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Russian evidence

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ЗАЯВЛЕНИЕ О САМОСТОЯТЕЛЬНОМ ХАРАКТЕРЕ ВЫПОЛНЕНИЯ ВЫПУСКНОЙ КВАЛИФИКАЦИОННОЙ РАБОТЫ

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ABSTRACTS

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Master Thesis Title	Application of country brand for tourism product promotion: Russian evidence
Educational Program	Graduate School of Management
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Description of the goal, tasks and main results	<p>The goal of current study is to explore the influence of the Russian tourism brand concept on the travelers' destination choice and for the country's tourism product promotion.</p> <p>In order to achieve the goal the author evaluated the theoretical background of tourism product and country brand peculiarities, conducted analysis of top ranked countries brands according to the Nation brand GFK index and assessed the technical inquiry for the development of the country brand for tourism in Russia.</p> <p>For the study the author performed content analysis of the associations about the country among foreign audience as well as in-depth interviews of the European tourists to examine the perception towards the country as a tourism destination. To tests the hypothesis and examine the country brand the survey was developed, where 186 European respondents were interviewed. Additionally, the expert interviews with the representatives of travel agencies were conducted to identify expected country brand functions and contribution to the tourism product promotion. The collected data was used for quantitative analysis and development of practical implications.</p> <p>Based on the empirical results of the study it was identified that the concept of Russian tourism brand is able to influence perception and intention to visit. Additionally, there was formed the model of the country brand contribution for the tourism product promotion. Furthermore, there were developed practical implications for the destination management organizations and tourism product promotion, different levels of the stakeholders of the country brand and the organization, responding for the country tourism brand creation.</p>
Keywords	Country branding, tourism product, tourist perception, tourism destination management, Russian tourism brand

АННОТАЦИЯ

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Описание цели, задач и основных результатов	<p>Цель настоящей работы – исследование влияния туристического бренда России на выбор туристов и возможности продвижения туристического продукта.</p> <p>В ходе работы был проведен анализ литературы относительно концепций туристического продукта и бренда страны, проанализированы ведущие бренды стран (согласно GFK индексу), изучено техническое задание и детали создания туристического бренда страны для России.</p> <p>В настоящей работе был проведен контент анализ ассоциаций о стране среди иностранной аудитории и глубинные интервью с туристами из Европы для изучения восприятия о стране как туристического направления. Для тестирования гипотез и оценки бренда страны был разработан опрос, в котором приняли участие 186 респондентов из Европы. Дополнительно были проведены экспертные интервью с представителями туристических агентств для определения возможных функций бренда страны и его содействия для продвижения туристического продукта. Полученные результаты были проанализированы, и использованы как основание для разработки практических рекомендаций.</p> <p>Основываясь на эмпирическом исследовании можно утверждать, что концепция туристического бренда страны для России способна влиять на восприятие и намерение посетить страну. Вместе с тем, была разработана модель воздействия бренда страны на продвижение туристического продукта. Помимо этого, были предложены практические рекомендации для организаций по менеджменту туристических направлений, различных уровней заинтересованных групп и организации, отвечающей за создание туристического бренда страны.</p>
Ключевые слова	Бренд страны, туристический продукт, восприятие туристов, туристический менеджмент, туристический бренд России

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism product concept has long roots and still there are various opinions concerning it. Figini (2016) offers to recognize the tourism product as a complex bundle which includes both complementary (accommodation, transport, attractions etc.) and substitute goods and services (different lodging structures, alternative museums or leisure parks etc.). Moreover, it was found out that various players are involved in managing tourism product: tourism enterprises, governments, public organizations (museums, parks, etc.), accommodation, infrastructure and hospitality organizations, travelers and other.

Additionally, it was found out that marketing stimulus can affect the choice of the tourism product of the travelers (Woodside and Lysonski 1989) and that falling cost of international travel and the rising spending power of a growing international middle class and its constant search for new experiences make the implementation of country brand widely used on the global tourism arena. Anholt (2003) defines country branding as using strategic marketing to promote destination image, products, and attractiveness for tourism and foreign direct investment. Though the term country or nation brand has various definitions by different authors, it could be seen that the idea of development country brand stands for the strengthening image, differentiation, connection interests and competitive capabilities of a country and involves the adaptation to the particular stakeholders.

In response to this in Russia the competition aimed to develop Russian country brand for tourism was launched between 2015 and 2017. According to the technical inquiry of the competition the strategic goal of the proposed concept should be to maintain the tourists' flow towards the direction of Russia. However, even though the competition was finished and the main attributes of the concept were developed, the launch of the concept is still delayed due to debates whether this concept is appropriate.

The assessment of the country brands of top ranked countries according to the Nation brand GFK index gave an opportunity to find out the set of functions of country brands and compare their representation in Russia. It was found out that those functions are partly present in Russia and are distributed through several organizations. Additionally it was found out that an unaided attitude could be recognized as an "excellent intermediate criteria" for evaluation the helpfulness of marketing stimulus (Axelrod 1968). Therefore, all things considered, based on the assessment of literature review about the country brand and tourism product concepts the *research gap* was identified, which could be represented as the lack of investigation whether the country brand is able to change perception towards the country, attain more tourists and develop tourism product.

In response to this, the *goal* of this study is to explore the influence of the Russian tourism brand concept on the travelers' destination choice and for the country's tourism product promotion. In order to reach stated goal, on the example of the Russian tourism brand concept the study is aiming to answer the following *research questions*:

- Whether the country brand can influence perception, intention to visit and emotional attitude towards the country among foreign tourists?
- What should be the content of the message about country to be delivered to the travelers?
- How the country brand can contribute to the tourism product promotion?

From the goal and questions of the study it could be seen that there are two major dimensions of the research:

1. To investigate how country brand precisely is expected to contribute to the work of destination management organizations and tourism product promotion on the example of the winning Russian tourism brand concept.
2. To find out whether the country brand is a strong enough as marketing tool to change the perception positively and can support to attain new customers (travelers) on the example of the winning Russian tourism brand concept.

Thus, the answer to the stated questions provide useful guidelines for brand and tourism managers in targeting foreign audience (tourists) and understanding the necessity for adoption of the country brand for the tourism product promotion.

In order to ensure the quality and efficiency **the study was organized** in a following way:

- Literature review in order to investigate tourism product concept, destination choice factors, country brand peculiarities, approaches of the development of the country tourism brand as well as examine Russian national tourism brand concept.
- Content analysis of the associations about the country as the preliminary stage for further investigation of the international tourist attitude toward the country.
- In-depth interviews with foreign travelers to Investigate tourism destination choice motivations, identify perception towards country as a tourism destination and examine country tourism brand concept
- Questionnaire development, which supports the study, tests the country tourism brand concept and its ability to influence consumers (travelers).

- Expert interviews with representatives of the travel agencies to investigate the expected role of the country brand and find out possible impact of the country brand on tourism product promotion

Additionally, the **thesis is structured** into three main chapters, where:

- The first chapter introduces the concept of tourism product, country branding, its stakeholders, its relevance to the tourism product promotion as well as analysis of the country brands of top ranked countries according to the Nation brand GFK index. The substantial part also devoted to the creation of the country brand of Russia, including its development, goals and functions.
- The second chapter is devoted to the discussion of the research goals, objectives, hypothesis, methodology, structure and design. Furthermore, the processes, structure, collection methods for the on-line quantitative research are described there. Additionally, the preliminary stage for the quantitative research the content analysis of the associations about country among foreign audience and in-depth interviews of the foreign tourists were also done.
- The third chapter represents statistical analysis of the data extracted from the on-line survey. There is a focus on descriptive statistics, concept evaluation, perception, knowledge, emotional attitude and intention to visit assessment before and after the concept, assessment of the associations' sets. The chapter also focused on the testing hypothesis set for the research.
- The fourth chapter is devoted to the expert interviews with the representatives of travel agencies in order to identify expected country brand functions and contribution to the tourism product promotion. The chapter also offers country brand implication for the destination management organization and tourism product promotion.
- The conclusion represents the discussion of the conducted research as well as practical implications derived from the research for the destination management organizations and tourism product promotion, different levels of the stakeholders of the country brand and the organization, responding for the country tourism brand development.

CHAPTER 1. NATIONAL TOURISM BRANDING: BACKGROUND AND PECULIARITIES

1.1. Tourism product definition, components and players

Tourism product concept has long roots and still there are various opinions concerning tourism product, where according Gooddall (1991) tourism product starting from the availability of tourism products that tangible resources (tangible) to intangible assets (intangible) and the totality is more inclined to the category of intangible services (intangible). In the same time tourism product is also recognized as “an array of integrated products, which consist of objects and attractions, transportation, accommodation and entertainment, where each element of the tourism product is prepared by individual companies and are offered separately to consumers (tourist / tourist)” (Burkat and Medlik 2001). Tourism product is also claimed to be “everything that can be sold and produced by combining factors of production, consumers are interested in interesting places, indigenous cultures and cultural festivals” (Burns and Holden 1995). Additionally, Kotler and Armstrong (1989) pointed out that tourism product should be recognized as something offered to the consumer or market share to satisfy the wishes and desires are included in the physical objects, services, human resources involved in the organization and breakthroughs or new ideas.

Nevertheless, it could be stressed that mentioned views of the concept of tourism product include several common characteristics: destination attractiveness, facilities of destinations and accessibility of destination. Additionally, it could be clearly seen that the components of tourism product come in various forms:

- products that can be sold independently on the market (hotel accommodation, air transport, admission to visitor attractions etc.) (Koutoulas 2001)
- public goods, such as the climate and the scenery, that can be used or consumed by tourists free of charge (Scheuch 1982, Leiper 1990)
- complementary services that cannot be sold independently on the market, such as the services provided by a tourist information office or by a tour leader (Koutoulas 2001)

In this case important to understand the stakeholders of the tourism product, which are according to the UNWTO include several key players both on the governmental, business and consumer sides:

- governments with specific competence in tourism matters
- tourism establishments and tourism enterprises, including their associations
- institutions engaged in financing tourism projects

- tourism employees, tourism professionals and tourism consultants
- trade unions of tourism employees
- tourism education and training centers
- travelers, including business travelers, and visitors to tourism destinations, sites and attractions
- local populations and host communities at tourism destinations through their representatives.

From the tourism industry players' point of view, it is important for a tourism destination to achieve its destination competitiveness in order to stay competitive, sustainable over time, and gain profit. Destination appeals and factors influencing the competitiveness of a tourism destination need to be identified from time to time, by not solely focusing from the demand side of view, but also on the perceptions from the supply side (Lo, Chin and Law 2017). It is also argued that the planning of tourism and the policy of a destination depend on the coordination and cooperation among several agents on a plethora of issues related to: the preservation and the enhancement of existing resources; the development and promotion of new ones; the variety of complementary services offered to tourists; the coordination in quantity, quality and prices set by private firms and the completion of the tourism product with the appropriate infrastructures (Figini 2016). In response to this, it was stated that community who are more supportive tend to provide better accommodation for their living place to tourists, which subsequently results to a stronger competitiveness of a tourism destination (Lo, Chin and Law 2017). Therefore, it is important to understand the peculiarities driving demand side (tourists) in order to achieve meaningful cooperation between tourist product players on the supply side.

1.2. Tourism product choice peculiarities

Figini (2016) offers that the planning of tourism and the policy of a destination depend on the coordination and cooperation among several agents on a plethora of issues related to: the preservation and the enhancement of existing resources, the development and promotion of new ones, the variety of complementary services offered to tourists, the coordination in quantity, quality and prices set by private firms and the completion of the tourism product with the appropriate infrastructures.

Researchers in the tourism are also concerned with the travel purchase decision have made similar observations to that of researchers investigating consumption decisions. The decision to travel has been understood as multi-phased rather than a single step process. Clawson and Knetch (1966) identified a five-phased process in their recreational behavior model: anticipation, travel to

the site, on-site behavior, return travel and recollection. This observation supports the work of Hunt (1975), Mayo and Jarvis (1981), who argue that a traveler's choice of destination is subjective and multi-faceted. While there are many factors involved in the decision making process, the most important is based on the image projected by a set of alternatives and the perceived ability of that image to most closely satisfy the travelers' needs. Important to note that those approaches include some similar features of the tourist behavior: need recognition, information search and post-evaluation phases. In response to this the general destination choice model presented by Woodside and Lysonski (1989) provides a more complete model to explain the destination awareness and choice processes of leisure travelers (figure 1).

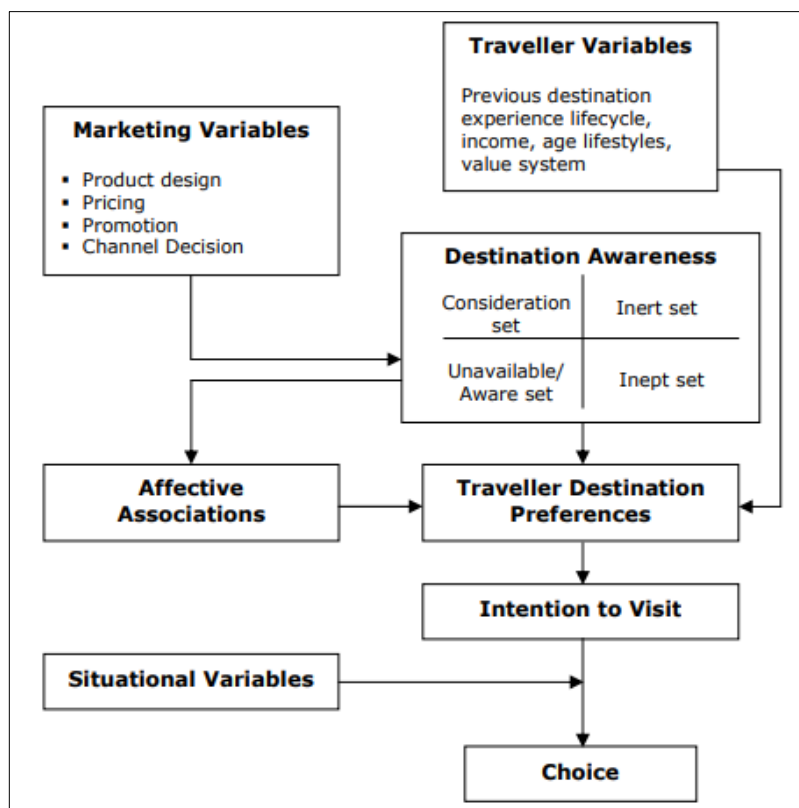


Figure 1. The general destination choice model (source: Woodside and Lysonski 1989)

The model represents eight variables and nine relationships as well as represents the interaction between marketing variables and traveler variables, which determine whether or not a destination is in the consumers' consideration set. Marketing variables here are those elements of the tourism product offering that the marketing entity stimulus can influence, including tourism product characteristics, price, promotion and distribution, and in the case of service industries, people, processes and physical evidence.

Therefore, it could be argued that the aim of destination marketing organizations (DMOs) should be to create a well-designed marketing mix targeted at a clearly defined target market to move a destination into the consideration set of that specific market (Woodside and Carr 1988). In support to this idea Rainisto (2003) argues that it is a very important strategic decision for a place to start systematic place marketing, and a decision to create a common place’s marketing program requires all parties to agree about the common goals. He also linked together with the perspectives of the practices and the success factors, which are divided into three sub-groups of events, namely the events in place marketing practices, the events in the network and the events in the macro-environment (figure 2)

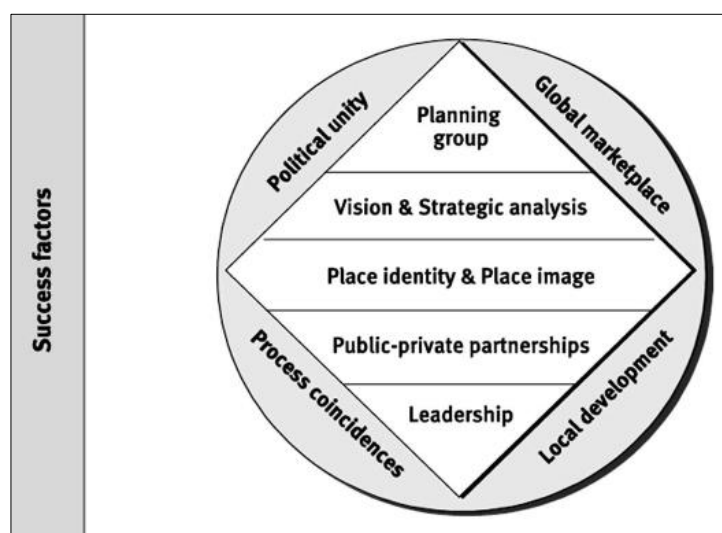


Figure 2. Success factors in destination management (source: Rainisto 2003)

The five success factors (“Planning group”, “Vision and Strategic analysis”, “Place identity and Place image”, “Public-private partnerships” and “Leadership”), which are situated inside the “prism” of the framework, represent abilities which place can actively influence. Another four factors are also considered to be essential. Kotler and Gertner (2002) claimed that the need to attract tourist requires from the places to adopt strategic marketing management tools and conscious branding, where one of the recent global approaches is the implementation of country or national brands.

1.3. Country brand and motivations for its development

The term country brand also recognized as nation brand and was offered by Simon Anholt in 1996, though the emergence of place branding and place marketing dates back to the early 1990’s (Szondi 2008). Country or nation branding concerns the application of branding and marketing communication techniques to promote destination image (Fan 2006). Anholt (2013) defines country

branding as using strategic marketing to promote destination image, products, and attractiveness for tourism and foreign direct investment. Important to note that the term country or nation brand has various definitions by different authors and there is no universally acceptable definition (Table 1).

Table 1. Definition of a country brand

Reference	Definition	Function
Kotler and Gertner 2002 Cho 2004	A name, related terms, marks, symbols, design or combined all to differentiate them from other countries	Image strengthening
Anholt 2010	The sum of people's perceptions of a country across its competence such as the cultural, political, commercial, tourist appeal, investment potential and human assets	Image strengthening, improvement country capabilities, strategic role
Szondi 2007	A sort of umbrella under which further sub-brands can be developed	Umbrella brand
Walsh & Wiedmann 2008	A very complex brand identity that is the result of a specific country reality, its perceptions and evaluations by many different internal and external stakeholders	Image strengthening, stakeholders connection
Dinnie 2008	The unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the country with culturally-grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences	Image strengthening and differentiation

Overall, it could be seen that the idea of development country brand stands for the strengthening image, differentiation, connection interests and competitive capabilities of a country and involves the adaptation to the particular stakeholders. In this case it is proposed that those destinations that avoid developing and implementing their own brand in their marketing activities will face difficulties in international competition of their tourism products (UNWTO and ETC 2009). When a place manages create favorable brand associations in the minds of the targeted customers, a place brand has been born and there is a chance that the customer will select the place to be “consumed” (Rainisto, 2003). The process creating a benefit for “place customers” requires a good development system for the place product so that a place-oriented value-added can be made “visible” (Gertner and Kotler, 2004). Additionally, according to Anholt (2007) there are several more conditions that make creation of the country brand essential:

- The growing power of the international media
- The falling cost of international travel and the rising spending power of a growing international middle class and its constant search for new experiences
- A range of tourism products sourced from an ever wider pool of countries increases the need to build trust for destinations and country of origin

- Tightly linked global economic system, and a limited pool of international investors being chased by a growing number of industrial and service locations
- Need for developing places, the intense competition for international funds, technology and skills transfer, inward investment, export markets and trade, etc.

In response to this, Papadopoulos (2004) has pointed out that country branding has been practiced independently in various different contexts (such as the promotion of exports, FDI, or tourism). Moreover, he insisted that there is an emerging phenomenon that public sectors at the national and local levels integrate those contexts into a consistent ‘place brand’ and the public and private interests in marketing place images converge.

1.4. Categories of the country brand stakeholders

Dzenovska (2001) claims that country brand is a strategic marketing tool, which aimed to connect all numerous stakeholders in the country from private and public sectors to the regional and national stakeholders. Additionally, Gilmore (2002) and Fehlmann (2002) distinguish various types of country brand stakeholders, including internal (i.e. businesses, public services, DMOs, government, etc.) and external (i.e. business partners, international organizations, travel agencies, media, etc.) parts. Thus the types and level of stakeholders were structured and summarized in the table 2.

Table 2. The categories of stakeholders for nation branding (Developed: Lee 2006)

Internal	International level stakeholders	International/multinational businesses
		International DMOs
		Media
		Embassies and consulates
		Investment/economic/other/agencies
	National level stakeholders	Country tourism organization/agency, tourist boards, DMOs
		Media
		Export and inward investment agencies
		Country enterprises
		Governments
	Regional level stakeholders	Regional DMOs, tourist boards, tourism associations
		Economic/social/cultural development agencies
		Media
		Governments
	Sector level (private and public) stakeholders	DMOs, tourism associations, travel agencies, tourism boards
		Cultural organizations and services
		Hospitality, retail, transportation businesses
		Leading enterprises
		Media
		Local developers/ agents/ organizations
Society groups (e.g. professional, religious, academics)		

		Governments
External	Businesses	Multinational organizations, global DMOs, global travel agencies
	World organizations	International tourism product exhibitions and associations, world economic/trade/other associations
	Others	Media; news agencies; governments

Gnoth (2002) advocates that the development of the country brand attributes need to be spearheaded in conjunction with all stakeholders. It is claimed that in tourism industry groups such as tourist offices, tourist marketing organizations, travel agents, carriers (planes, trains, buses, ships, etc.), event and conference centers, accommodation services and other are partners in the effort to maintain or improve a country image, whose determination is necessary to reply on the consumer preference for tourism products (Jaffe and Nebenzahl 2006). The substantially wide scope of country branding activity can only adequately be conducted through an inclusive stakeholder approach in pursuit of goals that will benefit the whole country (Dinnie 2008). The ultimate success of a place brand strategy relies on how effectively the brand mirrors the reality through effective commitment and relationships with stakeholders (Kerr and Johnson 2005, Hankinson 2004). In response to this, the management plan of “Visit England” country brand states that country branding should contain clear action plans to form the basis for their implementation (figure 3).

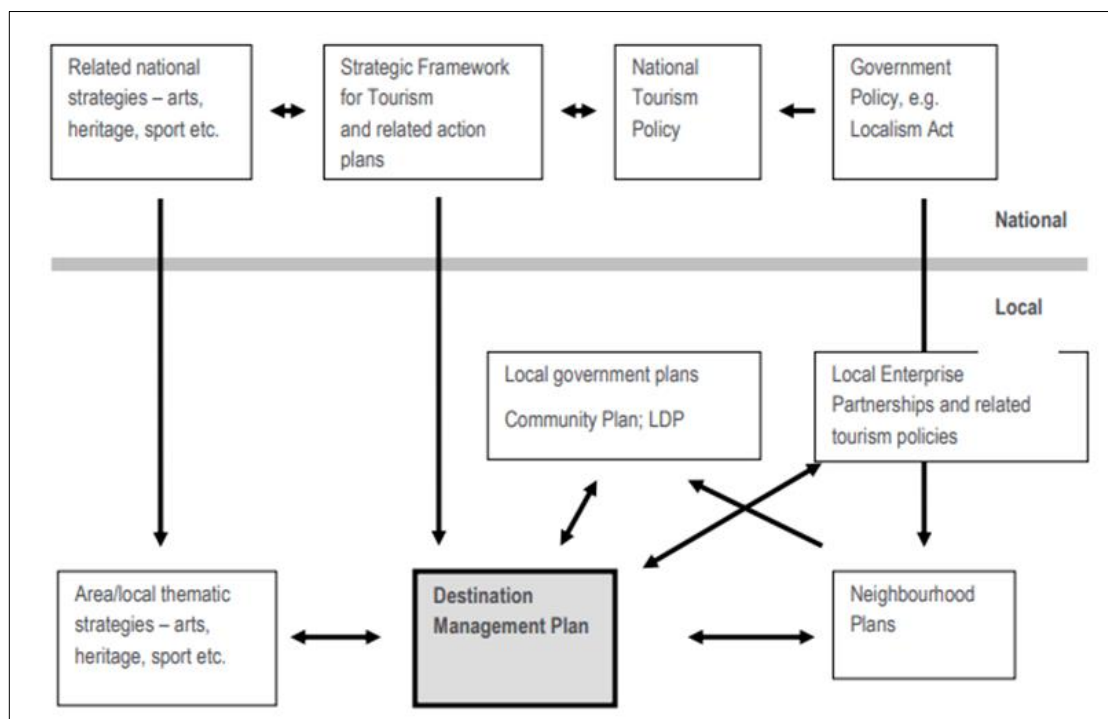


Figure 3. Strategic framework for tourism (source: “Visit England” country brand)

In terms of development and management of the country brand, Loo and Davies (2006) assure that countries generally take one of two approaches: in the first approach, dedicated

Cooperation with marketing organizations	yes	-	yes	-	-	yes	yes	-	yes
Establishing tourism associations	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Sponsorships and funding	yes	yes	yes	yes	-	yes	-	yes	yes
Providing research materials									
Incoming Tourism	yes	yes	yes	yes	-	yes	-	yes	yes
Business Travel Market	yes		yes	yes	-	yes	-	-	yes
Quality Monitor of Tourism	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Meeting and Event evaluation	yes	-	yes	-	-	yes	-	-	yes
Organizing training sessions									
Communication recommendations	yes	-	yes		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Employing & training staff	yes	-	yes	yes	yes	yes			
Managing finances	yes	-	yes		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Tourism planning guidance	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Destination advice	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	-	-	-
Presenting best practice	yes	-	yes	yes	yes	yes	-	-	-
Support promotion									
Promotional items and branded templates	Reco mmen dation s	Reco mme ndati ons	yes	yes	-	yes	-	Recom mendati ons	yes
International promotion	yes		yes	yes		yes			yes
Promotion on the official website	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Connecting with partners	yes	yes	yes	yes	n/a	yes	yes	n/a	yes

Therefore the country brand destination management organization (holder) in this case usually plays the role of knowledge management organization, enhancing the private and local business, as well as marketing organizations, supporting the development of tourism offer in the country through partnerships, promotion opportunities and funding: launching major tourism campaigns, cooperation and partnerships, providing research materials, organizing training sessions and support marketing. The country brand identity in this case usually is used as an example of the advertising focus and building identity abroad for the travel agencies on the step of attracting new tourists or is provided (images, templates and other sources) for the use of verified partner organizations.

Concerning the Russian reality these functions are mostly held by the Federal Tourism Agency, with more focus on distribution about regulations in tourism sphere, creating possible associations and Russia travel national tourism portal (table 4).

Table 4. Representation of country brand DMOs functions in Russia

Country	Federal Tourism Agency	Russia travel national tourism portal
Launching major tourism campaigns	Yes	Announcement
Cooperation and partnerships		
Tourism companies (regional and international)	Register	-
Cooperation with marketing organizations	n/a	-
Establishing tourism associations	Yes	-
Sponsorships and funding	Yes	-
Providing research materials		
Incoming Tourism	Statistics	-
Business Travel Market	n/a	-
Quality Monitor of Tourism	Yes	Redirecting (AIS Tourism)
Meeting and Event evaluation	Yes	-
Organizing training sessions		
Communication recommendations	Tourstudy	Redirecting (Tourstudy)
Employing & training staff	Tourstudy	Redirecting (Tourstudy)
Managing finances	-	-
Tourism planning guidance	Tourstudy	Redirecting (Tourstudy)
Destination advice	n/a	-
Presenting best practice	Tourstudy	Redirecting (Tourstudy)
Support promotion		
Promotional items and branded templates	-	-
International promotion	Participation	-
Promotion on the official website	-	-
Connecting with partners	n/a	-

In this case it could be seen that the functions of country brand are held or redirected on the several platforms, where the Russian tourism agency focused on more regulation and development issues, while Russia travel national tourism portal, which was organized by the agency, has a function of representation of the tourism opportunities in the country.

Important to note that evaluation of country brands of Germany, USA, UK and Australia showed that the websites of these brands significantly put focus on the explaining and offering different experiences in the countries, differentiated by thematic interests or regions. What is more, they gather all together destination opportunities, accommodation, services and activities with the opportunity to find and choose interesting offer directly from the country brand website, which is connected with those organizations directly or through agencies. Comparing with this approach Russia travel national tourism portal has only informative but not the connection function, where the

potential visitor can not directly find the supplier of the offer or book the travel and need to make additional search.

1.6. Russian country brand development

In addition to the assessed country brand DMOs functions represented in the previous section of the study, it is important to mention that though those functions in Russia were divided among several organizations, the prominent step towards the creation of country brand of Russia was also done. A special competition was launched from 2015 till 2017 in order to develop brand of Russia with focus on tourism.

According to the technical inquiry of the competition the strategic goal of the proposed brand should be to maintain the tourists’ flow towards the direction of Russia. The focus on the development of the country brand according to the technical inquiry had several incentives: growth of the global tourism, increasing competition among international tourism destinations and the development of country brands by other countries. The objective of the competition was to increase the tourism attractiveness of Russia and improve attitude of the external and internal (international and local) audience through promotional and communication instruments. Additionally, the goal of the competition was to create solid, strong and effective brand of a country.

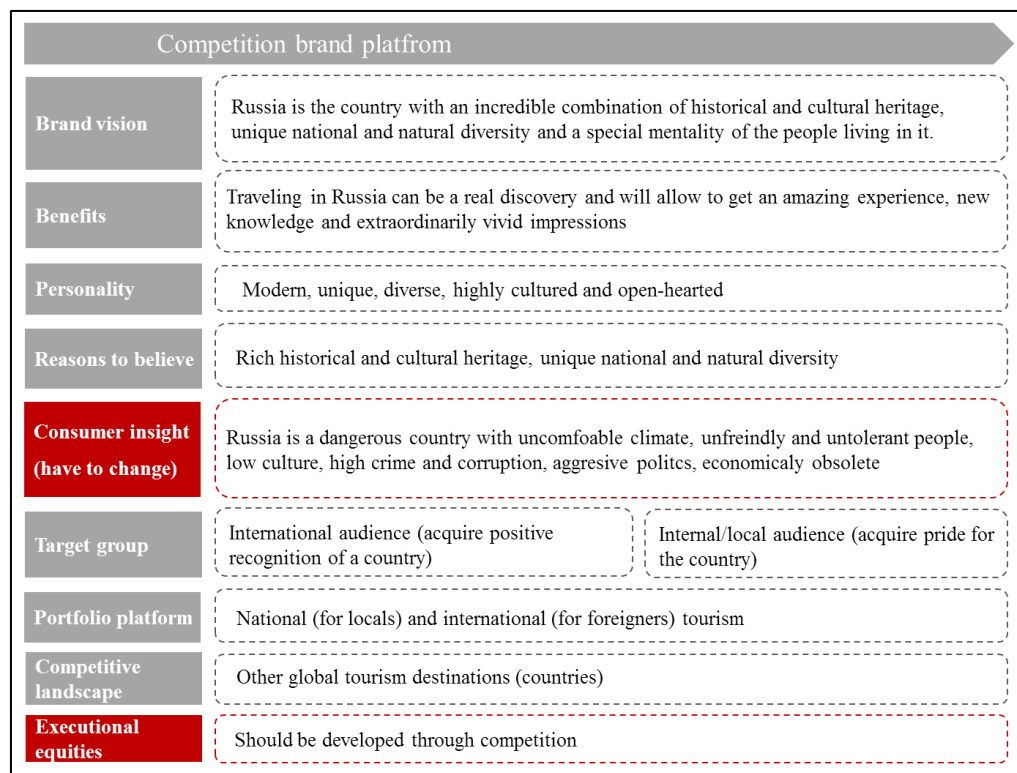


Figure 4. The brand platform for the completion (based on technical inquiry)

The technical inquiry also includes recommendations towards the creation of the brand and put significant focus on the negative perception and associations towards the country, which should be changed by the brand (figure 4).

The competition was organized by the Federal Agency for Tourism with the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation and the Association of Branding Companies of Russia. The competition devoted to the creation of the country brand included 3 rounds as well as committee and public evaluation. In November 2017, a committee selected the winner among the three top vote-getters. The winning concept (Appendix 1) was the representation of supremacist style as a representation of advanced thinking in Russia. The proposed logo of the concept is the representation of the map of the country, divided into specific major areas. The concept is aimed to show that “Russia stretches from the past to the future, comprising multiple cultures and preserving thousands of stories and memories”. Nevertheless, important to note that though the competition was finished and the main attributes of the concept were developed, the launch of the concept is still delayed due to debates whether this concept is appropriate. This gap in the work and time, which were utilized for the creation of this brand and stagnation arise the question in practical implication of the concept and its ability to be a strong representative of a country on the international tourism arena.

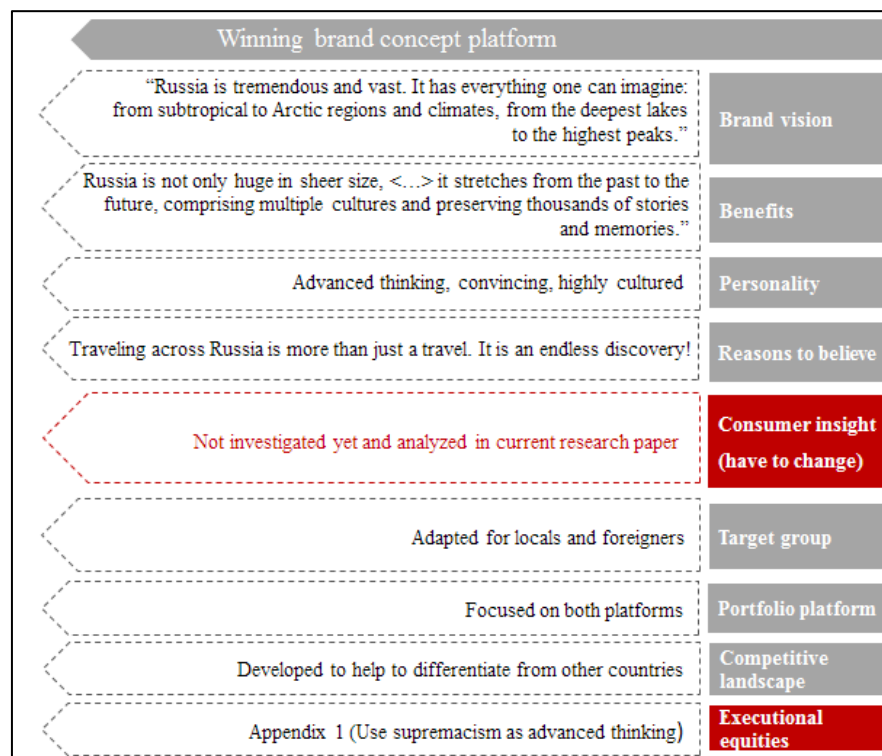


Figure 5. The brand platform for the winning concept of the brand (based on the concept idea)

With relation on technical inquiry and the winning concept brand idea there were constructed and compared two brand platforms for the current study (figure 5) in order to find out the relevance of the winner. The comparison of these platforms can represent that overall the proposed winning concept of the country brand suits the core demands of the technical inquiry. The concept is focused on the promotion of Russia as a tourism destination, is adapted for both local and international understanding, points out on the cultural heritage, outlines major tourism products in the country and tries to differentiate Russia from other tourism destinations.

However, the ability of this concept to have the function of accelerator of positive attitude towards the country was not investigated yet. Thus, the current research makes an attempt to understand the ability of this concept to fulfill the function of forming positive attitude aiming potential foreign tourists (one of the primer brand customers). Important to note, that as it was presented before technical inquiry states that the concept should be focused on both local and international auditory. However, those two target audience has different attributes and peculiarities of attitude and consumer behavior, which differs significantly. Therefore, in order to acquire unbiased perception of the country and the ability to change it by the concept the research was limited to the focus on the international tourism consumers.

1.7. Analysis of the type Russia brand concept

According to the technical inquiry of the competition set for the development of Russian tourism brand it was point out that the idea of the brand should present opportunities and advantages of the different types of tourism product in the country, be recognized by diverse audience and positively improve the image of the country (figure 6).

Furthermore, the technical enquiry for the creation of Russian brand also stated certain functions towards the brand of a country:

- The brand should represent strategic idea in order to support development the tourism product in Russia and Russia as a tourism destination.
- The brand should be an integrator for initiatives (in infrastructure, culture, social, educational, business and other areas) to support and develop tourism.
- The brand should be one of the drivers of interest towards Russia (tourists, media, etc.).
- The brand should be the tool for positive changes in stereotype attitude inside and abroad Russia.
- The brand should be the source for inspiration and initiatives for the tourism product development and promotion.

- The brand should attain recognition as nonpolitical symbol of Russia as a representation of progressive country with multicultural heritage and unique capabilities.
- The brand should be effective in differentiating Russia as a tourist destination from other countries and should be competitive in communications on international arena.

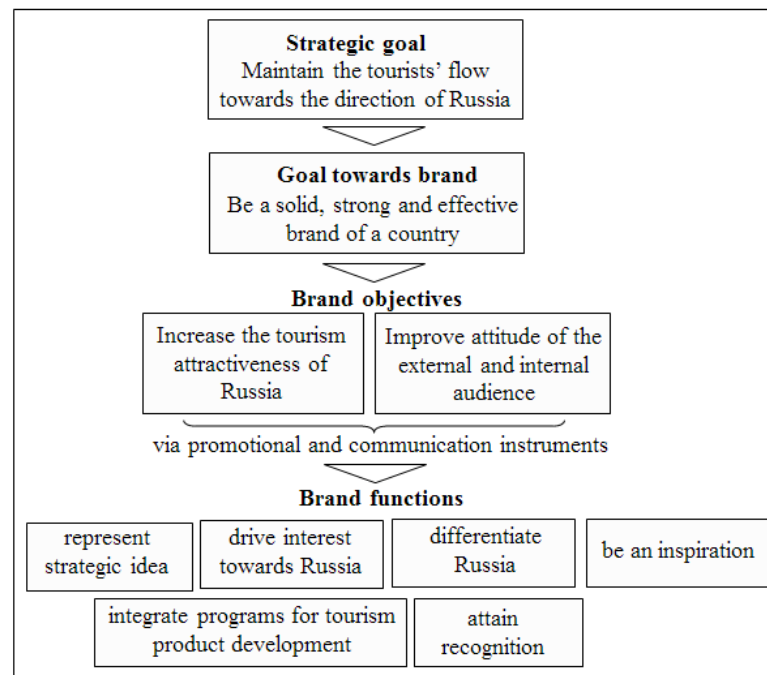


Figure 6. Hierarchy of brand goals, objectives and function (according to technical inquiry)

Therefore, relying on the national brand architecture model (Keith 2008), National Brand Hexagon (Anholt 2009) and mentioned above functions of the brand it is possible to outline that this country brand was aimed to be focused mostly on tourism sphere (table 5).

Table 5. Analysis of Russian country brand aim

National brand hexagon	Brand architecture model	Russia brand goals
People		Supportive
Export	Export	Supportive
Governance	Cultural and political figures	Supportive
Culture		Primer
Tourism	Tourism	Primer
Immigration and investment	Investment	Supportive
	Talent attraction	Supportive
	Sports	Supportive

Finally, important to note that evaluation of the Russian tourism brand goals and functions stated in technical inquiry with the goal and functions recognized for the country brands in theory (table 1) show that the proposed brand has all features of country brand.

1.8. Summary of the Chapter 1

Figini (2016) offers to recognize the tourism product could be recognized as a complex bundle which includes both complementary (accommodation, transport, attractions etc.) and substitute goods and services (different lodging structures, alternative museums or leisure parks etc.). Moreover, it was found out that various players are involved in managing tourism product: tourism enterprises, governments, public organizations (museums, parks, etc.), accommodation, infrastructure and hospitality organizations, travelers and other.

Additionally, it was found out that marketing stimulus can affect the choice of the tourism product of the travelers (Woodside and Lysonski 1989) and that falling cost of international travel and the rising spending power of a growing international middle class and its constant search for new experiences make the implementation of country brand widely used on the global tourism arena. In response to this in Russia the competition aimed to develop Russian country brand for tourism was launched between 2015 and 2017. According to the technical inquiry of the competition the strategic goal of the proposed concept should be to maintain the tourists' flow towards the direction of Russia. However, even though the competition was finished and the main attributes of the concept were developed, the launch of the concept is still delayed due to debates whether this concept is appropriate.

The assessment of the country brands of top ranked countries according to the Nation brand GFK index gave an opportunity to find out the set of functions of country brands and compare their representation in Russia. It was found out that those functions are partly present in Russia and are distributed through several organizations. In this case it is interesting to investigate how country brand precisely is expected to contribute to the work of destination management organizations and tourism product development on the example of the proposed Russian tourism brand.

Additionally it was found out that marketing stimulus can directly affect the destination choice of the travelers (Woodside and Lysonski 1989) as well as unaided attitude could be recognized as an "excellent intermediate criteria" for evaluation the helpfulness of marketing stimulus (Axelrod 1968). In response to this it is motivating to find out whether the country brand is a strong enough as marketing tool to change the perception positively and can support to attain new customers (travelers) on the example of the proposed Russian tourism brand.

Therefore, all things considered, the assessment of literature about the country brand and tourism product concepts revealed the *research gap*, which could be represented as the lack of investigation whether the country brand is able to change perception towards the country, attain more tourists and develop tourism product.

CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH DESIGN, CONTENT ANALYSIS AND IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS RESULTS

2.1. Identifying research goal and research questions

According to Anholt (2008) country brand represents how others perceive a country and can be seen as a strategic marketing tool for improvement of the reputation and image. In response to the growth of the global tourism, increasing competition among international tourism destinations and the development of country brands by other countries the competition aimed to develop Russian country brand for tourism was launched between 2015 and 2017. According to the technical inquiry of the competition the strategic goal of the proposed brand should be to maintain the tourists' flow towards the direction of Russia. However, even though the competition was finished and the main attributes of the concept were developed, the launch of the concept is still delayed due to debates whether this concept is appropriate. The assessment of the country brands of the top ranked countries according to the Nation brand GFK index gave an opportunity to find out the set of functions of country brands, which are also partly represented in Russia. Additionally it was found out that marketing stimulus can directly affect the destination choice of the travelers (Woodside and Lysonski 1989) as well as unaided attitude could be recognized as an "excellent intermediate criteria" for evaluation the helpfulness of marketing stimulus (Axelrod 1968). However, deeper assessment of literature about the country brand and tourism product concepts revealed the *research gap*, which could be represented as the lack of investigation whether the country brand is able to change perception towards the country, attain more tourists and develop tourism product.

Therefore, the *goal* of this study is to explore the influence of the Russian tourism brand concept on the travelers' destination choice and for the country's tourism product promotion. In order to reach stated goal, on the example of the Russian tourism brand concept the study is aiming to answer the following *research questions*:

- Whether the country brand can influence perception, intention to visit and emotional attitude towards the country among foreign tourists?
- What should be the content of the message about country to be delivered to the travelers?
- How the country brand can contribute to the tourism product promotion?

Hence, this study of the country brands on the example of Russian tourism brand is going to identify perception towards the country as a tourism destination, examine country brand (Russian tourism brand as an example) and find out contribution of country brand on tourism product.

2.2. Research hypothesis

Towards to the question of country brands assessment there are several major indices measuring the relative position of the different countries. Judging from the approaches of four major country branding indexes there could be outlined two major focuses in their methodology of evaluation: focus on pure statistical data as in Brand Finance Nation Brands rating and Bloom Consulting Country Brand Ranking or with focus on perception like in Anholt-GfK Nation Brand Index and partly Country Brand Index (this index is more like in between of these categories).

Concerning the second approach Shimp and Saeed (1993) represent country brand value as an emotional or attitude evaluation which is comprised from the customers' associations and perception of a country as a brand. Capriotti (2008) also claims that the image of a country is a set of associations towards the country and though they could be either true or false it is vital to take them into account. Therefore, in relation to the fact Russian tourism brand concept, which is used as country brand example for current work, is not launched yet, its assessment will be done from the perception point of view and technical inquiry demands.

Smith and Swinyard (1983) suggested that perception and affective emotions were vital in forming attitudes in advertising and developing marketing stimulus. Additionally, Mackenzie and Lutz (1989) argued that perception, associations and knowledge, affect the destination choice of the travelers. Woodside (1982) argued that the creation of associations is the process of connection of particular attributes and benefits to destinations. Understanding of the associations for the specific concepts (for example "breath-taking scenery" or "too expensive") and destination can help to identify how the place is positioned in the mind of tourists. Additionally, this positioning in the mind of the customer may occur simultaneously as mostly people are unable to set categories without prior evaluation (Brunner, Goodnow and Austin 1959, Gawronski 2015). According to the attitude formation theory developed by Eagly and Chaiken (1993) perception is shaped when consumers collect information and therefore create certain beliefs (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980, Eagly and Chaiken 1993, Kaneva, Popescu and Delia 2014). Van Raj (1986) claimed that tourism marketing stimulus should be developed on the understanding of the consumer perception and preferences. Various studies especially in marketing (Lutz 1991, Eagly and Chaiken 1993, D'Mello and Graesser 2015). Holyoak and Gick (1980) pointed that perception is also supported by connection the concepts, visual images, and messages with associations. Concerning the destination marketing and national branding it is claimed that all nations created their own brands already from public opinion and perception towards the country is influenced by the direct experience and associations gathered from it and media (Anholt 2008, Anandi 2017). It was also suggested that

there could be positive and negative perception towards the particular destinations which could influence the decision of visiting or not (Woodside and Lysonski 1989). Hence, the findings discussed from the literature review led to the development of the following scientific hypothesis for testing.

H1: Russian tourism brand can change the perception of the country among foreign tourists.

It is suggested that the image of a country is not only rational set of the knowledge and associations, but also emotional set (Villar 2010, Dinnie 2016). Positive and negative affect such as delight or anger have an independent influence about the satisfaction towards the evaluated object (Horley and Little 1985). Thus, those who have more positive affect reaction tend to evaluate more positively, than those who have negative affect reactions (Westbrook 1987, Eagly and Chaiken 1993, Oliver 1993). It was claimed that the emotional attitude can be developed as an initial reaction towards certain marketing stimulus even without awareness or interpretation. Thus, many marketing stimulus influence the way consumers feel rather than the way they think or behave (Leventhal 1980, Zajonc and Markus 1984). In relation to the destination marketing travelers develop their preferences for the alternative places or destinations with the basis on the place awareness and affective associations (Michie 1986, van Raaij 1986, Beyer and Matthes 2015), where preferences are the rankings assigned by attitude power (Woodside 1982). It is also claimed that affective or emotional part is faster than cognitive or rational component as it does not include analytical thinking and evaluation (Dunne 2005, Abe 2016) and therefore marketing stimulus can be put directly on this part. Finally, Lee and Lockshin (2012) found that the image of a country as a tourism destination is able to influence consumers' perception of products 'made in' the destination. Therefore, in terms of the assessing the Russian national branding concept it is vital to identify its ability to influence the preferences of the potential foreign consumers and form the second hypothesis.

H2: Russian tourism brand can influence positively the emotional attitude towards the country among foreign tourists.

The intention to purchase is a key factor in representing influence of the marketing actions (Havitz and Dimanche 1999, McIntyre 1992) in our case visiting of the country. Both Woodside and Carr (1988) and Muhlbacher and Woodside (1987) claim that intention to visit as likelihood of visiting particular place during the specific time and this intention is significantly connected with marketing incentives. Hunt (1975) points that the destination image influences the wish to visit particular destination. Additionally, it was stated that destination image is a direct antecedent of

perceived quality, satisfaction, intention to visit (Bigne 2001). Chen and Tsai (2007) also concluded that the image of the destination directly influences both attribute and overall satisfaction and that such two components, in turn, have a direct and positive impact on destination loyalty and choice.

H3. Russian tourism brand can lead to the increase in intention to visit the country among European foreign tourists.

In relation to this important to note that evaluation of the technical inquiry of the competition created for the development of the Russian tourism brand also included significant focus on the image of the country as well as changes in the association and perception of the target audience.

2.3. Choice and justification of the research design

Between five key philosophies, which are positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism and pragmatism (Saunders 2009), the *positivism* was chosen for current research. According to the Milman (2010) this type of the research paradigm is primarily objectivist with focus on finding truth and mostly is represented by the quantitative or experimental methodology. Concerning the research goal it is possible to outline that positivism fit its idea in the best way.

Additionally, before selection of the suitable research approach, it is vital to identify whether the research has a descriptive, explanatory, exploratory or predictive nature (Yin 1998, Snow and Thomas 1994). According to the goal and the objectives of the research, which were presented previously, it is possible to state that current research has an *exploratory nature* since it is focused on identifying and exploring the effect of the Russian tourism brand on the attitude of the foreign audience through cognitive, affective and behavioral components. Therefore, current research is targeted on the relationship between abovementioned parameters (Hair 2016).

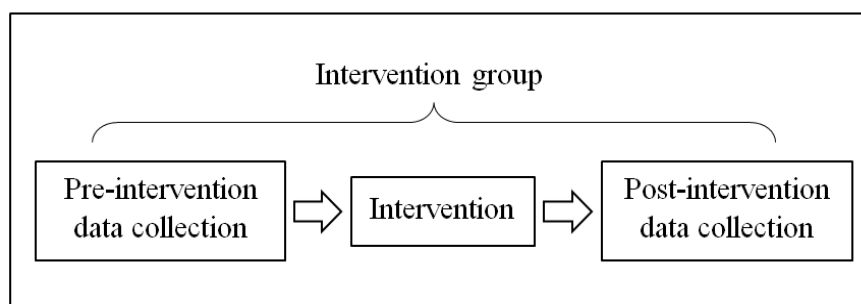


Figure 7. One group pre-test, post-test experimental design

Furthermore, concerning the type of the research design the most appropriate one for current study is the *one group pre-test, post-test experimental design* (figure 7) with only intervention group of respondents since the studied concept is proposed to cover entire population and therefore there could not be additional comparison group (Colman 2015). In this case the intervention group

(respondents) attitude will be evaluated before and after the concept (intervention). Therefore, it is possible to find out possible changes in the knowledge, perception and intention to visit the country.

This research is also *applied*, since we are planning to add new knowledge for the concrete concept and with the purpose of deriving practical recommendations for the branding managers or professionals involved in the tourism product and country branding development.

2.4. Data collection technique

From the goal and questions of the study it could be seen that there are two major dimensions of the research:

3. To investigate how country brand precisely is expected to contribute to the work of destination management organizations and tourism product promotion on the example of the winning Russian tourism brand concept.
4. To find out whether the country brand is a strong enough as marketing tool to change the perception positively and can support to attain new customers (travelers) on the example of the winning Russian tourism brand concept.

Therefore with the relation towards identified research gap, set research goal and questions there could be identified several major tasks of the current study: to identify perception towards the country as a tourism destination, examine country brand (Russian tourism brand as an example) and find out contribution of country brand on tourism product. In response to this there are several research stages which include both *qualitative* and *quantitative* research methods (table 6).

Table 6. Research task, methods, data sources and objectives

Task	Method	Data sources	Objectives
Identify perception towards country as a tourism destination	Content analysis	On-line reviews and discussions about Russia among foreign audience Number of sources: 21 website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the range of associations about the country among foreign audience • Develop the categories of the associations about the country
	In-depth interview	European travelers Response rate: 17 Europeans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate tourism destination choice motivations • Identify perception towards country as a tourism destination • Examine country brand concept
Examine country brand			

concept	Survey	Target audience (European travelers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine country brand concept • Investigate ability of the country brand to influence perception, intention to visit and emotional attitude towards country
Find out contribution of country brand on tourism product		Response rate: 186 respondents	
	Expert interviews	Travel agencies in Russia, working with foreign tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the expected role of the country brand • Find out contribution of the country brand for tourism product promotion
		Response rate: 5 experts	

The *content analysis* of associations about the country was done as a preliminary stage to understand the perception and attitude towards the country as the bases for the country brand functions. Analyzes included investigation recent on-line reviews and discussions about country among foreign audience from the point of tourism and culture. The focus was primarily based on such discussions as “What comes to your mind when you think about Russia?”, “Travelling to Russia”, “Myths about Russia”, etc.

For the *survey and in-depth interviews* the traditional sampling method was used: snowball and convenience. Additionally, according to the Russian Federation Federal State Statistic Service there is following structure of foreign visitors to Russia (2016 year): 57% are visitors from Europe, 36% are visitors from Asia, 6% are visitors from North America and less than 1% each are visitors from Australia, South America and Africa. Therefore, the focus in the survey and in-depth interviews distribution was put on European respondents as the major foreign visitors of Russia. The questions for the survey and in-depth interviews are presented in appendixes 2 and 4.

Finally, the *expert interviews* were conducted with the representatives of the travel agencies, which were chosen in relevance to several criteria: tourism agency, which has origin in the country, the agency should work with foreign tourists (particular with Europeans travelers), agency has an office or representative in European countries, and agency has government registration. The questions for the expert interviews are presented in appendix 7.

2.5. Survey structure, distribution and analysis approach

The survey was used to examine the concept and recognize the knowledge, perception, intention to visit and emotional attitude among foreign tourists before and after the concept of the Russian tourism brand.

A self-administered questionnaire was created based in the investigation if the literatures review on attitudes, national branding and technical inquiry of the competition for the concept

creation as well as was modified based on inputs from expert interviews. The questionnaire consists of several blocks (figure 8):

1. The block – filter of the respondents targeted to acquire answers from non-users (non-visitors of the country) so that the answers are not positively or negatively biased from the direct visiting.
2. Evaluation of the attitude of foreign audience about the country before the Russian tourism brand concept through perception, intention to visit and emotional attitude towards the country.
3. Evaluation of the Russian tourism brand concept in order to investigate its complexity and clearness (factors based on the technical inquiry demands).
4. Evaluation of the attitude of foreign audience about the country after the Russian tourism brand concept through the same measurements.
5. Demographic block to verify the congruence of the participated respondents.

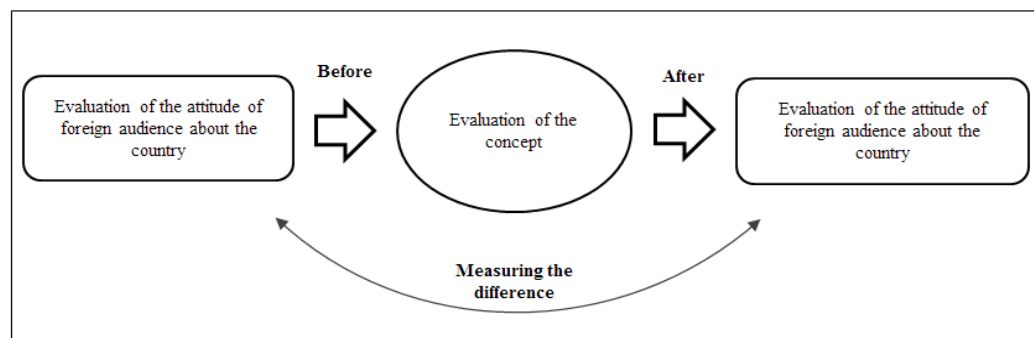


Figure 8. Quantitative research process (structure)

The knowledge, perception, intention to visit and emotional attitude were measured by the several questions:

- “What comes to your mind when you think about «Russia»? (Please indicate any 5 associations)”, where associations were asked before and after the concept in order to understand the power of the proposed Russian tourism brand change them into more positive way.
- Relevance question: Rating the statements about the country through semantic differential (“Russia has rich cultural heritage”, “People in Russia are tolerant”, etc.), where the statements were indicated through technical inquiry for the competition of the brand concept as the representation of what effects were expected from the branding concept as well as through inputs from expert interviews.

- Relevance question: “In your opinion what are the main reasons to select Russia as a tourism destination? ”, which represented the list of touristic opportunities in the country based on the technical inquiry for the competition of the brand concept.

Table 7. Five knowledge and five emotional responses (Arnould, Price, Zinkhan, McGraw, Irwin, 2004)

Five cognitive (knowledge and perception) response	
It is important It means a lot for me It is valuable for me It is relevant for me I need that	It is not important It means nothing It has no value for me It is irrelevant I do not need that
Five affective (emotions) response	
It is interesting It is exciting It is fascinating It is engaging	It is not interesting It is boring It is not attractive It is ordinary It is not engaging

Additionally, the emotional attitude (table 7) towards country was measured implicitly through the statement about the country (“Russia is an interesting destination to visit”) as well as through the emotional background (positive, neutral or negative) of the associations from the respondents. Finally, the intention to visit was assessed through the likelihood 5-point scale of the intention to visit the country (“How likely are you to take trip to Russia in the next 3 years?”).

Important to note, the same questions were asked before and after the concept in order to find out the attitude toward the country with and without proposed marketing stimulus (concept). Therefore, this research provides an opportunity to get insights whether the proposed Russian tourism brand concept can influence positively knowledge, perception, intention to visit and emotional attitude.

Questionnaire was posted in forums related to tourism in Russia as well as distributed through personal foreign connections. The survey is presented in Appendix 2. Then statistical procedures were conducted using SPSS 22.0 Statistics.

2.6. Assessment of the associations about country

As the preliminary stage for further investigation of the international tourist attitude toward the country the content analysis of the associations about the Russia among foreign audience was done. Studies on the National Branding represent that countries have their own brands and destinations acquire their brands from attitude (Anholt 2008, Keith 2008, Moilanen and Rainisto

2009). The perception, which is the cognitive component of the attitude, depends significantly on individual experience and/or sets of association through personal experience, media exposure and external opinion. According to Krishnan (1996) associations could be understood as the bridge between nodes in the memory and mind of the customers. In this case memory is consist of the data and knowledge, which is like a system of connections by associations. The fragments of the memory system are these nodes which characterize information taken from brands and their attributes and attach them to nodes through associations. Associations along with loyalty, awareness, perception are also viewed as one of the factors of the brand equity as well as it is claimed that they can be linked to the benefits, brand attributes, usage intentions (Aaker 1991, Dilon 2001, Keller 2003, Dinnie 2016). Additionally, this idea was developed to the suggestion that benefits and attributes of the brands correspond to the generation of associations among the customers (Kaynak, Salman, and Tatoglu 2008, Jordan 2015).

Consequently, it could be seen that associations are recognized as the linking material in customers' memory and knowledge about brand attributes, benefits and overall attitude. Thus, in order to assess cognitive component of international attitude toward Russia the content analysis was done. The primer aim of content analysis was to find out the list of associations connected with Russia as well to recognize the emotional background towards the country among foreign audience. Additionally, conducted analysis gave an opportunity to create the categories of associations, which could be also understood as the main thematic categories in which Russia is recognized by internationals. Furthermore, these categories of associations as a preliminary stage for the further quantitative analysis in evaluation of associations from the international respondents.

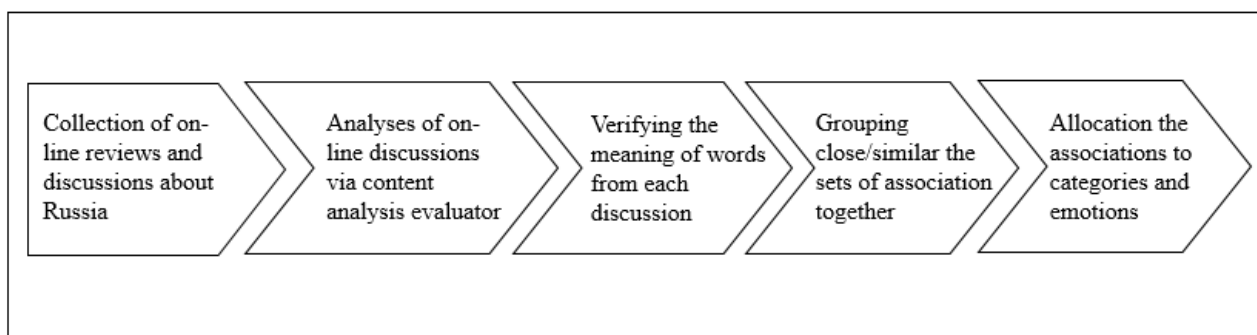


Figure 9. The process of conducted content analysis

The steps of the conducted content analysis were (figure 9):

1. Collection of all possible on-line reviews and discussions about Russia among foreign audience. The focus was primarily based on such discussions as “What comes to your mind

when you think about Russia?”, “Travelling to Russia”, “Myths about Russia”, etc. The range of possible on-line sources had several limitations:

- a. Avoid discussions about politics of Russia on international arena, since such discussions usually were weighted by the controversy or negative comments.
 - b. Focus on discussions concerning tourism due to the focus of the current research and the type of Russian national branding concept.
 - c. Focus on discussions about the whole image of country or the myths connected with it, as the result or quintessence of foreign perception and prejudices.
2. Analyses of the web-pages of the discussions about Russia through content analysis evaluator of the web-sites, which provides the list of the frequency of citations of the words on the web-page (for the current research it was used this evaluator http://prcy.ru/analysis_content/)
 3. Analyzes the created list of words from each page, the relevance of the words to the topic about Russia and the meaning (for example the adjective “beautiful” was used usually for both nature or women, however from the automatic content analysis of the webpages it is impossible to find out, thus the additional human verification of the webpages of the concerning words was required).
 4. Grouping of the close sets of words as one association, which was needed due to two main reasons:
 - a. close or same meaning, which was verified by the previous step (for example “climate/climates/climatic/cold/snow/weather/winter”, where logically the words “climate” and “winter” have the different meanings, however the authors, which implemented these words in their discussion aimed to tell about “cold weather” in Russia)
 - b. mistakes in spelling of the words (for example such sets of words as “vodka / wódka / wódki / votka / vwodka”)
 5. Allocation the associations into categories according to their thematic and emotional background. Additionally, the topic “culture” as one of the complex in meaning and in volume of associations was subdivided into several more categories in order to find out which of the cultural aspect has the most dominance. Important to note that it is possible to find out relatively closely related categories (for example “business” and “economy” or “food”, “history”, “culture”) divided separately. The main reason for this was the context in which words were used in the discussion, which was verified on the fourth step.

Overall it was evaluated 21 on-line source (Appendix 3), which gave an opportunity to extract 301 most frequent associations and associations groups.

As it was earlier mentioned in previous chapter according to Woodside and Lysonski, (1989) the tourists partly make their choice with bases on the set of associations about the destination in their mind, which could be are positive, neutral or negative. The authors argued that in this case positive associations can lead to the positive perception and interest in the destination, while negative associations can influence negatively the choice. As it was represented in the process of the content analysis each of the associations or the group of associations was evaluated from the emotional background of being negative (1), neutral (2) or positive (3). It gave an opportunity to identify the average emotional attitude toward Russia and categories by the following way:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n w_i x_i}{\sum_{i=1}^n w_i},$$

where

w_i – frequency of certain association,

x_i – emotional rank of association (1 – negative, 2 – neutral, 3 – positive).

Therefore, according to the performed analysis in table 5 it could be seen that the whole attitude towards the country among foreign audience based on the association content analysis is neutral, where the most positive category is culture and the categories which influence country’s image negatively are food and politics. Concerning the negative aspect of the category “food” it has to be noted that one of the strongest association “vodka” was included, which due to the high frequency influenced negatively the whole category (table 8).

Table 8. The categories of associations about Russia

Categories	Total weighted	Total number	Average
Sport	300	100	3,0
Culture	3735	1392	2,7
Country	2317	888	2,6
Sights	771	336	2,3
Other	585	257	2,3
Nature	1148	562	2,0
Geography	630	309	2,0
Alcohol	424	212	2,0
Infrastructure	48	24	2,0
Women	142	71	2,0
Travel	179	91	2,0

Food	465	240	1,9
People	2168	1214	1,8
Economy	644	381	1,7
History	685	417	1,6
Politics	1907	1291	1,4
Military	57	45	1,3
Crime	118	118	1,0
Total	16393	7948	2,1

Apart from the emotional aspect of the associations it could be seen from the table above that there are three most significant in volume categories in the list: culture, people and politics. Hence, it could be assumed that these three categories have the strongest influence on the attitude towards Russia.

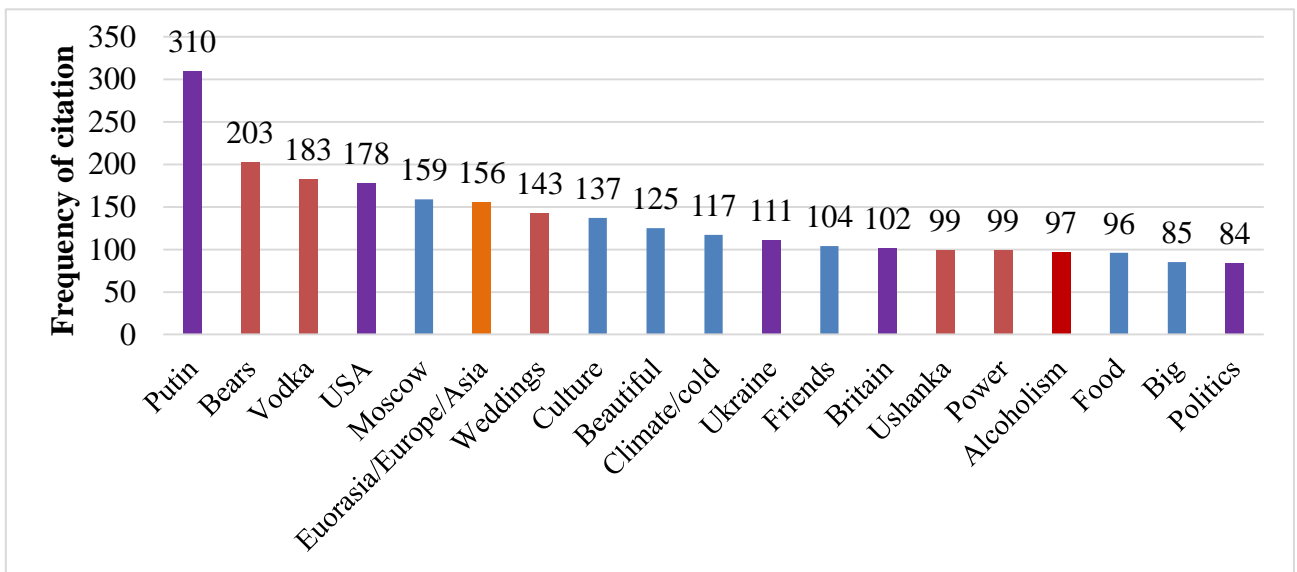


Figure 10. The frequency of associations about Russia

Additionally, the technical inquiry of the competition of the represented the range of associations which are aimed to be diminished by the Russian tourism brand, which are: “power”, “aggression”, “bears”, “matreshka”, “balalaika”, “birch”, “imperial/czar”. Interesting to note that in wider understanding of some of the words from the list it is difficult to say whether they are negative, positive or neutral (for example “matreshka”). However, in terms if the focus of the technique inquiry and this paper this range of associations has the working term “junk”, which means the associations simplifying, spoiling or making hilarious the image of the country.

Interesting to emphasize that according to the analysis of the frequency of associations the most popular are associations connected with politics (“Putin”, “USA”, “Ukraine”, “Politics”) or “junk” associations (“Bears”, “Vodka”, “Weddings”, “Ushanka”, “Power”). Nevertheless, it is

important to note that current list of associations is preliminary, while more precise and up to date associations are evaluated in the quantitative research (figure 10).

4.7. In-depth interview results

The respondents were chosen by the snowball method and were required to be representative of several features: frequent abroad travels (minimum 1-2 times a year), non-visitors of Russia, and representatives of the European countries, which travel in Russia more frequently (note: the biggest visit according to Federal Statistics is from Finland, however the close geographical position of the country was assumed to give biased opinion towards the Russia).

Information about respondents

In the in-depth interviews the target audience was students or recently graduated employees, who are likely to travel frequently abroad (minimum 1-2 times a year). The distribution of the respondents was from 22 to 34 years. The respondents were from European countries (6 Germany, 3 France, 3 Spain, 2 Poland, 2 Italy, 1 Netherlands). The respondents also shared their own travel preferences and travel preferences of their older family members. The number of respondents was 17.

The motivation to travel abroad

The younger generation respondents mostly pointed that the main focuses for the travelling are to have fun and relax, to meet with friends from other countries, to observe something new (mostly new cultures, sights, cuisine), education purposes or to try “travel as many places” as they can. Concerning their parents, they pointed out that they usually choose destinations which visited before or had a dream to visit and rely a lot on good image and reputation of the destination.

The choice of the destination to travel

If the choice of destination is focused on observing something new, including cultural heritage, and visiting the more places, the younger respondents mostly claimed that they are in search for the places which can provide new experiences (unique or authentic). In this case the focus usually put on significantly different cultures (majority mentioned Asian countries) or the destinations which are easy to reach. From the perspective of the respondents their parents tend to choose places which are safe or unique, they put focus on the value for money of travel and partly rely recommendations of the close surrounding.

Attitude to Russia as a destination

The younger generation has uncertain attitude towards Russia as a tourism destination yet. As a motivation to visit they admitted that it is interesting to experience culture, learn more about Russians and nationality. From their point of view, it is curious to visit Russia and they believe that

this travel can bring different, unusual experience. However, important to outline that many respondents said that there is not many information about Russia as a tourism destination and mostly they hear about the country from news. Additionally, respondents pointed that from their perspective they do not know much about the country in terms of tourism, mostly only that it is huge, with forest. Some pointed out about FIFA 2018 and that it provides particular interest in visiting country. However, from the particular places to visit in the country they represented that probably Moscow as about other places they do not know a lot.

Attitude to the advertisements of the destination

Respondents outlined that mostly they do not search information about the destinations far in advance, only when it comes more on the decision moment where to travel. Basically the choice is based on somebody's opinion, initiative or the long wish before (for example "dreamed about visiting Japan"). However, they do admit that might pay attention to the advertisements or description of the places in social media, some pointed out on the National Geographic and advertisements in the airplanes or other transportation means during the long travel.

The Russian tourism brand concept

Concerning the slogan of the concept "The whole world within Russia" respondents pointed out that it represents that Russia "combines all cultures", "is diverse country", "multicultural and versatile". They pointed out that the message is believable, promising and represents that Russia "has many things to offer", "spans in Europe and Asia", "huge country". Respondents outline that the message offers to find more information in Russia, explore country, acquire personal experience through travelling. From their perspective this slogan is short, clear, memorable and "strong statement".

Apart from the slogan, the logotype has several less positive perceptions. Though the logotype was recognized as overall attractive, modern and even entertaining, the minority of respondents found out that it represents the shape of the map of Russia. The opinion of the respondents concerning the shape of the logo varied from the "geometric shapes" to the "horse", "bird" and "satellite". Nevertheless, the respondents admitted that these shapes represent that "the whole world within Russia is different and connected" as well as "diversity", "art and innovation". Interesting to note that concerning the lines on the logotype none of the respondents could recognize or assume what they mean, the most usual answer was do not know or just "lines" or "compass directions". In the same time other geometric shapes also were not clear understood by respondents and were assumed to be buildings, architecture, "diversity", "provinces in Russia". The most capturing elements in logotype was mentioned to be "big purple circle", colors and lines. The

majority of the respondents claimed that it is better to overthink the colors on the logo and that the logotype is difficult to understand.

Overall, from the opinion of the respondents the concept represents the diversity of country, “different experiences” and catches the attention. The respondents outlined that together with slogan it gives “clue on what is Russia”. However, taken separately the logotype is still unclear and difficult to understand. Respondents admitted that the concept is memorable, “looks modern” and “reminds art”. Combined logotype with thematic pictures gives better opportunity to understand what is concept about. The most interesting and clear variations for the respondents were connection with cuisine and geographical parts of the country. The geographical images in the shapes of logo provided better opportunity to see that shapes are “regions”, “parts”, “provinces” of the country.

2.8. Summary of the Chapter 2

Current research has an exploratory nature as well as positivism paradigm was chosen for, which is focused on finding truth and mostly is represented by the quantitative or experimental methodology. In response to this the research design the most appropriate one for current study is the one group pre-test, post-test experimental design with only intervention group of respondents since the studied concept is proposed to cover entire population and therefore there could not be additional comparison group (Colman 2014). Additionally, this study is applied, since it is adding new knowledge for the concrete concept and with the purpose of deriving practical recommendations for the branding managers or professionals involved in the tourism product and country branding development. Additionally, it could be summarized that there are two major dimensions of the research:

1. To investigate how country brand precisely is expected to contribute to the work of destination management organizations and tourism product promotion on the example of the winning Russian tourism brand concept.
2. To find out whether the country brand is a strong enough as marketing tool to change the perception positively and can support to attain new customers (travelers) on the example of the winning Russian tourism brand concept.

Therefore with the relation towards identified research gap, set research goal and questions there could be identified several major tasks of the current study: to identify perception towards the country as a tourism destination, examine country brand (Russian tourism brand as an example) and find out contribution of country brand on tourism product. In response to this there are several research stages which include both *qualitative* and *quantitative* research methods (content analysis, in-depth interviews, survey and expert interviews).

As the preliminary stage an investigation of the international tourist attitude toward the country the content analysis of the associations about the Russia among foreign audience was done in order to explore the perception towards the country. In this case each of the associations or the group of associations was evaluated from the emotional background and it was identified that the average emotional attitude toward Russia is neutral, soften by cultural aspect.

Finally, in order to investigate tourism destination choice motivations, perception towards country as a tourism destination and examine country tourism brand concept elements an in-depth interview was conducted. It was found out that there is not there is not many information about Russia as a tourism destination and Europeans know about country mostly from news. Nevertheless, travel to Russia believed to bring different, unusual experience and is interesting in investigating culture of the country. Concerning the concept it was found out that slogan represent “strong statement” about the country, which is clear and easy to remember, while the shape of the logotype is difficult to understand and is not associated with the map of the Russia. Overall, together with slogan and visual background the concept was stated to represent the diversity of country, “different experiences” and catch the attention.

CHAPTER 3. INTERPRETATION OF THE SURVEY RESULTS

3.1. Descriptive statistics

In the conducted quantitative research aimed to evaluate the concept of Russian tourism brand as well as attitude of the foreign audience towards Russia as tourism destination 186 respondents took participation (Appendix 5), who did not visit Russia before and are frequent in travelling abroad (possible target audience for visiting Russia as a tourism destination).

The analysis of gender, age and employment of the respondents represent that the distribution of the participants is relatively valid. It is possible to recognize that most of the respondents are between the age of 18-34 (21%), 25-34 (40%), 35-44 (38%), 55-64 (2%) as well as are mostly employed (40%), students (35%) or self-employed (16%). The gender distribution is relatively equal, where 50,5% of respondents are males and 49,5% are females.

This distribution could be understood as valid for the current research as the presented range of participants is mostly be characterized as possible tourists. Hence, in terms of the fact that the demands of the age, gender, employment and set filter it could be stated that the survey is representative.

3.2. Evaluation of the Russian national branding concept

The analysis of the concept was done through the one-sample nonparametric test, which represented that concept of Russian tourism brand was recognized as attractive and easy to understand (table 9).

Table 9. Analysis of the concept of the Russian tourism brand

	Mean	Answer
Concept_is_easy_to_understand	3,9	Describes
Concept_is_simple	3,7	Almost describes
Concept_is_easy_to_remember	3,7	Almost describes
Concept_is_unique	3,8	Almost describes
Concept_is_attractive	4,1	Describes

In the same time the evaluation of the concept in terms of simplicity, uniqueness and remembrance was also higher than average. Therefore, the analysis represent that concept was recognized by the respondents relatively positively towards the main factors extracted from the technical inquiry of the competition of the concept.

3.3. Influence of the concept on the cognitive, affective and behavioral components

In order to assess the possible influence of the concept of Russian tourism brand on the perception, emotional attitude and intention to visit of the foreign audience the same factors (extracted from the technical inquiry of the concept) about the country were assessed before and

after the evaluation of the concept (table 10). It could be seen that the perception towards Russia as a tourism destination as well as the intention to visit was improved after the assessing the concept. The only exception is recognition Russia as an interesting destination to visit, however it was evaluated relatively high before the concept as well (4 out 5, where 5 - fully describes).

Table 10. 2 related non-parametric test about Russia

		Mean	Sig	
Pair 1	Before_innovative_country	2.25	.000	Significant
	After_innovative_country	2.92		
Pair 2	Before_interesting_destination	4.02	.527	Insignificant
	After_interesting_destination	4.08		
Pair 3	Before_safe_destibation	2.92	.002	Significant
	After_safe_destibation	3.09		
Pair 4	Before_rich_cultural_heritage	4.29	.000	Significant
	After_rich_cultural_heritage	4.51		
Pair 5	Before_comfortable_climate	2.49	.000	Significant
	After_comfortable_climate	3.97		
Pair 6	Before_conveient_infrastructure	2.62	.000	Significant
	After_conveient_infrastructure	2.90		
Pair 7	Before_friendly_people	2.99	.005	Significant
	After_friendly_people	3.19		
Pair 8	Before_tolerant_people	1.91	.000	Significant
	After_tolerant_people	2.41		
Pair 9	Before_intension_to_visit	3.13	.002	Significant
	After_intension_to_visit	3.22		

This could give an opportunity to consider that the concept is not only recognized as easy to understand and attractive for foreign audience, but also can influence positively perception (with the intention to visit country) of the foreign audience.

However, towards the perception about the country important to note that through the comparing of the means with the “do not know” possible answer in the questioner (which was represented by 3) it is possible to see that though the statements “innovative country”, “safe destination”, “comfortable climate” and “convenient infrastructure” were assed more positively after the concept, the respondents are still hesitate about those features of the country and changed from the negative knowledge to unsure as there is no significant difference between means of these factors and the answer “do not know” (table 11).

Table 11. One-Sample Test (Test Value = 3 or answer “do not know”)

	Sig. (2-tailed)	Significance
After_innovative_country	.285	Insignificant
After_interesting_destination	.000	Significant
After_safe_destibation	.152	Insignificant
After_rich_cultural_heritage	.000	Significant
After_comfortable_climate	.637	Insignificant
After_conveient_infrastructure	.117	Insignificant
After_friendly_people	.042	Significant
After_tolerant_people	.000	Significant
After_intension_to_visit	.017	Significant

Additionally, the statement that people in Russia are tolerant was assessed by the respondents lower than average before and after the concept (mean changed from 1.91 to 2.41)

3.4. Influence of the concept on knowledge of the tourism activities in Russia

As it was stated in the technical inquiry the organizers of the research stated that the concept has to represent that Russia can offer wide variety of the tourism opportunities. The stated list of possible opportunities in tourism was evaluated through multiple questions and it was found out that before the concept respondents mostly tended to recognize visiting the country to have cultural (96.2% of respondents), ethnographic (41.9%) and leisure experience (36.6%). After the evaluation of the concept cultural experience was chosen almost by all respondents (99%) and the interesting boost showed gastronomic experience (growth up to 65.0%) and ecotourism activities (37.2%).

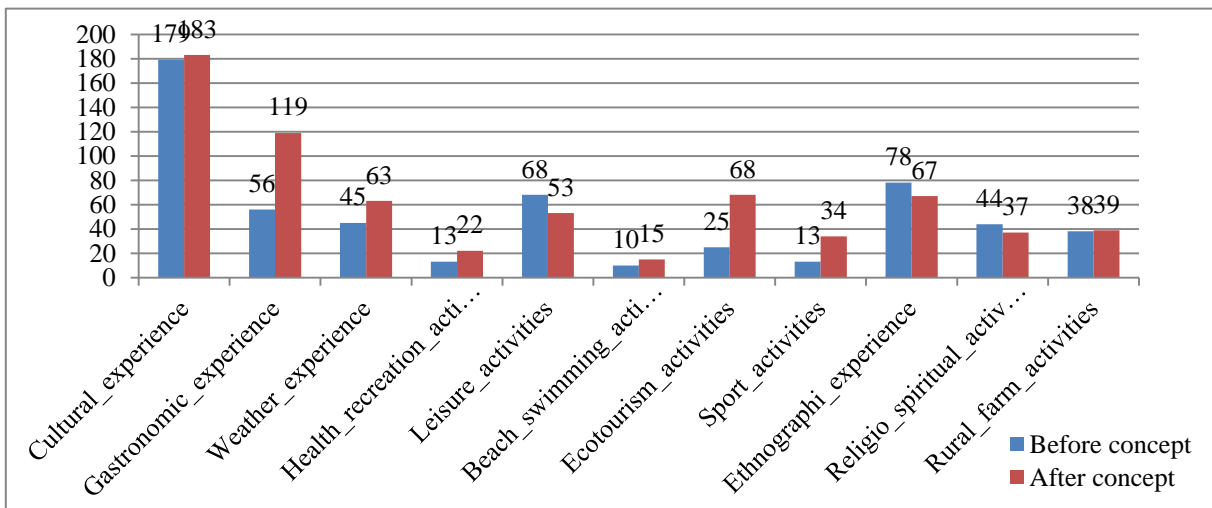


Figure 11. The choice of the tourism activities in Russia by foreign respondents

Concerning the shift towards the gastronomic experience it is possible to assume that it was affected by the food images on one of the visual representation of the concept (Appendix 1).

Nevertheless, though the wider choice of activities and experiences could be seen after the assessment of the concept by respondents, it is still difficult to say that the presented concept could substantially change the perception of the tourism opportunities (or variety) in the country (figure 11).

3.5. Influence of the concept on the associations towards the country

According to the assessment of the associations about the country among the respondents before and after the evaluation of the concept it is possible to find out that the range of the associations after the concept turned more into cultural and positive dimensions. There are less “junk” (table 12) and more culturally diverse associations towards the country as well as less frequent mentions about the politics, army and weapons.

Table 12. Set of associations before and after the concept

	Total number	Set of associations
Before the concept	142	Vodka, power, soviet, women, weapon, corruption, bear, cold weather, control, dolls, borscht, drink, hat, communism, alcohol, Russian accent, tsar, hilarious, imperialistic
After the concept	37	Cold, vodka, bear, women, tsar, hilarious, propaganda

The emotions towards the country are seen to be also influenced by the concept as the range of the associations became less negative and turned to be more neutral and positive. Finally, it is interesting to note that even associations started to represent the intention to visit the country as there started to appear such associations as “interesting destination”, “travel” “travelling” and “tourism” (table 13).

Table 13. The categories of associations before and after the concept

Category	Associations before the concept			Associations after the concept		
	Total weighted	Total number	Average	Total weighted	Total number	Average
Alcohol	50	50	1,0	5	5	1
Country	21	8	2,6	59	21	2,8
Crime	11	11	1,0	0	0	0,0
Culture	123	46	2,7	68	29	2,3
Economy	48	31	1,5	6	3	2,0
Food	22	11	2,0	138	64	2,2
Geography	68	34	2,0	16	9	1,8
History	101	51	2,0	28	14	2,0
Infrastructure	8	3	2,7	7	3	2,3
Military	54	35	1,5	0	0	0,0
Nature	58	24	2,4	192	76	2,5
Other	70	38	1,8	7	5	1,4
People	40	24	1,7	43	19	2,3

Politics	226	135	1,7	35	18	1,9
Sights	91	36	2,5	76	32	2,4
Sport	55	19	2,9	41	18	2,3
Travel	16	6	2,7	8	4	2,0
Women	56	28	2,0	91	34	2,7
Total	1046	556	1,9	812	350	2,3

Nevertheless, it is vital to note that though the range of associations became more neutral-positive and culturally focused, several “junk” associations still present (“bears”, “woman”, “vodka” and other) as well as it seems that “borsh” could become one more strong junk association later (if the focus will be as strong as in the visual examples of the concept).

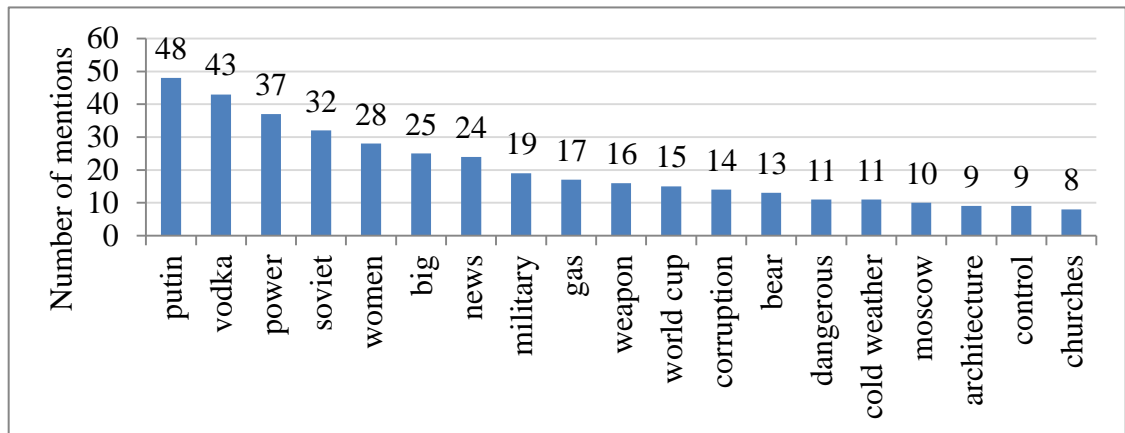


Figure 12. Top 20 associations before the evaluation of the concept

Additionally, it is important to note that though respondents, influenced by the concept, started to mention culturally focused associations, their knowledge about the country as well as cultural heritage of the country is still weak (figures 12 and 13). In relation to this most of them just mentioned “culture”, “cultural”, “rich culture”, “historical heritage” and other, without rare specification (“red square” and “hermitage” are only the relatively frequent).

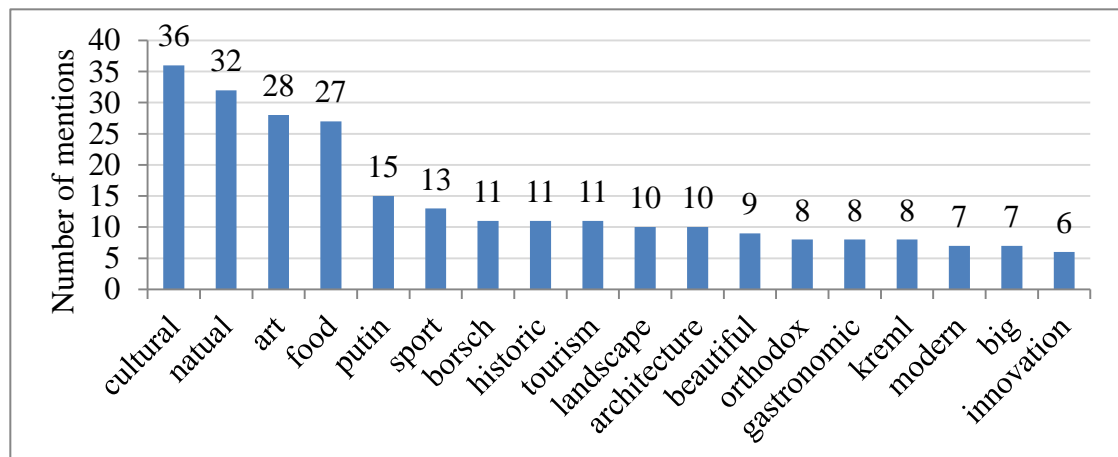


Figure 13. Top 20 associations after the evaluation of the concept

In response to the conducted study of the associations it is possible to suggest that as a tool for communication and changing the affective (or emotional) component of the attitude the concept might be helpful, but in order to increase knowledge about the country from point of culture, history and even current economy conditions (as Russia is recognized mostly as “ussr”, “communism”, “control” and other) more deep and persistent communication strategies should be implemented.

3.6. Hypothesis testing and results interpretation

All an all the conducted quantitative research and data analysis gave us an opportunity to test the hypothesis previously stated in the current research paper. However, before challenging the hypothesis it is important to mention that the conducted quantitative research basically could be divided into two complementary parts, where the first part was mainly done through scaled evaluation of statements about the country and provided solid statistical data, while the first part, focused on the extraction of associations showed not only statistical data (based on frequency of mentions of certain associations), but also meaningful interpretation of the associations. Therefore, the evaluation of the hypothesis will be done through these two dimensions, where the statistical data will be extracted from the paired sample test and Cohen’s D index effect size of the statements about the country (Table 14) and typology of the country as a tourism destination.

H1: Russian national brand can change the perception of the country among European foreign tourists.

The assessment of the perception statements about the country showed that concept influenced on all of them significantly, where:

- Recognition Russia as an “innovative country” has significant change after the representation of the concept $z(186) = -8,34, p=.00$.
- Recognition Russia as a “comfortable climate” has significant change after the representation of the concept $z(186) = -6,47, p=.00$.
- Recognition Russia as a “safe destination” has significant change after the representation of the concept $z(186) = -3,09, p=.00$.
- Recognition that Russia has “convenient infrastructure” has significant change after the representation of the concept $z(186) = -4,51, p=.00$.
- Recognition that people in Russia are “friendly” has significant change after the representation of the concept $z(186) = -3,49, p=.00$.
- Recognition that people in Russia are “tolerant” has significant change after the representation of the concept $z(186) = -6,53, p=.00$.

Important to note, that the range of tourism opportunities in Russia was not substantially widen after the evaluation of the concept.

H2: Russian tourism brand can influence positively the emotional attitude towards the country among foreign tourists.

The Recognition Russia as an “interesting destination to visit” does not have significant change after the representation of the concept $z(186) = -0,63$ $p=.53$. However, important to note the extraction of the associations before and after the concept showed the shift from negative to more neutral and positive associations as well as less respondents were focused on the political issues, which influence significantly affective part. Therefore, it is difficult to say strongly that the Russian tourism branding concept does not have any influence on the emotional component of the respondents.

H3. Russian tourism brand can lead to the increase in intention to visit the country among European foreign tourists.

Finally, according to the paired samples test for the statements about the intention to visit Russia showed significant change after the representation of the concept $z(153) = -3,02$, $p=.00$. Important to highlight that after evaluation of the concept the respondents started to mention associations connecting with travelling to Russia (for example “interesting destination”, “travelling”, “tourism” and other), while before the concept such associations were absent. Hence, it is possible to claim that the concept could have positive influence on the behavioral component of the attitude of the foreign tourists.

3.7. Discussion of the obtained results

The conducted survey showed that the concept of Russian tourism brand is able to influence the knowledge, perception and intention to visit Russia among European foreign tourists. The analysis represented that concept was recognized by the respondents relatively positively in terms of the statements of simplicity, uniqueness, remembrance, understanding and attractiveness, which were the main requirements extracted from the technical inquiry of the competition of the concept.

Additionally, the perception towards Russia as a tourism destination as well as the intention to visit was improved after the assessing the concept. However, the research showed that the participants were still hesitate about such statements of the country as “innovative”, “safe”, “comfortable climate” and “convenient infrastructure” and changed from the negative knowledge to

unsure (the “do not know” answer). Important to note, that the range of tourism opportunities in Russia was not noticeably widen after the evaluation of the concept.

From both theoretical and practical points of view Axelrod (1968) suggested that unaided attitude could be recognized as an “excellent intermediate criteria” for evaluation the helpfulness of marketing stimulus. The study showed that in terms of Russia image among the foreign audience, which was investigated during content analysis, the marketing stimulus (in our case concept) can change positively attitude of the foreign audience. The assessment of the associations about the country among the respondents before and after the evaluation of the concept represented that it helped to influence the perception and knowledge of European respondents. After the concept there were less “junk”, more culturally diverse, neutral and positive associations. Furthermore, associations started to represent the intention to visit the country with the appearance of such sets as “interesting destination”, “travel” “travelling” and “tourism”.

CHAPTER 4. EXPERT INTERVIEWS RESULTS AND TOURISM PRODUCT PROMOTION MODEL

4.1. Tourism agencies expert interview results

The agencies were chosen in relevance to several criteria: Russian tourism agency, the agency should work with foreign tourists (particular with Europeans travelers), agency has an office or representative in European countries, agencies have government registration. All in all there was an opportunity to conduct the expert interview with 4 agencies responding this criteria (Visit Russia, Express to Russia, Priora, Rusmania) as well as “Mono” - tourism service, offering Trans-Siberian tours for foreigners in Russia.

Government impact on tourism product of Russia

The representatives of the travel agencies admitted that the governmental regulations directly and indirectly have an effect on the travel agencies. The most prominent direct one was mentioned to be the part of the list of registered tourist agencies, while indirect was mostly concerned about visa issues and regulations for foreign tourists. Nevertheless, they pointed out that more or less agencies have freedom to form and develop the tourist offer. Concerning the regulated or planned regulation in the tourist market the representatives showed vigilance and claimed that this might bring more barriers for their business rather than help. In the same time, some of the experts admitted that cooperation with Russian tourism agency for participation in the large international tourism exhibitions might be helpful (FITUR, ITE, TITE etc.)

Country brand role

The main expectation concerning the role of the country brand among tourist agencies was the contribution to the increase of the tourists flow. They do see this might be fulfilled through the participation of the country brand on the worldwide exhibitions concerning tourism, branding on the sport/music/cultural events, partnerships with companies, who are in contact with foreign audience (airlines, ferries, etc.).

Experts pointed out that the main function in this case is to represent the diversity of the country and the variety of tourism opportunities, show that the country is magnificent and travelling in Russia could bring diverse positive experience.

The main concern was usually based on the significant financial investments for the promotion of the brand worldwide, diminishing of the brand influence due to the political issues, losing the opportunity to be presented strongly in the variety of the other communications from other countries and that the brand might be mostly only governmental tool with no relation to the tourism agencies in Russia.

Country brand for European travelers

Experts pointed out that the brand could support the knowledge about the country and probably arise interest to Russia as a tourism destination. In order to target Europeans experts assumed that it would be better if brand outline the cultural and natural diversity of the country and make significant focus on the easiness to travel in Russia. Towards the adaptation of the brand to different countries it was claimed that better to make the division in the brand through interests or tourism activities in the country and that targeting Asian countries need to involve accurate translation of the slogan and messages.

Country brand for tourism agencies

In relation to the help of the country brand to the travel agencies the representatives of the companies admitted that they have a hope that the country brand can represent at least main tourism players or offer to connect with them during the promotional campaign. They pointed out that it is vastly important as the real connection with the tourists will be done mostly through the agencies and therefore it could be helpful if the brand can involve them. The interviewed agencies in majority of the cases have either representatives or offices of their organizations in other countries as well as they admitted that have partnerships with international travel agencies. They outlined that it would be helpful if the agencies can use or transfer tourism advertising materials for their partners and foreign offices in order to represent country more properly.

The experts pointed out that it would be helpful if the country brand can establish or enhance partnerships with international travel agencies, to which the Russian agencies might have access. It was outlined that the mutual cooperation with the support of the country force could contribute to the development and promotion of the tourism product.

Some of the agencies admitted that the organizations within the country brand in other countries also provide market insights, which could be also useful for them in the process of representation the country in the foreign countries. It was also admitted that if the country brand could have a website, which represents travel agencies of Russia and opportunity to connect with them, it might be a helpful contribution for their work.

Concerning the stages of visiting the country experts from the travel agencies claimed that the most meaningful interaction of the country brand would be on the stage of consideration of visiting the country or preparation for the visiting. In this case on the consideration stage they pointed out that country brands role is primarily to promote Russia as a destination and show the specificity of the country, while on the preparation stage it is important to represent travel agencies through which the possible traveler can fulfill their wish to travel. Additionally, experts outlined that

on preparation stage it would be useful to transfer future tourists to the materials giving more knowledge about country, travel opportunities (activities) and contacts of the travel organizations.

In relation to the additional certification agencies presented relatively skeptical opinion, however they pointed out that certain barriers to be mentioned by country brand could be. In this case experts admitted that probably not every tourism agency could have an access to the country brand benefits and in order to be advertised within country brand there might be certain regulations. In response to this some of the agencies represented interest in the opportunity of entering country brand tourism agencies community or association in order to be supported by it in future and would be interested in acquiring country brand prove of the quality of their offer.

Country brand for the development of regional tourism product

The experts were not sure whether country brand can directly contribute to the development of the regional tourism product. Nevertheless, they admitted that increased flow of the tourists to the regions might influence local business to improve their offer. Additionally, it was mentioned that country brand could support investments to develop regional offers or propose cooperation in this area.

The same attitude was towards the improvement of infrastructure and the most prominent example was Sochi, where under the importance of the games the infrastructure was improved. Experts assume that if there would be chosen certain important new tourism areas, the changes and improvements might be, though not as significant as for the Sochi or other major international events held in the country.

4.2. Country brand implication for the tourism product promotion

The evaluation of the country brands of top ranked countries according to the Nation brand GFK index and the expert interviews with travel agencies got an opportunity to gather several insights of the expected and possible influence of the country brand on the development of the tourism product in Russia.

First of all, it was found out the role of the country brand could be broader recognized than just welcoming foreign tourists and could be recognized also as supportive role for the tourism partnerships among local and international players. Secondly, it was found out that travel agencies would be interested in getting additional credibility from the country brand to strengthen their offer, which could be useful on the stages of promotion of the tourism product. Finally, it was found out that travel agencies would be interesting in getting the support of the country brand in connection with the potential visitors through website and joining the exhibitions.

Additionally, the evaluation of the country brand destination management organizations showed that more broadly country brand could be recognized as an umbrella brand for tourism products in the country, where by the entering the partnership under the country brand, aimed to welcome foreign tourists, organizations connected in the tourism sphere access an opportunity to verify the quality of their services, have broader local and international connections with tourism agencies and organizations as well as support advertising their offer. Gathered all together the support of the country brand for the local destination organizations could be summarized in the following process (figure 18).

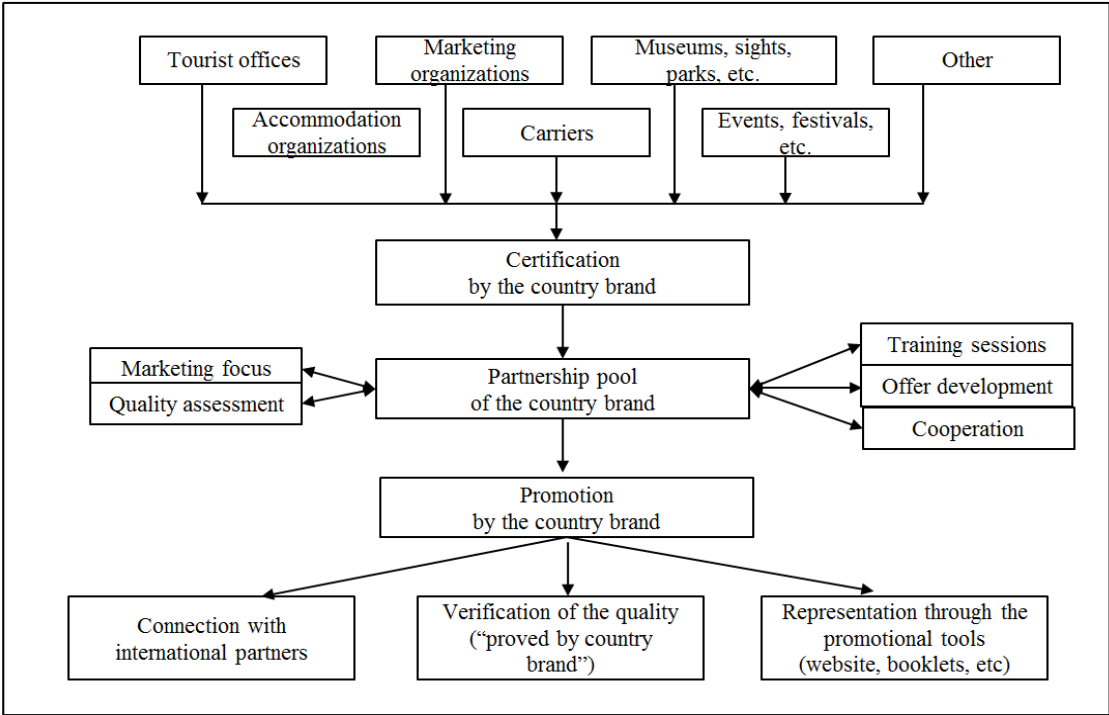


Figure 18. Model of the country brand for the tourism product promotion

In response to this, the certification by the country brand and being the part of the part of the community could, proved by the national organization, can help the destination management organizations to acquire additional credibility of their services among foreign tourists unfamiliar with travel opportunities. This function on Russian tourism market is partly held by the registration of the tourism agencies in the official governmental list, however the additional prove of quality by the country brand, which could be represented on the tourism or booking portals as well as on the travel Russia national tourism portal could be supportive.

Thus in this case the country brand for the Russia on the bases of the Russian tourism portal, could help to accumulate together destination organizations, stimulate their cooperation and

developing of the quality and specifics of the offer, provides additional prove of the services they offer and helps in marketing their offers locally and internationally.

4.3. Summary of the Chapter 4

The evaluation of the country brands of top ranked countries according to the Nation brand GFK index in the literature review and the expert interviews with travel agencies got an opportunity to gather several insights of the expected and possible influence of the country brand on the development of the tourism product in Russia. The expert interviews showed a field for cooperation of country brand with destination management organizations.

First of all it was found out that, Russian travel agencies are interested in cooperation with Russian tourism agency for participation in the large international tourism exhibitions might be helpful (FITUR, ITE, TITE etc.) under the country brand. Additionally, it was investigated that Russian agencies recognize that the country brand could be helpful in enhancing partnerships with local and international tourism organizations.

Secondly, it was explored that the advertising materials of the country brand would be useful for the international partners and foreign offices in order to represent country more properly. In relation to this, it was pointed out that country brand can also help partnerships with companies, who are in contact with foreign audience (airlines, ferries, etc.).

Finally, it was found out that most meaningful interaction of the country brand would be on the stage of consideration of visiting the country or preparation for the visiting. Where on the first stage country brand can help to promote Russia as a destination and show the specificity of the country, while on the preparation stage it is important to represent travel agencies through which the possible traveler can fulfill their wish to travel

However, the main concern was that country brand could become only governmental tool with no influence on the travel agencies, while those are needed to deal directly with tourists and help their experience in the country. Therefore, it was significantly claimed that it would be helpful if brand can involve them in promotion process and contacting with tourists. In response to this it was claimed that that if the country brand could have a website, which represents travel agencies of Russia and opportunity to connect with them, it might be a helpful contribution for their work.

Nevertheless, it was pointed out that not every tourism agency could have an access to the country brand benefits and in order to be advertised within country brand there might be certain regulations. However, agencies showed represented interest in the opportunity of entering country brand tourism agencies community or association in order to be supported by it in future and would be interested in acquiring country brand prove of the quality of their offer.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The thesis contributes to studies of country branding for the promotion of tourism product, revealing the role of proposed Russian brand for tourism business in the context of international environment. The study represented what is the role of country brand for the tourism industry, how country tourism brand can contribute to the needs of destination management organizations on different levels, the role and functions of proposed Russian tourism brand. Additionally, the research also gave an opportunity to test the concept of Russian tourism brand within identified demands of the technical inquiry.

Implications in promotion of tourism product for destination management organizations

Conducted research gave an opportunity to understand the relationship between country brand and destination management organizations. It is possible to state that the country brand is able not only to present country on international arena, but also be the guide and support for the destination management organizations in terms of offer development and promotional activities.

It was found out that country brand might be a supportive tool for tourism product on the stage of consideration and preparation of the visit Russia as a tourism destination. In this case on the consideration stage it should represent tourism activities in Russia, while on the preparation stage it would be useful in connection of the possible tourists with travel organizations. Therefore, for the preparation stage it is recommended suggested to involve or represent tourism agencies directly for the Russian national tourism portal, which could on behalf of the country brand support the process of visiting the country.

Additionally, it was found out that the country brand could help destination management organizations (particular travel agencies) to attain additional credibility by being presented on behalf or with cooperation with country brand. In this case it is suggested to implement the opportunity for partner travel agencies to use the statement “proved by country brand” or similar one.

Furthermore, it was found out that country brand can support the partnerships between local and international tourism agencies. Hence, it is recommended to enhance these partnerships through creating international and local pool of destination management organizations and support their cooperation.

What is more it was found out that advertising materials of the country brand could help travel agencies and their international partners to represent country properly, in this case it is recommended to offer such materials for travel agencies, which have foreign offices and international partners (international travel agencies).

Indirectly the wish of being presented by the country brand and participation in the partnership or associations on the bases of the brand can be filtered by the certification of the quality of the services of those organizations, which could substantially motivate them to develop their offer.

Finally, for the private hospitality organizations and public touristic bureau it is essential to put attention to the questions of the safety, convenience and hospitality of their services as by the European tourists those features are perceived relatively low for the country.

Implications for country brand stakeholders

The research showed that though the brand concept has ability to support changes in the attitude, it does not improved fully. For example, assessing the knowledge about the country it was possible to see that though the statements “innovative country”, “safe destination”, and “convenient infrastructure” though were assessed more positively after the concept, the participants were still hesitate about those features of the country and changed from the negative knowledge to unsure (the “do not know” answer). Hence, on the regional and national level it is important to pay attention to the development of mentioned areas as well as during the implementation of the national brand use the images which represent comfort and convenience. Accordingly, the destination management organization on all levels as well as private and public sector tourism players can develop and promote the convenience of their facilities in order to be persistent with the overall image of the country and quire additional competence.

Additionally, though respondents, influenced by the concept, started to mention culturally focused associations, their knowledge about the country as well as cultural heritage of the country was still weak and most of them just mentioned “culture”, “cultural”, “rich culture”, “historical heritage” and other, without specification (rarely it was “red square” and “hermitage”). Therefore, in response to the study it is possible to suggest that in order to increase knowledge about the country from point of culture, history and even current economy conditions more deep and persistent international communication strategies should be implemented. From the international and external level of stakeholders it might be proposed to focus more on cultural contribution of the country. For regional and sectoral levels it would be useful to make associations and educate tourists about attributes of the country in literature, art, architecture and other areas in order to be more consistent with country brand message and differentiate the proposed destination in culturally attractive way.

From the point of choice of the tourism activities it was found out that the significant interest in travelling to Russia acquire cultural experience, gastronomic, ecotourism and ethnographic activities. Therefore for the national and regional levels of the stakeholders it could be

recommended to put substantial attention on developing and promotion among European audience those activities as they are the core of the interest of those tourists. From the sector (public and private) level of stakeholders it could be also offered to put attention on the rich and specific cultural, gastronomic and natural differences and opportunities in the country. Additionally, it is proposed to avoid the use of junk images and mentions of “bears”, “matreshka”, “balalaika”, which could be inconsistent with the stronger tourism brand of country as well as simplify the image of Russia. Important to note that in depth interviews represented that except of Moscow and Saint-Petersburg Europeans relatively do not know what to visit in Russia. Therefore, the regional stakeholders need to make more emphasis and efforts on promotion their local opportunities.

Finally, it is important to mention that the European auditory is relatively skeptical about friendliness and tolerance of the Russians even after the evaluation of the Russian tourism concept. Therefore it could be advised to put significant focus during the promotion on warm, positive, friendly atmosphere and hospitality of the services and people around. This could be used on all levels of stakeholders and precisely developed and promoted on the tourism players of the public and private sectors.

Recommendations towards the concept of Russian tourism brand

Overall, from the opinion of the respondents the concept represents the diversity of country, “different experiences” and catch the attention. It could be recognized that the concept is recognized adequately by European audience and can be implemented as a brand of country targeting this tourists.

Particularly the slogan was recognized as strong statement, clearly presenting that Russia “combines all cultures”, “is diverse country”, “multicultural and versatile”. Thus, it is possible to suggest that the slogan does not need any adaptation for the European market.

Concerning the logotype of the concept the study showed that is not clear understood as a map of country. Combined logotype with thematic pictures and slogan gives better opportunity to understand what is concept about.

Additionally, with relation to the overall concept it was found out that the most interesting and clear variations for the respondents were connection with cuisine and geographical parts of the country. Furthermore, the geographical images in the shapes of logo provided better opportunity to see that shapes are “regions”, “parts”, “provinces” of the country. It is also important to use logo together with images associating with country as well as with slogan. The respondents outlined that all together with slogan it gives “clue on what is Russia”.

Theoretical implication

All things considered, the theoretical implications of the current master thesis could be viewed from the suggestion of Axelrod (1968) that unaided attitude could be recognized as an “excellent intermediate criteria” for evaluation the helpfulness of marketing stimulus. The study showed that in terms of Russia image among the foreign audience, which was investigated during content analysis, the marketing stimulus (in our case concept) can change positively attitude of the foreign audience. The assessment of the associations about the country among the respondents before and after the evaluation of the concept represented that it helped to influence the perception and knowledge of European respondents. After the concept there were less “junk”, more culturally diverse, neutral and positive associations. Furthermore, associations started to represent the intention to visit the country with the appearance of such sets as “interesting destination”, “travel” “travelling” and “tourism”. Additionally, the study provided to the investigations how country brand can contribute to different levers of stakeholders both national and international levels.

Limitations and further research

The research limitations of the current master thesis include that the research was focused on the Europeans (as the leading tourist flow according to Federal Statistics) in order to attain the normal distribution of the sample of the respondents. Hence, a potential area which could be researched is to find out how comparable the results are to other world regions. Furthermore, the destination choice factors were limited by the demands of technology enquiry of the Russian tourism brand concept. Therefore, the further studies could access the influence of country brand in terms of broader factors of destination choice.

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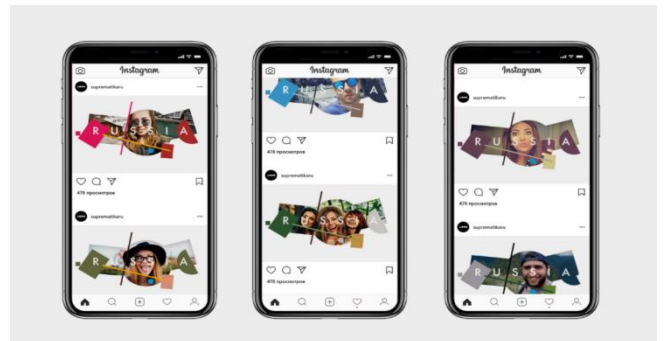
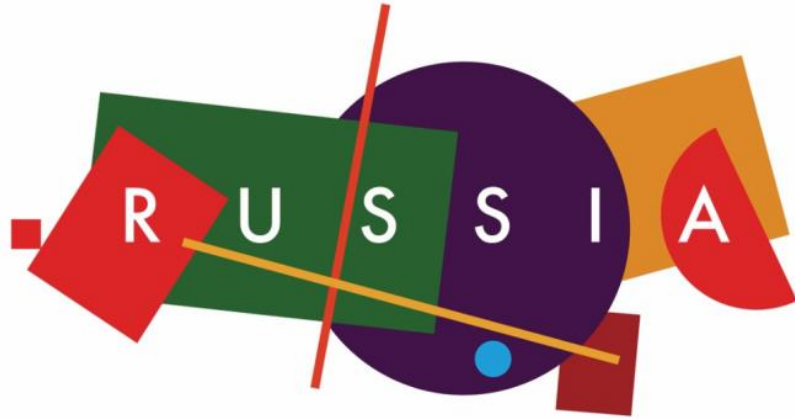
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Russian tourism brand concept

The Whole World within Russia



Appendix 2. On-line survey questionnaire

Hello,

This quick questionnaire has been set to support academic research about Russia as a tourism destination. I kindly ask you to respond to the survey, which should take from 5 to 7 minutes.

Please be assured that any information you provide in this survey will be treated as confidential.

Thank you a lot in advance

Have you ever visited Russia?

- Yes
- No

Have you traveled abroad during the past 3 years?

- Yes
- No

What comes to your mind when you think about «Russia»? (Please indicate any 5 associations) _____

For each of the statements below, please rate, how well they describe Russia (where 1 - not at all describe, 5 - fully describe)

	1	2	3	4	5
Innovative country					
Interesting destination to visit					
Safe destination to visit					
Cultural heritage is rich					
Climate is comfortable					
Infrastructure is convenient					
People are friendly					
People are tolerant					

In your opinion what are the main reasons to select Russia as a tourism destination? (Please, choose all that apply)

- Cultural experience (events, sightseeing, etc.)
- Gastronomic experience (food and restaurants)
- Weather experience
- Health and recreation activities
- Leisure activities (shopping, night life, etc.)
- Beach/swimming activities
- Eco-tourism activities
- Sport activities
- Ethnographic experience (observing different nationalities)
- Religion/spiritual activities
- Rural/farm activities
- Other _____

How likely are you to take trip to Russia in the next 3 years?

- Definitely
- Probably
- Fairly likely

- Probably not
- Definitely not

This is the concept of Russian tourism brand. Please evaluate it carefully as following questions will be based on this concept (Appendix 1).

For each of the statements below, please rate, how well they describe this concept (where 1 - not at all describe, 5 - fully describe)

	1	2	3	4	5
It is easy to understand					
It is simple (laconic)					
It is easy to remember					
It is unique					

After you have seen the concept of Russian what comes to your mind when you think about «Russia»? (Please indicate any 5 associations)_____

After you have seen the concept, for each of the statements below, please rate, how well they describe Russia (where 1 - not at all describe, 5 - fully describe)

	1	2	3	4	5
Innovative country					
Interesting destination to visit					
Safe destination to visit					
Cultural heritage is rich					
Climate is comfortable					
Infrastructure is convenient					
People are friendly					
People are tolerant					

After you have seen the concept, in your opinion what are the main reasons to select Russia as a tourism destination? (Please, choose all that apply)

- Cultural experience (events, sightseeing, etc.)
- Gastronomic experience (food and restaurants)
- Weather experience
- Health and recreation activities
- Leisure activities (shopping, night life, etc.)
- Beach/swimming activities
- Eco-tourism activities
- Sport activities

After you have seen the concept of Russian how likely are you to take trip to Russia in the next 3 years?

- Definitely
- Probably
- Fairly likely
- Probably not
- Definitely not

To help us analyze your responses, please answer the following questions about yourself...

You are...

- Female
- Male

Age...

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

What is your employment status?

- Employed
- Self-employed
- Unemployed
- Retired / renter
- Student / pupil
- Other _____

Thank you for your participation in the questionnaire and wish you to enjoy this day.

Appendix 3. Supplementary data from content analysis

Topic	Positive associations	Neutral associations	Negative associations
business	creative/creativity 41 engineering 12 developed 5 opportunity 4 partner 4	industrial/industry 53 programm/programmers /programming 25 cheap 22	piracy/pirate/pirated/pirating/pirates 56 mafia 26 destroyed/destruction 20 bribed/brides 18 oligarchs 11 prohibition 11 bloc 10 monopoly 5
economy		farmer/farmers/farming 20 crops 6 wealth 5	nuclear 18 poverty 9
food		food 96 mushroom 45 potato/potatoes 37 baked 9 flavor 8 cooking 7 grechka 7 borscht 5 restaurant 5	vodka/wódka/wódki/votka/vwodka 183 drink/drinking/drinks/drink 84 beer 18
Geography		eurasia/europa/europe/european/europeanculture/europeans 156 big/biggest/giant 85 siberia/siberian 51 sakhalin 5 volga 12	
history	victory 17 trotsky 3	ussr/soviet 61 tzar/tsar/tsars/czars 47 stalin 32 petr 27 battle/battles 20 elizabeth 13 romanov 10 brezhnev 9 gorbachev 5 marxist 4	soviet/sovoks 78 communism/communist/communists 74 bloodless/bloody 17
infrastructure		railway 12 road/roads 12	
nature	beautiful/beauty 125 amazing/amusing 59 glorious 21 breathtaking 10 scenery 7 picturesque 5	climate/climates/climatic/cold/snow/weather/winter 117 severe 9 outskirts 6	bear/bears/grizzly 203

<p style="text-align: center;">People</p>	<p>friend/friendly/friends/friendship 104 pretty 52 humor/humour 25 polite/politeness 19 smile/smiling 19 guru 18 welcoming 17 international 12 bravery 11 sympathy 11 peaceful 9 dedicated 8 nice 8 smart 8</p>	<p>woman/women/girls 71 babushka/babushkas 62 funny 29 patriotic/patriotism 21 love/loves/loveable 19 beards 13 ordinary 12 serious 12 brutal 11 pride 10 blonde 9 kazakh 9 determined 6 fancy 6 geek 6</p>	<p>criminal/criminals/crime 54 wedding/weddings/marry 143 alcohol/alcoholics/alcoholism/alcohols 97 racist/racially/racist 49 crazy 42 joke/laugh/laughed/jokes 24 intolerance 19 weird 18 strong/stronger 17 unfriendly 17 enemies 16 cigarette 13 evil 12 sexism 12 dangerous 9 ridiculous 8 sarcastic 8 strangers 8 gloomy 6 hate 6 homophobic 6 angry 5</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Politics</p>	<p>agreement 8 respect 7</p>	<p>president/putin/vladimir 310 power/powerful/powers 99 political/politicians/politicians/politics 83 election 18 leader 18 soldiers 18 zhirinovsky 17 defeat/defends 15 megvedev 13 alliance/alliances 12 berezovsky 12 military 12 stubborn 12 denying 7 diplomacy 7 army 3</p>	<p>britain/british/england/london 102 crimea/crimean 64 sanction/sanctions 37 crisis 35 corruption 34 news 32 oppression/oppressive 32 control 23 extreme 23 blamed 22 conflict/conflicts 21 enemy 21 dictators/dictatorship 17 weapons 17 enforcement 16 fear 14 dominate/dominates 13 propaganda 13 collapse 12 protest 11 aggressive 9 forces 9 revolution 9 harmful 8 hesitation 8 bombs 7 mandatory 6 cult 5</p>

culture	art	pictures 12 rublev 12		ukrainian/ukraine 111 georgia34 iraq 3
	city	sochi 5	moscow 159 petersburg/saint- peresburg/spb/sanktpete rsburg 51 vladivostok 17 kaliningrad 10	
	clothes		hat/hats/ushanka 99	fur 7
	dance	ballet 28 swan/swans 13	dance/dances/dancing 49	
	image	cultural/culturally/cu ltures 137 classic/classical 65 best/better/excellent 34 experts/genius 19 brilliant 17 vibrant 17 admire 12 great/greatness12 spirit 12 multicultural 12 interesting 8 appreciate 7	traditional/traditions 31 ideological 9	conservative 11 oldschoolcool 9 violence 7
	landmark	kremlin 67 building 23 parks 4		
	literature	dostoevsky/dostojev ski/dostoyevsky 58 tolstoi 53 poetry/poets 31 lyrics 21 bulgakov 18 pushkin 12 turgenev 11 chekhov 7 karamazov 7 pasternak 5 lermontov 4 sholokhov 2	drama 6 literature 72 books 34 morality 6 strougatski 4	
	movies	mikhalkov 7	cheburashka 26 film/films 12 movies27	borat 6

	music	music/musical 68 composer/composers 18 prokofiev 18 stravinsky 18 vysotsky 17 tchaikovsky 12 shevchuk 4 shostakovich 3	serebro5	
	other	space/spaceflight 19 events 17 poehali6 cleanliness 3 adventure 3	Matroshka/ dolls 38 slavic/slovenia/slovakia /slovianij 45 village/villages 39 ethnic 25 ethnicity 15 language 12 masculine 9 alphabet 7 motherland 4	dota 4 communal 2
	religion		orthoxerox/christianity/orthodox 63 churchs 10 muslims 4	
	science	science/scientific/scientists 40 mathematical/mathematicians/mathematics 36 doctors8		
	sport	olympic 31 championships12 athletes 11 hockey7 kurnikova 28 sharapova 11		

Appendix 4. In-depth interviews questions

The motivation to travel abroad

- What are the main reasons to travel to other countries? Why?
- What can motivate you to travel to another country?
- What about your adult surrounding, how do you think what are the main motivations/interest for them?

The choice of the destination to travel

- How do you choose the destination to travel?
- What might influence your choice?
- What can motivate you to travel to certain destination?
- Do you recognize the advertising of different destinations? Where? When?

Attitude to Russia as a destination

- How do you think whether Russia is an interesting place to visit?
- What can motivate you to travel to Russia?
- What do you know about this country as a tourism destination?
- What do you expect to do in Russia?
- What kind of tourism activities might be interesting for you there?
- Do you have any fears or prejudice about travelling to Russia? Why? Which?
- If you travel to Russia, which destinations would you choose?

The Russian tourism brand concept

Slogan

- What does the message tell you?
- Is the message believable? Why?
- What is it asking you to do? Why do you think so?
- Do you think this message is easy to understand? Why?
- Do you think this message is easy to remember? Why?
- What is needed to be improved in this message? Why?

Logotype

- What do you think when you see the logo?
- What does the logo show?
- What does the shape of the logo remind you?
- Why do you think the logo has this shape?
- What do you think the lines of the logo show?
- What do you think other geometric forms of the logo show?
- What are the things/elements that caught your attention?
- If you are to re-design this logo, what will it look like?

Concept

- What do you think when you see the concept?
- What does the concept show?
- What are the things/elements that caught your attention?
- What are the things/elements that you like in the concept? And Why?
- What are the things/elements that you do not like in the concept? And Why?
- If you are to re-design this concept, what will it look like?

Appendix 5. Supplementary statistical data from the survey

Russia_visit

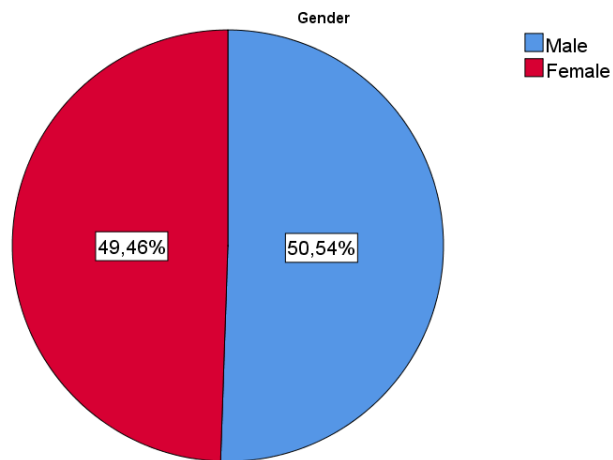
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	186	100,0	100,0	100,0

Abroad_travelling

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	186	100,0	100,0	100,0

Gender

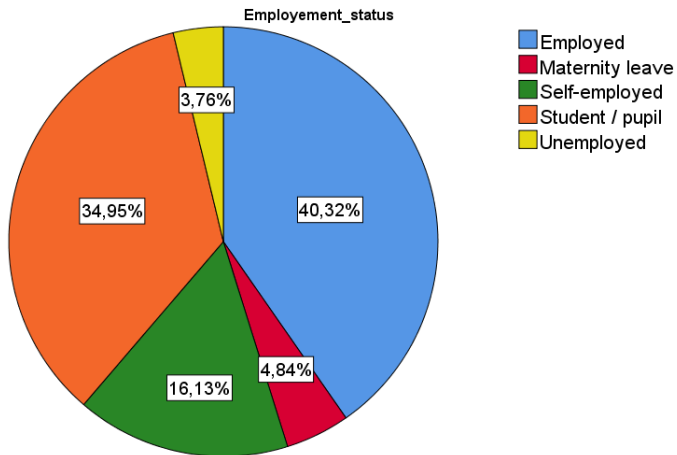
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	94	50,5	50,5	50,5
	Female	92	49,5	49,5	100,0
	Total	186	100,0	100,0	



Employment_status

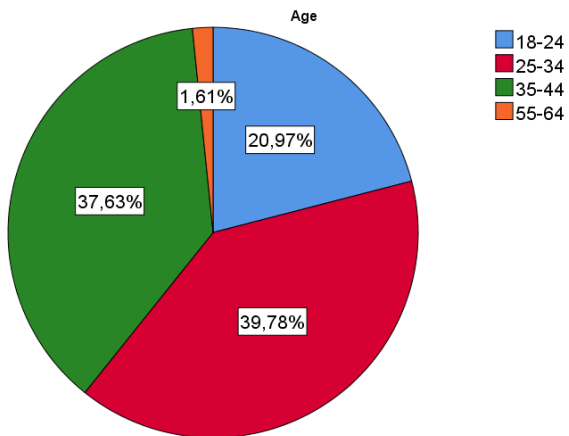
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Employed	75	40,3	40,3	40,3
	Maternity leave	9	4,8	4,8	45,2
	Self-employed	30	16,1	16,1	61,3
	Student / pupil	65	34,9	34,9	96,2

Unemployed	7	3,8	3,8	100,0
Total	186	100,0	100,0	



Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	39	21,0	21,0	21,0
	25-34	74	39,8	39,8	60,8
	35-44	70	37,6	37,6	98,4
	55-64	3	1,6	1,6	100,0
	Total	186	100,0	100,0	



NPar Tests

N	Mean	Std.	Minimum	Maximum
---	------	------	---------	---------

			Deviation		
Before_innovative_country	186	2,25	,956	1	5
Before_interesting_destination	186	4,02	,900	2	5
Before_safe_destibation	186	2,92	1,050	1	5
Before_rich_cultural_heritage	186	4,29	,858	2	5
Before_comfortable_climate	186	2,49	,871	1	5
Before_conveient_infrastructure	186	2,62	,844	1	5
Before_friendly_people	186	2,99	1,053	1	5
Before_tolerant_people	186	1,91	,963	1	5
Before_intension_to_visit	186	3,13	1,143	1	5
After_innovative_country	186	2,92	1,008	1	5
After_interesting_destination	186	4,08	,912	1	5
After_safe_destibation	186	3,09	,923	1	5
After_rich_cultural_heritage	186	4,51	,684	2	5
After_comfortable_climate	186	2,97	,774	1	5
After_conveient_infrastructure	186	2,90	,925	1	4
After_friendly_people	186	3,19	1,116	1	5
After_tolerant_people	186	2,41	1,098	1	5
After_intension_to_visit	186	3,22	1,176	1	5

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Ranks

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
After_innovative_country - Before_innovative_country	Negative Ranks	7 ^a	41,00	287,00
	Positive Ranks	95 ^b	52,27	4966,00
	Ties	84 ^c		
	Total	186		
After_interesting_destination - Before_interesting_destination	Negative Ranks	29 ^d	38,16	1106,50
	Positive Ranks	40 ^e	32,71	1308,50
	Ties	117 ^f		
	Total	186		
After_safe_destibation - Before_safe_destibation	Negative Ranks	19 ^g	32,03	608,50
	Positive Ranks	45 ^h	32,70	1471,50
	Ties	122 ⁱ		
	Total	186		
After_rich_cultural_heritage - Before_rich_cultural_heritage	Negative Ranks	17 ^j	26,00	442,00
	Positive Ranks	44 ^k	32,93	1449,00

	Ties	125 ^l		
	Total	186		
After_comfortable_climate - Before_comfortable_climate	Negative Ranks	13 ^m	64,08	833,00
	Positive Ranks	90 ⁿ	50,26	4523,00
	Ties	83 ^o		
	Total	186		
After_conveient_infrastructure - Before_conveient_infrastructure	Negative Ranks	20 ^p	42,20	844,00
	Positive Ranks	64 ^q	42,59	2726,00
	Ties	102 ^r		
	Total	186		
After_friendly_people - Before_friendly_people	Negative Ranks	16 ^s	39,38	630,00
	Positive Ranks	52 ^t	33,00	1716,00
	Ties	118 ^u		
	Total	186		
After_tolerant_people - Before_tolerant_people	Negative Ranks	9 ^v	69,50	625,50
	Positive Ranks	87 ^w	46,33	4030,50
	Ties	90 ^x		
	Total	186		
After_intension_to_visit - Before_intension_to_visit	Negative Ranks	6 ^y	14,50	87,00
	Positive Ranks	22 ^z	14,50	319,00
	Ties	158 ^{aa}		
	Total	186		

Test Statistics^a

	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
After_innovative_country - Before_innovative_country	-8,343 ^b	.000
After_interesting_destination - Before_interesting_destination	-,632 ^b	.527
After_safe_destibation - Before_safe_destibation	-3,096 ^b	.002
After_rich_cultural_heritage - Before_rich_cultural_heritage	-3,906 ^b	.000
After_comfortable_climate - Before_comfortable_climate	-6,476 ^b	.000
After_conveient_infrastructure - Before_conveient_infrastructure	-4,516 ^b	.000
After_friendly_people - Before_friendly_people	-3,497 ^b	.000
After_tolerant_people - Before_tolerant_people	-6,536 ^b	.000
After_intension_to_visit - Before_intension_to_visit	-3,024 ^b	.002

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

Nonparametric Tests

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The median of After_innovative_country equals 3.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	,285	Retain the null hypothesis.
2	The median of After_interesting_destination equals 3.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	,000	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The median of After_safe_destibation equals 3.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	,152	Retain the null hypothesis.
4	The median of After_rich_cultural_heritage equals 3.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	,000	Reject the null hypothesis.
5	The median of After_comfortable_climate equals 3.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	,637	Retain the null hypothesis.
6	The median of After_conveient_infrastructure equals 3.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	,117	Retain the null hypothesis.
7	The median of After_friendly_people equals 3.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	,042	Reject the null hypothesis.
8	The median of After_tolerant_people equals 3.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	,000	Reject the null hypothesis.
9	The median of After_intension_to_visit equals 3.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	,017	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is ,05.

\$Before_tourism_opportunities Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of
		N	Percent	Cases
\$Before_tourism_opportunities ^a	Before_Cultural_experience	179	31,5%	96,2%
	Before_Gastronomic_experience	56	9,8%	30,1%
	Before_Weather_experience	45	7,9%	24,2%
	Before_Health_recreation_activities	13	2,3%	7,0%
	Before_Leisure_activities	68	12,0%	36,6%
	Before_Beach_swimming_activities	10	1,8%	5,4%
	Before_Ecotourism_activities	25	4,4%	13,4%
	Before_Sport_activities	13	2,3%	7,0%
	Before_Ethnographic_experience	78	13,7%	41,9%
	Before_Religious_spiritual_activities	44	7,7%	23,7%
	Before_Rural_farm_activities	38	6,7%	20,4%
Total		569	100,0%	305,9%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

\$After_tourism_opportunities Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of
		N	Percent	Cases
\$After_tourism_opportunities ^a	After_Cultural_experience	183	26,1%	99,0%
	After_Gastronomic_experience	119	17,0%	65,0%
	After_Weather_experience	63	9,0%	34,4%
	After_Health_recreation_activities	22	3,1%	12,0%
	After_Leisure_activities	53	7,6%	29,0%
	After_Beach_swimming_activities	15	2,1%	8,2%
	After_Ecotourism_activities	68	9,7%	37,2%
	After_Sport_activities	34	4,9%	18,6%
	After_Ethnographic_experience	67	9,6%	36,6%
	After_Religious_spiritual_activities	37	5,3%	20,2%
	After_Rural_farm_activities	39	5,6%	21,3%
Total		700	100,0%	382,5%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

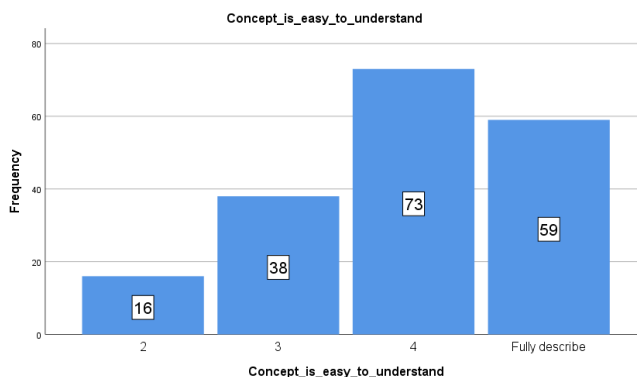
NPar Tests

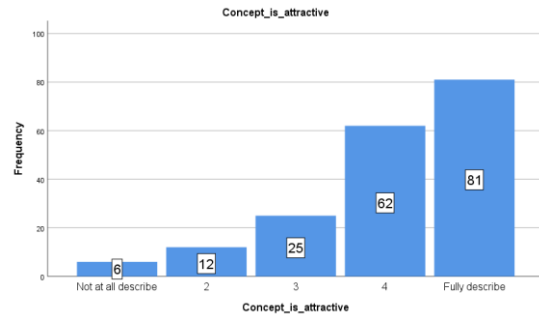
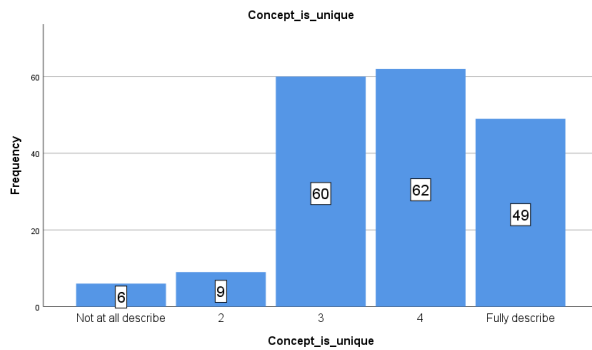
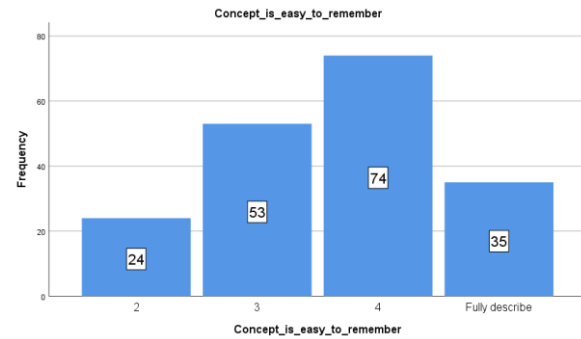
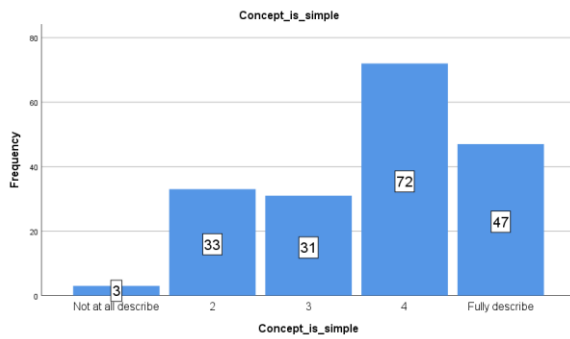
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Concept_is_easy_to_understand	186	3,94	,931	2	5
Concept_is_simple	186	3,68	1,086	1	5
Concept_is_easy_to_remember	186	3,65	,932	2	5
Concept_is_unique	186	3,75	1,006	1	5
Concept_is_attractive	186	4,08	1,058	1	5

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	Concept_is_ easy_to_und erstand	Concept_is_ simple	Concept_is_ easy_to_re member	Concept_is_ unique	Concept_is_ attractive	
N	186	186	186	186	186	
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	3,94	3,68	3,65	3,75	4,08
	Std. Deviation	,931	1,086	,932	1,006	1,058
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	,235	,255	,234	,196	,245
	Positive	,157	,133	,170	,175	,191
	Negative	-,235	-,255	-,234	-,196	-,245
Test Statistic	,235	,255	,234	,196	,245	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,000 ^c	,000 ^c	,000 ^c	,000 ^c	,000 ^c	

- a. Test distribution is Normal.
- b. Calculated from data.
- c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.





Frequency Table

Concept_is_easy_to_understand

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	16	8,6	8,6	8,6
	3	38	20,4	20,4	29,0
	4	73	39,2	39,2	68,3
	Fully describe	59	31,7	31,7	100,0
Total		186	100,0	100,0	

Concept_is_simple

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all describe	3	1,6	1,6	1,6
	2	33	17,7	17,7	19,4
	3	31	16,7	16,7	36,0
	4	72	38,7	38,7	74,7
	Fully describe	47	25,3	25,3	100,0
Total		186	100,0	100,0	

Concept_is_easy_to_remember

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	24	12,9	12,9	12,9
	3	53	28,5	28,5	41,4
	4	74	39,8	39,8	81,2
	Fully describe	35	18,8	18,8	100,0
	Total	186	100,0	100,0	

Concept_is_unique

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all describe	6	3,2	3,2	3,2
	2	9	4,8	4,8	8,1
	3	60	32,3	32,3	40,3
	4	62	33,3	33,3	73,7
	Fully describe	49	26,3	26,3	100,0
	Total	186	100,0	100,0	

Concept_is_attractive

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all describe	6	3,2	3,2	3,2
	2	12	6,5	6,5	9,7
	3	25	13,4	13,4	23,1
	4	62	33,3	33,3	56,5
	Fully describe	81	43,5	43,5	100,0
	Total	186	100,0	100,0	

Appendix 6. Expert interviews questions

Promotion (channels / tools)

- Do you think that marketing initiatives can contribute to the attraction of foreign tourists to the country?
- Which of those initiatives are stronger from your opinion: from the government or from private businesses?
- Do you think that travel agencies should act independently to attract tourists to Russia or with cooperation with other agencies (local and international)? Why?

Governmental influence

- Do government initiatives affect travel agencies and how?
- Do state initiatives influence the formation and promotion of tourist services for foreign tourists? How?

Country Brand: Role

- What do you expect from the brand of the country?
- What role, in your opinion, should the country's brand fulfil?
- What functions do you think should have the country's brand for the tourism market?
- In your opinion, what difficulties / fears do you have with the brand of the country?

Country brand: targeting countries

- Do you think that the country's brand can motivate European tourists to visit Russia?
- What, in your opinion, should include the country's brand for motivating European tourists to visit Russia?
- Do you think that the brand of the country should be adapted for the European market (tourists)? Do you think that the brand of the country should be adapted for different markets (countries)? If so, how? Why?

Country brand: for travel agencies

- Do you think that the country's brand can help with the promotion for travel agencies?
- Do you think it is useful to use the country's brand for international partnerships between travel agencies of different countries?
- If your agency had the opportunity to use the brand of the country, how would you like to do this? For what purpose? What rights would you like to have?
- In your opinion, what can be the benefits of travel agencies from the brand of the country?
- How can travel agencies, in your opinion, (still) use the brand of the country?
- Do you think that travel agencies should have an opportunity to use the country's brand to promote Russia? How?
- Do you think that all travel agencies should have the same access to the use of the country's tourism brand?
- At which stage do you think the country's brand is useful for the travel agency: at the stage of attracting European tourists to the country? At the stage of traveling around the country? After traveling around the country? Other stages? Why?
- Do you think that tourism services can pass additional certification of the brand's quality and be subsequently mentioned (advertised) by it?

Country's brand: development

- Do you think that the country's brand should / can stimulate regional tourist offers? How?
- Do you think that the country's brand should / can stimulate the development of infrastructure / gastronomy / other? How?