

# The Image of Ukraine in the World as an Identifying Factor of Incoming Tourism Growth

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## Abstract

The definitions of the country's tourism image and the national tourism brand are defined. The main determinants, which distinguish between tourism brand, tourist image and tourist reputation, are presented. A model for creating the concept for a national brand has been constructed. The image of Ukraine is determined on the basis of the authoritative world reports and ratings analysis.

English-language analytical Ukrainian Internet portals are explored. The most popular among them are Kyivpost, Unian, News, Euromaidan Press, 112 International, En.Censor, and Interfax-Ukraine. The US citizens (20-30% of all visits) mostly visit each of these sites. The total number of visits during six months for each of these sites has not exceeded 1 million people.

Analysis of the most popular world Internet publications for the purpose of news coverage about Ukraine is conducted. The BBC, the New York Times, The Guardian recall Ukraine mostly in the context of Russia's aggression and the war in the East.

The main stakeholders of the formation and promotion of the national tourism brand are defined: state institutions; citizens, residents of the country; media; creative intellectuals, athletes, other world-famous Ukrainians; diaspora; business; public environment; political forces.

Recommendations for forming the brand of Ukraine in the world are presented as a means of improving the outbound tourism and the economy of the country as a whole.

**Keywords:** national branding, national tourist brand, tourist image, tourism industry, tourist reputation

**JEL:** Z30

## Introduction

Starting from 2014, Ukraine has experienced a significant decline in entry tourism flows, which adversely affected the socio-economic indicators of the country's development. This downfall in the Ukrainian tourism industry development should be connected with the deteriorating image of Ukraine in the world, in particular, as a tourist destination.

Thus, according to the State Border Service, 13.6 million people came to Ukraine during 2016 through all available checkpoints. At least 8.7% more people (6.3 million people) compared to the previous year of 2015, but still only 55% of the 2012 stream. As for the incoming visiting dynamics of Ukraine from other countries (inbound tourism, or tourism exports), the most dramatic decrease in the flow of visitors was observed in 2014. The most relevant visitors

are from the Russian Federation, whose number in 2015 was 25% of the flow in 2012 (Hoppa, 2018). It is advisable to use a comparison with the year 2012, since this year there was the largest number of tourists in all regions of Ukraine (associated with the football championship Euro-2012).

Thereby, in order to restore the tourism and investment attractiveness of Ukraine, first, it is necessary to develop an objective methodology for systematically determining the international tourism image of the country based on indicators of the country's image – to create an anti-crisis strategy of the Ukrainian tourism branding.

However, today in Ukraine there is not enough sys-

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tematic search of the country's international image components, in particular, tourism. This makes the process of management decisions complicated and evaluates the economic effect of improving domestic tourism industry in general.

## Methods

The following methods have been used in the article: empirical (observation, monitoring of mass media) for studying the reputation and image of Ukraine in the consciousness of target consumers (foreign tourists); method of expert evaluation for more professional determination of factors influencing the tourist image of Ukraine in the world; logical and comparative analysis – to determine main transformations in the reputation and image of the country; analysis and synthesis – to formulate substantiated conclusions based on the results of the research.

## Analysis of Recent Sources and Publications

One of the first scientists who started exploring territorial marketing were F.Kotler, K.Asplund, I.Rhine, D.Haider. Papers of the following foreign authors also serve an important purpose: D.Aaker, P.Alford, S.Anholta, T.Moillanen, S.Reinistot, B.Baker, J.Traut, E.Avraham, E.Ketter, G.Eschworth, M.Cavarcissa, D.Scott, M.Dunn and others.

O.Belovodskaya, N.Haidabrus, M.Voloshenko, V.Kobelev, S.Matusyak, S.Nagornyak, S.Panyushkina and others are studying territory branding in Ukraine. Problems of increasing the competitiveness of regions in the context of the introduction of innovative approaches are studied by leading Ukrainian scientists, in particular, O.Amoshey, V.Heyets, Y.Popov, V.Udovichenko, O.Finagina, S.Shkarlet, and others. Research on the influence of tourism on the socio-economic development of both the country and the regions, in particular, are engaged by such scholars as M.Bondarenko, N.Gosteva, I.Krychovetsky, M.Reg, E.Shchepansky, V.Shmagin and others.

## Results

In order to conduct a qualitative study of the tourism Ukrainian image, it is necessary to determine the features of such concepts as tourist reputation, image and territorial brand. Typically, press and speeches of politicians and public officials identify these concepts, which may lead to the wrong choice of a strategy for the creation of a national brand and the position of the country. It is important to formulate and introduce an official definition of the concepts at the level of laws and regulations.

**The tourism image of the country** – is a set of feelings and emotionally colored representations of potential tourists that spontaneously arise over a particular country.

It is important to distinguish between the notion of a national tourist image and a national tourist reputation. Reputation category also implies spontaneous formation of the attitude of potential tourists to the territory, but is considered from the standpoint of an active activity. That is, the image is a spontaneous image which is created with the help of words and ideas and reputation is spontaneously formed by concrete actions and actions.

**The national tourism brand** – is a non-material asset, a combination of unique properties of the territory, which creates a stable emotional image of the country among potential tourists due to purposeful formation and popularization.

Thereby, the main difference between the national tourism brand and its national tourism image and reputation is the focus on its formation, as well as its positive color. The brand cannot be identified as negative, it can be ineffective, or with an unsuccessful strategy of reporting. It is also necessary to realize that the national image and reputation are formed faster than the brand and prove to be more stable. Therefore, it is difficult to form a positive national tourism brand with a negative tourist image and reputation.

In order to ensure sustainable tourism development and increase its competitiveness at the international level, the creation of an attractive national brand is essential. The concept of a national tourism brand should be based on the territorial identity, the interests of target consumers and implemented through the marketing information system (Romanova, 2013).

To improve Ukraine's image and reputation, Ukraine needs to develop and implement a National Branding Strategy.

**National branding**– is a set of marketing measures of domestic and foreign policy, executed in the strategy of national branding and in the complex are positively perceived by both the local population and foreigners.

**The goal of national branding** is to create an attractive foreign policy image of the country and a positive reputation in the world.

The model for the county's national brand formation is presented in Figure 1.

**The sources summarized in Table 1 can be used to assess the reputation of Ukraine. In particular, the most well-known international ratings of national brands (2016) are analyzed.**

The most reputable among them are *Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index*, *Brand Finance Nation Brands and Future Brand Country Brand Index*. If looking at the survey of a purely tourist image of countries, then the most well-known rating is the annual report of the World Economic Forum "Travel and tourism competitiveness report".

In particular, the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index surveys the perception of the image of 50 developed and developing countries. It is based on the estimates of 23 national attributes, which are then correlated and analyzed according to the six main criteria from which the national brand is composed: export (external reputation and attractiveness of goods and services produced in the country), public administration (image of power and perception of the quality of state administration), culture (interest in national culture and history, assessment of sports achievements, etc.), people (opinion of citizens of other countries about the inhabitants of the country as workers, friends, partners in business), tourism (attractiveness of the country for tourism), immigration /investment (the country's attractiveness for investment and talent).

Ukraine's position in this rating has improved from 68 to 59. According to the methodology of Brand Finance Nation Brands, the value of the national brand of Ukraine is estimated at 56 billion dollars. The United States, which is equal to the cost of the Dominican Republic brand, but almost 350 times cheaper than the most expensive brand in the world - the United States (\$ 20574 billion) and 13 times cheaper than Russia's brand (\$ 736 billion). According to the rating methodology, the value of a national brand is calculated in four segments: tourism, human capital, investments and products. The rating contains a scale from AAA (outstanding/exceptional) to DDD (unsatisfactory/failing). Ukraine on this scale has the strength of brand A (strong), USA - AAA, while Russia's estimate was A+ (Brand Finance, 2016).

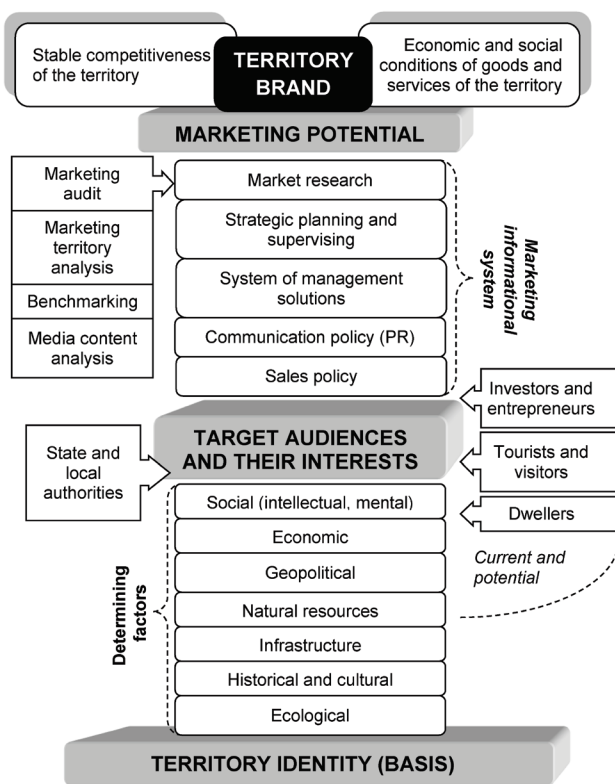


Fig. 1. The Model of the Country's Brand Concept

According to the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index in 2015, Ukraine ranked 46<sup>th</sup> out of 50 countries. In comparison with the results of research in 2014, the national brand of Ukraine has risen from the 48<sup>th</sup> to the 46<sup>th</sup> place. It should be noted separately that in the same year of 2015, the Russian brand ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> in the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index. It is also worth noting that for an unknown reason Ukraine was excluded from this rating in the next 2016, while Russia remained at the 22<sup>th</sup> position (GfK, 2016).

The Brand Finance Nation Brands appraises 100 countries worldwide by the following criteria: tourism, human capital, investments, products and services. In 2016,

The Future Brand Country Brand Index estimates 118 countries using a hierarchical decision making model for traveling and traveling to a particular country. The criteria includes the knowledge of the country, associations, and readiness to travel (or recommend the country to your family, friends and colleagues). The rating takes into account the system of values in the country, quality of life, conditions for business, historical heritage and culture, tourism, products. Developers of the rating point out that in the final report they only include 75 countries. Iran, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ukraine (74<sup>th</sup> place) and Nigeria, the last rating for 2014-15, are closed, while Russia holds the 31<sup>st</sup> place (Future Brand, 2015).

In order to assess the tourist image of Ukraine it is expedient to use a combination of results of authoritative international ratings from the brand and image, as well as specialized ratings for tourism and travel.

The ranking of countries by the Competitiveness Index for tourism and travel from the World Economic Forum provides one of the most comprehensive insights on the tourist attraction of almost 140 countries in the world. Assessment is carried out according to 14 criteria: international openness, security, readiness of information and communication technologies (ICT), health and hygiene, priority of travel and tourism development, price competitiveness, business climate, service, personnel potential, infrastructure of air transportation, roads and ports, natural objects, cultural resources and conference services.

In 2016, Ukraine ranked 88<sup>th</sup> out of 136 in this ranking. The worst position of our state was under the criterion of "security", namely, the 127<sup>th</sup> place from 136. Thus, Ukraine became one of the ten most dangerous countries of the world for tourism and travel. Ukraine also got low scores according to the following criteria: "environment" (97<sup>th</sup> place) - due to lack of effective mechanisms of environmental protection; "Priority of the development of travel and tourism" (90<sup>th</sup>) - this weak position is due to the fact that during 2014-2015 in Ukraine there was no single institution of executive power that forms the state policy in the field of tourism; "Infrastructure of air transportation" (79<sup>th</sup> place) is caused by - please, check this phrase: infrastructure is caused - use a better verb instead of "caused" an artificial monopoly on the air transport market of Ukraine; "Roads

**Table 1.** *The Image of Ukraine by Major World Sources and Ratings*

Criteria	Source	Ukraine's rate	Basis of rates	Measures to improve the image
National image	Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index	46th (of 50 )	23 national attributes, including tourism	Increase security and improve tourism infrastructure
	Brand Finance Nation Brands	59th (of 100 countries) The brand value of Ukraine is \$56 billion	4 criteria: tourism, human capital, investments, products and services	To work on such criteria as the level of corruption, quality of life and tourism infrastructure (especially transport infrastructure) (Romanova, 2017)
	Future Brand Country Brand Index	74th (of 118 countries)		
National tourism image	The ranking of countries according to the World Economic Forum (WEF) Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index	88th (of 136 countries)	14 criteria: international openness, security, readiness of information and communication technologies (ICT), health and hygiene, priority of travel and tourism development, price competitiveness, business climate, service, personnel potential, air transport infrastructure, roads and ports, natural objects, cultural resources and conference services.	Work on such criteria as: the environment; natural resources; security; the state's attitude towards the development of the tourism industry; tourist infrastructure, human resources, etc.
	List of countries in the world for the safety of tourists (provided by the US Department of State)	2nd security level (of 4 levels)	It is determined on the basis of security situation monitoring in each country	Work on security, alleviate the negative impact on the image of the country from hostilities in the Donbass, protest actions and political assassinations
	Ratings of international editions and companies	The British company "Hoppa" has identified Kyiv as the cheapest city for the weekend	Criteria: Average daily cost of living in the hotel, food, alcohol, taxi and entertainment. The data for calculations the company took from four sources: <a href="http://Expatisan.com">Expatisan.com</a> , <a href="http://Numbeo.com">Numbeo.com</a> , <a href="http://Pintprice.com">Pintprice.com</a> , <a href="http://Booking.com">Booking.com</a>	Improve the quality of the service and position the successful combination of attractive prices with high quality services
	Content analysis of the world's major media resources	BBC, New York Times, BBC, The Guardian most recall Ukraine in the context of aggression in Russia and the war in the East	–	Create as many positive news information as possible at world level, like Eurovision 2017

and ports” (81<sup>st</sup> place) – due to imbalance in the state of transport infrastructure and low quality of roads; “Natural objects” (115<sup>th</sup> place) – due to the lack of a systemic state policy for the protection of tourist natural destinations; The “human potential” (41<sup>st</sup> place) is due to the outdated training system (World Economic Forum, 2017).

Such a correlation of factors of tourism competitiveness should be taken into account when creating an attractive tourist product for foreign markets as well as for improving tourist competitiveness of Ukraine.

In addition, the position of the superpowers of the world at the level of safety of travel of its citizens to different



countries of the world has a great influence. One of them is the list of countries in the world for the safety of tourists, published annually by the US Department of State. All countries are divided into 4 levels of security, namely: level 1 – the safest countries, level 2 – recommended caution, level 3 – recommended not to travel, and level 4 are the most dangerous - travelling is prohibited. In 2017, Ukraine was assigned to the second group of countries, along with such countries as Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Maldives, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, Bahamas, Togo, Tunisia, Turks and Caicos Islands, United Kingdom, Zimbabwe, Japan. For example, the Russian Federation is classified in the third group of countries, Afghanistan, Yemen, Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Syria – to the fourth. However, it should be noted that such neighbors of Ukraine as Belarus, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania have fallen into the first category of the safest countries (US Department of State, n.d.).

For each of the countries, the US government has provided some reservations. Therefore, travel to Ukraine, in their authoritative opinion, can be dangerous because of the crime situation – please, use a better phrase here, such as – “the level of crime”, assassinations and bombings, protests across the country, including Kiev. US authorities have advised their citizens to avoid demonstrations and crowds, not to show physical resistance to any attempt of robbery. In addition, they are urged not to travel to the occupied Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk regions. These causes of a dangerous presence in Ukraine outlined and publicly presented by the world superpower, must be taken into account when formulating and implementing strategies improve tourist image of Ukraine (US Department of State, 2018).

The country's positioning strategy must necessarily be in line with the institutional capacity. In particular, countries with low institutional capacity for international strategic communications should not copy the strategies of high-capacity countries, although the temptation to do so may be large. Strategy makers are subconsciously under the influence of the most powerful national brands, such as, the United States, Germany, Great Britain, France, Canada, Japan, Italy, Switzerland, Australia and Sweden. However, it should be borne in mind that the GDP of the first seven countries from this list is among the top ten in the world. All these countries have powerful financial and human resources that are involved in their own media and cultural space. This means their experience is inappropriate for less-prosperous countries and they should seek their own ways of effective positioning.

One of the parameters by which the level of institutional capacity of Ukraine to implement international strategic communications can be estimated is the national English-language news and analytical sites. At the same time, in the context of Ukraine's positioning in the world, attention

should be focused on those resources that are content-oriented to the foreign audience. They are presented in Table 2. As it can be seen, the overwhelming majority of them are non-state resources. The largest national resource of UNIAN News accounts for about 10% of the total traffic of English-language news and analytical sites of Ukraine.

If most effective channels for distributing information about the country are concerned, the following are online social media formats based on popularity among visitors: Google (40.77 billion visits), Facebook (27.75 billion visits), YouTube (23,45 billion visits), baidu.com (16.94 billion visits), etc. (Similarweb, 2018). These resources should be actively involved in shaping a positive image and promoting the brand of Ukraine.

As illustrated above, up to 750 thousand visits are reported at the most popular Ukrainian English-language online edition in half a year. For comparison, over the same period, CNN recorded 443 million visits, New York Times – 348 million, BBC – 324 million, The Guardian – 275 million. Therefore, total traffic of Ukrainian English-language media resources is hundreds of times smaller from each of the world's leading media. As for the visits of the Russian-language internet resources, just 274,000 are reported on the most popular Russia Today, 97% of which is from Russia.

In addition, an important factor in assessing the national image and reputation is content analysis of the world's major media resources for the number of references to the country and the degree of positivity/ negativity with which the news is presented.

This means that, in addition to building the capacity of domestic English-language media, including, non-state-owned, Ukraine should at the same time develop integrated measures for its positioning in the leading world media. It should be borne in mind that, despite comparative unpopularity of domestic English-language media, they play an important role in constantly informing the world community about the processes in Ukraine, as well as providing more detailed information to foreigners interested in Ukraine. In general, foreign and domestic English-language media form an information environment whose parameters and features must be taken into account in the process of positioning Ukraine in the world.

At the same time, from the point of view of national security, global predominance of the Russian brand over Ukraine is particularly threatening. It characterizes both the balance of forces in the information warfare, deployed in the foreign media environment in relation to our state by the Russian Federation and the number of potential sympathizers of Ukraine and Russia abroad.

## Conclusion

Analysis of international ratings of national brands testifies to the unsatisfactory state of Ukraine's perception in the world, the reasons of which predominantly are high level of

**Table 2.** *The place in the World Ranking and the Number of Visits to English-Language News and Analytical Internet Resources of Ukraine (as of February 2018) (compiled according to (Similarweb, 2018))*

Webpage's rate in the international ranking	The name of the webpage	The address of the webpage	The amount of visits during the half of the year	The visits geography
127440	Kyiv Post	www.kyivpost.com	739	USA (27.73%) Ukraine (15.43%) Argentina (5.18%) Great Britain (4.8%) Canada (3.72%)
188584	UNIAN News	www.unian.info	342	US (23.48%) Great Britain (8.02%) Argentina (6.15%) Ukraine (5.67%) Canada (5.41%)
390852	Euromaidan Press	www.euromaidanpress.com	173	USA (25.02%) Argentina (7.85%) Germany (6.99%) Great Britain (5.67%) Poland (4.91%)
726760	112 International	www.112.international	79	United States (18.20%) Ukraine (12.50%) Poland (11.20%) Canada (7.39%) Finland (6.50%)
–	En.Censor	www.en.censor.net.ua	57	Argentina (27.66%) USA (16.04%) Canada (8.13%) Ukraine (7.48%) France (7.09%)
–	Interfax-Ukraine	www.en.interfax.com.ua	61	Argentina (23.48%) US (22.87%) Canada (8.08%) Ukraine (7.82%) France (5.65%)
30152	Russia Today	www.rt.com	274	Russia (97.09%) Ukraine (0.84%) Germany (0.43%) US (0.39%) Austria (0.13%)

danger, corruption, bureaucracy and unsatisfactory transport infrastructure.

Existence of a difference in expert approaches to the assessment and management of national brands should also be taken into consideration. Similar differences between the main stakeholders of this process in representations about the essence and content of national positioning are also observed in Ukraine. This leads to unsystematic and contradictory efforts, which in the end has a negative impact on Ukraine's perception of the world.

A feature of national branding is the involvement of a variety of stakeholders, including:

- state institutions;
- citizens, residents of the country;
- the media;
- creative intellectuals, athletes, other world-famous Ukrainians;
- diaspora;

- business;
- public environment;
- political powers.

However, it should be noted that the participants in international communications are inclined to relay the most common messaging. Therefore, the formation of the international brand of Ukraine has an important influence not only on the media (communicators) but also initial characteristics of the messages - the authority and breadth of the source of information, timeliness and infectivity message.

Thus, success of national branding largely depends on the ability to identify and harmonize public perceptions about the desired image of one's own country in the world. In the theory of branding, this process is called positioning; it is preceded by the creation of brand assets (content) and promotion campaigns using the necessary tools and channels. Moreover, the role of state bodies in this process is among the leading ones.

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