**Role of contemporary visual art in formation of destination tourist brand**

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**Introduction**

Nowadays competition among destinations on the tourist market grows dramatically. They are forced to raise their attractiveness and uniqueness very actively in order to attract tourists. One of the ways to raise destination potential among competitors is branding which encourages differentiation and identification of destination on the market. Destination branding is closely connected with cultural tourism since destinations form their brand with the help of cultural politics very often. They develop and promote attractions which can attract cultural tourists. Some destinations attract tourists with the help of historical and cultural heritage, others follow contemporary directions in arts and culture.

Described topics are discussed in the up-to-date scientific literature. Such authors as Anholt, Kotler, Zhang & Zhao, Riza, Kavaratzis, Florek, Kuzmina and Matetskaya give definition to destination branding, define the difference between destination ond territory branding, describe the main elements of destination branding (Anholt, S 2011, Kotler, Ph 2011, Zhang,L & Zhao, SX 2009, Riza, M et al 2012, Kavaratzis, M 2004, Florek, M 2005, Qu, H et al 2009, Кузьмина, К и Матецкая, М, 2015). Cultural tourism definition and major types of cultural attractions are described in the works of Ark, Richards, Gordin, Suschinskaya and Yatskevicc, Matetskaya (Ark, LA & Richards, G 2006, Гордин, ВЭ, Сущинская, М, Яцкевич, И, 2001, Гордин, ВЭ, Матецкая, МВ, 2013). Moreover, definition of contemporary art is considered widely discussed and argued nowadays. Definition and timeframework of contemporary art are defined by such scientists as Danto, Smith, Jeffers, Parth, Fox and Geichman (Danto, A 1997, Smith, T 2006, Jeffers, CS & Parth, P 1996, Fox, TG & Geichman, J 2001).

There are very few studies which connect three terms discussed above. The idea of using culture as mechanism o destination branding is supported by such authors as Vanolo, Evans and Zolberg (Vanolo, A 2007, Evans, G 2003, Zolberg, VL 1994). In their works Plaza and Mathews give examples of foreign destinations which form their brand on the basis of contemporary art (Plaza, B 2000, Mathews, V 2010). Among Russian authors who study the problem of development of organizations presenting contemporary art are Saltanova, Sheptukhina, Kopylova and Rodkin (Салтанова, МВ 2013, Шептухина, ЛИ 2012, Копылова, Д 2013, Родькин, П 2011).

**Aim and objectives of the project**

The aim of this study is development of mechanisms of contemporary visual art influence on tourist destination brand. In order to attain the aim the following objectives were figured out:

1. To eliminate the major mechanisms of contemporary visual art influence on the tourist destination brand on the basis of analysis of Russian and foreign destination experiences;

2. To classify organizations presenting contemporary visual art in St.Petersburg;

3. To assess possibilities and mechanisms of contemporary visual art influence on tourist destination brand.

The following hypotheses were marked out:

1. Contemporary art plays insignificant role in the formation of St.Petersburg tourist brand;

2. Contemporary art is more interesting for foreign tourists than for Russian ones;

3. Large museums of St.Petersburg presenting contemporary art are more tourist-oriented than small organizations such as galleries and art-centers;

4. Art commodification is one of components of contemporary visual art influence on tourist destination brand.

**Methodology and data**

The first method used was expert survey (interview). The first stage of expert survey included defining the criteria for selection of organizations taking part in expert survey. The database was formed. The second stage was development of detailed questionnaire for interview of respondents and, what is more, development of informational letter for respondents to be informed about the study conducted. The third step involved the survey of organizations’ employees which agreed to take part in the study. The last part of this part oof research was analysis of acquired results of expert survey.

Another method used was content-analysis of tourist companies’ websites. The first step of content-analysis was forming the database of studied sources of information that is Russian-speaking ad English-speaking websites of tourist companies. Then the analysis units were chosen, namely word-groups connected with contemporary art. Chosen sites were analyzed for the presence of these particular word-groups.

Thus, the database of organizations which work with contemporary art was developed. The number of criteria was chosen in order to select institutions for the study. Among these criteria are:

1. Contemporary art is one of the directions of institution’s work (middle of the 20th century-nowadays);

2. Dynamic event and cultural activities including participation in cultural and educational programs, organization of programs, vigorous activity in the framework of various arts projects;

3. Orientation not only on commercial activity and commercial result but on the educational activity and contemporary art promotion as well.

Organizations which have commercial activity in their basis were not studied in the framework of this study and it is explained by a number of reasons. First of all, art which is sold on art-market is characterized by high level of prices. This fact determines the second reason which is narrow segment of tourists and consumers who may be interested in this type of art. Art-market and tourists which travel with the aim of buying piece of art are connected with niche tourism. In the framework of this work mass tourism is studied.

In order to gain objectiveness information about number of institutions was taken from the website of St.Petersburg Culture Committee which enabled to assess the cultural element of the city. In accordance with information on the Culture Committee’s website organizations presenting contemporary art may be classified in the following way:

* Art-centers;
* Art-galleries;
* Museums.

As a result, in accordance with criteria determined the number of institutions are taen into consideration:

* 3 museums of contemporary art;
* 3 classical museums which have sections of contemporary art or organize contemporary art exhibitions;
* 17 art-galleries;
* 7 art-centers.

Experts for the interview were selected according to their competence level in the research question. Interviews were held with organizations’ directors, fine art experts, who participate in the organization’s activities and projects’ supervising actively, and also with employees of advertisement department and departments working with tourist groups.

The questionnaire for experts consisted of three parts. The first part of questions considered the organization’s activity and what role contemporary art plays in it. The second part of questions is about the audience in which organization is interested. The third part of questions enables to determine the role of institution and contemporary art which is presented in it in formation of city’s brand as a whole.

**Results**

With the help of expert survey the hypothesis which supposed that contemporary art place insignificant role in the formation of St.Petersburg tourist brand. Most experts confirmed that activity of their organization is slightly tourist oriented. Besides the fact that tourists visit organizations which present contemporary art these tourists are usually individuals and mass tourist is not interested in such art direction.

Expert survey allowed confirming the second hypothesis that large museums are more interested in tourist attraction than small organizations. In St.Petersburg ‘Erarta’ attracts a lot of tourists and plays significant role in the city brand formation. Moreover, the conclusion that contemporary art influences on the city brand through large projects, which are organized by world-known museums, was made. In the case of St.Petersburg ‘Manifesta’ became such a project. It attracted a lot of tourists to the city and encouraged the raise of popularity of small organizations.

The third hypothesis about commodification of art as a part of contemporary art influence on tourist destination brand was confirmed as well. Galleries, museums and art-centers develop commercial activity which is aimed at attracting common tourist who is able to buy a souvenir.

In the framework of content-analysis the hypothesis that contemporary art is more interesting for foreign tourists than for Russian ones was rejected. Contemporary art is mentioned more often on Russian-language websites which offer tours to St.Petersburg. However, content-analysis enabled to confirm hypothesis that big museums of contemporary art play significant role in the city brand formation. Excursions to ‘Erarta’ museum are the most mentioned topics both on the English-language and Russian-language websites.

St.Petersburg has established image of the classical city with rich historic heritage. Extensive and permanent work is needed in order to make contemporary art influence on its tourist brand. At the moment contemporary art is oriented on art-professionals and difficult for common tourist to understand. In order to solve this problem educational work connected with contemporary art is needed. It will help to make contemporary art interesting for tourist who is not a professional. Master-classes, open lessons and interactive excursion programs may encourage adaptation of contemporary art for mass tourist. Secondly, creation of effective managerial resources is necessary in the sphere. Thirdly, contemporary art in St.Petersburg may be developed by the means of foreign practice review. Development of contemporary art industry in Moscow may serve as a good example as well. Popularization of contemporary art might be implemented through development of routes and creative clusters which are contemporary art themed.

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