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CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT IN DESTINATION MARKETING: A CASE STUDY OF ESTONIA

According to the Estonian national tourism development plan, Estonia is not widely known in the world [2]. Since tourism constitutes a large share of countries economy, inviting moneyed tourists to Estonia should be a priority. Marketing is changing constantly and fast. While a few years ago social marketing was rather unknown, by now it has become the main way to communicate with potential customers [1]. Celebrities have been widely used in product marketing but over the years several destination managing organizations have also selected famous people as their spokespersons. In the context of Estonia, celebrity endorsement became an issue when Enterprise Estonia and the city of Tallinn co-financed a marketing campaign that included one of the most successful British pop-singer's, Robbie Williams' concert in Tallinn. It was also suggested that more local celebrities and special events to promote Estonia as a tourism destination could be used. The aim of the current study was to determine possible positive and negative aspects of celebrity endorsement in destination marketing campaigns that destination management organizations should consider.

The secondary data research showed that celebrity endorsement is not common in the Estonian tourism sector, but there are possibilities for using famous people in marketing Estonia for inbound and domestic tourism. Based on Glover's theory on the potential influence of celebrities on destination awareness and purchase decision model, an open-ended questions were combined, and interviews with 12 Estonian experts (theorists, practitioners and representatives of the public sector) from the field of marketing and destination managing were conducted [3].

The study revealed that the most important things to consider while using celebrity endorsements are choosing the right celebrity, target-group segmentation, the connection between the celebrity and destination, and natural communication. A celebrity will draw attention and generate interest in destination. The chosen celebrity can influence the destination's image, emit messages showing what is valued in the destination and indirectly send out a signals what kind of people are most welcomed to visit the destination. A question that arose is in terms of the potential benefits compared

to expenses using celebrity endorsers. It was suggested that unique and innovative ideas should be developed and the celebrity could be offered something he or she would be interested in being involved with.

It was also pointed out that destination management organizations should bring together different stakeholders and help to create unitary messages to communicate with potential tourists. Rather than conducting small individual campaigns that are not connected, destination management organizations should create a long-term strategy for destination marketing. In the context of celebrity endorsement in destination marketing, the author suggests to involve, rather than simply use famous people. Destinations will get more attention if associated with a celebrity, but there will always be the so-called "human factor" that the star might do something to damage his/her image and influence the image of the brand or destination he/she endorses. In order to minimize possible negative effects, it was suggested that historical or fictional celebrities should be used or an image on more than one celebrity should be built.

Celebrity endorsement offers many unique possibilities, but it is also important to understand that even though celebrities have the power to make destinations visible, the final tourist experience depends on local stakeholders.

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THE MAIN DIRECTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

The goal of this thesis is to reveal the main directions of development of tourism in the Republic of Belarus. There are the following tasks according to the goal: 1) to identify peculiarities of national tourism; 2) to determine the main problems of development of tourism in the Republic of Belarus. The object of the work is development of tourism the Republic of Belarus.