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RAISING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TOURISM MARKETING AND BRANDING: EVIDENCE FROM ARMENIA

Abstract. This research paper is a summary of the arguments and counterarguments about the scientific discussion on the issue of tourism marketing. The research aims at analysing tourism marketing in Armenia, find out the main gaps and suggest ways for raising its effectiveness. The analysis of the available literature sources and approaches for solving the problem indicates that the essence of tourism marketing is to understand and meet the needs of tourists. The importance of this scientific problem is that using marketing strategies is the primary mean to develop tourism. Also, destination branding is discussed, which may reflect the identity of a destination. Nowadays, the rise of the Internet gives various opportunities to present a country as an attractive tourism destination by using different marketing strategies and involve international tourists. Investigation of the topic of marketing and branding in the paper is carried out in the following rational arrangement. The essence and significance of tourism marketing and branding available in the literature are discussed, the main activities of tourism marketing in Armenia are analysed, and as a result, some suggestions are made for improving tourism marketing performance in Armenia. Besides, tourism brand of Armenia is processed, which reflects the history and culture of the country. Mainly qualitative methods were used in the research. The results of the empirical analysis are presented in the paper, which showed that having a good country brand strategy is a critical factor for achieving a high level of awareness among international tourists. The research analytically affirms that effective marketing and branding is the basis of tourism development. Armenian tourism stage in the tourism life cycle model is evaluated between involvement and development, so here marketing activities are necessary as well. The research results may be useful for state organs of the sphere for their marketing and branding strategic policies.

Keywords: tourism, marketing, branding, social media, destination, tourism area life cycle, strategy.

Introduction. The role of marketing in tourism development is very high. Nowadays, in the global era of the Internet, many tourists choose a tourism destination based on online ads. Suitable marketing activities using online platforms and social media are very important for sphere advancement. Effective marketing and strong country branding are critical factors for tourism promotion. In the Tourism Competitiveness Report of 2019, Armenia was ranked the 82nd in terms of marketing and branding effectiveness and the 99th in the Country Brand Strategy. It clearly states that marketing and branding need improvements. In this sense, the article presents the essence of tourism marketing and branding available in the literature, discusses tourism sphere in the Republic of Armenia, tourism marketing activities. As a result of the analysis, some steps for raising tourism marketing effectiveness are suggested. Tourism brand of Armenia is also processed and offered in the article.

Literature review. The literature review is a summary of some aspects of the essence of tourism marketing and branding. According to Kotler et al. (2017, p. 32), the essence of marketing is to meet the needs of customers. If the marketer finds out what the customer wants, creates products to afford high value for a customer; then prices, shares, and publicizes them effectively, these products will sell quickly. Marketing is the process when sellers make value for customers and form great customer relationships for securing value from the customers in return. According to Ray et al. (2018, pp. 85-88) «Tourism

marketing is the systematic and coordinated efforts exerted by the National Tourist Organizations and the tourist enterprises at international, national and local levels to optimize the satisfaction of tourists, groups and individuals, given the sustained tourism growth».

According to Roy et al. (2018, p. 25), «individuals and organizations who attempt to understand and meet the needs of these visitors successfully are practising what is called the marketing concept, an organizational philosophy centred on understanding and meeting the needs of customers». According to Zeithaml et al. (2018, pp. 25-26), one of the most fundamental concepts in marketing is the marketing mix, which is defined as «the elements an organization controls that can be used to satisfy or communicate with customers». The authors add people, physical evidence, process elements to the traditional marketing mix (product, place (distribution), promotion, and price). In this era of the Internet, it is crucial for tourism organizations and destinations to use online marketing strategies. According to Kotler et al. (2017, p. 478) «online marketing refers to marketing via the Internet using company Web sites, online advertising and promotions, e-mail marketing, online video, and blogs. Social media and mobile marketing also take place online and must be closely coordinated with other forms of digital marketing». Social media marketing is the act of using social networks, online communities, blogs or any other internet form of media for marketing. SMM concepts and techniques consist of: increase brand awareness of services, increase sales, educate and inform customers, improve customer service, and monitor brand reputation (Ray et al., 2018, pp.265-266). Word-of-mouth marketing may influence the buying behaviour of a consumer. The stories and suggestions of friends and others tend to be more conceivable than the suggestions of salespeople. Buzz marketing is creating impression leaders to act as «brand deputies», who develop and disperse stories about a company's products. They are people who, because of their skills, intelligence and charisma have a social influence on others (Kotler et al., 2017, pp. 181-182). Another critical factor in effective marketing is brand, as many customers rely on the brand name. The brand of tourism lies in service quality and its promise. «Brand value and brand promise create positive associations between the destination or company's quality assets and the potential tourist. ICT based tourism marketing has an effective role in extending the brand and creating brand equity» (Ray et al., 2018, p. 137). According to Konecnik et al. «the tourism destination brand identity system represents the process of developing a destination brand identity. The core destination identity should incorporate the characteristics of the destination. Brand characteristics are: the brand as a product, the brand as a symbol, the brand as an organization and the brand as a person» (Konecnik & Go, 2008, pp. 177-189). For defining the brand identity of a destination, it is essential to analyze the resources, competences and capabilities of the destination. «In the destination branding model, the brand identity is based on six elements: Brand culture; Brand character; Brand personality; Brand name; Brand logos (and symbols); Brand slogan» (Risitano, 2006, p. 7).

Methodology and research methods. The goal of the paper is to analyze tourism marketing in Armenia for finding out the existing gaps and take measures towards improving them. The object of this research is the tourism sphere in Armenia, while the subject is tourism marketing and branding development issues. In order to achieve the primary purpose of the article, the following objectives were solved:

- to analyse the current marketing performance in the Armenian tourism sector,
- to reveal the main problems,
- to process tourism brands,
- to offer ways for improving tourism marketing and branding in Armenia.

In order to process tourism brands, the following tasks were derived: to study the leading associations connecting with Armenia and Yerevan among tourists and to explore the leading touristic brands of different countries and cities. In the research, a variety of data are used from the Tourism State Committee of the RA, Statistical Committee of the RA, World Economic Forum, etc. In order to achieve the main goals

and objectives of the paper the following methods were used during the research: analysis and synthesis, abstraction, induction, systematic method, benchmarking, qualitative assessment: survey and interview, graphical and hypothesis methods.

The method of abstraction allows mentally disregarding unimportant features, relationships of the objects being studied, while at the same time identifying or highlighting one or more aspects which are more important. In this case, all other problems of tourism development in Armenia were disregarded, and the concentration was made only on marketing and branding issues. By the method of analysis, the whole research was divided into parts and analysed separately, and by the method of synthesis, all the analysed parts were integrated into one whole. It means that the whole marketing performance was analysed by separate parts and integrated at the end for drawing logical conclusions and recommendations. Induction was used as a logical method for drawing general conclusions from particular facts and clauses. The systematic method as the study of the system, its components, and their relation to the external environment was used by analysing tourism marketing as a system of different measures and tasks, their components, their relations and impact on stakeholders. The qualitative assessment was done via survey and interview among 300 people: 200 Armenians and 100 tourists during 2019 by a research questionnaire (Table 1). The leading associations that people remember when they hear about Armenia were analysed. The database was created based on the survey results for quantitative assessment, and then these results were analysed via Word frequency query of NVivo software. Based on it, the leading associations with Armenia were revealed, which is shown in Figure 1.

Table 1. Survey questionnaire

1. Age			
Up to 18 years old		46-60 years old	
19-30 years old		61 years old and elder	
31-45 years old			
2. Gender			
Male		Female	
3. Where do you live? _____			
4. What words do you use to describe Armenia? (what words do you associate with Armenia mostly?)			
History	National songs and dances	Hospitality	Traditions
Culture	Apricot	Sevan	Literature
First	Wine	Dilijan	Safety
Christian nation	Brandy	Jermuk	Velvet revolution
Carpetmaking	Lavash	Gyumri	Sunny
Biblical land	Barbeque	Yerevan	Happiness
Sport	Pomegranate	Edjmiatsin	Astronomy
Chess	Grape	Nature	Art
Church	Fish	Resort	Technologies
Genocide	Clean	Mountains	Picturesque
Cross-stone	Armenian cuisine		

Source: developed by the author.

For developing the brands of Armenia and Yerevan, the method of benchmarking was used. Benchmarking method means discovering the best performance achieved by others, comparing and creating the best solution for improving the performance. It means that the theoretical bases of creating brands were investigated and the brands of other countries and cities were explored and based on that some versions for Armenian touristic brands were created.

The graphical method was used for the graphical interpretation of the results of the research: the leading brands processed by the author.

For accomplishing the survey, the following hypothesis was derived:

H1: The main factors that people associate with Armenia are the following: history, culture, Christianity, churches, cuisine, and Genocide.

The novelty of the article is the following: based on the analysis of tourism marketing and branding issues in Armenia. Touristic brands were developed for Armenia and Yerevan, which consider the Armenian touristic assets, tourism development bases and citizens' and tourists' perceptions.

Results. Armenia is an ancient country with history, culture and traditions of centuries. It was the first country that officially adopted Christianity as the state religion in 301 A.D. Armenia has all the resources to develop religious, historical, cultural, health-medical, gastronomic, adventure, agro- and eco-, scientific, educational tourism. Tourism is one of the main spheres of the economy. In recent years the number of inbound tourists has raised – 1894377 tourists came to Armenia in 2019. The growth was 14.7% compared to last year (Social-Economic Situation of the RA in January-December, 2019). Tourists mainly came from Russia, USA, Iran, Germany, France, etc.

In the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019, published by World Economic Forum, Armenia was the 79th among 140 countries. The main problems were connected with workforce qualification (77th), marketing and branding effectiveness for tourism (82nd), country brand strategy (99th), ticket taxes and airport charges (105th), the sustainability of tourism industry (81st), natural and cultural resources (103rd), the attractiveness of natural assets (83rd), etc. (Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019). Thus, in order to make Armenia more attractive to tourists, develop tourism and increase competitiveness, priorities must be the following: improving tourism services and transport infrastructure, ensuring environmental sustainability and preserving natural resources; increasing the quality of the workforce in the sector, increasing the effectiveness of tourism marketing and branding. The top priority should be to raise the level of awareness about the country, to present its tourism potential, which will require large-scale marketing activities using different marketing strategies.

The Tourism Development Fund of Armenia was created in 2017, to ensure the most effective fulfilment of the marketing policy of the state in tourism sphere (Decision N 785-N of June 29, 2009). The goals of the Foundation were to assist the State Tourism Committee in implementing tourism marketing policy, to strengthen, develop and promote the description of Armenia as an attractive and favourable tourism country on the world market, to diversify the Armenian tourism product and its markets, design and promote new competitive tourism products (Decision N 785-N of June 29, 2017). In 2019 the Foundation's activities were suspended, and all its functions have been transferred to the Tourism State Committee. In 2018 within the framework of the tourism marketing policy aimed at attracting international tourists and promoting Armenian tourism in the international tourism markets, 50 foreign media representatives and bloggers were invited to Armenia from different target markets: Lebanon, Russia, China, France, India, as a result of which they published over 100 articles, more than 15 videos have been filmed with over 3 million views. In 2018 Armenia participated in 6 international exhibitions: Iran's 11th Titex Expo 2018, ITB Berlin 2018, ATM Dubai 2018, Japan 2018 Expo, WTM London 2018 International Travel Exhibitions, Profi.Travel/OTM CIS and Georgia online exhibitions. Over 30 festivals were organized in Armenia during 2018. The priorities of «Tourism Development 2019 Program» of the RA were:

– ensuring the competitiveness of the Armenian tourism product in the international tourism market and Armenia's continued integration into the international tourism market;

– increasing the awareness of Armenia and Armenian tourism product by strengthening, developing and promoting Armenia's image in the global market as a sustainable, secure, favourable and attractive country for entrepreneurship, investment and tourism;

– diversification of Armenian tourism product by promoting new, competitive product development, maintaining traditions and rituals, cultural and natural heritage, evaluating tourism resources, developing

new tourism resources and attractions, and establishing tourism and leisure centres in the regions of Armenia;

– infrastructure and human resources development by promoting the investment and improvement of a quality system in the tourism sector;

– development of international cooperation – ensuring active cooperation with international, regional and other organizations, development of bilateral relations with other countries.

The purpose of the program was to contribute to:

– the continuous increase of tourist visits to Armenia – up to 8% annually;

– the sustainable and proportional regional economic development of Armenia, increase of national income, an increase of living standards of the population;

– designing, improving, and promoting the proper description of Armenia as a country attractive for tourism;

– increasing worldwide recognition of Armenia and Armenian tourism product (Order N 126-A of February 27, 2019).

The program provided the following activities of tourism marketing and promotion:

1. Implementation of electronic (digital) marketing:

– presentation of Armenia and Armenian tourism product on www.armenia.travel, as well as on Facebook and other social networks (site visits – at least 400000, more than 70000 visits on Facebook and Instagram, communicating on VK, Telegram, Twitter social networks);

– proper presentation and promotion of Armenia and Armenian tourism product (creation of two short clips (up to 1 minute) to spread on social platforms and increase platform engagement.

2. Advertisement materials for all target markets (processing, editing and printing of at least three languages of advertising information in at least 40,000 brochures, maps, folders, information sheets on a single page, preparing and sending at least four newsletters, dissemination of printed and electronic advertising information materials in information centres, international exhibitions, embassies of Armenia, in www.armenia.travel and social networks, international events and media; preparing at least three 45-second video ads and presenting in the website, social networks; acquisition of 40 HD quality photos, photo placement in advertising materials, distribution on social media, and other platforms of digital marketing).

3. Organizing foreign journalists' introductory visits (organizing visits of well-known and specialized foreign journalists of at least five countries, at least one report or program, photographed or printed material as a result of each visit).

4. To participate in prestigious international tourism exhibitions (at least three exhibitions ensuring participation of at least seven tour operators in each).

5. The government should support the operation of tourist information centres (Establishment of a comprehensive system of tourist information centres in Yerevan and regions – provision of information, dissemination of advertising materials, state support to the activities of at least five tourist centres in Garni, Goris, Gyumri, Sevan and Zvartnots airports).

For the implementation of the activities mentioned above, the amount allocated from the state budget was 123,500,000 AMD.

The program highlighted the diversification, packaging and promotion of the Armenian tourism product, which included the following activities:

– development and organization of plans for the preparation of at least five tourist sites for historical and cultural monuments and specially protected areas;

– development of new tourism programs and presentations (promotion of eco, gastro, ethnic and other forms of tourism);

−   development of programs of activities for attracting historical and cultural places of interest in tourist routes,

−   state support to the organization of traditional festivals in the regions of the RA (proper organization of at least five traditional festivals in the regions of the RA, presentation of local traditions in at least ten pavilions (Annex N 2 of the Order N 126-A dated February 27, 2019).

For the implementation of the points mentioned above, 22,000.0 thousand AMD was allocated from the state budget (Annex N 3 of the Order N 126-A dated February 27, 2019).

The «Tourism Development 2020 Program» of the RA sets the following activities of tourism marketing and promotion:

−   running digital and social platforms;
−   digital content creation;
−   creation and translation of advertising materials;
−   printing of advertising information package;
−   ordering advertising articles about Armenia in prestigious periodicals;
−   organizing foreign journalists' introductory visits;
−   participation in prestigious international tourism exhibitions, marketing campaigns.

For the implementation of the activities mentioned above, the amount allocated from the state budget will be 136,000,000 AMD (Annex N 2 of the Order N248-A dated February 19, 2020). One of the most critical steps in 2017 was the launch of Armenia Travel website, which allows providing official information to tourists about the Republic of Armenia. The site received 530,000 visits from 144 countries in a month. In this regard, we should note that the official website about tourism in Armenia was last updated in 2013, so we did not have such a site for four years before launching this one. In 2018 the site www.armenia.travel had more than 720000 visitors (The results of tourism in Armenia were summarized, 2018). At the moment, the page on Instagram has over 60000 followers and over 105000 likes on Facebook (as of March 2020).

Despite the implementation of the measures mentioned above, tourism marketing in the RA still has serious problems, which is confirmed by the Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019. Armenia has severe problems with raising awareness, which cannot be ensured by only these actions. Large-scale events are needed on the online platform. Currently, the leading information platform for tourists is social media, so current targeted events are also needed in this area. The information on the www.armenia.travel site should be added. For example, the parts of Religious tourism and the First Christian country have limited information presenting only some monasteries. Likewise, information on health-resort tourism is also very restricted, with only brief general information on mineral waters and Jermuk resort. Whereas the «Research Institute of Physical Medicine» CJSC of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia, has mentioned ten health resorts in Armenia (Harutyunyan, 2010), all of which have natural curable resources (mineral water, healing muds, favourable climatic conditions) and detailed information about it with some pictures would be sufficient to present. It would also be useful to present the major cities of Armenia with their tourist attractions for promoting urban tourism development.

Similarly, it is necessary to have separate sections presenting the most promising tourism destinations and available resources: eco and agro, gastronomic, festival, scientific, educational, adventure, sports tourism, etc. The site is now available in English and Russian. Hopefully, it will also be available in French Spanish, Italian, Chinese. It will be more useful to organize advertisements featuring well-known people who can present critical tourism assets in Armenia and directly or indirectly contribute to raising Armenia's awareness. International conferences and events in Armenia will also be useful. With effective marketing and branding, tourism in Armenia will grow to a new, higher level.

In the Tourism Competitiveness Report of 2019, Armenia was ranked the 82nd in terms of marketing and branding effectiveness (in the report of 2017 it was the 95th), and the 99th in the Country Brand Strategy (70th in the preliminary report). It is perhaps the most definitive evidence that one of the most

important and necessary steps for tourism development in our country, which is marketing, needs improvement. Armenia should develop a tourism brand that will present the face, history and culture of our country, the main attractions. The idea of national branding has British descent since the term was first introduced in 1996 used by British policy adviser Simon Anholt as «a mix of political, historical, cultural, sociological approaches and studies to national identification» (Public diplomacy and nation branding, 2012). The purpose of country branding should be to represent the culture and history of the country and the nation, as well as its main features, resources, positioning the country on the global arena in a way that is attractive for tourism, raising the level of international recognition of the country, etc.

Here comes the necessity of a strong brand identity, which are the visible elements like colour, design, logo, etc., that will distinguish the brand in tourists' minds. Brand image is the perception of the brand by tourists. The destination should create a strong brand identity in order to have a positive brand image among tourists. In this step, it is essential to evaluate the leading associations connected with the destination. These are the main elements that people remember or understand when they hear the name of the destination. Based on it, the destinations should try to position the brand in the market and tourists minds better. Considering the above mentioned, the leading associations that people remember when they hear about Armenia were analysed. A survey and interview were done among 200 Armenians and 100 tourists, which were from different countries. The participants were mainly 19-30 and 31-45 years old (Table 2).

Table 2. Some data of survey participants

	% of participants (total of 300 survey participants)
Age	
Up to 18 years old	5
19-30 years old	**48**
31-45 years old	**32**
46-60 years old	9
61 years old and elder	6
Gender	
Male	33
female	67
Nationality	
Armenia	67
Other (Estonia, Canada, Belgium, France, Jordan, Lebanon, USA, Portugal, Cyprus, Spain, Australia, Netherlands, Switzerland, Egypt, Czech Republic, etc.)	33

Source: compiled by the author based on the survey results

The participants were asked to mention the words which they use to describe Armenia (words which they associate with Armenia mostly). Armenians mainly mentioned the following words: history (75% of the participants), first Christian nation (72%), cross-stone (71%), apricot (71%), churches (71%), lavash – Armenian bread (67%), hospitality (65%), culture (64%), Armenian Genocide (63,5%), brandy (53%), mountains (52%), Yerevan (49%), Lake Sevan (48%), national songs and dances (45%), wine (45%), Armenian cuisine (42%), chess (42%), barbeque (41%), nature (37%), Edjmiatsin (36%), Gyumri (35%), safe and secure (35%), biblical land (32%), etc.

Tourists mainly mentioned the following words which they associate with Armenia mostly: history (80% of the participants), culture (76%), Yerevan (75%), first Christian nation (69%), lavash (Armenian bread – 66%), Armenian Genocide (63%), mountains (59%), churches (52%), hospitality (50%), Armenian cuisine (48%), apricot (46%), national songs and dances (46%), safe and secure (46%), nature (46%), barbeque

(44%), biblical land (42%), wine (42%), Edjmiatsin (40%), brandy (39%), Lake Sevan (39%), Gyumri (24%), etc. These words were analysed via Word frequency query of NVivo software, and the results are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Main associations with Armenia

Source: the author processed the figure via NVivo

The results of the qualitative research show that the hypothesis was correct and approved. So based on the survey results, the hypothesis may be accepted, that the leading associations with Armenia among people are the following: history, culture, Christianity, churches, cuisine, and Genocide. Thus, based on the above mentioned, some versions of the Armenian tourism brand were created, which is presented below:

Figure 2. Brand of Armenia. Option A

Source: the figure was processed by the author.

In Figure 2, option A, the word ARMENIA is coloured by the colours of the Armenian flag as a slogan was chosen to DISCOVER AND FEEL ARMENIA: ANCIENT LAND OF BIBLICAL NOAH. FIRST CHRISTIAN NATION, which states while Armenia is the land of the Biblical Noah, as well as the first Christian country. This best represents the identity of our nation and country with an ancient and rich history.

Figure 2. Brand of Armenia. Option B
Source: the figure was processed by the author.

It is the slogan that best positions us as an ancient country and people may be interested and have a desire to visit our country, for discovering, revealing and exploring our history and culture, feeling the Armenian spirit. In option B the same is written on the picture of Khor Virap and Mount Ararat, biblical mountain, and in option C – on the Armenian flag.
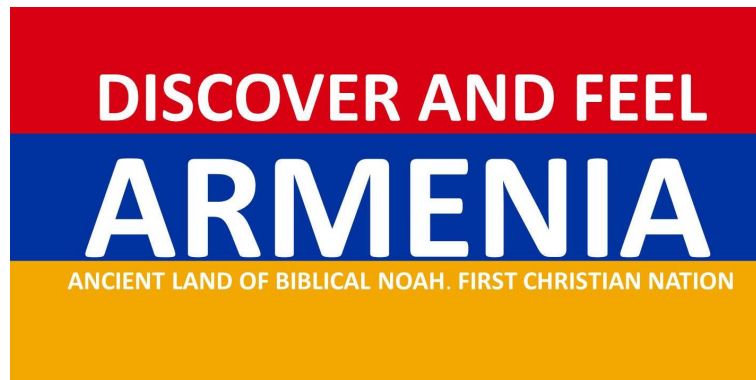

Figure 2. Brand of Armenia. Option C
Source: the figure was processed by the author.

Figure 3 shows the tourism brand of Armenia. Here the main assets that may be attractive to tourists are outlined: religious, historical-cultural, natural and extreme, resort, urban, gastronomic tourism and of course the rest in Lake Sevan. These are the main elements which let us the position as a tourism destination offering many types of experiences to be discovered and felt. It should also be noted that works have already been undertaken to create a national brand. Notably, in 2014 a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Ministry of Economy of Armenia, the National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia and the US Agency for International Development. The National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia and American GK Brand company then signed a national brand creation agreement.
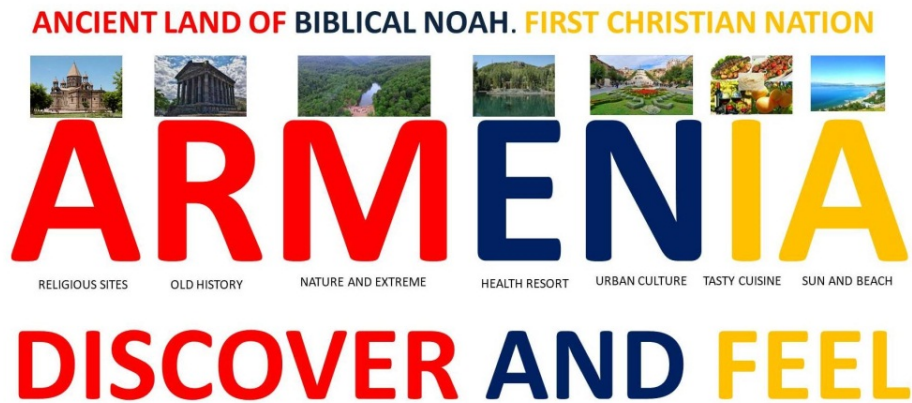
Figure 3. Tourism brand of Armenia
Source: the figure was processed by the author

As a result, a brand logo representing Armenia as a «Forever Sun» was created, with the slogan: The story is just beginning. It, according to the authors, symbolized that Armenia is one of the few countries whose culture has had a significant impact on all corners of the globe, with its contribution to the intellectual, spiritual, scientific, business and other fields (Armenia's national brand logo not in use despite considerable expenses, 2017). Discussions, criticisms followed the development of the brand, and it was never used (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Armenian brand logo developed by GK Brand
Source: Armenia's national brand logo not in use despite considerable expenses, 2017

Considering the rich and ancient history of Armenia, the slogan «History is just beginning» is not so convenient and does not reflect the history of our millennia. The chosen slogan mentioned in the article above is deeper and more meaningful in this respect. The picture shows the brands of several other countries (Figure 5). Besides Armenia, a brand for Yerevan was also developed. The 2802-year-old Yerevan is the largest city and capital of Armenia, the country's economic and cultural centre. It was established in BC 782, 29 years before the founding of Rome. Tourists in Yerevan can admire the old and new architecture, visit museums, theatres, churches, gardens and more.

Figure 5. Brands of different countries
Source: images are taken from various web sites mentioned at the end of references

The best places to visit are: Matenadaran (about 17,000 manuscripts), Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex and Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, Erebuni Fortress and Erebuni Historical and Archaeological Museum, Armenian History Museum, National Gallery of Armenia, Victory Park and Mother Armenia Memorial Complex, Cascade Complex and Cafesjian Center for the Arts, Yerevan Brandy Factory, National Academic Opera and Ballet Theater, Yerevan Zoo, Yerevan Botanical Garden, Republic Square and the musical fountains, Vernissage Market, Lovers Park, North Avenue, Liberty Square and Swan Lake, churches, etc.

In Yerevan, there were 390 hotels in 2018 (Marzes and Yerevan city of the Republic of Armenia in figures, 2018) including Armenia's Marriott Hotel, Best Western Congress Hotel, Hyatt Place Yerevan Hotel, DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Ibis Yerevan Center Hotel, Alexander Hotel, Radisson Blue, Holiday Inn and more. Tourists in Yerevan usually stay for 2-3 days, and since the number of tourists is not calculated for Yerevan, it is believed that tourists visiting Armenia also visit Yerevan. In recent years several works have been done in Yerevan for tourism development: Yerevan City Tour, Yerevan Summer, publishing of Yerevan's tourism maps and guidelines, Yerevan Card, etc. However, there are still many problems. Yerevan is not presented correctly abroad as a city with 2802 years of history and culture, delicious cuisine and hospitable people. The tourism infrastructure is underdeveloped, the level of services is not very high, and there are few tourist information centres. Considering Yerevan's historical and cultural, religious, gastronomic, entertaining and business tourism opportunities, Yerevan tourism brand should be developed to attract international tourists through active marketing activities. As Yerevan has no official brand, the following touristic brand for Yerevan was created (Figure 6). The red colour in the picture draws attention. It relates to emotions, is attractive, stimulating, vibrant and exciting, gives strength, courage, love. The orange symbolizes encouragement, excitement, warmth and enthusiasm to visit Yerevan. It is an attractive, extrovert, motivating and encouraging colour, reflects joy and happiness, has a driving force. The yellow symbolizes confidence, success, and optimism, stimulates the left side of the brain, helping with clear thinking and quick decision making. Yellow grabs attention because the eye sees yellow first (Colour meaning). «The city of sun» is written in yellow. The eye of the person attracts the yellow and reads «The city of sun», and he/she is already concentrating on the rest, associating Yerevan with the sun.
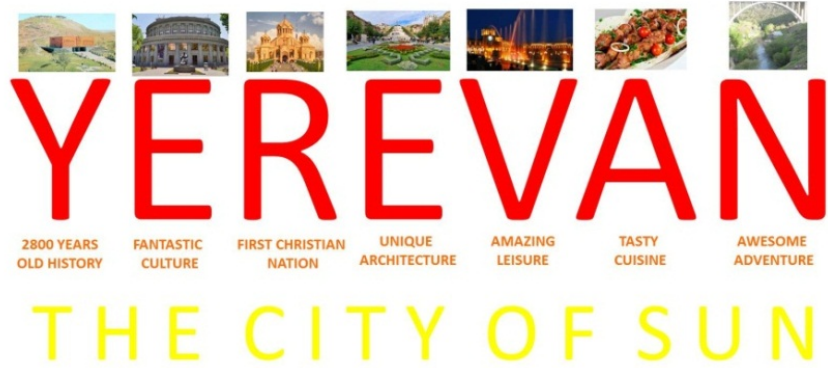
Figure 6. Touristic brand of Yerevan
Source: the figure was processed by the author

Red stimulates to visit Yerevan. With orange were marked the main activities that can be seen or done in Yerevan, which complement the small pictures. In Yerevan, you can experience the breadth of 2800 years history and the faith of the first Christian nation, admire the unique culture and beautiful architecture, enjoy the delicious national cuisine and enjoy tremendous and diverse entertainment in the sunny city of Yerevan. Apart from that, another brand, without the pictures and actions of sites was offered to mention only «Yerevan – The City of Sun» in red and yellow colours (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Brand of Yerevan
Source: the figure was processed by the author

Figure 8. Brands of different cities
Source: images are taken from various web sites mentioned at the end of references

The brands of different cities showed in Figure 8. The basic principle of city branding is that it should be colourful and attractive, meaningful, presenting Yerevan as warm, sunny, hospitable and safe city. However, just developing a brand is certainly not enough. Comprehensive and complex steps are needed to improve and enhance the effectiveness of tourism marketing in Armenia. For carrying out excellent marketing performance, it is crucial to analyse the life cycle of the tourism area. In 1980 Richard Butler, studying the dynamics of tourism development, developed the model of tourism area life cycle.
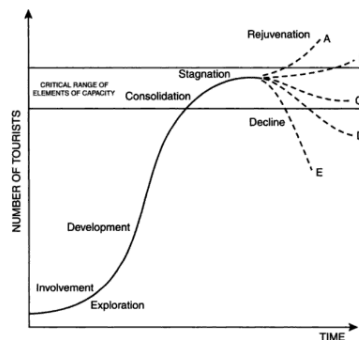

Figure 9. The model of tourism area life cycle by Butler
Source: Butler, 2006

In the model, the «first stage is exploration, which is characterized by a small number of tourists. In the involvement stage, some advertising to attract tourists is done. As a result, a tourist season may emerge. The third is the development stage which shows a good touristic market area, with good advertising. At peak season the tourists may exceed the number of the local population. At the consolidation stage, the increase rates will decrease, although tourists will exceed the number of populations. In the stage of stagnation, the highest number of tourists will have been reached. There may be problems concerning environmental, social and economic issues. Although the area will have a good image, however, it will no longer be trendy. In the stage of decline, the area may not compete well and will have decline and may be used mainly for weekend trips. At the same time, rejuvenation maybe by doing crucial changes, processing new products» (Butler, 2006). Considering the current state and development rates of the Armenian tourism industry the conclusions as follows: Armenia, as a tourist destination, is still between the stages involvement and development, when marketing and advertising efforts are being made to attract tourists, infrastructures are starting to develop.

Conclusions. Tourism destination marketing differs from the usual marketing of products and services, as destinations have evolved over the years, centuries, have an established image and identity due to historical, geographical, cultural, and other factors that cannot be easily changed in line with market demands. The destination attracts tourists not just as a physical place but with its sights, natural and cultural objects, infrastructures, accessibility, types of activities that the tourist can engage in during the visit. For the valid promotion of the destination, it is remarkable how a potential tourist perceives it. Destination marketing and branding are, therefore, crucial for the successful promotion of that place and for creating a positive image in the tourist consciousness. One of the critical steps in the development of tourism in Armenia is marketing, which should effectively promote Armenia as a beautiful tourism destination, creating an attractive image for tourists. The analysis in the paper shows the main gaps in tourism marketing in Armenia. As a result of the analysis, some steps are suggested, which will raise the effectiveness of tourism marketing in Armenia:

1. The existence of official site of tourism in Armenia is an advantage. However, there is a lack of comprehensive information about all tourism assets. Thus, adding information in the site and making it available also in other languages will promote sphere development.

2. Making a tourism brand of the country and using it for attracting international tourists (some suggestions were made in the article by the author for Armenia and its capital Yerevan).

3. Involve influencers and use word of mouth and buzz marketing techniques. It will be more useful to organize advertisements featuring world-famous people who can present tourism assets in Armenia. Directly or indirectly contribute to raising Armenia's awareness (in recent years, for example, prominent Armenians Kim Kardashian, Henrikh Mkhitaryan, Alexis Ohanyan, Serj Tankian directly or indirectly contribute to enhancing Armenia's recognition). In this case, buzz marketing and word of mouth marketing strategies should be applied, using the influence of well-known Armenians on their influencers and followers. It is fact that traditional marketing tools in the 21st century do not provide high efficiency, so the transition to more effective tools should be done: accomplish significant activities using social media marketing; accomplish innovations in the sphere and carry out differentiated marketing for target markets.

Thus, as a conclusion it may be stated that for the development of tourism marketing in the Republic of Armenia, it is essential to identify the motivations of tourists and to develop tourism product based on tourists' needs and the potential of tourism resources, to separate target market segments, to implement targeted marketing steps in different markets, to implement steps relevant to the stages of the tourism life cycle, and to take measures for increasing the international potential and commercialization opportunities of the main types of tourism in the Republic of Armenia, etc.

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Підвищення ефективності туристичного маркетингу та брендингу: досвід Вірменії

Автором систематизовано аргументи та контраргументи у рамках наукової дискусії щодо туристичного маркетингу. Метою дослідження є підвищення ефективності туристичного маркетингу Вірменії на основі запропонованих методів нівелювання визначених недоліків у сфері туризму. Результати систематизації літературних джерел та практичних підходів щодо вирішення досліджуваної проблематики свідчать, що традиційно туристичний маркетинг розглядають у контексті задоволення потреб туристів. Автором визначено, що розроблення ефективної маркетингової стратегії є основою розвитку туризму в країні. Розвиток Інтернету забезпечує поширення інформації про туристичний потенціал країни, що формує передумови для зростання кількості іноземних туристів. У статті зазначено, що туристичний бренд Вірменії відображає історію та культуру країни. У ході дослідження застосовано наступну логічну послідовність: 1) узагальнення наукових досліджень з метою уточнення сутності та значення туристичного маркетингу та брендингу; 2) аналіз основних напрямів діяльності туристичного маркетингу Вірменії; 3) надання пропозицій щодо покращення ефективності туристичного маркетингу Вірменії. Емпіричне дослідження проведено з використанням кількісних методів. Результати дослідження свідчать, що Вірменія має ефективну стратегію формування бренду країни, яка є ключовим фактором у досягненні високого рівня по інформованості іноземних туристів про туристичний потенціал країни. На основі аналітичних розрахунків автором встановлено, що ефективний маркетинг та брендинг являються підґрунтям розвитку туризму. При цьому автор визначено стадію туризму Вірменії відповідно до теорії життєвого циклу – проміжна стадія між залученням та розвитком. Результати дослідження мають практичне значення і можуть бути використані держаними органами влади при розробленні маркетингової та брендингової стратегії країни.

Ключові слова: туризм, маркетинг, брендинг, соціальні мережі, призначення, життєвий цикл туризму, стратегія.