

Features of the tourist enterprises image formation

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Abstract

The article defines the types of tourist enterprises depending on the duration of operation on the market and the features of activities to maintain and develop their image based on the empirical data obtained as a result of the tourist services market research in Yalta (Republic of Crimea). These are enterprises that are that for the first time begin to operate in the tourist market and form their image, enterprises that are active in the market, but do not form their image; enterprises that need to review or completely change their image building activities.

For each type of enterprise, the stages of the image formation, including the necessary marketing tools, have been developed and substantiated: for the first type of the enterprises – determination of the image audience, development and approval of corporate identity, implementation of internal and external image building, image management; for the second type – image audit, analysis of the causes of the loyalty loss, development and implementation of image events; for the third type – image audit, choice of approach to the image program implementation.

It is proved that the image of the tourist enterprise is characterized by a life cycle. It is proposed to consider four stages of the life cycle: formation; development; stability; blurring and loss. The characteristic features of the stages, management goals and the program of image building events have been determined.

Keywords: tourist enterprise, image, life cycle, image building, Crimea, image building program, image audience, image management, image audit

For citation: Kushkhova Z.V., Ryvkina O.L., Khrabrova N.I. (2021). Features of the tourist enterprises image formation. *Upravlenie / Management (in Russian)*, 9 (3), pp. 39–45. DOI: [10.26425/2309-3633-2021-9-3-39-45](https://doi.org/10.26425/2309-3633-2021-9-3-39-45)



Получено: 01.07.2021

Статья доработана после рецензирования: 05.08.2021

Принято: 19.08.2021

Особенности формирования имиджа туристских предприятий

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Аннотация

В статье на основе эмпирических данных, полученных в результате исследования рынка туристских услуг г. Ялты (Республика Крым), определены типы туристских предприятий в зависимости от продолжительности функционирования на рынке и особенностей деятельности по поддержанию и развитию их имиджа. Это предприятия, впервые начинающие функционировать на туристском рынке и формировать свой имидж; предприятия, активно действующие на рынке, но не формирующие свой имидж; предприятия, которым необходимо пересмотреть или полностью изменить имиджбилдинговую деятельность.

Для каждого типа предприятий разработаны и обоснованы этапы формирования их имиджа, включая необходимый маркетинговый инструментарий: для первого типа – определение аудитории имиджа, разработка и утверждение фирменного стиля, осуществление внутреннего и внешнего имиджбилдинга, управление имиджем; для второго типа – аудит имиджа; анализ причин потери приверженности; разработка и реализация имиджевых мероприятий; для третьего типа – аудит имиджа; выбор подхода к реализации имиджевой программы.

Доказано, что имидж туристского предприятия характеризуется жизненным циклом. Предложено рассматривать четыре стадии жизненного цикла: формирование; развитие; устойчивость; размытие и потеря. Определены характерные особенности стадий, цели управления и программа мероприятий имиджбилдинга.

Ключевые слова: туристское предприятие, имидж, жизненный цикл, имиджбилдинг, Крым, программа имиджбилдинга, аудитория имиджа, управление имиджем, аудит имиджа

Для цитирования: Кушхова З.В., Рывкина О.Л., Храброва Н.И. Особенности формирования имиджа туристских предприятий//Управление. 2021. Т. 9. № 3. С. 39–45. DOI: 10.26425/2309-3633-2021-9-3-39-45

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Introduction

The modern intensive development of tourism leads to increased competition in the market of tourism services, which calls for the search for and development of sustainable competitive advantages of tourism enterprises. One of these advantages is the positive image formed in the process of image building. However, for different tourist enterprises, this process has its own specifics. It depends on the attention paid to the image development in the tourist enterprise management and the stage of the image life cycle. Therefore, the purpose of the article is to study the features of the tourist enterprises image formation taking into account these factors.

Materials and methods

The study of the features of the tourist enterprises image, as well as the process of its formation and development, has been carried out on the basis of a monographic survey results using the questionnaire method of marketing service specialists of the tourist enterprises in Yalta (Crimea) as part of the study [Khatikova, 2010].

Six tourist operators and more than thirty hosting facilities have been operating in the city at the moment of the research holding. Five tourist operators and ten hosting facilities operating in the region of Big Yalta at different life cycle stages have been chosen for estimation of the efficient image management organisation.

These tourist enterprises are officially specialized in different types of tourism, and have different infrastructure, capabilities and range of optional services, price policy, management organization structure; hotel enterprises have different star-rating. Tourist market competition is performed at both – at the level of formed image and the level of gaining the favor and loyalty of the image audience.

Quality estimation was performed based on estimation criteria offered by A.P. Durovich [2015] and reworked based on specifics of the issue under study (competence, reliability, empathy, accessibility, understanding, communication, confidence, safety, courtesy, tangibility, competitiveness, quality, price, versatility, creativity, impression, and commitment). Forty three people under survey were offered to evaluate the level of each parameter achievement based on the professional activity experience, as well as services consumption on the grounds of the modified Likert scale application.

Theoretical review

Many domestic and foreign scientists have been engaged in the study of the problems of tourist enterprises image formation. Theoretical issues of the essence of image building and approaches to its management are

reflected in the scientific works of G.G. Pocheptsov [2001], A.Y. Panasyuk [2009], Y.I. Palekha [2005], J.-P. Boduan [2001], G. Dowling [2002], A. Bontour and J.-M. Leyu [2008], R. Abratt and N. Klein [2012], R.J. Brodie et al. [2009], J.T. Campbell et al [2012], G.R. Davies et al [2010], K. Lew et al [2015], J. Viglia et al [2016], A.P. Durovich [2015], V.P. Scaramanga [2011], E.A. Dzhandzhugazova [2011]. At the same time, most researchers characterize the features of the image building process at the stage of opening a tourist enterprise, and the specifics of image building activities at all subsequent stages of its life cycle are not given due attention.

Results and discussion

According to the study results of the image building activities features of tourist enterprises in Yalta, they have been combined into three groups:

1. Enterprises starting functioning in the tourist market for the first time, and forming their image.
2. Enterprises active in the market but not forming their own image.
3. Enterprises in need to review or completely change the image building activity.

Let us consider the proposed recommendations on the content of the stages of the tourist enterprises image forming process for each of the selected groups.

Stages of the image forming process for the tourist enterprises starting to operate in the tourism services market

The main stages of the image forming process for the enterprises that are just starting to operate on the tourist service market are:

- determining the image audience;
- development and approval of the enterprise's corporate identity;
- implementation of internal image building;
- implementation of external image building;
- image control.

At the first stage of the image building process, the image audience is determined, meaning the groups of people who plan to form a certain opinion about the enterprise [Beaudoin, 2001]. Groups of people identified on the basis of different characteristics should be investigated in terms of determining the most suitable for cooperation and service by a particular enterprise. In our opinion, for enterprises just starting activities in the tourism services market, image audience groups should include: the staff of the tourism enterprise itself, its consumers and business partners. At the same time, it is important to note that determining the image audience is not a one-time event carried out only at the stage of the enterprise formation, it is a constant process aimed

at identifying the most attractive audience groups for it, which is caused by the high dynamics of the tourism industry, as well as a possible change of priorities for the enterprise development. Thus, the number of image audience groups can expand, which will positively affect the image activities implementation.

The second phase involves development, implementation and use of branding and its visual attributes. The manifestation of corporate identity should be reflected in all information originating from the tourist enterprise in order to form a visual associative perception of its image in the audience consciousness [Durovich, 2015].

At the third stage, in the process of internal image building of the tourist enterprise, the main attention should be paid to the development and implementation of corporate culture and philosophy, which include not only the visual characteristics of the enterprise, but also reflect its moral, ethical and organizational norms and values, the maintenance and execution of which determines the effectiveness of image measures [Khatikova and Ryvkina, 2020].

At the fourth stage, as part of the tourist enterprise external image building process, the main attention should be paid to PR and advertising. Active direct marketing should involve e-mailing potential business partners about the creation, goals, and general strategy of the enterprise; holding PR events on the occasion of its opening, introduction of new services, honoring partners. In advertising, you need to pay special attention to the uniqueness of the services offered, as well as visualization of the image, by using high-quality printing, advertising and souvenir products.

Image management as the final stage of its formation process at the newly opening tourist enterprise provides for mandatory strict compliance with the promises of the tourist enterprise to the image audience (in relation to the offered range of services and their quality) and their subsequent implementation. Otherwise, the company may encounter a problem of expectations and perceptions mismatch, which may entail problems in the quality of image management and in the future may lead to its possible complete change. Or, the company will be forced to carry out a complete restructuring, associated with both significant material costs and the problems of introducing and developing a new image.

The presented process of forming the image of a tourist enterprise, which is just beginning to develop the tourism services market, can create the basis for the development of its sustainable competitive advantage.

Stages of the image forming process for the tourist enterprises active in the market, but not implementing image formation measures

The modern tourist market of Yalta is also represented by enterprises that operate for a long period of time,

but have never implemented special measures to form an image. The reason for this is the lack of understanding or misunderstanding by the enterprises management of the importance of both the economic and social benefits of such activities. However, the strengthening of competition in the tourism services market and the emergence of new enterprises with a high level of service on it, make it necessary to solve the problem of revising the marketing policy of long-functioning tourism enterprises from the point of view of their image strengthening.

For such enterprises, the image building process includes the following stages: image audit; analysis of reasons for commitment loss; development and implementation of image activities.

The first stage of the image building process is conducting image audit. It is extremely necessary, since, despite the fact that targeted image creation activities have been not carried out, the audience has formed a spontaneous image portrait of the enterprise, which is not always positive. In this regard, the image audit should be a comprehensive survey of the level of associative perception of the tourism service enterprise image by the audience of image, loyalty and commitment to it, sources of image value, from the point of view of both the enterprise and its audience. In order to ensure the completeness and reliability of the image audit results, the tourist enterprise must also analyze the budget allocated for such measurements and its structure [Khatikova, 2009].

The audit results will make it possible to draw conclusions about the further image building focus.

If the revealed level of loyalty and commitment of the audience to the tourist enterprise image is high, the main goal of the subsequent image events will be to strengthen and confirm the positions won by him. In such a situation, the tourist enterprise is recommended to stimulate sales through bonus programs, promotions for consumers, partners, and staff. And further improvement of its marketing policy will allow it to maintain its developed niche, despite the emergence of new competitors, anticipating their desire for leading it.

If the results of the image audit show a complete lack of loyalty and loss of commitment to the tourist enterprise on the part of the image audience, it is recommended to identify the reasons. Audit experts should conduct a detailed factor analysis of the possible reasons for the loss of a positive image in the minds of the target group of the image audience. Otherwise, standard targeted image building activities can not only be ineffective, but also worsen the current situation. A detailed analysis will identify the level of commitment as well as the availability/absence of the possibility to increase it. According to experts, if the level of commitment to the tourist enterprise image, revealed during the image audit,

falls within the range of 60 – 100 %, then the use of image events is a necessary and obligatory condition of its marketing activity [Ries and Trout, 2012].

As for the development and implementation of image events as the last stage of image building activities for tourism enterprises of the second group, they are advised to contact professional image makers and PR agencies to achieve maximum results. Independent action, at best, will not change the current state of affairs [Palekha, 2005]. Despite the fact that professional services of image building can be cost-intensive, however, the subsequent effect of the professionally formed positive image of the tourist enterprise will allow it to recoup all its efforts over time. In addition, any manager must understand the need to constantly maintain and develop the image of the tourist enterprise due to its changes as an adaptive reaction to the rapidly developing tourist market in modern conditions.

Stages of the image forming process for the tourist enterprises that need to revise or completely change the image building program

The results of empirical studies have shown that among the tourist enterprises that have been operating in Yalta market for a long time, those that need a significant change in the implemented image-building program should be singled out separately. The reasons for the revision of the image formation policy may be:

- ineffective image activities carried out by a tourist enterprise;
- inconsistency of the formed image of the tourist enterprise with the set goals and objectives of its image building;
- obsolescence of the formed image.

The proposed set of image activities can be applied in each of these cases. Such results of image activity are not inevitable, but pose a constant threat.

The image building process for such enterprises is proposed to be formed from the following two stages: image audit; choice of the image program implementation approach.

The first stage of the image building process, as for enterprises of the second group, is the image audit, which can be carried out in the same ways. As a result of the audit, image makers develop recommendations for the tourist enterprise management to develop its image. Four approaches to such development are possible.

The first approach is the development and implementation of a plan to “rejuvenate” the image. It can be applied if, as a result of the image audit, sufficient image potential has been identified, and therefore the possibility of image measures active use [Bontour, 2008]. The plan begins with a study of the tourist enterprise

and its image awareness, respectively. The purpose of such a study is to establish the presence of associative perception with the enterprise image, both in the image audience and in the target audience. The plan begins with a study of awareness of the tourist enterprise, respectively, and its image. If the results of this study indicate the absence of an associative chain in the consciousness of the audience, and the communicative effect gives its results, it is necessary to evaluate the nature of associations and their strength. Experts argue that if residual awareness is 10 %, then the image, through its management measures, is rejuvenated or restored; if 30 % – image needs urgent management [Ries and Trout, 2012].

An important prerequisite for the successful implementation of the first version of the development of the tourist enterprise image is the availability of the necessary professional experience and knowledge of image makers to identify the potential of its image. In some cases, the rejuvenation plan can be lengthy and complex, but everything focuses on assessing the ratio of the required investments to recreate a positive image in the minds of the image audience and the expected final financial results from them. The main condition of the image rejuvenation is the preservation of essential values and the individuality of the enterprise unchanged throughout the entire period of image events.

The second approach to image development is profit-oriented. It is acceptable for those tourist enterprises whose image audit has showed the presence of a certain, but insufficient to rejuvenate, potential. In this case, image events undergo significant changes. And the positive image in the mind of the audience of the image remains until it disappears on its own.

The third approach to image development is rejection. It is relevant if the results of the tourist enterprise image audit indicate that the positive associations’ image is no longer formed in the audience consciousness, and those the past ones are erased, and the enterprise image is destroyed. At the same time, image neutralization should also be carried out by specialists in the field of image building. The image that did not meet expectations should be replaced by a new one, completely different from the previous one. It is desirable that the measures for the formation of the image and its implementation are shock-induced in order to make the image being formed not associated with the old, crashed one.

The fourth approach to image development is a management change. Significant mistakes made by the tourist enterprise managers may lead to the fact that the goals of image management will not be achieved. In some organizations, despite the developed and approved image building program, these activities are not implemented [Ryvkin and Khatikova, 2019]. The management

motivates this by the lack of financial and other funds for the image development [Dzhandzhugazova, 2011]. The result of such inaction can be complete loss of recognition of the tourist enterprise among potential and real consumers, loss of trust on the part of business partners, decrease in the level of staff remuneration and loss of their interest in work. Important criteria for selecting new top managers should be professionalism and ability to quickly, flexibly and adequately respond to changing market conditions in the tourism industry. After the management change, we should expect strengthening the image position of the tourist enterprise by implementing a new image building program. Thus, the content of the stages of the process of the tourist enterprises image formation depends both on duration of their operation on the tourist services market and on the peculiarities of the activities to maintain and develop their image.

In addition, another significant condition for the success of the process of tourist enterprises image building is the consideration of the stage of their image life cycle.

Since the image of the tourist enterprise is an element of its marketing complex, therefore, in our opinion, the concept of the life cycle can be applied to it, identical to the way it is used in relation to the enterprise itself or its product [Khatikova and Ryvkina, 2019].

Given the specifics of the tourist enterprise image, the author’s approach to the composition of the stages of its life cycle is proposed, which includes: the image formation, its development, stability, blur/loss. At each stage

of the life cycle of the tourist enterprise image, it is proposed to implement appropriate measures as part of the image building process [Khatikova and Ryvkina, 2019].

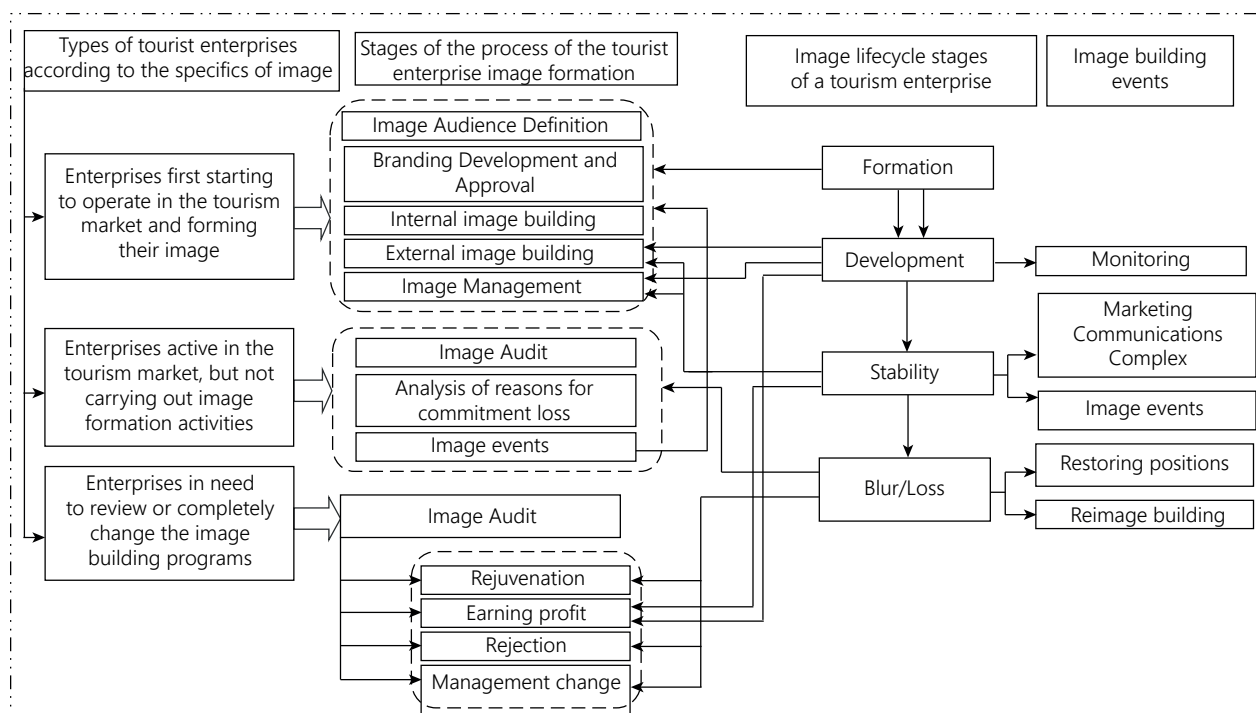
It is important to note that there is a close relationship between the proposed stages of the image formation program of three types of tourist enterprises and the developed stages of the life cycle of the tourism enterprises image (Fig. 1). By combining the sets of proposed image events, the tourist enterprise has the opportunity to carry out effective activities to form and develop an image at each stage of the image life cycle and quickly respond to possible unplanned changes in the image building program.

Conclusion

Summarizing, it should be noted that the process of the tourism enterprises image formation may differ significantly. The specifics of this process, its structural components, stages of implementation and their content depend, according to the results of the analytical study, both on the type of enterprise depending on the experience of its functioning on the market and the policy of image building, and on the stage of the life cycle of its image.

Yalta tourist services market has three types of tourist enterprises, depending on the experience of operation and the image building program:

- enterprises just starting to work in this market, therefore only beginning to form their own image;
- enterprises active in the tourism market, but are not engaged in image building;



Source: [Khatikova, 2010]

Fig. 1. The process of tourist enterprise image formation

• enterprises in need to change or completely revise the image building program.

For each type of enterprise, the stages of their image formation process, including the necessary marketing tools, have been developed and substantiated.

The work proved that the image of the enterprise as an element of its marketing complex is characterized by a life cycle.

Four stages of the life cycle of the tourist enterprise image are proposed and their characteristic features are

determined. For each stage of the life cycle, management goals and tasks have been developed, an appropriate program of image building activities has been presented.

The practical significance of the proposed approach to the formation of the image of the tourist enterprise, taking into account the peculiarities of its functioning and the stage of its image life cycle, is to ensure the focused management of the image as an intangible strategic asset of the tourism enterprise and to create a sustainable competitive advantage based on it.

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