

## COMPARISON OF THE TOURISM POTENTIAL OF BALTIC COUNTRIES AND HUNGARY

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to compare the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) and Hungary's economic and social terms in the period from 2004 to 2015, with an emphasized character in the tourism processes. Each of the four countries joined to the European Union (2004). The 2008 economic crisis seriously affected these areas at both national and regional levels. We try to find the answer to what kind of processes took place in the economy and in tourism; and what kind of role has the regional marketing toolbar in each countries' prosperity; and it is still possible to enhance the affirmation of the tourism potential with the online marketing tools. **KEYWORDS:** *world economic crisis, tourism, online marketing.*

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### Introduction

The main objective of the study is to detection the effects of the economic crisis of the Baltic States and Hungary, on the other hand to make comparative analysis in the field of the tourism potential. The used methodology was to analyze the statistical data and the literature synthesis.

In our opinion, the Baltic States have considerable tourism potential, as Hungary, but the role of tourism could be even more strengthen enhance with the use of online marketing tools. Each of the Baltic States and Hungary, most tourists turn up in the capital city, besides in the more considerable tourist attractions offering regions. In Hungary, such popular areas like these are the surroundings of the Lake Balaton and the bigger cities. According to our opinion the tourism potential of Baltic stated and Hungary will be stronger if the countries use more online marketing tools. The countries have different economic background but the tourism sector is very important for each country.

The Baltic States put the emphasis on to the Scandinavian virtues – cleanness, nature, relaxation – but all try to call the attention for itself with some specialties. Lithuania's slogan is: "Feel it, love it." with a spirit of special programs are also offered: for example, it is possible to travel over Vilnius by hot-air balloon. Estonia is proud of the WHO survey; according to it, Tallin is the world's best air city. In one of the new museum of Riga the guests are greeted with the official cocktail of Latvia, the Clavis Riga ([www.turizmusonline.hu](http://www.turizmusonline.hu)).

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## 1. Analysis of the economic and social background, particularly during the economic crisis

The literature called the suddenly increasing economy of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as a “Baltic miracle”. “The most important peculiarity of development path of the Baltic States, that getting over the crisis situations of the 1990 decade, in the 2000 years outstanding, after the 2004 accession they could achieve even more accelerated growth rate” (Meisel, 2009: 12). High inflation is threatened the Baltic States due to the high GDP growth, the 2008 economic crisis quickly caused quite severe damage to both the economic and in the society.

Before the eruption of the economic crisis it could be felt the unsustainable of the situation: (1) the lack of balance of payments, (2) low economic activity, (3) the lack of the increase of productivity because of the increase of the income, (4) the low standard of the savings, which resulted in credit spiral. It was foretold that the crisis would cause serious problems in the economy (Mező, Bagi, 2012).

To the overview of the Baltic States’ economic situations the GDP per capita data was used to help (Figure 1). The break caused by the 2008 economic crisis can be clearly seen in the data series. In all three countries the crisis caused such a recession which can only be generated a more considerable economic growth from 2012. If a lineal regression function is constructed onto the data series, it becomes clear that the steepness of Hungary’s trend line is  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the steepness of the Estonian trend line. Hungary’s economic performance lagged behind the Baltic States, since we were not able to reach the situation prior to the crisis in 2013. Among the examined countries the living standard was the highest in Estonia of all, in 2014 with 15.000 Euros/capita value, in Hungary this value was 10.500 Euros / capita.

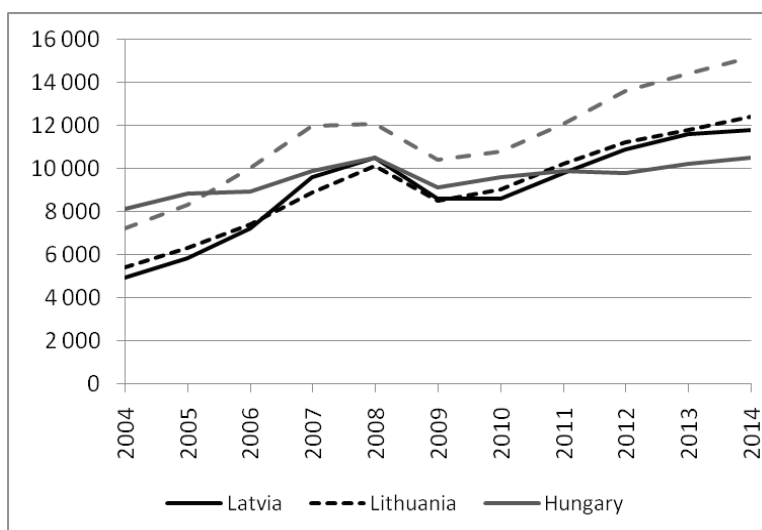


Figure 1. Changes in GDP per capita (euro/capita PPS) between 2004–2014

Source: Own work based on Eurostat data

We analyzed the state budget deficiency (Figure 2). In the case of the Baltic States before the periods of the economic crisis the deficit of the general government was (the surplus budget of Estonia is visible between 2004–2008) under the relevant Maastricht criteria of 3 %. The state budget deficiency as a result of the crisis in Latvia and Lithuania reached almost 9 % in 2009, so the EU Council put these countries under an excessive deficit procedure due to the euro adoption plan. As a result of the crisis management and the reduction of the deficit the euro became the official currency from 2011 in Estonia, from 2013 in Latvia, and from 2015 in Lithuania.

In Hungary the general government deficit was significant in the period of 2004–2008. It was close to 10 % in 2006, and thanks to the targeted fiscal policy during the economic crisis and after that, the state budget deficit was kept at 4.5–5 % and from 2012 it was 3 % according to the Maastricht criteria (in 2004

it was 2.5 %). However, this price is serious, cuts and extra taxes were introduced. In Hungary, not the euro is the legal currency yet, that is why the government considers of the Maastricht aim value's compliance.

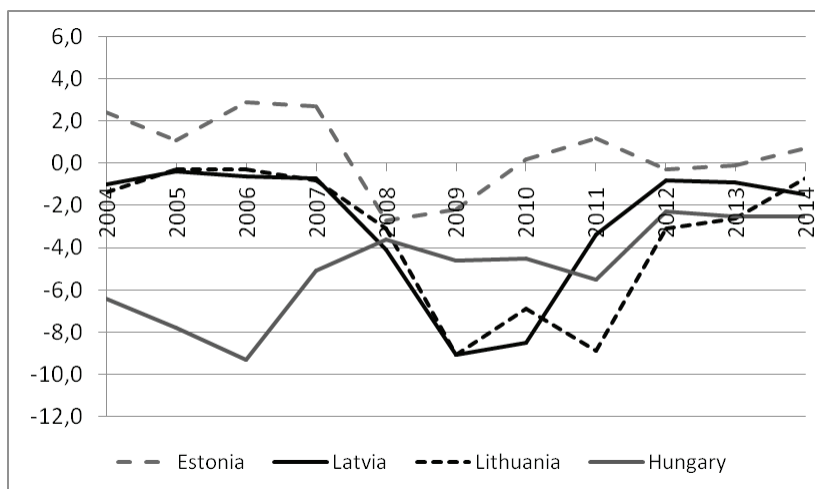


Figure 2. Developments in the general government deficit (in % of GDP)

Source: Own work based on Eurostat data

The analysis of the unemployment rate considered necessary (Figure 3), as the economic crisis quite deeply affected on the labour market in the Baltic States. The labour market is almost immediately responded to the crisis, in the first quarter of 2008 it was between 5–6 % in the Baltic States, but it started to increase in the third quarter of 2008 and the end of 2009 in all three countries exceeded the 15 % (Mező, Bagi, 2012).

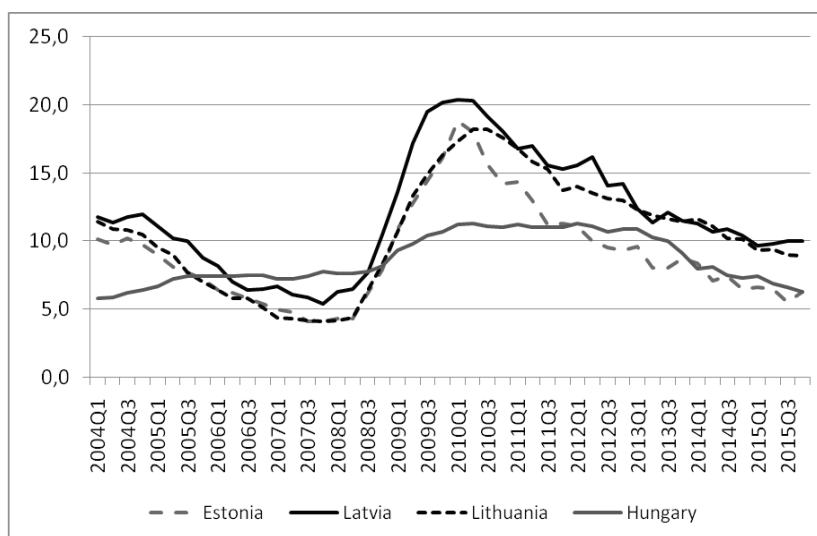


Figure 3. Changes in unemployment rate (%) between 2004 Q1 – 2015 Q4

Source: Own work based on Eurostat data

Based on the series nearly 20 % unemployment was measured between the first quarter of 2009 and the third quarter of 2010. On the other hand, the economic crisis did not affect the Hungarian labour market so deeply. According to Eurostat data, the highest unemployment rate was 11.5 %, while the NUTS 2 measured a value around 17 % in the Northern Hungarian and Northern Great Plain regions, the situation is similar in Latvia region where the unemployment rate was 10 % in 2010. The Baltic States relatively quickly got out from the recession labour market with a well – structured employment policy.

We analyzed the number of employees' evolution in the national economy per quarter (Figure 4), the first quarter of 2008 taken as 100 %. It can be seen that the most considerable decline was in Latvia, where the employed proportion fell at 78–83 % compared to the first quarter of 2008. In the Baltic States the number of employees' decrease was more significant, while in Hungary this decline was 2–3 % compared to the base year. From the first quarter of 2013 the proportion of the employees was growing dynamically in the national economy (this may be partly due to the classification of the number of the public employees to the employed).

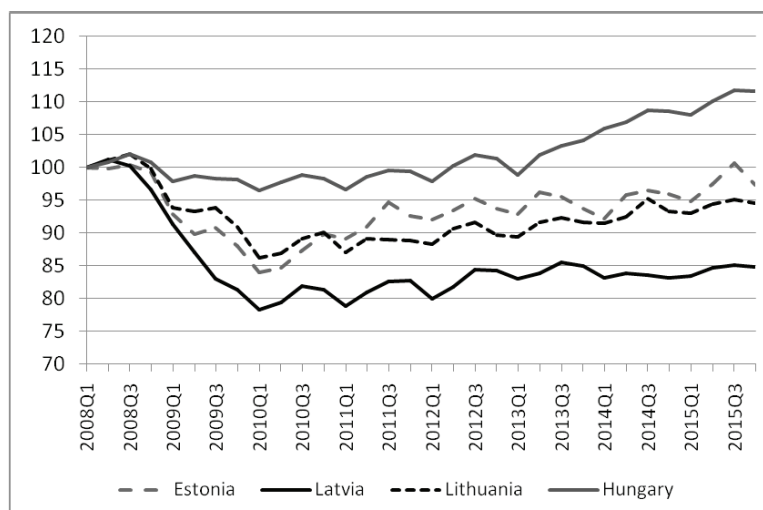


Figure 4. Changes in the number of employees (%) between 2008Q1 – 2015Q3! (2008Q1 = 100 %)

Source: Own work based on Eurostat data

We think that the economic crisis has caused a permanent breakaway for the Baltic States and Hungary compared to the more developed Western European states.

## 2. Analysis of the tourism potential of the Baltic States and Hungary

The tourism is a significant economic section in the examined countries, where we see further unexploited opportunities. We analysed the evolution of the number of employees in the tourism sector quarterly, considering the first quarter of 2008 data as 100 % (Figure 5). The seasonal fluctuations are outlined on the graph well; at the same time it is perceptible that the decline was more considerable in the case of the Baltic States than in Hungary. In Latvia there was 23 % decline at the beginning of 2011. From the second quarter of 2013 in Hungary the staff numbers of employees in the tourism began to increase, that it means approximately more than 33.000 employed people by the end of 2015 than at the beginning of 2008. This value was more with 6.000 people in Estonia, in Latvia it was less than 1.000 people and in Lithuania did not change.

The tourism potential of the examined region can be described by the number of the guest nights stayed at the commercial accommodation (Figure 6). The number of the guests' nights distorted, as the population number and the size of the countries are not the same, so the previous year's data taking as the 100 % can be seen the changing tendency. The year 2009 was the low point for each countries, the commercial accommodation's service fell back with 27.4 % in Lithuania, 21.6 % in Latvia, 10.4 % in Estonia and 6.3 % in Hungary. In 2011 the measure of the change was positive, at the same time in 2012 in Lithuania to the previous yearly's turnover very impressive 175.7 % increasing could be reached (while in 2011 3 266 858 guest nights were spent in Lithuania, until in 2012 5741252 guest nights were spent). Similarly high value was reached by Hungary in 2012 (119.2 % increase over the previous year). After the economic crisis, apart from the above mentioned outstanding data, significant change did not happen in the visitor traffic, stable and almost constant the rate of increase from year to year since 2011.

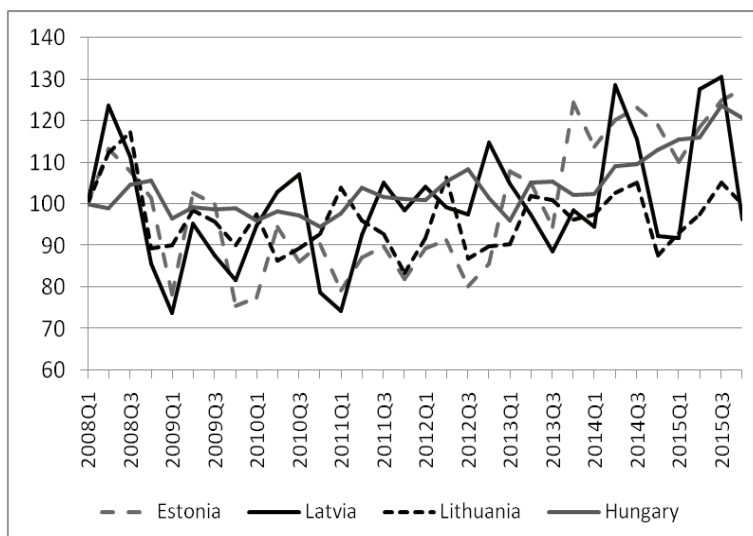


Figure 5. In the sector of accommodation and food service activities change in the number of employees (%) between 2008Q1-2015Q4 (2008Q1 = 100 %)

Source: Own work based on Eurostat data

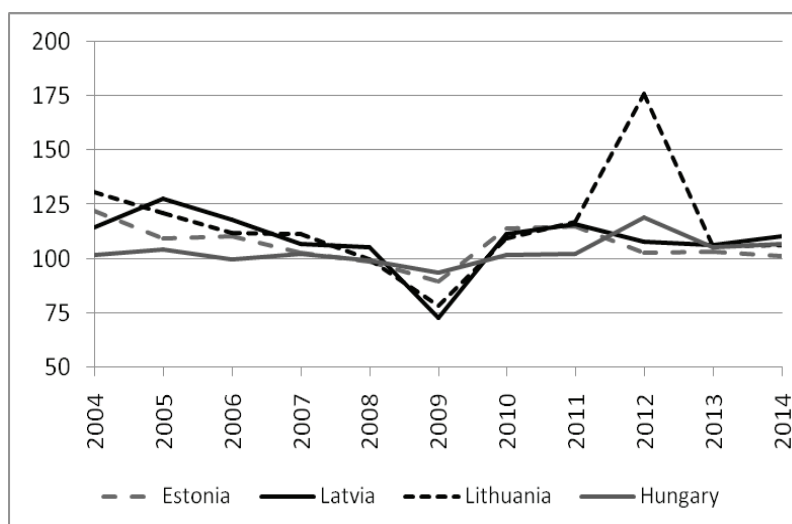


Figure 6. Commercial accommodation establishments (same period of previous year = 100 %)

Source: Own work based on Eurostat data

From the country publications of 2016 Travel & Tourism Economic Impact we collected the affected areas freshest (2015) data, so that we can demonstrate the extent of the tourism potential of the countries. Because of the geographical area of the Baltic states, the number of the guest nights are much smaller and also the GDP data, but the hierarchy's value of the WEF Global Competitiveness is thought-provoking. In this world hierarchy the Baltic States relatively got to a prominent place, while Hungary only reached the 60<sup>th</sup> place.

After the national level overview of the data it was important to consider which cities and regions are the most visited, can we talk about the sharp presence of the regional differences or neither. We illustrate the number of the guest nights at the commercial accommodation NUTS 3 regional breakdown of the year 2015, in the case of Lithuania only the year of 2013 data was available for us (Figure 7), so they were used to.

It can be seen that the capital area is the most visited in all countries. In the case of Estonia, in the metropolitan area – in the Põhja-Eestiarea – the number of the guest nights is the 52 % of the country's

guest nights (3 040 550 nights). In Latvia the spent guest nights in the area of Riga is the 62 % of the all nights (2 516 474 nights), in Lithuania the Vilnius apskritis region represents the 33 % of the all nights (1 852 519). However, in Hungary at the Budapest region also the 33 % represent of the all nights (8.152.775). The Hungarian Zala, Somogy and Veszprém counties also had a high attendance, and the Lithuanian Klaipėdos apskritis, and Alytaus apskritis.

Table 1. Main tourism indicators

Features (2015)	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Hungary
GDP: Direct Contribution	800 m € 3.9 %	1 006.3 m € 4.1 %	607.9 m € 1.7 %	4 308 m € 4 %
GDP: Total Contribution	3 100 m € 15.5 %	2 234.4 m € 9 %	1 654.1 m € 4.5 %	11 039 m € 10.4 %
Employment: Direct Contribution	25 500 jobs s 4.1 %	36 500 jobs 4.1 %	22 500 jobs 1.7 %	246 000 jobs 5.8 %
Employment: Total Contribution	96 000 jobs 15.3 %	79 000 jobs 8.9 %	59 000 jobs 4.4 %	428 500 jobs 10.1 %
Visitor Exports	1700 m € 10.3 %	973.5 m € 6.8 %	1 077.5 m € 3.7 %	6 126 m € 6 %
Investment	400 m € 7.3 %	278.1m € 4.9 %	235.6 m € 3.2 %	848 m € 3.8 %
World ranking: absolute	95	100	119	55
Word ranking: relative size	49	108	169	82
Global competitiveness index	29	42	41	60
Number of trips (2014)*	2 572 332	3 257 763	2 649 216	12 583 784
Number of nights spent (2014)*	5 809 464	4 158 418	6 465 004	26 053 873

Source: Own construction based on Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2016 documents

\*Eurostat database

After the analysis of the NUTS 3, we were curious about which settlements are the most popular tourist destinations. In Hungary, according to the Central Statistical Office 2015 data the most visited settlements include the number of guest nights in descending order: Budapest (8 712 571 night), Hévíz (923 539 night), Hajdúszoboszló (854 948 night), Siófok (712 098 night), Bük (672 076 night), Balatonfüred (591 362 night), Zalakaros (462 205 night), Sárovar (457 357 night), Eger (443 085 night), Debrecen, Gyula, Sopron, Győr, Szeged, Miskolc, Pécs, Zamárdi. These settlements are baths, county towns and cities with several spectacles. The most visited site is the capital city, where almost 10 times the number of guest nights is spent by the visitors than in the second most visited town. It clearly shows the capital's strong position, that not only in the tourism, but in most sections observable. In the case of Hungary we can express criticism that the strong capital orientation also applies in the tourism, as well as in the transport networks, labour market processes or commercial processes. At the same time, there are regions with a lot of tourist attractions outside the capital, and they could improve their attendance if they would use stronger regional tourism marketing.

In the case of Latvia known the 2015 data of the number of guest nights and thus the most visited settlements as follows: Riga (2 516 474 night), Jūrmala (515 400night), Liepēja (121 639 night), Ventspils (114 210 night), Daugavpils (54 702 night), Valmiera (36 454 night), Jelgava (25 317 night), Jēkabpils (17 724 night) (Latvijas Statistika, 2015). In Estonia, the order is the following on he basis of the 2015 data: Tallinn (2 790 993 night), Pärnu (705 446 night), Tartu (327 460 night), a többi városra nem volt elérhető adat (Eesti Statistika, 2015). (Such data in Lithuania is not found.)

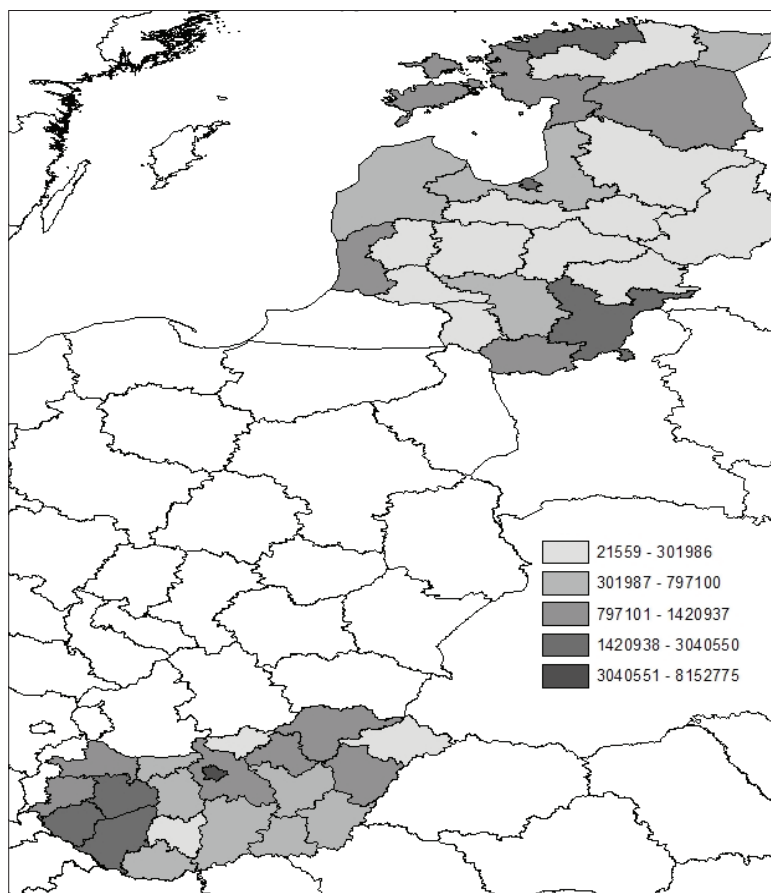


Figure 7. The Baltic States and Hungary visited NUTS III. level departments (the number of guest nights spent in commercial accommodation, 2015, data for Lithuania in 2013)

Source: Own compilation based on Eesti Statistika, Latvijas Statistika, Lithuanian Statistika, Hungarian Statistical Office data

### 3. Just places or tourist destinations?

There are lots of beautiful places in the world, but not all of them are tourist destination. What makes a country, a region attractive for tourists? In our opinion Kotler et al. (1993: 18) summarise the answer with their strategic place marketing model, which contains the following four factors:

1. “The planning of a correct mix of the community, local features and services”.
2. Developing attractive incentives for the users of these products and services, and current customers
3. The broadcasting of the products of the place and its services, sending to the consumers in the most efficient manner
4. The promotion of the place’s values and image in order for the potential consumers to be aware of the differential competitive advantages of the place in a full measure.

In order to develop a place into destination we have to take into consideration different factors (Figure 8). In the heart of the Figure, we can find the planning group with three actors: citizens, business community and government. Their involvement in a place marketing strategy is indisputable. Planning group has an effect on the marketing factors, like people and their life quality, attractions and infrastructure. In the wider target market we mean the tourist, new residents and corporate (manufacturers, investors, exporters) as well. A complex cooperation of the above mentioned actors is needed for this place marketing.

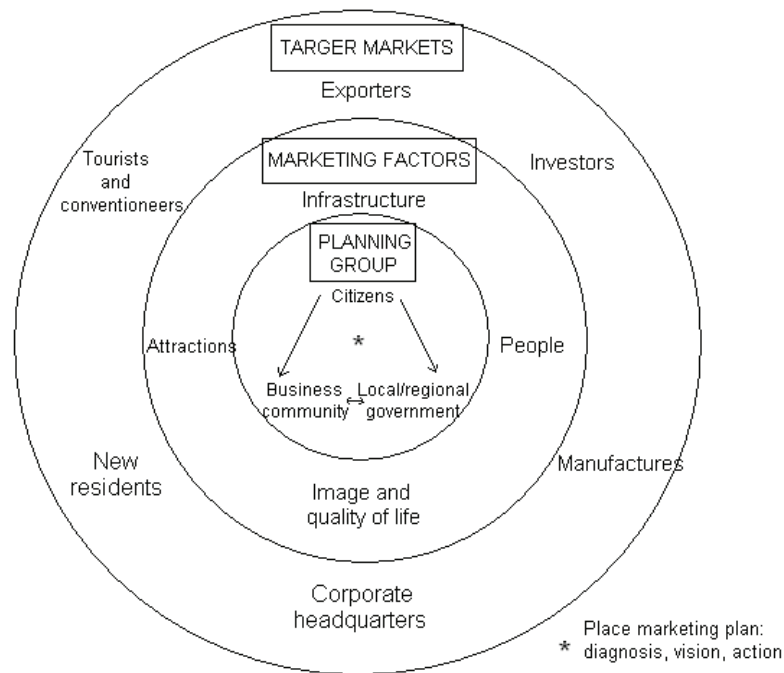


Figure 8. Strategic place marketing model

Source: Kotler et al. 1993

According to Jeuring (2015) the tourism marketing as a policy tool aims to influence representations of tourism destinations (Cousin, 2008; Kavaratzis, 2012).

City branding in case of Estonia is an actual topic nowadays. Determining the image has started in 2001, when Estonia has won the Eurovision Song Contest. The whole World picked up on this Baltic country. From 2001 till our days this process still operates. According to estonianworld.com in February 2016 marketers have designed 20 new logo proposals. In this logo, after the transition they emphasize the renewed status. Visitestonia.com reflects lots of opportunities to take part in the country, such as historical sightseeing, cultural programmes and events, sport activities, nature tours, gastronomically experiences, and last but not least health and wellness facilities. “e-Estonia is a digital society” slogan can attract young Traveller, by the way they built a part of a new target group. Tallinn has an excellent location and strength in the quality of business services.

After the economic downturn Latvia had to rebuild its image. In order to create a rebrand, in 2007 Anholt (branding expert) has made marketing researches. Due to his results a new slogan was born: “Latvia. Best enjoyed slowly.” Slowly means the slow rhythm of life. According to the Latvian Tourism Marketing Strategy 2010–2015 “Latvia is not and will never be a mass tourism destination”, so it is not an aim to increase the number of tourists, and overnights in an enormous way (Latvian Tourism Marketing Strategy). Latvia takes high efforts on city branding, and the new direction is a green and slowly country focusing on culture, natural beauty, active holiday, spa and wellness, cuisine, and medical tourism. Latvia is geographically bounded by Estonia and Lithuania, which is an advantage. Furthermore taxes are more favourable.

It is not easy to summarise the branding in case of Lithuania, while there is no general accepted existing logo, slogan, and target group. It seems to us, that Lithuania still searches its image. According to Markviciene’s work (2012) “in 2009 a government audit report was released which stated that the funds for Lithuania image formation were used irrationally and inefficiently”. Creating the city brand and image of Lithuania a place marketing strategy is necessary. Because of the uncertain economic situation of 1990–1993 “Lithuanian government decided to focus on the investment side of the image of Lithuania”. Nowadays one of the main target audiences is the medical tourists (BCC Paper, 2013). Lithuania’s infrastructure is excellent, and thanks to its location is close to Belarus and Poland.



With the common touristic destination management effort concerning the Baltic States, they can attract more tourists and investors (Vanaga, 2011; Labanauskaitė-Gedvilas, 2013). This is called competition from the two words: cooperation and competition at the same time. According to a situation analysis concerning place Branding and place promotion efforts in the Baltic Sea Region (2010) Estonia and Latvia started the cooperation with the campaign “One vacation – two countries” from 2009 to 2011. In 2010 Lithuania also joined to the new initiative called “Great Baltic Travel”. Tourists had to visit 10 places in each country, make and share their photos as evidence. Besides these projects, there are several ones, that focusing on economic recovering, competitiveness increasing and investors attracting (Andersson, 2010).

In order to develop a place (country, region, city) marketing strategy it is worth taking the following image – and brand building factors (Töröcsik-Somogyi, 2009: 22) into consideration.

Table 2. Image – and brand building factors

Nagasihma (1970)	Picture living in exchange of businessmen and consumers, reputation, the typical products of fame, stereotypes, the country, national characteristics, traditions, history and political background
Wish, Deutsch, Biener (1970)	Geographical conditions, economy, politics, culture
Rot, Romeo (1992)	Prestige, (natural products, brand perception), design, innovativeness, professionalism (eg. Diligence, hard work, thoroughness to detail cool...)
Graby (1993)	Physical elements and cultural elements, personal items, contact items, controlled items
Martin, Eroglu (1993)	Natural conditions, economic development, technological level, social background, features of people living there
Kotler et al. (1993)	Geographical features, history, art, music, citizens formed in people’s minds the ideas and opinions of all
Van Ham (2001)	Geographical features, history, ethnic motifs
Papadopulos (2002)	Strong stereotypes that influence the behavior of all possible target groups, largely situational judgment
Kleppe, Iver-sen, Stensaker (2002)	The sum of aesthetic and sensual qualities like experiences, beliefs, ideas, impressions, memories, things that person has a particular place.
Denig (2004)	History, culture and language of the country’s values
Jenes (2005)	Geographical and natural conditions, history, social factors, economic factors-commerce
Maurice (2007)	Geographical conditions, economy, politics, culture, climate perception, the size of the country, personal items, information obtained

Source: Own compilation based on Töröcsik-Somogyi (2009: 22)

There are two aspects concerning the Baltic States. On the one hand it is worth dealing with the inter-regional cooperation between the Baltic States, while together they can increase their competitiveness. Creating a common touristic program offering, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia could become a more attractive destination.

They have a macro-regional organisation CBSS (Council of the Baltic Sea States, which function is to increase cooperation between the Baltic Sea States. These States are: Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany (Tursie, 2015; Zitkus, 2013). The BSR (Baltic Sea Region) focuses on the common history (Hanseatic League), but we think that the identity of the Baltic States can lost beside the other countries, e.g. Germany, Sweden, that higher tourism potential has.

“Today, the countries in the Baltic Sea Region are the best examples of knowledge-based societies. The standard of knowledge and education is far above average. Nowhere else can the role of universities in developing an area by enhancing the economic, cultural, and societal progress be better observed than in this small region in the heart of Europe” (Baltic Study Net, 2016).

On the other hand these three countries are independent, and all of them have its own imagination about the different branding. That is why we would offering online destination marketing tools, for example a same structured homepage. That is why, let’s see what are the advantages of online travel organisation.

#### 4. Online benefits of travel agencies

With the help of the different online communicational devices, for example the web- and e-mail based devices; social media; advertising; programming options can help to achieve target specific marketing communications (Xiang-Gretzel, 2010; Buhalis-Law, 2008) In the Table 3, we summarize the on-line communication devices.

Table 3. Online communication tools

Online communication devices		
Web-based tools	E-mail based ads	Solutions appear in other programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• webpage</li> <li>• display advertisements</li> <li>• sponsorship</li> <li>• text ads</li> <li>• search ads</li> <li>• PR articles</li> <li>• video</li> <li>• Social Media Solutions</li> <li>• Classifieds</li> <li>• onlinemarketplaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• electronic direct mail</li> <li>• newsletters</li> <li>• Customer support e-mails</li> <li>• ad by e-mail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• instant messaging services</li> <li>• rss</li> </ul>

Source: Own work based on Berényi (2011: 158–177)

The proportion of the accommodation reserved traditionally in the travel agencies travels significantly dropped in the latter years compared to the reservations executed on the internet. The reason for this likely to experience the advantages during the on-line organization, which are described below:

1. Favourable price. The on-line travel organization often has a favourable price on the internet. The most expensive trip, room still unsold, so the travel agent is able to sell them even below the price to avoid the loss.
2. Time factor. On the one hand, we have the opportunity to do this activity in a suitable time for us, and we do not have to adapt to the travel agency opening hours. On the other hand, we can reserve in the last – minute, modify or cancel our stay, with which our degree of freedom can be further increase.
3. Available information. The websites’ available information is endless, resulting in a huge range of products. It is not a problem if we do not have familiarity with the place, because on these portals almost all hotels, tourist programs are available, as a result of it everyone can find for himself the best price-value proportion category. Additional information source is the consumer reviews who honestly write their experiences obtained on the given accommodation to the forums and the blogs. The assessment rates prepared by the consumers are used for this. We can get information on the basis of photographs and virtual tours, since we can feel ourselves in the hotel when we do not put our feet yet.

4. Easy comparison. We can set more rank opportunity for the accommodation, in which order we ask the personalized accommodation offer. This hierarchy can happen even the price, the type of the accommodation, equipment, supplies, or distance from the city centre, as well.
5. Application of Pictograms. Pictograms simplify and accelerate the understandings. Previously, they can only be seen in technical catalogues. The pictograms are exceptionally practical, what we could express with more sentences possibly, the image can be 1–1.

## Conclusions

The decreasing economic and tourism performance caused by the 2008 crisis can be boosted again with the additional exploitation of the tourism opportunities with the insurance of the systems of asset conforming to the consumer society's expectations better. On the basis of our judgement "the on-line" trend will continue in the field of tourism, with which it is necessary to keep step continuously. Nowadays, it does not mean competitive advantage; it is the condition of staying in the competition.

It is clear from the tourism destination management initiatives presented in this article that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are ready for the common developments, but at the same time they insist on their identity rightly. Therefore, such devices are worth to apply in which the virtues of each country are distinguished.

Estonia was the first, who started the city branding. The [visitestonia.com](http://visitestonia.com) website is perfect in appearance, content and clear. Fully serves the tourists, since the content of the information is complete, and the structure of it is very logical and user-friendly.

Latvia aimed at the "green" direction, which is in harmony of the present age with the trend of "back to the nature". The life rhythm sped up to so much that the consumers desire calmness in the untouched nature during their relaxation.

Lithuania comes close to the tourism sector from the view of the investors' point of view and it is primarily focused on the medical tourists. Baltic Sea Region are knowledge-based societies, thus talent attraction can be an aim, too. In this way tourism can be destination based on 3 pillars: travel and business, medical, and talent youth tourism.

In the on-line consumer purchase process, intangibility arising due to the nature of the services, we have to lay more emphasis on the prepared by the travellers.

These cover for the price-value proportion, the services, the comfort, the staff, accessibility and other factors. Beside the quantities assessment, travellers may also write their own opinion of which influencing effect can be felt during the organization of the trip. Information on the internet is fast, comfortable an up to date, while booking is free or in return for certain surcharge can be modify till the last minute, or it can be cancelled.

The integrated application of these devices is needed based on our judgement. During the on-line communication more targeted information flow realizes compared to the traditional marketing communication devices. For example, if somebody searches for Estonia, in the following few days, the coming advertisements during the internet browsing will be in connection with Estonia related to travel and accommodation offers.

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## TURIZMO GALIMYBIŲ BALTIJOS ŠALYSE IR VENGRIJOJE Palyginimas

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Santrauka

Šiuo tyrimu siekiama palyginti Baltijos valstybių (Estijos, Latvijos ir Lietuvos) ir Vengrijos ekonomines bei socialines sąlygas 2004–2015 metų laikotarpiu, akcentuojant turizmo procesus. Visos keturios šalys priklauso Europos Sąjungai, 2008 m. ekonominė krizė gerokai paveikė jas tiek nacionaliniu, tiek regioniniu lygmenimis. Ieškome atsakymų į klausimus, kokie procesai vyko ekonomikoje ir turizmo sektoriuje, kokį vaidmenį regionų rinkodaros priemonės turi kiekvienos šalies gerovei, ar vis dar galima didinti tu-

rizmo potencialą interneto rinkodaros priemonėmis. Iš šiame straipsnyje pateiktų turizmo vietovių valdymo programų paketų aišku, kad Estija, Latvija ir Lietuva yra pasirengusios bendram vystymuisi, kartu šios šalys primygtinai siekia išlaikyti savo tapatybę. Taigi verta taikyti priemones, kurios leis išskirti kiekvienos šalies privalumus.

Estija buvo pirmoji, pradėjusi miesto prekės ženklo kūrimą. Svetainė *visitestonia.com* puikiai apipavidalinta, aiški, turinys – prasmingas. Ji naudinga turistams, nes pateikta išsami informacija, svetainės struktūra logiška ir patogi vartotojui.

Latvijos pasirinkta „žalioji“ kryptis dera su šio amžiaus „atgal į gamtą“ tendencija. Gyvenimo ritmas yra tiek pagreitėjęs, kad vartotojai nori ramiai ilsėtis nepaliestoje gamtos aplinkoje.

Lietuva stengiasi į turizmo sektorių pritraukti kuo daugiau investuotojų ir pirmiausia orientuota į turistus, kurie nori gauti medicininės paslaugas (plastikos chirurgija, odontologija ir pan.).

Akivaizdu, kad šios trys Baltijos regiono šalys žinomos kaip žinių visuomenės šalys, turinčios pakankamą žinių ir gebėjimų bagažą, todėl ir turizmo kryptys yra ne tik kultūrinių ar gamtos objektų lankymas. Šiuo metu matomos turizmo plėtrios kryptys yra šios: kelionių ir verslo, medicinos ir jaunimo (kuriami turistiniai maršrutai, pramogos išskirtinai jaunimui). Be to, nustatyti nesklandumai perkant turizmo paslaugas internetu, dėl to reiktų kuo aiškiau apibrėžti, kokią paslaugą gaus vartotojas atvykęs į konkrečią šalį ar užsisakęs konkrečią paslaugą.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *pasaulinė ekonominė krizė, turizmas, internetinė rinkodara.*

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