

Irakli Abashidze

E-mail: irakli.abashidze02@gruni.edu.ge

Doctor of business administration, associate professor
Grigol Robakidze University
Batumi, Georgia

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0011-6279>

DESTINATION BRANDING FOR GAINING A COMPETITIVE EDGE IN THE GLOBAL TOURISM LANDSCAPE: INSIGHTS AND PROSPECTS OF THE GEORGIAN CASE

Abstract: Destination branding with its role in the international tourism landscape is a constantly evolving field of study. Effective branding can propel a country forward, significantly contributing to its economic development. Achieving success in this area necessitates meticulous planning and execution of marketing campaigns. However, increasing competition and global fluctuations highlight the need for comprehensive research to inform the practical implementation of successful destination branding strategies.

In the post-pandemic period, the global tourism landscape has shifted, presenting both challenges and opportunities for countries aiming to strengthen their destination brands. COVID-19 has redefined traveler preferences, with heightened emphasis on safety, authenticity, and experiential tourism. As countries like Georgia seek to establish a resilient position in the tourism market, adapting destination branding strategies to align with these evolving preferences is essential. The pandemic has also brought about a surge in digital engagement, offering new avenues for countries to reach and engage target audiences through online platforms. Additionally, in a post-COVID world, Georgia has the opportunity to differentiate itself by focusing on niche tourism sectors that align with emerging global travel trends. These shifts underscore the importance of crafting flexible and responsive branding approaches that can adapt to rapid changes, thereby providing a competitive edge in the international tourism arena.

The objective of this paper is to investigate destination branding, using Georgia as a case study in the post-pandemic period, to explore trends and insights with a focus on competition. Through literature review and observation, various aspects of the issue are analyzed, resulting in conclusive recommendations for enhancing Georgia's competitive advantage as a destination brand.

Keywords: Destination branding, Tourism marketing, Georgia

JEL classification: M31

ირაკლი აბაშიძე

ელ. ფოსტა: irakli.abashidze02@gruni.edu.ge

ბიზნესის ადმინისტრირების დოქტორი, ასოცირებული პროფესორი

გრიგოლ რობაქიძის სახელობის უნივერსიტეტი

ბათუმი, საქართველო

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0011-6279>

დესტინაციის ბრენდინგი გლობალურ ტურიზმში კონკურენტული უპირატესობის მოსაპოვებლად: საქართველოს მაგალითის მიმოხილვა და პერსპექტივები

აბსტრაქტი. დესტინაციის ბრენდინგი და მისი როლი საერთაშორისო ტურიზმში მუდმივად განვითარებადი კვლევის სფეროა. ეფექტიან ბრენდინგს შეუძლია ბიძგი მისცეს ქვეყნის ეკონომიკურ განვითარებას. ამ მიმართულებით წარმატების მიღწევა მარკეტინგული კამპანიების საფუძვლიან დაგეგმვას და განხორციელებას მოითხოვს. მზარდი კონკურენცია და გლობალური რყევები საფუძვლიანი კვლევების საჭიროებას განაპირობებს, რაც დესტინაციის ბრენდინგის სტრატეგიების პრაქტიკაში დანერგვისთვისაა აუცილებელი.

კოვიდ-პანდემიის შემდგომ პერიოდში გლობალური ტურიზმის ლანდშაფტი შეიცვალა, რაც ქვეყნებს უქმნის როგორც გამოწვევებს, ასევე შესაძლებლობებს. COVID-19-მა მნიშვნელოვნად შეცვალა მოგზაურთა დამოკიდებულებები, რომელთა შორის აღსანიშნავია მოთხოვნა უსაფრთხოების, ავთენტურობის და გამოცდილებით მდიდარი ტურიზმის მიმართ. საქართველოს მსგავსი ქვეყნებისთვის, რომლებიც ტურისტულ ბაზარზე მდგრადი პოზიციის დაკავებას ცდილობენ, აუცილებელია ბრენდინგის სტრატეგიების ადაპტირება ასეთ ცვალებად გარემოსთან. პანდემიამ ასევე განაპირობა ციფრული კომუნიკაციების როლის ზრდა, რაც ქვეყნებს ახალ შესაძლებლობებს აძლევს მიზნობრივ აუდიტორიებთან კომუნიკაცია ონლაინ პლატფორმების მეშვეობით უფრო ინტენსიურად დაამყარონ. გარდა ამისა, პოსტ-კოვიდურ პერიოდში, საქართველოს შესაძლებლობა აქვს თავი დაიმკვიდროს როგორც განსაკუთრებული ნიშის მექანე დესტინაციამ გლობალური ტურიზმის ბაზარზე. აღნიშნული ცვლილებები განაპირობებს ბრენდინგის მოქნილი მიდგომების აუცილებლობას, რაც საერთაშორისო ტურიზმის ბაზარზე კონკურენტული უპირატესობის მოპოვებას შეუწყობს ხელს.

სტატიის მიზანია დესტინაციის ბრენდინგის კვლევა საქართველოს მაგალითზე, ტენდენციების და კონკურენტუნარიანობის თვალსაზრისით პოსტ-პანდემიურ პერიოდში. ლიტერატურის მიმოხილვისა და დაკვირვების გზით გაანალიზებულია

საკითხის სხვადასხვა ასპექტები, რაც საფუძვლად უდევს დასკვნით რეკომენდაციებს საქართველოს როგორც დესტინაციის ბრენდის კონკურენტუნარიანობის ამაღლების შესახებ.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: დესტინაციის ბრენდინგი, ტურიზმის მარკეტინგი, საქართველო

JEL classification: M31

Introduction and review of literature

Driven by fierce competition in the global tourism and hospitality industry, destinations pursue brand recognition. Broadly defined, a destination brand signifies the destination's identity and uniqueness while conveying the promise of a memorable and distinctive travel experience (Ruiz-Real et al., 2020). For international travelers, a destination's brand image increasingly influences their emotions, associations, expectations, attitudes, decisions, behaviors, and feedback. This heightened influence emphasizes the growing importance of destination branding in a globalized and highly competitive tourism industry. One of the most important sources of competitive advantage is a destination's market uniqueness and visibility, which can be achieved through a well-implemented destination branding process (Miličević et al., 2016).

A country's positioning can be heavily influenced by its natural characteristics, including history, culture, and geopolitics. Brand management seeks to leverage these features, refine them, and potentially introduce new elements to build a unified brand image and reputation among target audiences. However, a brand's strength often lies in its focus on a specific niche and delivering a distinct value proposition that resonates with consumers. Effective destination positioning capitalizes on this principle, aiming to differentiate itself from competitors (Pike, 2012).

Stakeholder engagement in destination branding is of high importance. Local residents and entrepreneurs significantly constitute core brand elements (García et al., 2012). To a great degree, the local population acts as destination ambassadors, directly influencing visitor experiences. This inherent dynamism makes destination brand management a multifaceted endeavor, with a substantial portion of its processes lying outside the direct control of brand management entities.

A country's economic prosperity can be significantly influenced by its success in positioning itself as an attractive destination brand. This is particularly relevant for Georgia, where despite its size and economic base, the potential for developing a globally recognized destination brand and attracting international travelers holds immense promise. However, recognizing the economic, social, and environmental implications of tourism requires destinations to approach brand development and management with sensitivity and under careful guidance (Campelo et al., 2014). Considering the general vulnerabilities of the tourism industry to global processes like economic crises, political instability, climate change, and health concerns, it remains a high-risk sector. Nevertheless, for economies like Georgia, leveraging the potential of tourism through effective destination branding remains one of the important directions of their economic development strategies.

The COVID-19 pandemic stands as one of the most disruptive forces the global tourism industry has ever encountered. According to the World Tourism Organization, international tourism recorded its worst year ever on record; international tourism declined by 74% (UNWTO, 2021). Similar to other countries, Georgia experienced significant damage to its tourism sector due to imposed restrictions (Kvirkvelia & Tsitsagi, 2021). As the industry experiences transformations globally, it is necessary to elaborate strategies to mitigate risks and capitalize on this recovery. Thus, the issue of destination branding management is crucial for Georgia.

In marketing literature, the concepts of “destination branding” and “place branding” are closely interconnected, yet they possess distinct nuances. Place branding encompasses the application of brand strategy and marketing techniques to influence the economic, socio-political, and cultural development of cities, regions, and countries. Whereas, destination branding represents a specific facet of place branding, focusing on the perspective of the tourism industry (Hanna et al., 2021).

Simon Anholt's contributions to place and destination branding research are extensive and valuable. As he states, "Place branding is believed to be a way of making places famous" (Anholt, 2010). Zenker and Braun (2017) define a place brand as a network of associations within consumers' minds, shaped by the visual, verbal, and behavioral expressions of the place and its stakeholders (Zenker & Braun, 2017). Both definitions emphasize the core purpose of branding: forging a place's recognition and value in people's minds and influencing their decisions and behaviors.

Several key aspects contribute to successful destination branding efforts, as highlighted in marketing literature. Brand image, shaped by the associations consumers hold in memory, plays a crucial role (Almeyda-Ibáñez & George, 2017). These associations, in turn, significantly influence the overall brand experience. As a key determinant of visitor outcomes, including satisfaction, revisit intentions and recommendations, brand experience plays a pivotal role in shaping future visitor behavior (Barnes et al., 2014).

Brand authenticity is another important element in understanding destination branding theory. Its research is still in its infancy, and the concept still requires exploration. However, existing studies show that brand authenticity significantly influences brand-customer relationships, focusing on brand trust, brand attachment and brand love (Chen et al., 2020). Cultivating an authentic brand identity, one that genuinely reflects the essence and unique character of a destination, fosters closer connections with potential visitors, a sense of trust and emotional attachment.

The issue of sustainability is one of the most important aspects to research in destination branding, particularly in the context of competitive environments. Destination branding can only be sustainable when hosts, policy objectives and tourists' demands are in harmony (Zouganeli et al., 2012). Compliance of these factors constitutes a basis for the sustainable growth of a destination brand.

Marketing literature and research related to tourism development in Georgian is extensive. Nevertheless, there is a gap to be filled in the issues concerning destination branding in particular. Djakeli (2013) reviews Georgia's branding from various perspectives and emphasizes that a strong identity builds some incentives and opportunities for branding (Djakeli, 2013). Considering the

intense competition Georgia faces in the global tourism market, a more in-depth examination of this area is necessary.

Methodology

Observation and secondary data analysis were conducted. A literature review and processing of statistical data were utilized to underscore the main problem and draw relevant conclusions. The statistical data's trustworthiness and credibility are high, as they originate from official sources. Both qualitative and quantitative data were employed to explore various facets of the issue. A case study was undertaken to concentrate on the primary objective of the research: analyzing the competitive potential of destination branding in the global tourism landscape, focusing on the Georgian example. The case study is exploratory and descriptive, as it examines the problem from diverse perspectives.

The limitation of the research lies in its inability to provide a definitive analysis of the issue, given that country branding is a complex and ever-evolving field of study. Consequently, continuous research is imperative to uphold up-to-date insights and research findings in this field. Based on the research and data analysis, relevant conclusions and recommendations are formulated, summarizing the issue across different dimensions.

Destination brand as a competitive advantage

Globalization intensifies competition within the tourism industry. Every country, every city and every region must compete with every other for its share of the world's tourists (Anholt, 2007). This necessitates the development of effective branding strategies, as branding has emerged as a powerful tool for destinations to differentiate themselves and forge emotional connections with potential tourists (Shi et al., 2022). While a well-planned and executed strategy can foster emotional connections that translate into a competitive advantage, maintaining and enhancing these connections requires consistent marketing efforts in the face of fierce competition. Particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly transformed the tourism sector globally.

One of the primary benefits of branding a destination is its capacity to yield enduring results. Brand recognition fosters customer loyalty and cultivates long-lasting relationships with tourists (Kumar & Kaushik, 2017). Consistent brand management can establish high awareness, a positive reputation, and profitable brand equity for a destination within the minds of potential travelers. However, building a competitive destination brand is a time-intensive process, mirroring the challenges of branding in general. In particular, the global tourism industry is susceptible to risks and crises due to its vast and diverse target audiences. Consequently, the development of a robust anti-crisis communication management strategy is crucial.

A destination's competitiveness hinges on carving out a distinct niche within the tourism market. By cultivating unique associations and values, a country or city can effectively influence the decision-making and behavior of targeted tourist segments. This is achieved through a well-developed positioning strategy. Satisfaction quality can influence the process of assessing destination familiarity and subsequently reflect visitors' attitudes and intentions toward the destination (Chi et al., 2020). Consequently, fostering positive post-trip evaluations converts into a powerful influence on the choices and behaviors of potential travelers. By leveraging niche branding, a destination engages in competition only with those destinations that have similar positioning strategies, thus circumventing unnecessary competition.

Destination branding offers another significant advantage: the potential for a high return on investment for a nation's economy. By boosting the tourism sector, successful branding can indirectly stimulate economic growth across various sectors. Effective branding and positioning in foreign markets can foster positive associations among target audiences, leading to the development of even stronger brand loyalty over time. The connection between certain brands and their country of origin can become so influential, through consistent and prominent marketing efforts, that it becomes challenging to discern whether the perception of a particular quality stems more from the brand itself or its origin (Anholt, 1998).

If a country or city is strongly associated with a specific value among target audiences, it becomes challenging for other destinations to position themselves for the exact same value. Core values, such as the cultural, social, and natural dimensions of destination resources, serve as inputs for service provision aimed at meeting tourists' needs. Consequently, a destination is perceived as a promise (Chekalina et al., 2018). This can be considered a competitive advantage that translates not only into monetary results but also into a positive "label" for a destination which is a valuable asset.

Georgia possesses the potential to leverage this asset by building a strong destination brand, thereby gaining a competitive advantage within the global tourism marketplace. Opportunities exist for Georgia to position itself based on emerging values and carve out a unique niche within the industry. While efforts are underway to achieve this goal, this process is influenced by multiple factors, including historical background and contemporary challenges.

Background and challenges

As previously discussed, a country's global image is shaped not only by branding strategies and marketing efforts but primarily by its history, culture, and societal mentality. Georgia's historical narrative can be broadly segmented into several distinct periods: the ancient past, the Soviet era, the post-Soviet period, and the transformational period. The ancient past of Georgia is often associated with the Golden Fleece, agriculture, and Christianity. The Soviet era is frequently linked to Stalin (as a Georgian), resorts, corruption, and hospitable people. The post-Soviet period of the 1990s is characterized by political instability, an underdeveloped economy, and breakaway regions. The transformational period of Georgia is associated with economic growth, anti-corruption efforts, democratic reforms, aspirations toward EU and NATO integration, and recognition as the birthplace of wine (Djakeli, 2013). While these associations are inevitably incomplete, they provide a general overview of Georgia's image across various historical periods.

Georgia's international image has been notably impacted by several events during the post-Soviet and transitional periods, including wars with Russia-backed separatist regions, the 2003 "Rose Revolution", and the 2008 war with Russia. The conflicts had an extremely detrimental effect on Georgia's tourism sector and its economy overall. The ongoing confrontation with Russia further complicates the formation of a strong destination brand. Russia's continued occupation of Georgian territory and human rights violations contribute to a negative perception of safety and stability, posing a significant challenge to Georgia's tourism industry.

The "Rose Revolution," played a role in fostering positive global perceptions of Georgia as a country undergoing democratic reforms and transitions. However, intermittent political instabilities continue to impede the branding of Georgia as a travel destination. Consequently, not only the

tourism sector but also the overall economy of the country is negatively affected. Places must strive to achieve economic viability to ensure a high quality of life for all stakeholders, including tourists (Skinner, 2021). Therefore, economic stability stands as the primary prerequisite for tourism development.

International media significantly impacts the creation of Georgia's global image. Negative news undermines the perception of the country as a safe travel destination, leading to the generation of negative word-of-mouth. WOM is recognized as a vital channel for disseminating evaluations of intangible tourism offerings, thereby exerting a significant influence on the success of tourism destinations (Hendrik et al., 2017). Hence, international media serves as a crucial external force that shapes a country's reputation to a considerable degree.

Conversely, positive media portrayals of cultural and sporting events can foster favorable perceptions among potential tourists. These events project an image of Georgia as a developing, peaceful, and safe destination. The value of mega-sporting events in stimulating economic growth and destination marketing is well-documented (Van Niekerk, 2017). Indeed, cultural and sporting events can have a more pronounced impact on positive national perception than other forms of news coverage. This "halo effect" occurs when a single positive attribute significantly influences overall public opinion, leading to a favourable behavioural response. Furthermore, internationally renowned Georgian figures in cultural and sporting spheres can also act as powerful influences. They not only generate positive awareness but also function as brand ambassadors in the international tourism marketplace. Finally, hosting international cultural and sporting events directly enhances Georgia's reputation as a desirable destination.

Insights in post-pandemic context

The Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA) serves as the primary governmental body responsible for promoting Georgia within the international tourism marketplace. The GNTA has developed an action plan – the "Tourism Strategy of Georgia 2025," which outlines key development directions for Georgian tourism, including current trends, objectives, indicators, and evaluations (GNTA, 2018). However, while the plan acknowledges the importance of building an attractive destination brand, it would benefit from a more comprehensive focus on destination branding strategy.

Georgia's global image can be significantly shaped by its historical and cultural heritage. Notably, its status as the cradle of wine presents a powerful asset for positioning Georgia as a sought-after travel destination. Chemical analyses of ancient organic compounds absorbed into the pottery fabrics from sites in Georgia in the South Caucasus region, dating to the early Neolithic period (ca. 6,000–5,000 BC), provide the earliest biomolecular archaeological evidence for grape wine and viniculture (McGovern et al., 2017). Wine tourism offers a unique opportunity for tourists to experience Georgian culture (Meladze, 2016).

The status of the birthplace of wine, cultural heritage, nature and other factors can be used for positioning and branding of Georgia in the global tourism market, which may indirectly manifest in official statistics. According to GNTA, the tourism sector's share of Georgian GDP reached 6.8% in the first three quarters of 2023 (GNTA, 2023). For comparison, international tourists' expenditure before the pandemic in Croatia accounts for almost 20% of GDP (European Commission, 2018). This discrepancy underscores the potential for growth in the Georgian tourism

sector, considering some shared characteristics of tourism opportunities between Croatia and Georgia. However, Croatia's geographical proximity to EU countries offers a distinct advantage for its tourism sector compared to Georgia. It is also noteworthy, that a tourism sector that generates a large portion of a country's GDP can introduce economic vulnerabilities.

Statistical data reveal encouraging trends in the post-pandemic era. In 2022, the number of international visitor trips to Georgia surged to 4,703,945, marking an increase of 173.3% compared to 2021. The primary countries of origin for visitors include Russia, Turkey, Armenia, Israel, and Ukraine. Notably, 53.6% of these visits were for holiday, leisure, and recreation purposes (GNTA, 2022a). Regarding EU countries, there were 272,916 trips in 2022, reflecting a substantial growth of 96.1% from the previous year and comprising 5.8% of the total visitor trips (GNTA, 2022b). It is evident that geographic proximity significantly influences the decisions and behaviors of travelers. However, a robust destination brand holds strong potential to attract visitors not only from neighboring countries but also from distinct nations. EU travelers represent one of the key target markets for the Georgian tourism sector.

It is crucial to consider the destination branding strategy within the broader context of global economic developments and crises. The economic downturn resulting from the pandemic compounds the economic crisis triggered by Russia's war in Ukraine (Charaia & Papava, 2023). Hence, the efficacy of destination branding for Georgia hinges not only on the branding strategy itself but also on external factors to a significant extent.

In addition to global external factors, local factors may also impede the establishment of Georgia's competitive destination brand internationally. For instance, the adequacy of personnel recruitment in tourism facilities, the quality of relevant infrastructure, and proficiency in marketing communications at the local level within tourist establishments. Hence, it is imperative to develop strategies aimed at achieving sustainable results in the long term.

Strategies for elevating competitiveness

The development of Georgia as an internationally recognized destination brand is a multifaceted process encompassing numerous aspects. Strategic investments in infrastructure, education, and marketing hold the potential to propel Georgia to the forefront of tourism competitiveness (Gamsakhurdia et al., 2017). Georgia's status as the birthplace of wine presents a distinct advantage that can be leveraged to enhance its tourism offerings. Consequently, the development of the Georgian wine industry and the promotion of wine exports hold significant importance (Zivzivadze & Taktakishvili, 2019). This approach can not only foster growth within the wine industry but also offers visitors a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in the country's culture and lifestyle (Koblianidze & Sachaleli, 2021).

Executing consistent international marketing campaigns is a fundamental prerequisite for establishing a robust destination brand. Advertising serves to raise awareness of brands, products, services, and ideas (Mamuladze & Beridze, 2020). Various communication channels must be employed in this endeavor, given the contemporary multi-screen experience paradigm encompassing television, phones, tablets, and computers (Khakhubia, 2018). Digital communication channels hold particular significance as travelers utilize them throughout the trip-planning process. Hence, social media, websites, booking platforms, online maps, video portals, and mobile applications profoundly influence travelers' decisions and behavior. Social media, in

particular, can pose both reputational threats and serve as a tool for safeguarding a brand (Abashidze, 2022).

Consistent communication serves as a critical determinant of traveler experience and impressions, thereby significantly impacting future travel intentions. It plays a substantial role in shaping brand image perceptions among target audiences. A clear and cohesive branding system is essential, encompassing both targeted market communication and a distinct emphasis on competitive advantages (Parlov et al., 2016).

It is essential to highlight several factors that must be incorporated into the creation of a branding strategy for Georgia as a desired destination for foreign travelers: Well-trained staff in the tourism and hospitality sector, adequate infrastructure, and qualified human resources responsible for planning, executing, and analyzing efficient marketing campaigns. Furthermore, the development of a brand book can serve as a valuable guideline for ensuring consistent communication across diverse marketing channels. For instance, Slovakia has established a brand visual identity design manual that provides detailed instructions for the proper use of the country's visual elements (Slovakia, 2024). However, a brand encompasses far more than just visual identity.

The global tourism sector is inherently susceptible to a multitude of challenges arising from both internal and external forces. Besides competition, these can include economic fluctuations, geopolitical crises, and global pandemics. While a general strategy and core principles provide necessary direction, specific decisions regarding destination brand management require flexibility to address changing market conditions and increasing competition among countries.

As branding constitutes a long-term endeavor, it necessitates meticulous planning and execution aligned with predetermined values and standards. The involvement of qualified brand managers and marketing professionals in this process is of paramount importance. Through this effort, Georgia has the potential to emerge as a competitive destination brand in the global tourism marketplace.

Conclusion

Several key aspects are crucial for Georgia to leverage destination branding as a cornerstone of its tourism development and a significant contributor to its economic growth. First, a comprehensive branding strategy, encompassing both overarching principles and a detailed marketing action plan, is essential. This strategy must be adaptable to the dynamic environment of the international tourism marketplace. Benchmarking successful international practices can provide valuable insights for enhancing the strategy's effectiveness. However, successful execution requires the active participation of stakeholders across the Georgian tourism and hospitality industry, both public and private.

Data-driven decision-making, informed by robust analytics, is a fundamental prerequisite for optimizing destination brand management efforts. Furthermore, maintaining consistent communication with target audiences through digital channels is critical for attracting tourists across diverse travel segments. In this communication, emphasizing Georgia's unique heritage as the cradle of wine production can be a powerful differentiator and a significant competitive advantage. Finally, it is essential to acknowledge that destination branding is a long-term and complex endeavor, susceptible to various risks and global threats. Consequently, continuous monitoring of international tourism markets is crucial.

REFERENCES

1. Abashidze, I. (2022). Key Issues of Elaborating Branding Strategies by Using Social Media Marketing Platforms. *European Journal of Business and Management Research*, 7(2), 130-137. <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejbmr.2022.7.2.1333>
2. Almeyda-Ibáñez, M., & George, B. P. (2017). The evolution of destination branding: A review of branding literature in tourism. *Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing*, 3(1), 9-17. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.401370>
3. Anholt, S. (1998). Nation-brands of the twenty-first century. *Journal of Brand Management*, 5(6), 395-406. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.1998.30>
4. Anholt, S. (2007). *Competitive Identity, The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York
5. Anholt, S. (2010). Definitions of place branding – Working towards a resolution. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 6, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1057/pb.2010.3>
6. Barnes, S. J., Mattsson, J., & Sørensen, F. (2014). Destination brand experience and visitor behavior: Testing a scale in the tourism context. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 48, 121-139. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2014.06.002>
7. Campelo, A., Aitken, R., Thyne, M., & Gnoth, J. (2014). Sense of Place: The Importance for Destination Branding. *Journal of Travel Research*, 53(2), 154-166. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287513496474>
8. Charaia, V., & Papava, V. (2023). On Supply-Side Inflation and Some Unconventional Indicators for Measuring Inflation. *International Business & Economics Studies* 5(4), 23-35. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/ibes.v5n4p23>
9. Chekalina, T., Fuchs, M., & Lexhagen, M. (2018). Customer-based destination brand equity modelling: The role of destination resources, value-for money and value-in-use. *Journal of Travel Research*, 57(1), 31-51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287516680774>
10. Chen, R., Zhou, Z., Zhan, G., & Zhou, N. (2020). The impact of destination brand authenticity and destination brand self-congruence on tourist loyalty: The mediating role of destination brand engagement. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 15, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2019.100402>
11. Chi, H-K., Huang, K-C., & Nguyen, H. M. (2020). Elements of destination brand equity and destination familiarity regarding travel intention. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 52(3). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2018.12.012>
12. Djakeli, K. (2013). Country's Branding for More Attractive Image of Georgia. *Journal of Business*, 2(1), 15-20. <https://jb.ibsu.edu.ge/jms/index.php/jb/article/view/48>
13. European Commission. (2018). Croatia's Tourism Industry: Beyond the Sun and Sea. *Economic Brief*, 036. https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a84f66c0-e4b8-4f28-ab31-b4f5e130f126_en?filename=eb036_en.pdf
14. Gamsakhurdia, T., Piranashvili, M., & Meladze, M. (2017). From Strategy to Action: Developing Georgia's Tourism. *Social & Economic Review*, 3, 28-33.

15. García, J. A., Gómez, M., & Molina, A. (2012). A destination-branding model: An empirical analysis based on stakeholders. *Tourism Management*, 33(3), 646-661. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2011.07.006>
16. GNTA. (2018). Tourism Strategy of Georgia 2025. *Georgian National Tourism Administration*. <https://gnta.ge/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/საქართველოს-ტურიზმის-სტრატეგია-2025-2.pdf>
17. GNTA. (2022a). International Visitors in Georgia. *Georgian National Tourism Administration*. https://gnta.ge/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/International_statistical-overview-2022-eng.pdf
18. GNTA. (2022b). Georgian Tourism in Figures. *Georgian National Tourism Administration*. <https://gnta.ge/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/2022-eng-1.pdf>
19. GNTA. (2023). Economic Indicators. *Georgian National Tourism Administration*. <https://gnta.ge/statistics/>
20. Hanna, S., Rowley, J., & Keegan, B. (2021). Place and Destination Branding: A Review and Conceptual Mapping of the Domain. *European Management Review*, 18(2), 105-117. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emre.12433>
21. Hendrik, J., Jeuring, G., & Haartsen, T. (2017). Destination Branding by Residents: The Role of Perceived Responsibility in Positive and Negative Word-of-Mouth. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 14(2), 240-259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2016.1214171>
22. Khakhubia, N. (2018). TV Advertising as the Destination Marketing Tool. *Proceedings of the 8th Eurasian Multidisciplinary Forum, EMF 2018*, 1-7. <https://eujournal.org/files/journals/1/books/8th.EMF.2018.pdf>
23. Koblianidze, T., & Sachaleli, N. (2021). Wine as A Competitive Agricultural and Agritourism Product (Example of Georgia). *Agricultural Economics and Rural Development* 18(1), 47-62.
24. Kumar, V., & Kaushik, A. K. (2017). Achieving destination advocacy and destination loyalty through destination brand identification. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 34(9), 1247-1260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2017.1331871>
25. Kvirkvelia, N., & Tsitsagi, M. (2021). Impact of Covid-19 on Tourism in Georgia – An Overview. *Georgian Geographical Journal*, 1(1), 27-33. <https://doi.org/10.52340/ggj.2021.08.10>
26. Mamuladze, G., & Beridze, I. (2020). The Role of Advertising and PR Activities in Place Branding Context (in the Case of the Department of Tourism and Resorts of Ajara). *Innovative Economics and Management*, 7(2), 18-25. <https://doi.org/10.46361/2449-2604.7.2.2020.18-25>
27. McGovern, P., Jalabadze, M., Batiuk, S., Michael P. C., ... Lordkipanidze, D. (2017). Early Neolithic Wine of Georgia in the South Caucasus. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(48), E10309-E10318. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1714728114>
28. Meladze, M. (2016). Wine Tourism as a Great Opportunity for Georgia. *Proceedings of 5th Eurasian Multidisciplinary Forum (EMF 2016)*, 27-28 October, Tbilisi, Georgia, 372-376.

29. Miličević, K., Mihalič, T., & Sever, I. (2016). An Investigation of the Relationship Between Destination Branding and Destination Competitiveness. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 34(2), 209-221. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2016.1156611>
30. Parlov N., Perkov, D., & Sičaja, Ž. (2016). New Trends in Tourism Destination Branding by Means of Digital Marketing. *Acta Economica Et Turistica*, 2(2), 139-146. <https://doi.org/10.1515/aet-2016-0012>
31. Pike, S. (2012). Destination positioning opportunities using personal values: Elicited through the Repertory Test with Laddering Analysis. *Tourism Management*, 33(1), 100-107. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2011.02.008>
32. Ruiz-Real, J. L., Uribe-Toril, J., & Gázquez-Abad, J. C. (2020). Destination branding: Opportunities and new challenges. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 17, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2020.100453>
33. Shi, H., Liu, Y., Kumail, T., & Pan, L. (2022). Tourism destination brand equity, brand authenticity and revisit intention: the mediating role of tourist satisfaction and the moderating role of destination familiarity. *Tourism Review*, 77(3), 751-779. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-08-2021-0371>
34. Skinner, H. (2021). Place Branding – The Challenges of Getting it Right: Coping with Success and Rebuilding from Crises. *Tourism and Hospitality*, 2(1), 173-189. <https://doi.org/10.3390/tourhosp2010010>
35. Slovakia. (2024). Slovakia brand visual identity design manual. *Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic*. <https://www.economy.gov.sk/uploads/files/nTKN319M.pdf>
36. UNWTO. (2021). How COVID-19 is changing the world: a statistical perspective. *World Tourism Organization*, Volume III. https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ccsa/documents/covid19-report-ccsa_vol3.pdf
37. Van Niekerk, M. (2017). Contemporary issues in events, festivals and destination management. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 29(3), 842-847. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-01-2017-0031>
38. Zenker, S., & Braun, E. (2017). Questioning a “one size fits all” city brand: Developing a branded house strategy for place brand management. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 10(3), 270-287. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPM-04-2016-0018>
39. Zivzivadze, L., & Taktakishvili, T. (2019). Index-based Analysis of Georgian Wine Export's Competitiveness on a Global Market. *International Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 4(5), 201-206. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijae.20190405.12>
40. Zouganeli, S., Trihas, N., Antonaki, M., & Kladou, S. (2012). Aspects of sustainability in the destination branding process: a bottom-up approach. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management*, 21(7), 739-757. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2012.624299>