



# Critical Discourse Analysis of Lithuania's Official Tourism Communication

Faculty of Arts | Master Thesis Creative Industries

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Nijmegen, August 10, 2017

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## **Acknowledgments**

This thesis is special for me because it is about the young country that I was born in. I was growing in Lithuania together with changes in it, seeing how the country is overcoming difficulties and learning from its mistakes. By writing this thesis, I had an opportunity to assess Lithuania's attempts to introduce itself to the world. Therefore, I am very grateful for my supervisor Dr. Tom Sintobin, who steered me in the right direction whenever he thought I needed it, but at the same time gave me a lot of freedom and allowed this paper to be my own work. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for his patience and guidance.

I thank my fellow classmates and lecturers for the immense knowledge that enriched my life. I am grateful that I had an opportunity to study with the most interesting people from all over the world and learn from the inspiring and dedicated professors.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family. I truly appreciate everything they have done for me. Most importantly, I would like to express my gratitude to my parents, who supported me throughout this journey of my life and without their support I would have missed out on the best experience of my life. I will be forever grateful for their love and trust.

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## Introduction

*“How one represents the world, to what one commits oneself.”*

- Norman Fairclough

During the late-modern age, tourism has become one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Political changes on both local and international level led to more open borders between countries. Traveling by all means of transportation has become cheaper and more accessible to a broader audience. But most importantly, consumer behavior started to shift from the consumption of goods to the consumption of experiences. Hence, from the end of the 20th century onwards the discussion about experiences as commodities has emerged. Consequently, branding of the places started to receive increasing attention. It has been “interpreted within the framework of a neoliberal shift in public management urging regional and local authorities to show an entrepreneurial attitude” (Pasquinelli, 2010, p. 558). Countries, regions, cities and even neighborhoods started to apply branding strategies to attract and retain the resources and to add value to the places. The application of marketing concepts to places resulted in the shift of meaning, where places have been appraised as commodities. The reoccurring pattern of the use of language and rhetoric in place branding literature proves it very well. Scholars and marketers argue that place branding is vital for the competitive advantage in the global tourism market as it adds value to the place and helps to attract economic resources (Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Govers & Go, 2009; Daye, 2010). When it comes to placing branding the goal of marketers is to project an image of a place by emphasizing distinctive features of it for a target audience. The selective nature of place branding often results in a generalized image of a place in which certain aspects of it are promoted as dominant while others are excluded. Place branding is always trying to shape the singular meaning of a place which is highly contradictive as “places are social constructions” (Boisen, Terlouw, van Gorp, 2011, p. 137) that change over time together with shifts in culture, economy, and politics. Branding implies homogeneity whereas places and their residents are always heterogeneous. What branding practitioners very often underestimate is that “places are more than simply geographic sites with definitive physical and textual characteristics – places are also fluid, changeable, dynamic contexts of social interaction and memory” (Stakowski, 2002, p. 369). On the one hand, branding can help places to overcome negative associations or stereotypes. On the other hand, it raises many ethical questions of who has the power

to shape the image of the place; why some features of a place are neglected; and can the place be promoted as a commodity?

This research will analyze the recent place branding project of Lithuania named *Real is beautiful* and its communication on the national tourism website. Launched at the end of 2016 it was the first serious Lithuania's attempt to create a unified and consistent brand for tourism purposes with the aim to attract more foreign visitors and boost domestic tourism. Considering that many foreign visitors know very little about the small Baltic country and some of them may still associate it with negative stereotypes of the Soviet Union, post-communism or Eastern Europe, the new brand has a strong potential to become an important source of meaning and perception of a place in the eyes of foreigners. Simultaneously, it has a capacity to affect local residents' perception of a place. Therefore, the aim of this research is to find out what kind of discourses about the country and its nation this brand message and its communication entail.

## 1. Country in transition

Lithuania is very often associated with Russia, which is not surprising considering that for many years it was occupied by the Russian Empire (from 1795 to 1918) and later was absorbed by the Soviet Union (from 1944 to 1990). During both periods occupants actively tried to assimilate the country and its nation with the use of political and social tools. Nevertheless, all attempts were met with strong resistance from locals and in both cases resulted in the re-establishment and later restoration of the independence. However, it cannot be said that these occupations went without consequences. The traces of them can still be found in culture, architecture, traditions and even social life. Because of the historical circumstances Eastern part of Lithuania was also highly influenced by Polish and Jewish, whereas the Western part (the region of Minor Lithuania) – by the Prussian and German cultures. Even though the historical past of this country was highly complicated and disturbed by the invasions and occupations, it still managed to save its language, which is “the most archaic Indo-European language still spoken” (Britannica, 2013), national costumes, traditions seeking pagan times. But most importantly, it managed to save and sustain the nation that led to the development of an independent country. It can be said that the social and cultural values of a place, that have been shared through culture, language and history had much more influence than well-organized political regimes of the foreign power.

After the re-establishment of the independence in 1990, Lithuania adopted democratic governance, market economy and started to move towards Western countries. In 2004 it became a member of the European Union and in 2015 it changed its currency from Litas to Euro. With the help of the foreign investments and the European Funds, the country started to renew and revise infrastructure, which has been very beneficial for the tourism industry. For example, currently the tourism promotion and development in Lithuania are financed by both the national budget and the EU Structural Funds (OECD, 2016a). During the period from 2007 to 2013 alone EUR 251, 12 million was allocated to the implementation of 290 projects for tourism development from national and European funds (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2016, p. 5). The tourism sector in Lithuania has been growing steadily with the increasing inbound tourists arrivals. For many years Lithuanian tourism industry strongly relied on tourists coming from Russian Federation as in 2013, 243, 6 thousand Russian tourists visited Lithuania and that accounted for 20% of all inbound visitors (LSDT, 2013, p. 3). However, after the 2014 the flow of tourists from Russia started to decrease gradually mostly because of the tense political situation between two countries and financial crisis in Russian Federation.<sup>1</sup> The Lithuanian State Department of Tourism (henceforth LSDT) was forced to re-evaluate tourism marketing strategy in order to attract more tourists from different countries. For that purpose, there was a need to adopt modern marketing tools and place branding was one of them.

## 2. The background story behind the place branding in Lithuania

Lithuania, has been trying to revitalize its international image from the restoration of Independence in 1990. It has been challenging since the very beginning as the country and its nation faced many internal transitions: from the central planning to the market economy, from the authoritarian to the democratic governance, from being part of the Soviet block to the membership of the European Union. Consequently, as the reality was changing it affected the country's image and identity. Gyorgi Szondi (2007), who analyzed place branding in Central and Eastern European countries notes:

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<sup>1</sup> "The escalation of the crisis between Ukraine and Russia over Crimea reduced outbound travel from Russia as the Rouble started to weaken progressively" (European Travel Commission, 2014, p. 4). Lithuania has been actively supporting Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, which has negatively impacted the international relations between Russia and Lithuania. For the support for Ukraine Lithuania also received negative publicity in Russia.

transitional countries are more concerned with internal affairs at the beginning of their transition and only after a few years later do they start to pay more attention to their external images and be more conscious about the external environment. (p. 8)

In the case of Lithuania from the 1990 onwards the biggest efforts were devoted to the development of the positive image within the international diplomacy and for the foreign business investors. There were several attempts to craft a unified country's image for the international public, but they all ended up in failures because of the lack of vision, coordination, finance and poor management. Therefore, the country's internal and external image promotion resulted in a number of short-term communication campaigns. The first serious endeavor to create a consistent country's brand was in 2008 with the ambitious slogan – *Lithuania. Brave country.* However, as the global financial crisis stroke in 2009 branding campaign was cut off after just a year of existence. Nevertheless, the LSDT continued to use the slogan and logo for its communication until the end of 2016. Lithuania as a tourism destination has been presented for prospect tourists in many different ways depending on a source but did not have a consistent image. Considering that many foreign visitors either are unfamiliar with the relatively new country or associate it with the negative stereotypes of Eastern Europe, there was a need to develop new and clear brand image in order to gain competitiveness in the tourism market.

The National Tourism Development Programme for 2014-2020 sets three main goals for tourism development in Lithuania: expand and improve tourism infrastructure and the quality of services; reduce the impact of seasonality; and increase the awareness of the destination with the use of the effective marketing and communication methods (OECD, 2016a). In 2015, the LSDT commissioned the research study with the aim to understand how foreign visitors assess tourism infrastructure and what features of Lithuania are the most attractive for them. Tourists from five different countries, namely England, Germany, Finland, Poland, and Belarus, participated in the research. Results showed that visitors come to Lithuania having very little information about it. Tourists from Western countries usually choose to visit Lithuania after they have already explored most of the other countries in Europe. Visitors describe Lithuania as appealing for its green nature, cozy and well preserved old little towns, emphasize its clean and neat environment and slow and relaxing atmosphere (LSDT, 2014). In 2016 the LSDT announced an open call for tenders for the Lithuania's tourism brand creation. The tender offer of the local communication agency *New* was selected from five submitted ones.

Consequently, it was hired to create a concept for the destination brand for Lithuania. Thus, at the end of 2016 the new brand of Lithuania was introduced for the public with the proud slogan – *Lithuania. Real is Beautiful*.

### 3. Destination brand of Lithuania: Real is Beautiful

It is important to note that the new brand for Lithuania was created for the tourism purposes. Therefore, this makes it a destination brand, which aim is to attract visitors and boost tourism. The country' brand has a different meaning as it is directed to “the promotion of economic, commercial and political interests at home and abroad” (Szondi, 2007, p. 9). According to the LSDT design of a new destination brand required completely different tasks:

to introduce the heritage of Lithuanian nature and culture, to represent the country of Lithuania and differentiate it from other tourist destinations, to invite to visit Lithuania and promise unforgettable experience there (LSDT, 2016a).

The slogan of the brand – *Real is Beautiful* – defines the identity of the brand and stands as a core of its communication. The official representation of the brand has been described in the Brand manifesto, which will be analyzed later in this thesis.

The emphasis of the branding campaign is on the visual representation of the destination brand of Lithuania in a post stamp. The logo typeface is designed to resemble growing tree branches and is contained within a pastel mint symbol of a postage stamp. Complementary stamp symbols were created to deliver a more accurate message, whether it's nature, outdoor activities, food, culture or meeting local people. The destination brand campaign was created with the intention to promote tourism for both inbound and local tourists.

### 4. Public reaction and controversies related to the Lithuanian destination brand

The destination brand for the public was introduced at the end of 2016 through various media outlets. However, residents' reactions were not very positive. The new branding concept was accepted skeptically by the local audience and raised intensive public debates. Slogan (*Real is Beautiful*), which is the core of the brand's identity, did not convince many. People started to question its meaning, arguing that the ordinary reality is not that beautiful at all. Public debates were followed by the launch of an unofficial Facebook page which posted unappealing pictures from Lithuanian

reality aiming to draw attention that not everything what is *real* is actually *beautiful*. However, as the administrators of this unofficial page used official slogan and logo of the destination brand, it was quickly removed for the intellectual property infringement. Nevertheless, the reaction was not promising, especially considering that Lithuanian citizens were part of the target audience.

Many marketing professionals and scholars who analyze place branding process note that it is a very complicated task as it is nearly impossible to meet all the needs of various stakeholders. Assessing the process of Lithuanian brand creation, it is apparent that the residents of the country were not involved in brand's creation. Moreover, it can be said that their needs and assumptions were not considered as there was no research made to evaluate Lithuanians perception of a place. What is remarkable on account of place branding is that the fundamental coherency between "the brand, its values, its propositions and all measures that communicate the brand requires that local people support and assist in the process for place branding to be effectively developed" (Braun, Kavaratzis, Zenker, 2013, p. 22). Local residents act as brand ambassadors by communicating on social media, blogs or participating in online and offline discussions. Therefore, Pasquinelli (2010) warns that "if local communities do not feel part of the communicated identity, they have the power to render any branding completely futile" (p. 561).

Soon after the non-official Facebook page was removed, the new, official one was launched as it was part of the communication process. When it seemed that people started to accept the new brand and even enjoy appealing promotional pictures the new scandal stroke. It appeared that the LSDT allowed its communication partners (communication agency *Turinio rinkodara*) to use stock photos for the marketing campaign and some of those photos were taken in other countries namely Norway, Slovakia and Finland to promote Lithuania. This caused even a bigger public outrage, especially in the context in which slogan Lithuania. Real is beautiful was illustrated by fake pictures. The scandal was covered by international press. Lithuanians started to make jokes on social media by posting famous world sites with the caption 'Lithuania. Real is Beautiful' ironically reacting to the given circumstances. Not only it was an example of unprofessionalism it also contradicted the destination brand image. After this scandal, the head of the LSDT was forced to resign. Soon after, the agency, which was responsible for social media communication was fired too. However, the credibility of the destination brand has been damaged in both inbound and domestic markets.

## 5. Relevancy and the focus of the research

Looking at Lithuania's national tourism brand manifesto, which defines the core of the brand, it is apparent that marketers speak on behalf of all residents. The message of the brand can be regarded as a promise "that is aimed at shaping the expectation of the consumer to the brand" (Daye, 2010, p. 6). Lithuanian brand's promise is that 'real is beautiful'. But who decides what is real or beautiful in the country? The first negative reaction from residents, which was followed by the lawsuit for copyright infringement initiated by the LSDT, was described as "threatening to the country's image" (Mikalčiūtė-Urbonė, 2016). This shows that the LSDT seeks to promote constructed, but not authentic reality that country's residents face and does not intend to debate about the choices of the representation. It highlights two major issues related to the destination brand. First, while the brand message is based on sincerity, it is not sincere at all. Second, while it speaks on the behalf of all residents, it does not represent their view of reality. Therefore, the new brand raises many questions. Whose point of view is represented by the brand's message? What kind of reality is being promoted by the branding? Which parts of reality are neglected? What is considered as *real* and *beautiful*? To answer those questions the official brand and its online communication have to be examined to assess which objects, aspects and features of Lithuania are promoted as 'real' and what kind of reality the LSDT is trying to legitimize and sell to prospective visitors. This leads to the **main research question of this thesis**:

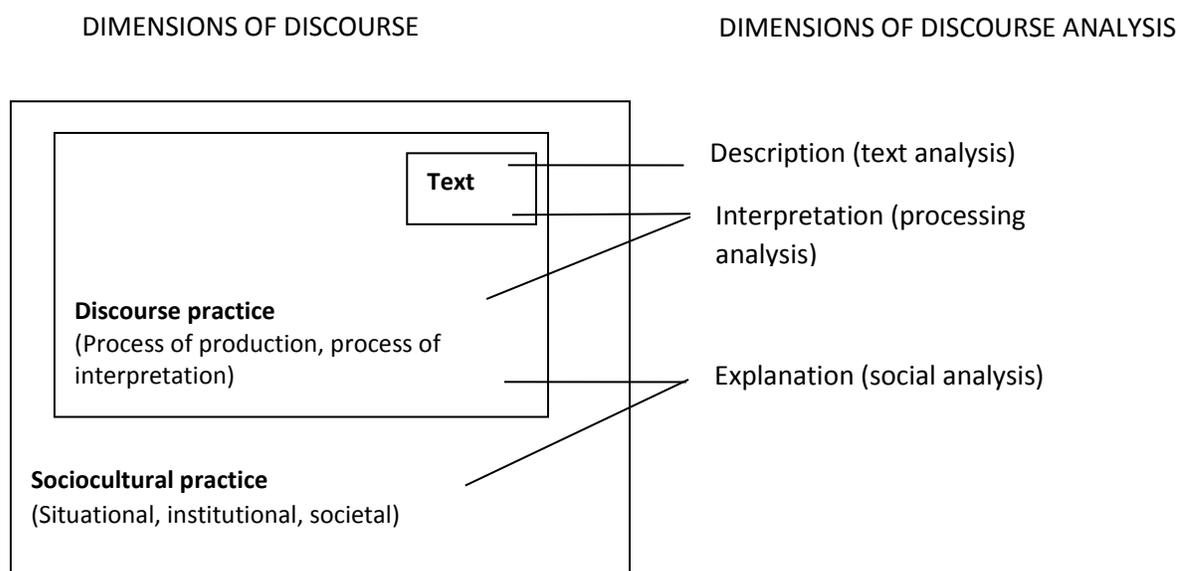
**How does the Lithuanian State Department of Tourism represent Lithuania?**

## Methodology

Lithuania has overcome many internal political, social and economic transitions in the past twenty-seven years of independence. On the other hand, a history shows that since the very beginning the reality in the country has been changing together with the conquests and later occupations and restorations of independence. One may wonder, what is this place all about after so many internal transitions? Hence, one of the sources for answering this question can be the official tourism communication. With the promotion of tourism, the authorities within Lithuania create a certain image of a place. As Fairclough (2003) argues “how one represents the world, to what one commits oneself” (p. 166). Therefore, in this thesis, I will analyze the official tourism communication managed by the State Department of Tourism under the Ministry of Economy, which is “responsible for the implementation of national marketing measures and monitoring market developments” (OECD, 2016a, p. 350). Thus the focus of this thesis will be on the institutionalized representation of Lithuania. Tourism promotion works both ways, i.e. it creates a knowledge about the country and influences the behavior of the visitor and simultaneously affects the perception of it in the eyes of the residents. In other words, this communication has a capacity to produce a discourse, which is a “form of social action that plays a part in producing the social world and in maintaining specific social patterns” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). Therefore, the content of Lithuania’s tourism communication will be analyzed by applying principles of critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) to understand the discourse mediated by the communication material.

The corpus of this research will consist of the destination brand material (brand manifesto and logo signs) and the official tourism website [www.lithuania.travel](http://www.lithuania.travel). Both, the brand and the website, are being managed by the LSDT. The negative public reactions to the newly created destination brand suggest that the institutionalized version of the country’s image may not reflect the residents’ perception of a place. Thus, the critical examination of the brand material by applying CDA will help to reveal not only the discourse mediated by it but also the motivation and reasons behind it. Similarly, the analysis of the photographs of the objects displayed on the official tourism website will reveal how the country is represented. The exhibition of selected sites promoted to tourists, will show what features of the country, according to the LSDT are the best signifiers of Lithuania. Moreover, the way the promoted objects are illustrated will reveal what discourse about the country the representation entails.

For the CDA I will take an approach presented by Norman Fairclough (1989, 1993, 2003), who views the discourse mediated by the use of language as not only constitutive but also as constituted (Fairclough, 1993, p. 134). The central idea of Fairclough’s approach is that the discourse reproduces and changes knowledge, identities and social (including power) relations, and simultaneously is shaped by other structures and social practices. In a sense, that the material for the analysis was created and has been managed by the governmental institution and is directed mainly to people, with the very limited knowledge about the country (tourists), Fairclough’s approach to CDA becomes an appropriate methodology to investigate the discourses mediated by the official tourism communication. Fairclough views language, as a social practice, which can reproduce meaning and by doing so reimagine and challenge existing social and power relations, social identities, beliefs and systems of knowledge. However, “for Fairclough, text analysis alone is not sufficient for discourse analysis and an interdisciplinary perspective is needed in which one combines textual and social analysis” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011, p. 7). Therefore, Fairclough uses a three-dimensional framework of analysis for exploring linkages in particular discursive events (Fairclough, 1989). This three-dimensional framework will be applied to the analysis in this thesis as well. According to Fairclough (1993), “each discursive event has three dimensions: it is a spoken or written language text, it is an instance of discourse practice involving the production and the interpretation of the text, and it is a piece of social practice” (p. 136). The three-dimensional framework is reproduced below in the Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** This figure displays Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework of discourse (Fairclough, 1989, p. 25).

By following this three-dimensional model, I will structure the thesis as follows. First, I will make a theoretical overview of place branding and heritage tourism that will explain the wider social practice within which the discourses entailed by the tourism communication material are located. Additionally, at the beginning of each chapter, I will describe the sociocultural contexts, that influenced the production of each discourse. Namely, for the analysis of brand material, I will shortly overview the institutional guidelines for the brand creation and for the analysis of the objects displayed on the tourism website I will briefly describe the historical context of the promoted heritage. After the explanation of sociocultural practices, I will move to the text analysis. In the third chapter, at the level of the text, I will apply the linguistic analysis for the brand manifesto. For the understanding of the visual meaning of brand logos, I will follow the semiotic approach presented by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). After the textual and social analysis, I will discuss the discourses entailed by these written and visual texts that function as the Lithuania's destination brand material. Similarly, in the fourth chapter, I will apply Kress's and van Leeuwen's visual 'grammar', semiotic analysis for the analysis of the photographs representing the objects promoted on the tourism website and after that will discuss the discourse created by the visual communication.

One can see, that the following analysis will include a mixture of theoretical perspectives, CDA, linguistic and semiotic analysis. For the visual analysis at a text level, I will make use of visual 'grammar' semiotic methods explained by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). This approach will help to distinguish representational meanings through the presence of vectors and conceptual patterns; compositional meanings through the information value, framing, salience and modality; and interactive meanings through the contact, distance, and point-of-view (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001). To understand the meaning of a written text, I will analyze its generic form, cohesive relations between sentences and clauses in complex sentences, the grammar of the clauses (including modality and mood) and vocabulary by following Fairclough (2003) text analysis approach. Linguistic and visual texts mediate discourses that depend on the social context and the means of the text production and representation. The interpretation of the discourse may differ on the person who is interpreting. In other words, depending on the reader's prior knowledge the perceived meaning can be different. Thus, it is important to note, that as a native Lithuanian I may interpret these discourses differently than the reader with no prior knowledge of the country. While mediated discourses directly involve me, I will assess them from the citizen's and not from the tourist's perspective. The application of the CDA will help to answer the previously presented research question.

# Theoretical framework

## 1. Place branding

Place branding is a relatively new concept. It emerged as a response to globalization, exponential expansion of tourism and travel and the rise of the internet. Since the early 2000s, it has been receiving increasing attention from both practitioners and scholars. However, they still have not agreed on fundamental concepts, models or strategies of place branding. On the academic level, many have acknowledged that it is a cross-disciplinary practice as it includes not only the marketing of a place, but also its culture, identity, traditions, a community of inhabitants, tourism and various different services. In fact, place branding is not only tightly linked to tourism and urban policy domains, but actually originates from them (Hankinson, 2010, p. 306). The early literature, which emerged in the 1970s focused on place promotion and place selling, whereas public policy literature of that time was concerned about urban image while scholars of tourism domain analyzed destination image from a tourism perspective. Hankinson notes that “more recently, the cross-disciplinary convergence of the urban policy, tourism, and marketing domains into a place branding domain has been helped by the developments in branding theory associated with corporate and, to a lesser extent, services branding” (2010, p. 301). As a consequence of this convergence, the focus of discussion shifted from “place branding for business and marketing as the dominant domains of it (Hanna & Rowley, 2008, p. 69). It also resulted in the confusion over the use of the terminology that remains as one of the primary objects of discussion between scholars and practitioners and “as a consequence, there is a little consensus between the domains about what branding consists of, and how it should be applied” (Hankinson, 2010, p. 306). The risk of the direct application of business related concepts from marketing to place branding is that it can lead to the assessment of a place as a static commodity without considering local culture and its environment and where the interests of tourists and visitors may become more important than those of local inhabitants. As Govers and Go (2009) underline that “there is a desire within the cultural community and the public sector to project imagery, which represents an authentic identity of a place, whereas commercial interests are keen to stage authenticity to represent desirable activities or convenient commodities of consumption” (p. 147). Many scholars draw attention to this issue, noting that place brand is only a promise of value that has to be delivered on site by local service providers and even ordinary inhabitants. If the brand promise cannot be fulfilled during the actual visit, it makes the brand artificial and deemed to fail.

Therefore, it is very important for brand practitioners to find a common cause and consensus among various stakeholders of a place, “which includes the long process of consulting, co-opting and distilling information from their input from the essence of a place’s personality and that is the toughest part of the place branding exercise” (Polunin, 2002, p. 3).

From the marketing perspective, local stakeholder involvement is important because for a brand to be successful locals have to act as brand ambassadors to deliver the brand promise to a target audience. However, from the cultural perspective, it is much more complicated as the brand imagery can affect the perception of the place in the eyes of the residents. If the place brand managers manage to persuade local service providers and inhabitants to live up to the brand promise and perform accordingly, they have the power to shift the perception of the place and change its meaning not only for tourists but also for locals. As a consequence “over time the images generated within tourism come to constitute a self-perpetuating system of illusions, which may appear as quaint to the local inhabitants as they do to the tourists themselves” (Duncan, 1978, p. 277). Therefore, place branding should not be treated as just an innocent promotion trick as it is much more powerful than it. The decision of what the place brand should be like is usually made by the government or semi-governmental institutions, such as destination marketing organizations, tourism boards or departments. This makes taxpayers the collective owners of the brand from which they are supposed to get if not financial then at least emotional return, i.e. the feeling of pride. It makes the place branding practice even more ambiguous as its offerings and communication have to be appealing to potential visitors, convincing and beneficial for local stakeholders and competitive in the global tourism market.

## 2. Destination branding

Destination branding for tourism purposes can be understood as one of the branches of place branding, in which “place branding describes the general branding of the places for all target groups, including residents, tourists, investors” (Zenker, Braun, Petersen, 2017, p. 15) and “promotes political, commercial and economic interests at home and abroad” (Szondi, 2007, p. 9). Whereas destination branding targets and focuses solely on tourists and visitors. However, as Govers and Go (2009) note:

while it is commonly agreed that place branding aims at attracting tourism, investment, talent and trade, we feel that though these seem to be separate categories, tourism reaches across them all, as leisure travelers, expats, business travelers and investors often use many of the same facilities such as transport, hospitality and travel services; and are sometimes even drawn to the same attractions. While these different markets might be looking for different aspects of place we shall often refer to tourists or visitors as including the different types of travelers. (p. 5).

Also, as mentioned before, destination branding cannot be separated from the residential part of place branding, as “the residents are not only part of the place itself” (Zenker et al., 2016, p. 16) but also by delivering the brand promise on site, they may change their perception of the place. Therefore, it can be said that looking solely from marketing perspective destination brand is projected only for tourists and visitors, though in reality, the brand has a potential to affect a much broader audience that includes residents, investors, expats, etc. Considering that the Lithuanian “emigration rate is one of the highest in the European Union with about one-quarter of the population has left since 1990” (OECD, 2016b, p. 107) it is also very likely that destination brand may influence the views of emigrants about their home country. Govers and Go (2009) suggest that “destination branding gives a competitive advantage for a place in the global tourism market and simultaneously provides a source of pride for the population already present” (p. 16). It is commonly agreed in the literature on destination branding that it is a marketing tool intended to communicate a unique and distinctive destination’s identity and distinguish the place from other competitors (Kladou et al., 2016; Zenker et al., 2016; Lichrou, O’Malley, Patterson, 2008). Usually, “the main resources for the development of a competitive destination brand are the physiography, culture, and history of the destination” (Crouch & Ritchie, as cited in Lichrou et al., 2008, p. 29). Morgan and Pritchard (1998) notes that “brand managers try to position their product (destination) by stressing attributes they claim will match the target markets’ needs more closely than other brands” (p. 141). Therefore, the branding is more about staging than representing the identity of the place and creating positive associations in consumers’ minds. The selective nature of branding raises many questions about the power relations of who has the authority to shape place’s image and who decides on which aspects of the place are more important than others.

Nowadays World Wide Web provides people an opportunity to search, plan and even buy the trip to almost every country in the world without the help of a travel agency. By searching for the

information online people can analyze and compare different destinations before making a decision and so “by going through this process and collecting all this information, the consumer creates an image or mental portrayal” of what the travel experience might look like (Govers & Go, 2009, p. 6). Consequently, the goal of destination branding is to convince potential tourists to choose to visit the particular place by projecting an appealing image of it. For lesser known places like Lithuania branding can be much more than that. For those who have no prior knowledge about the place, the imagery staged by marketers can become an important source of information which has the potential to shape the meaning and perception about the country in general, even if the person decides not to visit the place. When the imagery of a place convinces people to visit a country, it not only gives them a promise of what to expect from it but also influences their behavior during the visit. So to say, if the tourist is convinced by the brand promise of wilderness s(he) will not be looking for urban cities when visiting the place and vice versa. Therefore, the promoted attractions are usually very well thought through by marketers as they very often become the signifiers of the place. And even if tourists acknowledge that all those attractions were carefully selected to attract them rather than depict the ‘reality’ they still can recognize them as the best assets a country has to offer.

### 3. Tourist gaze

The central to the concept of destination brand is that it has to address prospective tourists and by projecting the imagery of the place convince them to visit the place. The carefully constructed destination concept is being produced through the tourism images and narratives that involve signs that signify touristic experiences. These experiences are constructed by tourism professionals, who seek to manage and regulate our behavior and perception of a place. John Urry has been an influential sociologists who elaborated and explained the notion of the tourist gaze. According to Urry and Larsen (2011) “the concept of the gaze highlights that looking is a learned ability and that pure and innocent eye is a myth” (p. 1). In addition, “gazing is conditioned by personal experiences and memories and framed by rules and styles, as well as by circulating images and texts of this and other places” (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 1). For Urry visual is central to the tourism experience, as people convinced by the visual imagery decide to visit a place and during the visit gaze at those objects that initially drew them to the place. The exhibition of ‘things to see’ on the tourism website can be regarded as a good example of the concept of tourist gaze. What is more important, these types of websites not only direct tourists to visit certain sites but also through the visual representation

regulates of how to gaze upon these sites. In other words, Urry (1990) argues that “people have to learn how, when and where to gaze” (p. 9) and tourism communication, including the destination branding, can be regarded as a source of information that provides these ‘rules’ for gazing. Thus, tourism imagery constructs a certain ‘reality’ of a place, which not only convinces tourists to participate in it but also regulates their gaze and consequently perception and behavior.

Urry (1990) regards a tourist as an amateur semiotician, who is able to read signs of tourism imagery and interpret their meaning. As “the gaze is constructed through signs” (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 4), one is able to identify whether the destination is romantic or adventurous from the signs that signify the meanings of it. Additionally, there are “different kinds of gazes authorized by various discourses” (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 13). Different types of gazes imply different kind of relationships between the tourist and the object of the gaze. One of the most prevalent one, especially in the heritage tourism, is the romantic gaze. It stresses “the solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze” (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 13). Urry and Larsen argue that “romantic gaze tends to ignore signs of modernity in order to signify the sublime, timeless’ scenery” (p. 13). As mentioned before, during the visit, tourists tend to look for the signs that drew them to the place and by taking pictures of the ‘constructed reality’ and spreading these images they contribute to the meaning creation.

#### 4. Place identity

It is commonly agreed in the place branding literature that for a brand to be successful, it has to be based on the place identity as it is the most distinctive feature of a place that cannot be copied. However, there are two different approaches to the place identity among scholars and practitioners. Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) argue that “the dominant is the communication-based view on place identity as static and fixed” (p. 73). It describes the identity of the place as something that can be easily manipulated, defined and articulated for the broader audience with the use of various communication tools, where decision makers “can delineate what the identity of the place is about, break it down into elements, and reform it in a fashion that will be manageable and easily communicated” (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, p. 74). This approach is very convenient for practitioners, but not very fair for residents or the place. Also, this approach again confirms that the practice of place branding cannot be based solely on marketing concepts and techniques as it can result in the treatment of the place and its culture as static ‘products to sell’ for a target audience. This is not right

because the place is a complex entity, shaped and co-created by history, politics, culture, and people living in it. Therefore place identity cannot be manipulated and staged to only fit the interests of the target audience without considering the needs and insights of the residents who are the co-creators of the place and its identity.

Opposite approach, which is becoming more and more appraised in the literature views place identity as a complex, interactive and constantly changing process. Govers and Go (2009) define that “place identities are constructed through historical, political, religious and cultural discourses; through local knowledge, and influenced by power struggles” (p. 17). Branding practitioners are not in favor of this approach as it requires much more time, efforts and expertise to deeply understand the place and articulate it accordingly. Govers and Go draw upon the work of Noordman (2004) who identified elements that can define place identity, such as “structural elements (including location and history); semi-static elements (including size, physical appearance and inner mentality); and coloring elements (including symbolism, behavior and communication)” (Govers & Go, 2009, p. 50). Transition countries such as Lithuania can be a very good example to illustrate the argument that the identity of the place is not fixed but rather dynamic and constantly changing. After the restoration of independence in 1990, there have been quite a few significant changes among almost all the elements that define place identity within Lithuania. Even looking particularly from the tourism perspective the changes have been more than evident, from the improvements in infrastructure to the changing hospitality and service culture.

By analyzing place branding attempts in transitional Eastern and Central European countries Szondi (2007) underlines that “one of the functions of place branding in those countries is that it can facilitate (re-)defining and (re-)constructing national identities as identity is also changing during the transition” (p. 10). Therefore, place branding can help the post-Soviet countries like Lithuania to express to the world how they have changed by positioning themselves as an attractive tourism destinations. This idea can be supported by the statement expressed by Anholt (2006), who suggests that as brands moderately become one of the dominant channels of communication for national identity, it becomes even more important “to push other channels – by encouraging the first-hand experience via tourism; by careful management of international perceptions of a nation’s foreign policy decisions; and by the representation of national culture” (p. 134). When the brand is crafted drawing upon the dynamic place’s identity it has a capacity to fight stereotypes and create an

appealing imagery for the potential visitors by simultaneously enhancing positive emotions to local residents. This again leads to the local brand support, which as discussed before, is vital for a successful brand functioning.

## 5. Place brand positioning

To convince potential tourists to visit a particular place, marketing practitioners have to create an appealing imagery of a place that would stand out from the other competing destinations and would fit the needs and interests of a target market. This process is called brand positioning. Brand positioning stands in between place identity and place brand imagery. Ries and Trout (1981) who were one of the firsts to tackle brand positioning concept noted that brand “creates *unique positions* in consumers’ minds through distinctive brand associations targeted at clearly defined segments” (Ries & Trout, as cited in Hankinson, 2010, p. 302). Thus, those associations derive from the place identity and then are carefully shaped, projected and communicated to target segments. Therefore, Boisen et al. (2011) argue that “if no market segmentation is maintained, the resulting brands will be all-inclusive and on many scalar levels it will be difficult to position these brands in relation to other – competing – brands” (p. 143). Hence, the purpose of positioning is to identify unique characteristics of a place that are different from the other destinations and find the way to link them effectively to a target audience. The result of the successful positioning strategy is “a distinctive brand image on which customers rely in making product choices” (Morgan & Pritchard 1998, p. 141).

## 6. Place brand image

Projected place image is created through the use of marketing and communication tools, thus it is a result of implemented place branding strategy. The projected destination image has to distinguish the place from the competing destinations and convince potential tourists to visit it by shaping their expectations towards the place. The image of a place is also tightly linked to a reputation and as Reynolds (1965) notes “often the word ‘image’ is used as equivalent to reputation... what people believe about a person or an institution, versus character, what the person or institution actually is” (p. 70). This quote very well defines the essence of a place brand image as it is more about of how the place wants to be perceived by others rather than what is the actual reality of it. However, as Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2012) note “to be effective, the desired image must be close to reality, believable, simple, appealing and distinctive” (p. 42). Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) suggest that “in

essence, image and identity should be thought of as two sides of the same coin, none of which has meaning without the other” (p. 77). Therefore, the image as well as the identity are very complex concepts that may be approached and perceived in a number of different ways and they also impact one another significantly. Hence, Govers and Go (2009) argue that “one will never really know what the real identity of things is; it is all based on projected and perceived images, and projected images of the perceived images of others, and so on; a perpetuating system of illusion” (p. 26). Therefore, “most countries images are in fact stereotypes, extreme simplifications of the reality that are not necessarily accurate” (Kotler & Gertner, 2002, p. 251). Having said this, it is likely that the information on which the brand is based “might be dated, based on exceptions rather than on patterns, on impressions rather than on facts” (Morgan et al., 2012, p. 37). Nonetheless, projected place image is always an ideological process that seeks to reinforce the dominant ideology of tourism culture, manage the desirable perception of the place and impose certain ways of seeing the reality of the place.

Considering that tourism is an experiential product and branding is an extensively consumer orientated practice it is not surprising that the dominant view to place image projection is based on the creation of mystification and fantasy rather than the reflection of collective sense of the place. To attract a tourist place imagery has to offer some distinctive and unfamiliar experience. Therefore, Lichrou et al. argues that “images of ‘Otherness’ are essential in the creation and consumption of tourist destinations” (p. 33). What is unique about tourism is that the decision has to be made before the actual visit. Thus, it makes the projected image of a place significantly important because “consumer creates a mental prototype of a place” (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000, p. 37) before the visit based on the ‘brand promise’. Therefore, Govers and Go (2009) suggest that “place images projected in information space will have a great influence on the place images as perceived by consumers” (p. 180) because tourists make a decision to visit a particular country to fulfill their fantasies invoked by the place image. The problem with a mystification of a place is that it inevitably involves local residents, as they are part of the place that is being represented, even if they do not want to be part of the projected discourse. Moreover, Morgan and Pritchard argue that “systems of representation do not merely convey meaning, but also contribute to the production of knowledge – which is closely related to social practices enabling some to have more power to speak than others” (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998, p. 34). Hence, those who have the power to shape place’s image very often create a

discourse about the place that favors tourist expectations and interests and neglects the needs of residents.

## 7. Heritage

Heritage is an ambiguous concept that can be used to describe almost everything from tangible objects such as buildings or artifacts to the intangible aspects of traditional culture such as food, songs and various cultural performances. The professionalization of heritage had begun in the nineteenth century with the intention to protect and preserve ancient and medieval buildings at risk in post-revolutionary France by the Commission des Monuments Historique (Harrison, 2013). Since then, and especially from the second part of the twentieth century, the practice of the heritage preservation has evolved into an industry that has been used to serve ideological and commercial interests within a country. Nowadays it is defined as “a mode of cultural production in the present that has resources in the past” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, p. 150). Or as Timothy and Boyd (2003) explain “heritage is not simply the past, but the modern-day use of elements of the past” (p. 4). Hence, heritage is formed and produced in the present from the historical resources that countries intend to preserve for future generations by simultaneously shaping spatial and national identities informed by certain historical narratives. Thus, Harrison (2013) argues that “the heritage is primarily not about the past, but instead about our relationship with the present and future” (p. 4). There is no doubt that the past is an important resource, usually defined as “the foundation of individual and collective identity” (Hewison, 1999, p. 161) and that the heritage is one of the main determinants of the unique character of places. However, it is important to note that heritage objects are protected not because of their history or materiality but because of their historical, cultural or aesthetical significance to a particular place or community. Or as Ashworth (1994) puts it “heritage is the interpretation that is traded, not its various physical resources” (p. 20). And the aspect of interpretation is what makes the process of heritage contradictory. Timothy (2011) notes that nowadays “many observers agree that it is virtually impossible to know the true, objective history because every perception of the past is subject to muffled interpretations, which obviously affects the way it is presented” (p. 132). So, it is not a matter of preservation that raises questions for many scholars from the cultural domain, but the question of what kind of past it is chosen to preserve and what impact on the present and future generations does it make.

## 8. Ideological uses of heritage

Over the course of the twentieth century with the increasing control of governments, the process of heritage shifted its focus from preservation to the maintenance of public spheres and nation building mostly through the official planning actions. During that time the government officials felt a need to protect public spheres from industrialization and later war. The concept of public sphere was based on the idea that certain heritage objects “needed to be conserved by, and for, the public as part of a broader conversation about what was important from the past in forming a set of values for the appropriate functioning of societies in the present” (Harrison, 2013, p. 46). Heritage was defined as a professional activity and “became less about what people did as part of their everyday lives, and came to be seen as a separate class of extinct objects associated with vanished cultural practices” (Harrison, 2013, p. 56). With the increasing control of the government officials heritage became a source for building a national identity. Consequently, objects and places that reminded about the glorious past events were appraised and those related to the ‘ugly’ aspects of the past covered up or ignored. Thus, the objects of heritage preserved within a country do not necessarily inform about the history of the country, but rather tell a story about carefully selected parts of the past that are ‘worth preserving’ and have a capacity to induce positive values for its residents. Hence, the process of heritage can be regarded as an “active selection process of assembling a series of objects that we choose to hold up as a mirror to the present, associated with a particular set of values that we wish to take with us into the future” (Harrison, 2013, p. 4). However, as the decisions of which objects are worth preserving are usually made by people in power, those choices benefit the intentions or interests of the decision makers rather than the ordinary people to whom the heritage is projected. Ashworth argues that “a homogeneous national heritage disinherits non-participating social, ethnic and regional groups, as their distinctive historical experiences are ignored or distorted by the hijacking of history by the dominant groups” (Ashworth, 1994, p. 26). So, the national heritage should never be recognized as an objective source of a country’s history as it always includes an ideologically informed decision making.

## 9. Tourism and heritage

It was not a coincidence that heritage industry has been growing together with the increasing tourism demands. While the tourism industry and destination branding require the production of difference, heritage is one of the main features that helps to distinguish destination from others.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett who is known for bridging the heritage and tourism studies more closely, in her book *Destination Culture* (1998) explains the relationship between two domains:

Heritage and tourism are collaborative industries, heritage converting locations into destinations and tourism making them economically viable as exhibits of themselves.

Locations become museums of themselves within a tourism economy. (p. 151).

Thus, the production of heritage for economic purposes is mostly visible in the tourism industry. However, the use of heritage for tourism is also a controversial and a highly politicized action, because “choices have to be made regarding what elements of the past will be shown to tourists and which ones –will be ignored” (Timothy, 2011, p. 127-128). It again leads to the selection process but this time it is a selection from the already selected. Another tension regarding heritage for tourism purposes is that the exhibition of heritage objects has to be appealing for tourists. So instead of the objective representation of a country’s past, it has to offer something exciting; an experience that cannot be fulfilled anywhere else in the world. To accomplish that, “a rich and complex past must be reduced to a set of characteristics easily recognizable by the visitor who has limited local knowledge, time and attention span and who is collecting a limited set of previously ‘marketed’ experiences” (MacCannell, as cited in Ashworth, 1994, p. 25). It goes without saying that when it comes to tourism everything, including heritage, is framed and promoted in a way that favors tourist gaze. According to Ashworth (1994) to be successful the tourism heritage industry has to resell tourists’ their own heritage in an unexpected context rather than direct them to the heritage of the destination country. It is naïve to think that the history or culture of the destination country can be easily learned during a short visit. What tourists see and experience during the visit is very often staged and shaped in a way to guide them through the carefully projected narrative that tells a story that visitors want and expect to experience. It is usually achieved by maintaining “stereotypical forms of ‘culture’ for tourist consumption” (Harrison, 2013, p. 83). But still, where does this admiration of the heritage visits come from? Hewison (1999) argues that “in the face of apparent decline and disintegration, it is not surprising that the past seems a better place” (p. 159). Hewison criticized heritage industry for producing nostalgic feelings “not for the past as it has been experienced ‘in the past’, but for sanitized version of the past that was re-imagined through the heritage industry as a utopia, in opposition to the perceived problems of contemporary world” (Harrison, 2013, p. 100). Hence, the heritage tourism provides visitors ‘a travel through past times’ though those ‘past times’ are carefully selected and

managed to bring marketed experiences for visitors. So, what tourists learn from the heritage during the visit is often either manipulated in a way that narrates a story of the relations between the destination country and their country of origins or provides them an escape from the present to the times 'when everything seemed simpler'.

## Lithuania's destination brand "Real is Beautiful"

### 1. Institutional practice: Official requirements for the brand creation

As mentioned before, in 2016 the LSDT announced an open-call for tenders for Lithuania's destination brand creation. It was followed by the release of the official document in which all the requirements, conditions and objectives were outlined. The document was placed online on the official website of Public Procurement. The guidelines and requirements for the brand reveal how the LSDT intends to promote Lithuania as a tourism destination and reflect their assessment of a place.

All the information about the branding project and its requirements were outlined in the Lithuanian language. Moreover, among the requirements, it was noted that "the tender and related correspondence have to be submitted only in Lithuanian language" (LSDT, 2016b, p. 8). It shows that the foreign agencies were not welcomed to submit their proposals. Which is rather strange as the project was financed by the funds from the European Union (LSDT, 2016b) and among the main requirements it was specified, that:

- Participant has to be accomplished at least one similar project (related to the creation of the brand concept, logo, slogan and brand book) over the past 3 years, that was valued no less than 28 000 EUR.
- Participant's average yearly income has to be more than 42 000 EUR.
- Participant guarantees to gather the team of qualified professionals. The project team has to include a strategist, project manager, creative manager, and designer. Additional requirements for the project team:
  - The strategist has to have more than 5 years of experience in branding and communication and has worked in at least 5 branding projects.
  - The project manager has to have more than 4 years of experience in the management field and has managed at least 5 projects related to branding.
  - The creative manager has to have more than 5 years of experience and has participated in at least 6 branding projects.
  - The designer has to have more than 4 years of experience and has participated in branding projects. (LSDT, 2016b, p. 6).

These requirements raise some concerns. First of all, participants were only required to have experience in branding. Considering that over the past 4-5 years there was no official place branding project within the country (at least not on a national level) and that the open-call was directed to the Lithuanian agencies exclusively it is apparent that the LSDT views the place branding project only from one – commercial branding – perspective and does not require any expertise from a place branding, tourism, public policy, sociology, anthropology or cultural domains. Considering this, it is doubtful if people with only marketing expertise can identify the communal sense of place and its changing identity. It leads to another assumption that the LSDT views a country not as a dynamic and complex entity but rather as a static commodity, which ‘competitive advantages’ can be easily distinguished and communicated for a broad audience. As mentioned before this communication-based approach fails to acknowledge that identity is not fixed but is constantly changing and renegotiated. Also, it does not recognize residents as the co-creators of a place’s identity. According to the official document the initial goal of the project was:

To create a destination brand concept that would represent Lithuania’s natural and cultural heritage. It has to represent a country as a unique and attractive tourism destination. A destination brand has to reflect the identity of the place for the potential foreign visitors and has to be familiar to the local inhabitants. A destination brand should be created based on the analysis of target audiences, and the examination of the images and communication of the similar countries with their tourism potential, economical and geographical attributes. Together with the concept participants have to create a logo, a brand book and a slogan in English and Lithuanian languages. (LSDT, 2016b, p. 18).

The goal of the project reveals that the focus of the LSDT, which is the legal and official owner of the destination brand, is on the promotion of natural and cultural heritage. It was also made clear that the brand has to be based on a country’s identity, positioned to the target markets and has to have a unified visual imagery. However, the content of the document did not provide any information about the identity of the country or anything related to the changing dynamics of a tourism sector within a country. Nevertheless, the Department did require that “the concept of the brand would be based on the analysis of the competitive advantages of Lithuania’s natural and cultural heritage” (LSDT, 2016b, p. 18). It means that it was expected from a brand creators to use the heritage and consequently the historical narratives as an expression of place’s identity. Even though, a history and heritage are

inevitably important they are only a few elements that define the identity of the place. The intention to promote country's heritage rather than reflect its identity is very likely to result in the myth creation instead of the representation. Moreover, it is questionable if the heritage is the best way to define the changing dynamics within the country.

The attempt of the LSDT to build a brand based on heritage promotion, on the one hand, seems logical as the heritage tourism is indeed a powerful and profitable industry in itself. On the other hand, following Hewison's critical approach to heritage, "heritage entails the promotion of a culture that is backward-looking rather than future-oriented, fearful of the present and therefore escapist, and incapable of innovation" (Lumley, 2005, p. 17). The heritage may be an interesting selling point for target markets, but it is not very beneficial for businesses and people living in the country, who are the stakeholders of the brand. It also raises many questions: does the heritage the only distinguishable feature of a country? Does the heritage inform about the changing spatial and cultural dynamics within the country? What meaning does it create about the destination and its inhabitants?

Another tension with heritage promotion as discussed above is its selectivity and interpretation. Considering, that the LSDT left for branding practitioners to decide on 'competitive advantages of the country' it is clear that the country's historical narrative will be shaped for tourist gaze. Though, what is not clear is which periods of the history will be promoted because of their 'competitiveness' and which will be neglected as 'not competitive' for tourist gaze. The selection between 'competitive' and 'uncompetitive' heritage will consequently leave some communities, parts of the country and even parts of the history abandoned. Thus, the final result of the destination brand will probably create a discourse which will be based on sanitized version of history and stereotyped version of a culture shaped for tourists gaze.

When the heritage is perceived as the only 'competitive advantage' of the place it consequently suggests that the positioning will be based on the discourse of timelessness. Morgan and Pritchard (1998) criticize attempts of Eastern European countries to position themselves as 'wrapped up in time' arguing that "these descriptions both mirror and reinforce pervasive Western perceptions which may well hold significant implications for countries' economic development" (p. 166). And indeed by looking at the target audiences outlined in the official document it is apparent that this positioning strategy is in favor for Western European audiences. In the official document target segments were divided into five groups:

**Table 1.** Countries targeted by Lithuanian destination brand.

Most important target segments	Distant target segments	Important target segments	Prospective target segments	Domestic tourists
<b>Italy</b>	Israel	Belarus	Finland	<b>Lithuania</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Japan	Latvia	Spain	
<b>Norway</b>	USA	Estonia	Denmark	
<b>France</b>	China	Ukraine	Belgium	
<b>Sweden</b>		Poland	Netherlands	
<b>Germany</b>		Russia		

These target segments reveal that the brand intends to attract tourists from Western Europe, Scandinavian and neighboring countries. The geographical segmentation raises many doubts. The LSDT probably intends to promote the brand in those countries, therefore they are outlined as a target ones. However, people living in the same country have different needs, interests, even income and opportunities to travel. Therefore, this vague segmentation leads to the assumption that the brand and its imagery will be simplified to meet the needs and expectations of a very broad ‘mass’ audience. This brief overview of the main goals and objectives of the Lithuania’s branding project provides an institutional context and will help to better understand the meaning of the created brand.

## 2. Brand manifesto

The brand manifesto can be regarded as the most important written document of the Lithuania’s destination brand. It was produced by Lithuanian communication agency *New*. The content of the manifesto describes and explains the main idea of the brand. The manifesto is uploaded on the official website of the LSDT. It is also included in the brand book and was distributed through many media channels in Lithuania, when the brand was introduced. It now legally belongs to the LSDT as well as the other material related to the brand. The fact that this text is part of the official destination brand project, entails that this text will reflect the official stance of the tourism authorities of how they see the brand, its function, and purpose. More importantly, it will entail how the tourism authorities view the country as a tourist destination. In this chapter, I will analyze the texts of the brand (linguistic and visual) by applying principles of the critical discourse analysis. I will start with the analysis of linguistic

text and then move to the analysis of visual signs, namely logo and additional logo symbols that complement the brand.

## 2.1. Text analysis of the brand manifesto

I will start from the analysis of the brand manifesto (See Appendix A). I will analyze each of the given sections outlined in it separately and will then make a conclusion at the end. I chose to analyze this text in this manner because the first thing that drew my attention was that the relatively short text is divided into seven distinctive parts (See Appendix B). It means that the given information has been organized into groups of idea units, which, presumably, entails different meanings or serves different purposes. This type of text organization manages the reader's perception by suggesting where one authors' point ends and the latter starts. It will also help to structure and organize the analysis more accurately.

The first part of the text<sup>2</sup> consists of two sentences. The phrase 'not to mention'<sup>3</sup> indicates that the second sentence is the elaboration of the first one. Thus, the first sentence entails the most important information within this short section. To find out what this sentence reveals, I distinguished the subject and the predicate of the main clause from it:

Subject: 'To get a picky traveler interested in visiting a small European country';

Predicate: 'is an incredibly tough task'.

According to the English grammar rules, the subject is the point around which information is organized whereas the predicate gives the information about the subject. Two dependent clauses within the first sentence are embedded into the main clause with the relative pronoun 'that' and are joined together with the conjunction 'and'. These dependent clauses stand as constituents of the word 'country'. In other words, these clauses provide information about the country the authors are referring to. Interestingly, the following sentence is an elaboration of the information about the 'country' and not the subject or the predicate. Thus, most of the information in this section is actually about the country, but it is not made clear what exact country the author is referring to because the country's name is only implicit. Even though the author gives quite a lot of information about the

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<sup>2</sup> "To get a picky traveler interested in visiting a small European country that doesn't boast spectacular wonders of nature or architectural miracles and is doomed with a hard to pronounce English name is an incredibly tough task. Not to forget, it still lacks direct flights from major cities and of which most of the world's citizens knows next to nothing." (See Appendix A).

<sup>3</sup> A phrase used for adding a comment that emphasizes the main idea of what has been already said.

‘country’, the most important point is still a subject. This subject involves the process (‘to get ... interested in visiting’) and the social actor (‘picky traveler’) while the predicate shows the authors’ stance towards the subject with the value assumption triggered by the adverb ‘incredibly’ and noun ‘tough’.

The authors make a lot of evaluations in the first section. To understand the main intention of it I took out those words that refer to evaluation from the main clause:

‘To get a traveler interested in visiting a European country ... is a task.’

This sentence shows that the author has a goal (‘a task’) and this goal is ‘to get traveler interested in visiting a European country’. I want to draw attention, that the goal is not to attract or convince to visit, but ‘to get [them] interested’. It indicates that to achieve this goal the authors will use the promotional and/or communication-related strategies to induce ‘traveler’s’ curiosity and interest. It also shows that a traveler is the most important social actor and the authors will be focusing on how to interest him/her. To come back to the main clause, the original version is not the value-neutral, but rather the opposite of that. In the original version, ‘a task’ is not just a simple task but ‘an incredibly tough’ one. The full version of the predicate shows that authors see a goal (‘a task’) as a problem (‘an incredibly tough task’). But why is this goal so problematic? According to the text, it can be because of two main reasons: the traveler and a country. The rest of the information in this section (not including predicate) can be applied to both traveler and a country and most of the statements (except the subject) are presented as statements of facts that are pervasively evaluative. The motive for that is because the authors intend to back their argument to show the reader why the goal is so problematic. In other words, ‘a task is incredibly tough’ because:

**Table 2.** Descriptions of the traveler and the country from the first section of the brand manifesto.

The traveler	The country (Lithuania)
is ‘picky’	Is not interesting for ‘picky travelers’
not ‘interested in visiting a small European country’	Is ‘small’
is interested in ‘spectacular wonders of nature or architectural miracles’	‘Doesn’t boast spectacular wonders of nature or architectural miracles’
is English speaker	‘Is doomed with a hard to pronounce English name’
Travels by plane from the major cities	‘Lacks direct flights from major cities’
Is a ‘world’s citizen’ who knows about the country ‘next to nothing’.	Of which most of the world’s citizens know next to nothing’.

These statements are presented as facts, not as an opinion, even though they are highly evaluative. This short section consisting of two sentences contributes to the knowledge exchange, but this particular knowledge is knower-initiated. The question then arises, who is behind this authoritative voice? The author is not indicated in the text or next to it. But as this particular text is uploaded on the official website of the LSDT under the 'Lithuanian Tourism Brand' section, the reader can assume that this is the official stance of the Lithuanian tourism authorities. This fact legitimizes the presented point of view. So, from this short section, the reader can get the impression that the LSDT views both the visitor and the country rather negatively. It also entails that the LSDT has 'an incredibly tough task' 'to get traveler interested' because of who s(he) is and what s(he) expects from the destination and that the 'small European country' cannot offer her/him that. The first section entails that the text producers have a goal 'to get ... traveler interested in visiting a ... country' but this goal is problematic as the country does not have much to offer to fulfill 'picky traveler's' needs or interests.

The second section<sup>4</sup> of the manifesto reveals that the authors found a way to solve a problem with communication. The third sentence indicates the solution to the previously mentioned 'task' and it is made explicitly clear with the phrase 'tourism communication'. The second section also defines the global context of the competitive nature of the tourism market by suggesting that there are many countries which are competing for tourists' attention ('those who talk like everyone else'). This sentence contributes to the complexity of the authors' 'task'. So, now not only 'a traveler', 'a country' but also a global context of 'tourism communication' are the factors turning authors' goal to a problem. Authors respond to this problem by stating: 'We need to stand out and be different.'

First two sentences of the second section entail that the authors believe that to grab tourist's attention country's communication has to 'be different' from 'everyone else's'. However, the authors do not say that 'communication needs to stand out' but instead uses the pronoun 'we'. It means that the text is actually suggesting that 'we need to stand out and be different with our communication'. Who are 'we': the authors, the LSDT or Lithuania's residents? The intransitive verb 'need to' indicates the necessity. So for whom is it necessary to 'stand out'? The logical response would be for those who

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<sup>4</sup> "The intensive white noise of tourism communication will not spare those who talk like everyone else. We need to stand out and be different. And our message is inspired by the point of view that we can share. This point of view will determine how we are seen, what can be experienced in Lithuania or expected from us. This will be our emotional selling proposition." (See Appendix A).

aim 'to get picky traveler interested' and do not want to get lost in the 'intensive white noise of tourism communication'. But do the authors mean that? The co-occurrence of the plural personal pronouns 'we' and 'our' in this section indicates that the authors intends to use 'we' as all-inclusive 'we' "which reduces hierarchy and distance by implying that all of 'us' are in the same boat" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 76). This personal pronoun also makes an opposition between 'we' and 'those who talk like everyone else'. Considering that this text is part of the Lithuania's brand communication the pronoun 'we' in this case refers to 'we-community' of Lithuanians.

The following sentences in this section very well illustrate why the authors decided to reduce distance and changed their voice from authoritative to more inclusive, even mobilizing. The fifth sentence starts with the conjunction 'and'. However, this sentence is not an additive but an elaboration of the former one. In other words, the fifth sentence indicates that author has found the solution of how to solve the problem. Authors state:

'And our message is inspired by the point of view that we can share'.

This very authoritative, compound sentence has main and subordinate clauses and the pronoun 'that' indicates that the latter clause is embedded in the main one. The subject of the main clause is 'message' but the authors do not start the sentence with the subject instead place the conjunction 'and' and personal pronoun 'our' before it. Gee (2011) explains that "anything that occurs before the subject of the main clause is the theme of the multi-clause sentence" (p. 66). As I have already discussed the conjunction 'and' helps to tie sentences together and does not really hold much meaning in itself. The same cannot be said about the personal pronoun 'our'. In this sentence 'our' refers to the authors of the text because the present simple tense indicates that the message 'is'. It means that it has been already created. So, the personal pronoun 'our' again signals the authoritative voice of the authors. It implies that authors are those who know the best way of how to solve the problem. The subject of the sentence ('message') proves that brand practitioners intend to solve the problem by communication. The 'message' that they created is 'inspired' (note: not based upon or grounded in) 'by the point of view that we can share'. The subordinate clause elaborates on the phrase 'point of view' by implying the possibility ('can'). In the subordinate clause the authors again use the personal pronoun 'we' which in this case refers to the 'we-community' and the verb 'share' denotes that this 'point of view' can possibly be common or agreed upon among all the community members. If the main clause acts as a statement the subordinate one is more like a prediction or

suggestion. There are always many different and even conflicting points of view within the community, so how did producers of this text manage to distinguish the most common one? This sentence can be considered as highly ideological as it “makes a positioned representation as a matter of general common sense” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 82). The following sentence is even more contentious:

‘This will determine how we are seen, what can be experienced in Lithuania or expected from us.’

This sentence shows that ‘the point of view’ that the authors decided upon are going to directly affect local people to satisfy ‘picky traveler’. The power of making statements on behalf of others, or on behalf of ‘all of us’ is “a power which has an uneven social distribution” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 171). With the indirect reporting the authors dehumanize local people by implying ‘how’ they will be ‘seen’ by tourists. In other words, the authors make a resolution (‘will determine’) that ‘to get traveler interested’ local people will be offered as an attraction to be seen. Moreover, local residents are not only going to be seen as passive objects but also will need to behave in a certain way to fulfill tourists’ expectations (‘expected from us’). Even the additive ‘experienced in Lithuania’ refers to some activities or entertainment services that usually involves local people. It means that the text producers neglect the agency of local people and impose their vision on how people should be seen and behave and how the experiences should be like. It gets even ‘better’ with the last sentence of this section, in which authors suggest that:

‘This will be our emotional selling proposition.’

This sentence concludes the second section. Therefore, the pronoun ‘this’ refers to both message and the point of view. ‘Will be’ indicates authors’ expectations and a probability of future events. The personal pronoun ‘our’ again entails questionable meaning. It can either refer to the authors of the text or the whole community. This personal pronoun is probably used to reduce the hierarchy between the authors and local community with the aim to enhance sympathetic feelings towards the brand. The co-occurrence of personal pronouns in this section denotes that the text is trying to persuade local people that ‘we are all responsible for this’ for unknown reasons. But the most intriguing aspect of this section is that authors regard the ‘message’ and the ‘point of view’ as an ‘emotional selling proposition’. It is clearly a marketing term, but what does it mean? Dictionary of Business and Management (2016) defines the concept as “the unique associations established by

consumers with particular products”. According to Fan (2005), “emotional selling proposition provides advertisers with a powerful tool to manipulate the consumer’s emotion in order to achieve brand differentiation” (p. 343). It means that branding communication intends to shape certain associations about the country and its residents in order to enhance positive emotional feelings for a tourist towards the country. So, it shows that the authors believe that the best way to promote the country is by ‘selling’ country’s culture and the social life of the residents with a stereotyped approach. I am arguing that this is a stereotyped approach because it is not clear whose ‘point of view’ influenced the ‘message’ and how did brand creators decide on it. By assuming a ‘common ground’ vision manifesto reduces the voices of local people and even their agency as they are presented as the passivated agents, whose ‘task’ is to make sure that tourists will get satisfied and all their expectations will be fulfilled according to the script, which is provided in the following section.

The third section<sup>5</sup> of the text starts with the statement and the following three sentences elaborate on this statement. With this section the authors are clearly seeking to legitimize their earlier presented ‘point of view’. To do so, the authors use one of Van Leeuwen’s (1999) strategies of legitimation, i.e. Moral Evaluation, which is “a legitimation by reference to value systems” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 98).

Interestingly, all inclusive ‘we’ occurs in each of the following sentence (2 times in the 9th sentence as ‘we’ and ‘our’; 3 times in the 10th sentence as ‘we’, ‘our’, ‘we’; and 1 time in the 11th sentence as ‘we’). The adjective ‘real’ is also quite frequent as it appears for two times in the last two sentences of this section. The elaborative sentences (9, 10, 11) are very similar in their structure as they are composed by using ‘from...to’ construction and include additional explanations in the brackets. In fact, all of the information presented in these sentences could have been written in a list, but the authors chose to use it as the disparate items that frame presented ranges. Grammatically it is not correct to use the idiom ‘from...to’ if it does not identify the extremes of the spectrum and especially in the cases where presented ‘items’ do not have anything in common like in this section. However, this organization of information creates an impression that there is a whole spectrum of ‘valuable things’ and those objects that are presented represent only a small part of the spectrum.

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<sup>5</sup> “We value real things. From the food we eat (hardcore believers of naturally grown food) to the enviable part that nature takes up in our landscape (nature is where one can meet all of the Lithuanians during weekends and in the summertime. From the realness of people (we keep our word, we despise pretentiousness) to the realness in the streets (unpolished architecture). From the real culture that we value (famous theatre, overwhelmingly popular world cinema, booming music festivals) to the real, earnest hospitality.” (See Appendix A).

Nevertheless, those objects that have been included in this text indicate the most important - 'real subjects' that are valued within the country. According to the text these subjects are: food, nature, people, streets, culture, and hospitality. All of them are quite commonly valued within every community in the world. Moreover, presented subjects do not really tell anything unique about the country. Therefore, there is a need to look to the information written next to these subjects as it could entail more specified picture of the 'the point of view'. With this description of the 'point of view' the authors intend to determine 'how [local people] are seen, what can be experienced in Lithuania or expected from [local residents]'. In other words, the information provided next to the subjects explains what makes those subjects 'real' and therefore valued.

The 'real food' that Lithuanians value is the one that they eat. Information in the brackets emphasizes that Lithuanians are 'hardcore believers of naturally grown food'. It means that a significant part of the food that they eat is a 'naturally grown' one. According to the text Lithuanians eat mostly naturally grown food and only the naturally grown food that they eat is considered as 'real' and is 'valued'. The authors do not mention anything about national cuisine, but choose to emphasize 'naturally grown food'. It leads to the assumption that the authors emphasize it with the intention to create an expectation for the travelers that in Lithuania they could have a lot of opportunities to taste the food made from naturally grown ingredients. Also, this statement is used to create an impression of 'slow', 'eco-friendly' country. The following statement (in the same sentence) echoes it by noting that 'nature is where one can meet all of the Lithuanians during weekends or in the summertime'. This information is provided in the brackets after the statement that 'the enviable part that nature takes up in our landscape' is valued. This part of the sentence signals the national proudness because according to it, it is not just the country's landscape, but 'our landscape' and it takes the 'enviable part in our landscape'. It means that the reader is expected to be envious of that. The information in the brackets is more intriguing. There are two social actors in the sentence – 'one' who is supposedly a traveler and 'Lithuanians'. The authors make a propositional assumption for potential travelers by indicating that they 'can meet all of Lithuanians' in nature. Simultaneously the authors make a categorical assumption about Lithuanians, stating that 'all of Lithuanians' can be met in nature 'during weekends or in the summertime'. Lithuanians in this sentence are presented as passive agents, which signals hierarchical power relations. The traveler is again treated as a more important social actor than the locals. The authors demonstrate homogenization by incorporating the pronoun 'all'. What does it entail? Lithuanians ('all of them') are portrayed as valuing only their landscape and spending

their free time in the country and specifically in the nature. One could argue that this whole sentence represents Lithuanians as quite conservative, narrow-minded and even nationalistic. As they are portrayed as valuing only a food that they eat, expressing the pride of their nature and spending their free time inside the country without wishing to travel elsewhere and meet other cultures.

The following sentence reveals what the authors meant by 'realness of people' and 'realness in the streets'. Two most important characteristics chosen to explain the notion of 'realness of people' are presented with the categorical assumptions. Also, these two characteristics entail what the authors meant by stating that 'point of view will determine ... what can be expected from [Lithuanians]'. The first phrase 'we keep our word' indicates that people are trustworthy and have integrity in delivering their promises. This is important for every tourist or traveler. So, it was not accidentally chosen. The second phrase 'we despise pretentiousness' is more ambiguous. On the one hand, the meaning of the noun 'pretentiousness' regards to the manner in which people try to create a false appearance of exaggerated importance and act unnaturally. So it can be regarded as an opposite of the 'real' at least on some level. On the other hand, the verb 'despise' signals a strongly negative stance towards the subject. So the phrase entails that Lithuanians value 'real' people, but 'despise' pretentious ones. Or it can be argued that Lithuanians cannot stand those who are different from them because of their attitude or value system. It creates a perception that Lithuanians are sincere and trustworthy, but intolerant for those who are different from them. The rest of the sentence entails that the local residents value 'realness in the streets' and by that the authors mean 'unpolished architecture'. The phrase 'unpolished architecture' is vague and not very specific. The authors chose the adjective 'unpolished' to suggest that the architecture is 'authentic'. However, what does it say about people who enjoy living around 'unpolished architecture' and do not want to change it because they 'value' it? It tells the reader that the people living in Lithuania are stubborn and not very open for changes and enjoy life as given.

The last sentence of the third section describes the culture and hospitality that are valued within the country. The first part of the sentence is the only part of the text so far that does not create an impression of Lithuanians as the archaic or closed community. Nevertheless, it still portrays the 'real' culture that they 'value' quite primitively. According to the text 'real culture' is best described by 'famous theater, overwhelmingly popular world cinema, booming music festivals'. The notion of culture involves much more than just a theater, cinema and music festivals, does it mean that

Lithuanians value only these entities? Or are these the only cultural things within the country? From the brand manifesto one can make a conclusion that Lithuanian culture is not very rich and does not have much to offer for the visitor. The sentence ends with the assumption that the 'real, earnest hospitality' is also valued in Lithuania. The adjective 'earnest' gives positive connotation. I believe that the authors included this feature of the country to address traveler and to create an emotional appeal of what to expect while visiting a country.

The third section is concluded with the following one<sup>6</sup>. So, the explanation of the 'point of view' results in the communication message: 'real is beautiful'. This message is 'a message to the world' which means that this is how the authors project the image of the country and more importantly local people's social life (including everyday life) and their values to the external audience.

The following section<sup>7</sup> stands up for what the authors call 'selling proposition'. It consists of only one sentence and this sentence directly addresses the 'traveler'. The authors present the information with a present real conditional sentence which is used to express general truths. The individualized 'you' addresses the prospective traveler and by doing so simulates a conversational and therefore relatively personal, informal, equal relationships between the authors and the reader. In contrast, in the second section the authors addressed the local community ('we need to stand out') with a highly authoritative command marked with the modal 'need to'. This signified unequal, hierarchical relations and suggested unequal power distribution. In the fifth section the 'offer' sentence is inviting. However, not the country or its inhabitants are inviting the visitor but the brand. The conditional clause is marked with the word 'when', which suggests that this 'condition' will definitely happen. The result clause gives an advice which is presented as a factual instead of just possible ('is a good decision').

With the fifth section, the authors draw an opposition between 'traveler's' world and Lithuania. I use the word 'world' because in the previous section author declared that this is a message 'to the world'. Lithuania is represented as the 'escape' destination, distinct and different from the world that the traveler is living in. I structured the binary oppositions enhanced by the text in the table below:

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<sup>6</sup> "We have a message to the world: real things are beautiful to us. Real is beautiful." (See Appendix A).

<sup>7</sup> "When you want to get away from fake smiles, concrete jungle, industrial madness, plastic architecture or conveyor belt of tourism, visiting Lithuania is a great decision." (See Appendix A).

Table 3. Binary oppositions narrated in the brand manifesto.

Features of traveler's world	Features of Lithuania
Fake smiles	Realness of people
Concrete jungle	The enviable part of nature in the landscape
Industrial madness	Realness in the streets
Plastic architecture	Unpolished architecture
Conveyor belt of tourism	Real, earnest hospitality

The implementation of the binary oppositions juxtaposes Lithuania and traveler's world. It represents Lithuania as different from the world in which traveler is living in. Phrase 'conveyor belt of tourism' suggests that Lithuania is also different from popular tourism destinations. This shows that the authors are addressing those visitors who identify themselves as travelers and are looking for unconventional destinations.

The sixth section<sup>8</sup> of the brand manifesto consists of three sentences. It functions as a wrap-up of the whole text as it does not provide any new information but simply rephrases already presented ideas. However, the way these ideas are concluded is worth analyzing. In the sixth section, the authors do not talk about the aspects of the country, but rather define the social life of its inhabitants. The first sentence of this section echoes the main message of this text ('real is beautiful'). The following sentences may seem as providing new information but they are written to support the myth (or as they call it 'emotional selling proposition') that authors are creating with this text. The sixteenth sentence provides a response to the flaws of the country as presented in the first section. In other words, it suggests that while there are no 'natural or architectural miracles' within the country, there are a lot of simple things that are valued 'even if they are imperfect' as oppose to the 'spectacular wonders' and 'miracles' of other destinations. The last two sentences of this section suggest that people living in Lithuania are 'proud' of imperfections. It means that Lithuanians are not trying to change or improve their living conditions, as they 'see the beauty in them'. These statements contribute to the representation of 'authentic' and again make an implicit opposition between 'traveler's world' and Lithuania.

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<sup>8</sup> "Lithuania is a place where real things are valued. Even if they are a bit of imperfect. We're proud of our imperfections. In other words, we see the beauty in them." (See Appendix A).

The last section<sup>9</sup> of this text is the concluding one. The authors state that ‘tourism communication’ is the solution to the previously presented ‘incredibly tough task’. Text producers again use the generic personal pronoun ‘our’ by assuming that it reflects the general common sense of local community. The last sentence is not a really grammatical sentence but rather the list of adjectives (‘unvarnished, sincere, and real’) and a phrase (‘with no makeup’) that define the ‘communication’. With the last sentence, the authors are trying to persuade the reader that this communication depicts the reality of the place. By doing so, the authors aim to legitimize the myth represented earlier in the text. Finally, at the bottom of the text creators outline the message of this communication: *Lithuania. Real is beautiful.*

The brand manifesto can be regarded as the explanation of the initial message. In the first section it provides an explanation of what Lithuania is (or is it better to say that it represents what Lithuania is not). Then, in the second section the authors explain the motivation for the creation of this message and also outline its purpose. The third section explains the ‘point of view’ which indicates what the authors mean by emphasizing the ‘real’. Finally, the fourth, fifth and sixth sections explain why these ‘real’ things are ‘beautiful’. The message ‘Real is beautiful’ is not only used as a slogan for tourism communication, but also functions as a core of the brand. It means that all communication or promotion projects related to the tourism brand have to match this slogan or be based on it. So, as the authors outlined in the second section this brand manifesto ‘will determine how [Lithuanians will be] seen’ by foreigners, at least from the official tourism communication.

## 2.2. Discourse practice

As it was explained before, this text was created by Lithuanian communication agency *New* and it was produced by following the guidelines and requirements outlined by the LSDT. As mentioned before, these guidelines reflect the official stance of Lithuania’s tourism authorities and reveal the vision of how they regard and intend to represent Lithuania as a tourism destination. Considering this context (which may not be acknowledged by the reader of the text) it is clear that a creative agency produced this text as an explanation of a brand concept. The analysis of the content entails how the producers of the text interpreted the requirements for the brand. This text is not dialogical as it does not “attribute representations to sources or ‘voices’” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 46). It means that the statements presented in it are actually the assumptions of the authors. The intensive usage of

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<sup>9</sup> “This is our new tourism communication. Unvarnished, with no make up, sincere, real.” (See Appendix A).

adjectives and hyperboles makes the text vivid and more interesting to read. Which reveals that this text is an advertisement product, which uses emotive words to associate the country (which is a product in this case) with the lifestyle of the target audience. The fact, that the text was produced by the communication agency specializing in advertising partly explains the choice of words and expressions. However, this text is presented as not just a simple advertising product, but is legitimized by the Lithuania's tourism authorities as the official representation of the country.

How does the text portray the social actor, who represents the target audience of the brand? By looking into the guidelines for the brand it is apparent that the LSDT left a lot of freedom for brand practitioners by only requiring to target people from particular countries without emphasizing their demographic, psychographic, sociographic or behavioral characteristics. So, it can be said that it was a creative agency's decision to create a brand for a 'picky traveler' and not for 'an adventurous traveler', 'a curious tourist' or 'an intelligent visitor'. The words 'traveler', 'tourist', 'visitor' can be used as synonyms though they have quite different meanings. So, by using the word 'traveler' authors refer to the discursive category of the travelers. People who identify themselves as travelers tend to be more active and adventurous, seek to visit less explored destinations and are likely to choose unconventional types of traveling. The flaws of the country listed in the first section, in my opinion, are the flaws for a tourist, but can be seen as advantages for a traveler. As the tourist is the one who is usually 'picky', seeking 'to visit' a country and expects comfort ('direct flights', easy 'pronunciation', well-known conventional destinations as oppose to 'unknown ones'). With this text the brand practitioners suggest that Lithuania is different from popular destinations as it offers 'earnest hospitality' instead of 'conveyor belt of tourism'. Therefore, it can be argued that by doing so the brand practitioners address those, who identify themselves as travelers and not as tourists.

The brand manifesto entails that the authors are aiming to persuade potential travelers that Lithuania is a typical 'escape' destination because it is opposite from the their world. The features that define traveler's world refers to the stereotypes of Western countries. It indicates the positioning strategy that authors chose to apply for the branding project. Brand practitioners are clearly targeting travelers who are looking for immutable, remote destinations. This is very well visible from the construction of the traveler's world and Lithuania around binary oppositions. Traveler's world is depicted as a modern and developed in contrast with Lithuania, which is represented as a remote and archaic. Morgan and Pritchard (1998) explained this as follows:

This view of tourism destinations as timeless and immutable to the forces of change is related to the so-called search for authenticity and the sacred. In our industrialized, urbanized, fragmented world some of us search for the sacred, to compensate for our own alienated experience. This search for sacred is itself an outcome of nineteenth-century (white, male, heterosexual) anthropology – a social science constructed around binary concepts: savage and civilized; primitive and developed; them and us. (p. 243).

It is important to emphasize that tourism communication has a lot of potential to influence travelers' decision whether to visit a country or not. Tourists make decisions based on available information. It means that if the branding communication that aims to sell a myth about the country manages to persuade tourist, they will be looking for this myth while on site. So, this positioning strategy may give a competitive advantage but does it really reflect the reality of the country as it declares? The more controversial question is whether this myth is beneficial for country's image outside of tourism domain?

Textual analysis revealed that the brand creators believe (or pretend to believe) that Lithuania does not have anything interesting to offer for the travelers or at least not interesting enough to compete in the highly competitive tourism market. Thus, they decided that the best way to appeal to travelers is by promoting the country's residents, their values and social life as the most interesting 'attractions'. The hierarchical power relations between the potential tourist (for whom the communication has been created), local people (who are the co-creators and the real owners of the place) and brand practitioners (who intend to promote the country) are also clearly evident from the text. According to Fairclough (2003) "the capacity to exercise social power, domination and hegemony include the capacity to shape to some significant degree the nature and content of the 'common ground', which makes implicitness and assumptions an important issue with respect to ideology" (p. 55). The ideology that the authors are exercising in this text is not political, but a market-driven one. It means that the authors regard travelers as the most important social actors and intends to do everything that could potentially be appealing to them at any cost. On the other hand, one can argue that the requirements for the brand already revealed that the LSDT is driven by the neo-liberalism principles. The authorities did not ask to create a brand after the deep analysis and dialogue between local people and brand practitioners, but to create a brand that 'sells'. They left marketing

professionals to distinguish the unique features of the country. This fact alone shows that the country was being treated as a commodity rather than a complex social and cultural entity. So it is not surprising that the authoritative voice of the brand producers entails that the brand totally neglects local residents as co-creators of the place. Brand practitioners do not ask or offer local stakeholders to contribute to the brand or tourism communication, but declare that the brand created by them 'will determine how we are seen', etc. It means that they do not leave any options for locals to disagree with the brand or shape it in their own best interest. The question is it ethical to use local people as part of the 'emotional selling proposition' just to appeal to tourists without their permission was clearly not considered.

The most contentious aspect about the brand manifesto is that text producers depict an image of local people's social life and their values without a dialogue and with the intent to enhance emotional appeal for the potential tourists by unfolding a homogenous and highly biased discourse about the country and its inhabitants. All the assumptions made by the brand practitioners entail that everything is very simple within Lithuania, even primitively simple. What is also interesting is that the authors do not suggest or invite travelers to get involved in local social life or culture and to make conclusions by their own. Thus, they suggest to only 'gaze' upon instead of interact with. In other words authors invite travelers to 'gaze' upon certain, projected reality. Moreover, the brand manifesto does not entail anything unique about Lithuania as all of the assumptions presented in the text are not based on a factual information. First, the authors declare a strong value assumption, that the country 'doesn't boast spectacular wonders of nature or architectural miracles'. In fact, four sites in Lithuania were recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. It may not seem like an impressive number, but it indicates that according to one of the most influential world organizations Lithuania 'does boast' at least a few 'spectacular wonders of nature' and 'architectural miracles'. Country's nature and architecture are also emphasized by the travel guides Lonely Planet and Rough Guides. Lonely Planet describes the country as "a pocket-sized republic that's a nature lover's delight, yet lacks nothing in urban excitement" (Lonely Planet, 2017). Whereas Rough Guide recommends to "leave time for long days and lazy evenings exploring Lithuania's baroque masterpiece, Vilnius" (Rough Guide 2017). Moreover, while brand creators assume that the country 'lacks direct flights from major cities', Rough Guide notes that "the country is 'easy to reach from most other parts of Europe" (Rough Guide 2017). In fact, Lithuania has direct flights to almost all targeted countries and to several cities in those countries, except Japan, USA, and China. It is difficult to say whether 'the

name of the country is hard to pronounce' or how much 'world's citizens' know about the country'. However, the decision to include those statements are quite strange as most of the 'travelers' who should be targeted by the branding campaign are not from the English-speaking countries. Also, the lexical choice to use the phrase 'world's citizens' when stating that they 'know next to nothing' about the country is odd considering that this term refers to people who are interested in cultural diversity and open for the new knowledge about different cultures. Interestingly, this term is not used in the Lithuanian version of the text. So, the agency chose this term either to strengthen their point that even most of the world's citizens know next to nothing about the country or simply because they saw it as a trendy word. The fact, that they did not include it in the Lithuanian version can prove the latter.

The authors represent Lithuania as an archaic country, and people as proud in everything they have within a country and not very open to changes or differences. Real culture is defined very vaguely by suggesting that the Lithuanian culture is best represented by the theatre, cinema and music festivals. According to the website of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania (n.d.), country has 13 state theatres and each year there are about 60 new plays produced that attract over half of million spectators<sup>10</sup> per year. Cinema is significantly more popular. However, people watch movies produced abroad because there were only 58 Lithuanian films<sup>11</sup> produced the same year (LFC, n.d.). So to distinguish cinema as one of the most important features of Lithuania's culture seems rather strange as Lithuanians mostly watch popular movies which is a quite common practice among most of the communities around the world. Even though many music festivals take place within Lithuania during summer they are local ones and are visited mostly by local people. If they are 'booming' they are 'booming' only within the country's borders. The way the culture is portrayed creates a perception that Lithuanians are not very interested in the cultural life especially considering that they 'all' spend their free time in the nature. Therefore, one can argue that authors seek to follow the 'exotic' discourse and create an image of the country as distinct and different from the Western European counterparts.

The values of Lithuanians are also based on the authors' assumptions with the intention to create an image of Lithuania as 'wrapped in time' and immutable to changes. According to the manifesto, Lithuanians value naturally grown food, nature, a primitive culture, unpolished architecture and earnest hospitality. According to the survey conducted in 2013 for International Social Survey

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<sup>10</sup> There are approximately about 3 million inhabitants in Lithuania.

<sup>11</sup> That includes: 21 drama films, 10 documentaries, 18 short-films and 9 animation films.

Programme (ISSP) by Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuanians are mostly proud of the achievements in sports, country's history, the achievements in the arts and literature and the scientific and technological achievements, respectively (Rauleckas & Žvaliauskas, 2017). These results of national pride do not coincide with the 'values' represented in the brand manifesto. Paradoxically, authors emphasize the adjective 'real' when describing Lithuania even though the text does not represent the country as it is for real but rather create a myth of a remote place that is opposite from the Western world. Morgan and Pritchard (1998) argue that "the exotic is described as 'authentic', 'original', 'real' and indigenous people are characterized as strangers who are presented as primitive, simple, exotic, remote and unspoilt" (p. 219). It means that the extensive use of the adjective 'real' is used to create an appeal of 'authentic' destination and persuade the reader that the given information about Lithuania is based on truth. So, instead of promoting Lithuania brand practitioners promote the myth, or as they call it 'emotional selling proposition', about Lithuania as 'authentic', 'exotic' and 'primitive' destination.

In my view, it is a bit paradoxical that authors represent Lithuanians as the community that is not open for changes considering how many changes this nation experienced over the past 27 years of independence. But since many people, who live outside the country are not familiar with Lithuania they may associate it with the stereotypes that the brand manifesto is trying to legitimize. The myth with which the authors are trying to persuade the reader is created to please the Western perception of small and relatively unknown countries. Almost twenty years from now Morgan and Pritchard commented tourism communication of Eastern European countries as follows:

The language and style used is very similar to those which frequently describe other, more obviously exotic (non-western) cultures and peoples. Here, we have a construction of the exotic within the 'new' Europe – and, interestingly, one which is not just constructed by external marketers from tour operators but also by the countries' own national tourism boards. (p. 234).

From the analysis of this text, the same can be said about the new branding project of Lithuania. But since 1998 when the book of Morgan's and Pritchard's was published Lithuania joined the European Union in 2004, elected a woman president Dalia Grybauskaitė for two terms since 2009 till now, organized European Basketball Championship in 2011, changed its national currency from Litas to Euro in 2015, to name only a few facts. A lot has changed since then but apparently, tourism

communication is still following the same path. The main problem with this type of communication is that instead of challenging dominant Western stereotypes about Lithuania it complements them by privileging tourist over the locals. The fact that this text was written by the creative agency partly explains the motives and lexical choices that were made. However, the brand manifesto is not presented as the advertisement created by the communication agency. It is authorized by the LSDT and thus reflects the official position of the authorities. A country and more importantly its culture and social life belong to people who live there, so the aim to create a misleading myth about it just for the tourist appeal is neither fair nor ethical. Moreover, by creating a myth only for travelers' appeal it contradicts with the main principles of place branding, that suggest that the place brand has to be based on place culture and reflect the residents' views of it. Place brand works both ways, i.e. not only it speaks for the tourists but also for the residents. Consequently, "the representation of the place affects how the people represented see themselves, their culture and their place" (Campelo, Aitken, Gnoth, 2011, p. 6).

The destination branding campaign is intended to target both the inbound and local tourists. The brand manifesto is also available in Lithuanian language. However, assessing this text from local resident's perspective it is clearly evident that the text was created for the foreign visitors and later was translated in Lithuanian. The text addresses foreign visitor, it talks about the traveler who needs to be 'interested in visiting' Lithuania. Thus, it does not invite Lithuanians to travel within Lithuania only notes how they 'will be seen' by foreign visitor. This again shows that the destination brand neglects and ignores local people not only as co-creators of the place but also as the potential domestic tourists.

### 3. Visual representation of the brand

For the visual representation of the brand, two version of the logo and five additional signs were created. Logo of the brand was one of the main requirements of the brand creation from the LSDT. The logo is one of the brand elements, which together with a name, slogan, style, and design forms the coherent unity of the brand. So, it is only a small part of the destination's brand. However, it functions as the visual symbol that represents the brand and consequently the destination. Logo very often takes a lead in a branding project as it provides the first impression of the brand communication and thus creates awareness about the destination and what it has to offer for a tourist. The new logo of Lithuania's destination brand was described as follows:

The focus of the visual representation of the tourism brand of Lithuania is a postage stamp. The logo typeface resembles lively, growing tree branches and is contained within a pastel mint symbol of a postage stamp. Complementary images have been created as well, which, along with the logo, help to deliver a more accurate message – namely, “Meet people”, “Taste Food”, “Stay Active”, “See Nature,” or “Explore Culture”. Based on the style of the logo, a souvenir line and communication marketing tools have also been developed (LSDT, 2016a).

While the brand name, logo and slogan are considered as the crucial elements of the brand in commercial branding, the significance of these brand elements in place branding domain has been an object for the debates. Some scholars argue that these symbolic brand elements have a very limited impact on visitors (Munar, 2011; Kladou et al., 2016). Hence, Estonia, which introduced its place branding project in 2017, decided not to use any logo but to present a country by using only its name and a consistent graphic design. However, it is an exception rather than a rule. Most places in the world, as well as Lithuania, still create and use logos to communicate their message to a mass audience.

The most important aspect concerning destination brand logo is that it has to be consistent with other elements of the brand. The coherence between different brand elements serves “to unify the image formation and building, which in turn contributes to the strength and uniqueness of brand identity” (Hem & Iversen, 2004, p. 86). Hem and Iversen argue that “units such as families (e.g. the royal family of Great Britain), religions (the Christian cross) and countries (the American Stars and Stripes) have used logos to represent their names visually for centuries” (p. 87). These, so called logos, later developed into the important symbols of places (as flags or state emblems). Nowadays, logos of places and destinations are not that sophisticated as their predecessors. Oppositely, logos of destinations are created to be as simple and clear as possible. The same as others brand elements logo has to distinguish the destination from others and communicate the most important features of the place. In other words, logo gives the first impression of what the brand and the destination will be all about.

### 3.1. Visual texts analysis



**Figure 2.** Destination brand logo (English version).



**Figure 3.** Destination brand logo (Lithuanian version).

The brand practitioners created two versions of the main logo: one for the foreign and another for the domestic markets. Interestingly, complementary images have been created only for the inbound visitors, as they are all in English. The main logo of the destination brand includes country's name in English (Lithuania) and the slogan (Real is beautiful). The version of the logo for the internal market resembles the former one, except the name of the country is in Lithuanian (Lietuva) and the slogan have a different meaning than in the English version. Instead of translating the slogan 'Real is beautiful' brand practitioners decided to create a different tagline, which translated into English means 'Have you been there?'. The Lithuanian slogan is more engaging. It enhances the curiosity of the message receiver and instead of imposing a particular view on a country it invites to explore the unfamiliar places within the country and make conclusions on their own. Moreover, it suggests that there are not one but many places within Lithuania that are worth visiting. It is not clear why the brand practitioners decided to create a new and completely different slogan for the internal audience instead of translating the original one. It proves that they were focusing on the foreign visitors while creating a brand.

The main emphasis of these logos is on a nature aspect of the country. Even though there are no distinct indicators of nature, the wordmark and two shades of green create an impression that the beauty of the country lies in the nature. The green color is usually associated with nature, grass, trees and it creates feelings of calmness and reminds people of outdoors (Hemphill, 1996; Kaya & Epps, 2004). The placement of two main objects of the image – name on the top and slogan on the bottom – reveals the information value through the composition. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) the elements that appear on the top of the image represents the 'ideal' and those placed on the bottom – the 'real'. The 'ideal' elements stand for the idealized essence of the information, while the

'real' elements provide more specific or practical information. Thus, the name of the country is presented as the 'ideal' information, whereas slogan as the 'real'. The linguistic meaning of the slogan *Real is beautiful* is strengthened by this composition. Lithuania (as the destination) is presented as the aspired goal because it is depicted as the most salient visual object of the logo. The slogan strengthens this impression as it suggests that the nature of the country is 'real' and 'beautiful'. As for the Lithuanian logo version, it invites local residents to explore natural areas within the country.

The wordmark was meant to represent a growing tree branches. Looking from afar it looks like a forest, though it might get confused with the mountain range. About 30% of the Lithuanian land is covered by forests, so for the people familiar with the country's landscape this wordmark may be a clear signifier of trees, but for those who do not know anything about the country, this may be confused with something else. Nevertheless, the rhythm enhanced by the typography implies that the country is dynamic and vibrant destination.

### Complementary images



**Figure 4.** Complementary images of the destination brand.

As mentioned earlier, additional images that complement the main logo, have not been translated in the Lithuanian language. So it leads to the assumption that these were created exclusively for the foreign audience. Complementary images were also framed in the post stamp template. Each additional image consists of the illustration and the auxiliary caption. These five stamp images echo the most valuable tourism assets within Lithuania as explained in the brand manifesto, namely food, nature, people, culture, and activities. Even without reading the brand manifesto one can perceive these subjects depicted on the additional stamps as the most important ones for a tourist visiting Lithuania and that was probably a goal of brand creators. From the very beginning when the first actual postage stamps were introduced, governments have used them as a very convenient medium to commemorate most significant aspects, persons, events or achievements of the country or its citizens. Brunn (2001) argues that a lot can be learned from country's stamps about how "the state wishes to be seen and remembered (or imaged) by others" (p. 317). Thus,

consequently, people perceive things depicted on the postage stamps as significant features of the country. So the illustrations together with the messages framed in the postage stamps suggest the most important 'things to do' while visiting Lithuania.

Visual (iconographic images) and written (taglines) elements are connected through the usage of the same colors. Verbs that directly address the reader and urge to take an action are written in the same colors as the backgrounds of the main images. The nouns are in the same colors as the contours of the elements that they are referring to. All the complementary signs are divided in two parts, whereas images are on top and written information at the bottom. It shows that the 'ideal' images reflect the 'real'. The white space on the bottom may also refer to the image of a Polaroid picture. Thus, it suggests for potential tourists that by following the instructions outlined on the bottom of the logos they will create memorable experiences from the visit, that are depicted on the top of the logo.

**Taste food.** The picture which invites tourist to 'Taste food' depicts the illustration of mushrooms, carrot and bread images. Brand creators state in the brand manifesto that Lithuanians are 'hardcore believers of naturally grown food' and this is reproduced in the picture since all three objects are drawn as growing from the bottom. The warm color of yellow is engaging and elicits positive and inviting feelings. The phrase 'taste food' indicates that the authors are suggesting to enjoy and sense the taste of the food. The objects in the image are depicted from the front and are brought close to the viewer, which enhance engagement and inviting, personal relationships between the viewer and the drawn elements.

**See nature.** Brand creators chose to use trees images to represent the nature aspect of Lithuania. Trees are drawn in the green background. Tree icons function as signifiers of forests and greenery of the Lithuanian landscape. Brand practitioners could have depicted sea, river or lake illustrations that are common signifiers of the vacation destinations. The decision to represent the nature with greenery symbols shows that the authors are aiming to appeal to people living in the cities and for whom greenery may seem as an exotic aspect of the destination. The tagline 'See nature' proves that the authors are suggesting to perceive the nature with eyes instead of explore or engage with it in other ways. It shows that the authors believe that the nature aspect itself may be appealing for the tourists who live in 'concrete jungles'. Forests have always been a symbol of a mystery and wilderness. Oppositely to the cities, forests refer to the precondition of civilization. Forest image is depicted from the distance and the viewer can see the full figures of trees, which suggests impersonal

relationships, but the frontality of the elements engages the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) by suggesting that the Lithuanian 'nature' is inviting visitors to explore it with respect.

**Meet people.** To represent Lithuanians brand creators depicted them with the traditional family illustration. The warm colors may signify the friendliness of people. The picture itself may seem welcoming as the tagline invites to 'Meet people'. The family image creates an appeal for those tourists who travel with their own families. On the other hand, a traditional family image signify the dominant attitude towards the family model within Lithuania. The image of the kid depicted at the centre connects the man and woman together. The depiction of a family at an eye level suggests the equal, social relationships with the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The frontality of the images signifies engagement. However, people depicted in it do not have any facial expressions, except for a kid, who is smiling. Therefore, the family is not trying to make any contact with the viewer, except for a kid, but the father and mother block kid from the outside world by holding him in their arms, like protecting. The way the arms of the two adults are depicted by joining them together and closing the family from the outside world show that it is an 'offer' image (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), which means that the viewer is detached from any personal relations with the family and can only be a passive observer of it. Thus, people are depicted as the display objects 'to be seen'.

**Explore culture.** With the tagline 'Explore culture' brand creators try to convince the potential visitor that in Lithuania culture needs to be actively explored rather than passively observed. The color of purple is usually associated with nobility, power, luxury, and spirituality. So the background color of this image suggests for the visitor that next to the wild nature s(he) can also find a rich and noble culture. The illustration of building refers to the architecture. Tall and narrow buildings with gable roofs refer to the old architectural styles. This illustration does not represent any particular building located in Lithuania. It reminds of a church but as there are no cross symbols, it can be perceived as an ordinary house. The depicted building suggest that the culture is still rather than vibrant. The distant figures suggest impersonal relationships, but the frontality invites a viewer to engage with them as one can see the door at the bottom-center of the image.

**Stay active.** With this picture, brand creators imply that Lithuania is a destination for those who intend to spend their free time actively. They illustrated this picture with an icon of a person riding a bicycle. Over the past years a bicycle image has become an indicator of sustainable and the environmental-friendly lifestyle attribute. It is associated with the ecological mean of transportation

rather than the source of entertainment. Thus, by suggesting to 'stay active' while in Lithuania with this picture brand creators may create a positive appeal for tourists. However, as this picture will probably be associated with environmentally friendly, lively and probably urban lifestyle, it does not represent any activities worth experiencing in Lithuania. The choice of blue color together with bicycle illustration seems a bit strange considering that the city bike rental systems, that work successfully in three biggest Lithuanian cities, is renting orange bicycles thus at least Lithuanians often associate bicycles with orange color. The central image of the logo is a bicycle which represent the active leisure. The low angle and the fact that the person's, who is riding the bike, head is cut off from the image, suggest that the activities are more important than the participants of them. The lines at the left side of the image signify the motion and speed, which seems a bit strange considering that with the brand manifesto, creators tried to create an impression of Lithuania as the destination of slow leisure.

### 3.2. Discourse practise

The main logo and additional marks resemble the representation of Lithuania narrated in the brand manifesto. It can be even said that brand creators translated words into a visual language to make the brand more coherent and consistent. The colors and vector illustrations create a feeling of a simple, natural destination for those who aspire active lifestyle and seeks to explore new places. It does not represent Lithuania as a passive vacation destination, where one can enjoy 'sun and sand' but rather enhance the feelings of nostalgic place, full of natural mysteries, noble culture, and unspoiled landscapes, people and culture. The visual representation mostly speaks to the older tourists or people traveling with families and who are looking for a calm and unexplored destination. In the brand manifesto, brand creators invite travelers to get away from 'their world' and suggest to choose Lithuania as their escape destination. The post stamp motive of the logo supports this message and strengthens the perception of Lithuania, which brand creators are trying to foster, as an authentic, unspoiled destination that is still wrapped in time and untouched by technological changes. Ironically, Lithuania has one the fastest public wi-fi in the world, but is presented for the tourists with a postage stamp. It again proves that the destination brand concept was created not to represent the country, but to create a myth about it for the Western European travelers.

The layout of the logo evokes nostalgic<sup>12</sup> feelings and reminds of the times before the social media revolution when sending postcards was a dominant way of sharing holiday memories. Nowadays, this habit has been largely replaced by tourists constantly uploading their photographs and sharing memories of their holidays on various social media sites. Even though it is considered as a habit from the past, many would agree that postcards sent from somewhere bring positive feelings. The materiality of the card, together with local postage stamps enhance different emotions than a picture or a message posted or sent via social media site. For the older generation, it also brings forward nostalgic feelings about the times when everybody used to use mail for the communication. Postage stamps are one of the most distinguished signifiers of this type of communication. So, with the decision to adopt postage stamp motive for the logo of the destination brand, practitioners try to appeal to potential tourists by offering a journey to not only a different place but also to a different time. On the other hand, the postage stamp symbol refers to the slow leisure, without disruption of technology and the internet. It invites to explore, take time to oneself and share only the most exciting memories with the closest people. Considering the message, which the branding project is trying to convey and which was explained in the brand manifesto, the decision to use postage stamp motive for the brand logo seems like a logical step.

However, illustrations do not represent anything unique about Lithuania. Additional marks without photography or textual description may seem vague and incomplete. The same pictures could be easily adopted by any other place in the world as they are very generic and do not represent anything unique about Lithuania. They do support the myth of the timeless, primitive and unvarnished destination that brand creators try to 'sell'. In the brand book, it is recommended to use additional marks to define the tourism product which is being communicated more precisely. One can see a paradox here as the logos framed in post stamp motives are being used for online communication as none of these images were released as actual postage stamps. So it can be said that with these additional marks brand practitioners are trying to direct tourists by implying what is worth seeing and doing in Lithuania.

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<sup>12</sup> Nostalgia is not about the longing for the past but more a response to changing conditions and anxiety of the present (Hewison, 1999; Harrison, 2013).

#### 4. Conclusion

The brand manifesto can be regarded as the explanation of the idea of the destination brand. In other words, the content of it describes what does the slogan *Real is beautiful* mean. The logo and additional signs were created to visualize the main points contemplated in the brand manifesto. Clearly, the brand material was created following the neo-liberal, market-driven discourse. Thus, it privileges consumer (traveler) over the product (country). It is not even implicit as from the very beginning of this text authors state that their task is 'to get traveler interested'. Interestingly, the creative agency chooses to address and target Western traveler, who is traveling to see other cultures and visit unexplored, unvarnished places. The agency made this decision on its own as it was not explicitly emphasized among the project requirements what kind of audience this branding project is supposed to target. So, to appeal to the adventurous traveler the authors of the brand created a representation of pseudo-reality. I argue this because the brand material do not provide any factual information about the country. The brand manifesto is based on value assumptions made by the authors. Moreover, the authors do not even try to represent the aspects of the country and make it clear by noting that 'this will be our emotional selling proposition'. The function of an emotional value proposition is to create a set of associations related to the product to enhance positive emotional appeal to the consumer. In other words, this can be regarded as the myth instead of an overly emphasized 'reality'. One can argue that even the function of this brand is to create a myth about Lithuania and its inhabitants rather than represent the country for potential tourists. The most controversial feature of the brand manifesto is that the authors are creating a myth mostly about the local community living in Lithuania instead of the objects or sites within the country. They accomplish it by presenting a very primitive and homogenized image of the social life, culture, and values of Lithuanians. Moreover, this homogenized image is projected to appeal to a Western traveler. The perspective that brand practitioners take is based on binary oppositions between traveler's world and Lithuania, in which traveler's world is presented as a developed one in opposition to Lithuania, which is presented as rather undeveloped and immutable to forces of change. This myth is created to appeal to the travelers looking for sacred and authentic cultures. Even though the word 'authentic' is not used in the text the intensive co-occurrence of the adjective 'real' is used to persuade the traveler that the country is authentic. According to the myth that the brand practitioners constructed, Lithuanians are trustworthy, but narrow-minded, sincere, but stubborn. Local people are represented as

primitive and proud of it. Considering that one of the goals of the place brand is supposed to be a source of proud for the local community I strongly doubt that this myth is able to achieve it.

Another tension related to the brand manifesto is that it is presented as part of the official tourism communication. It is uploaded on the official website of the LSDT. It means that it reflects the official stance of the country legitimized by the tourism authorities. In my view, it is controversial that in the XXI century, the European country is represented as a primitive and exotic one with the intention to gain some interest from Western European tourists. The reader who is not familiar with the production of the brand is very likely to take the brand manifesto as a common view of a country that is generally accepted within the local community. The explicit usage of the inclusive personal pronoun 'we' suggests that this text reflects the common sense reality, or to put it differently, it reflect 'the point of view' that is shared among Lithuanians. While it is presented as an official representation of the country it has a strong potential to shape peoples' perception of Lithuania and reinforce particular ways of seeing it. The brand communication is trying to sell the myth about the country. It means that tourists who will make a decision to visit Lithuania influenced by brand communication will be looking for this myth during the visit.

The text of the brand manifesto can be called a hortatory report. It implicitly tries to persuade both traveler and local inhabitant to act in certain ways. Interestingly, when addressing a traveler authors use modals ('one can meet'; when you want') it indicates that they try to give traveler advice and suggestions. The same cannot be said when authors address local inhabitants. When addressing Lithuanians the authors use either value assumptions by declaring what locals value, what they do, like or despise. Or use a very authoritative language by stating that 'this point of view will determine how we are seen, etc.'. It reveals that the authors are regarding local people as part of the commodity that they are trying to sell. It entails unequal power relations in which local inhabitants are disregarded as passive objects of the place. There are no traces of dialogue in this text. It means that it reflects the stance of the authors even though they represent it as a common sense reality. Local people are not only being 'sold' to potential travelers, but also are demanded to act in a certain way to fulfill travelers' expectations. Moreover, the guidelines for the brand creation required that the brand would target both domestic and inbound tourists. However, there are many signs that reveal that the brand was created for the foreign audience and then was slightly adapted for locals. Thus, this again proves that the brand practitioners privilege foreign travelers over the locals. The brand

manifesto shows that the brand practitioners not only neglect the fact that culture and society are both diverse, constantly changing and evolving. It also shows that the authors fail to acknowledge the agency of local people to act as social actors and influence the changes in the culture or social life within the country. Considering that the tourism is not the most important industry of Lithuania is it really worth it to represent the country and its people as primitive and wrapped up in time just for travelers' satisfaction? As a Lithuanian, I strongly doubt that.

# Communication on the national tourism website

## 1. General description of the website

The national tourism website of Lithuania: [www.lithuania.travel](http://www.lithuania.travel), is managed by the LSDT. The interactive website provides a lot of important information for people interested in visiting Lithuania. The landing page is in English, but the visitors can choose the language of their preference from 11 options. The language button is incorporated on the right side of the fixed header on top of the homepage, just above the search box. The main menu bar is also on the same header. The menu has seven sections: 'Lithuania', 'Attractions', 'Routes', 'Links', 'Publications', 'Amber Road' and 'Gallery'. On the left of the menu header, there is a logo of destination brand, which functions as a link to the homepage.



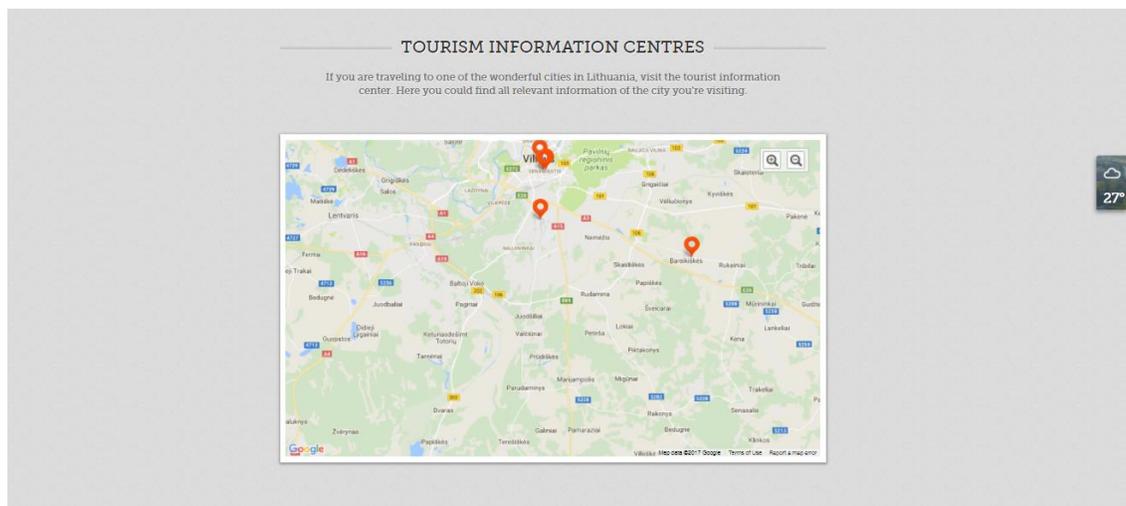
**Figure 5.** Menu header of the official tourism website.

Below the header, there is the main content area, which is divided into three sections. Two of those sections are *below the fold*, thus they are underneath the point first viewable to the website visitor. The main body part of the website is devoted to the display of attractions and sites within Lithuania. Attractions are integrated into the image map, so by clicking on the particular picture one is redirected to the internal page of the website, in which the description and additional photographs of the particular attractions are provided for the website visitor. This section will be the object of my research, thus, I will come back to it later.



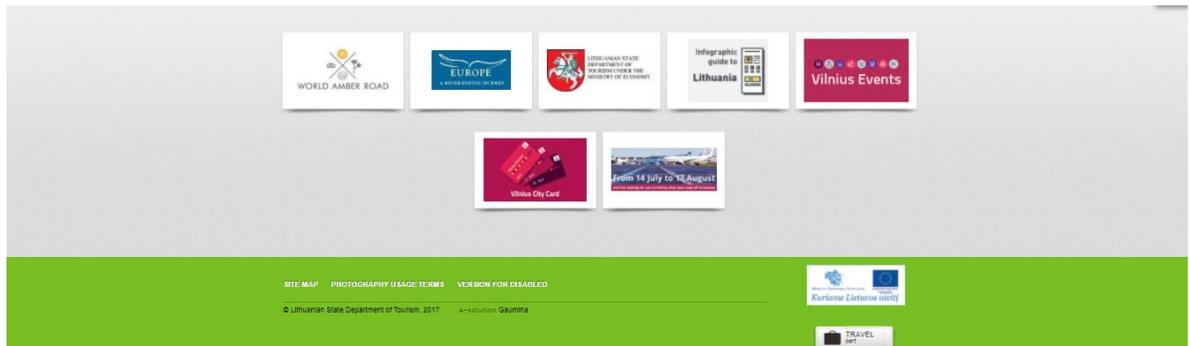
**Figure 6.** The main body part of the official tourism website.

*Below the fold*, there is a section named ‘Tourism information centers’ with an integrated map, where visitors can find all of the tourism information centers located in Lithuania.



**Figure 7.** Additional section of the official tourism website.

The last part of the content area is dedicated to the advertisement, thus the displayed pictures lead to the external web pages. At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with the integrated additional navigation, the copyright, and web design development credits on the left and European Union logo with the identification that the website is supported by funds from the EU on the right.



**Figure 8.** Advertisement section and the footer of the official tourism website.

The website has four widgets. One of them is incorporated on the right of the main content area and functions as a hyperlink, which redirects to the internal page named 'Routes' in which visitors can find more information about the BBC 'War and Peace' filming sites and other recommended tourism routes within the country. The rest three are the sticky widgets that do not disappear when scrolling the website. Two of them are placed on the right side of the website, whereas one of them indicates the current weather information in Lithuania (degrees Celsius and icon indicating the rainy or sunny weather). The last widget is a travel cart button. The website allows visitors to add the attractions that they like into the 'travel cart', which makes it easier to plan the trip.

The term *Above the fold* originates from the newspaper industry. Nowadays, website designers use this term to describe the content, which is visible on the initial page load. The same as in the traditional newspapers the information placed *above the fold* is supposed to be engaging and convincing enough to get people to take some action, i.e. buy a newspaper, explore the rest of the content on the website or even make a decision to visit a destination, which is a goal of the tourism websites. The LSDT exploits this area of the website for the display of tourism attractions within the country. The pictures of the attractions are organized in the interactive image map. Each picture redirects the visitor to the internal page in which the description of the site and additional pictures are provided. Above the picture map, there is a navigation bar, from which visitors can choose their travel purpose, whether they are interested in a 'Business Tourism', an 'Active tourism', a 'Cultural tourism', a 'Health tourism' or a 'City-breaks tourism'. These categories indicate the main tourism categories that the LSDT is offering for people interested in visiting Lithuania. When visitor switches the category of a travel purpose, the objects on display in the image map changes together with the background of this *above the fold* section. Objects that appear among different categories are not completely different, some of them are re-occurring in every category. This part of the website also

has an integrated widget with four buttons that indicate different seasons of the year. The displayed objects on the image map also change when the season is switched. Thus, the visitor of the website can get acquainted with the recommended attractions by the LSDT according to the different season of the year or the purpose of travel.



**Figure 9.** Widget indicating different seasons of the year.

By emphasizing the display of attractions the LSDT tries to appeal to tourists with the visual representation of Lithuania's most distinguished sites. Among all the categories (both the seasonal and the travel purpose) there are 81 attractions that are being promoted on the website. Some of them indicate a specific site in Lithuania, for example, 'Park of Europe' or 'St. Peter and Paul church' while others are more generic such as the 'nature', 'rehabilitation' or 'sustainable tourism' that do not refer to the specific site, attraction or activity but are devoted to describing the abstract aspects or services available in the country. The categorization by the season of the year or travel purpose seems a bit hectic as the objects on display, their composition, and sizes of the pictures slightly change every time when entering a website. The video embedded on the image map seems a bit strange because it is an old video with an old logo and slogan 'Get more'. It is not clear why the Department has not changed it to the new one created for the destination brand. The design and application of the website were not the objects of the branding project, hence the selection of objects on display, their organization, and management of the content is the responsibility of the LSDT. The material of branding project 'Real is beautiful' has not (yet) been integrated into the website. Attractions and sites are categorized by different categories than suggested by branding practitioners. It is not clear how often the website is being updated or changed. However, the fact that the only trace of the new branding project on the website is the logo of the brand, leads to the assumption that the website has been changed very little after the introduction of the brand. Still, since the branding project has been widely published (from both negative and positive sides) the visitors of the website may expect to find on the website what Lithuanian tourism authorities call 'real' and 'beautiful'. Therefore, I am going to analyze the visual representation of the sites and attractions according to the categories proposed by the new destination brand: 'Taste food', 'Meet people', 'See Nature', 'Explore culture', 'Stay active'.

First, I structured the objects displayed on the website according to the brand project categories (See Appendix C). This helped to select pictures for the analysis of each category. Moreover, this type

of categorization immediately revealed that the main emphasis of the website is on the representation of the heritage, cultural artefacts, and attractions. Significantly less attention is devoted to the rest of the categories. Surprisingly, not that many objects are devoted to representing nature of the country. On the other hand, most activities offered for tourists by the website take place in the natural landscape or are tightly related to nature. I chose to put festivals and events under the 'Meet people' category because the traditional events are typically considered as the gatherings, where one can meet local people. Nevertheless, for the analysis, I will also observe pictures from other categories to better understand how local people are represented for tourists. Lithuanian gastronomy is very poorly represented on the website with only three objects that give information about national cuisine, restaurants and homemade bread and cheese.

## 2. Historical context

As the vast majority of cultural sites and artefacts exhibited on the official Lithuania's tourism website are related to the country's heritage it is important to briefly overview the historical context of the exhibited objects. Almost all heritage objects promoted on the website are the historical buildings of the late medieval and early modern periods of the history. Thus, they represent the ancient Lithuanian history, namely the development of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. These early periods are considered as the noblest times of country's history that with no doubts laid the foundation for the later development of Lithuania.

After the third partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795 and until 1918 the biggest part of Lithuania with the capital city of Vilnius was under the rule of the Russian Empire. During this period the intensive program of Russification was implemented which was followed by the ban of the Lithuanian language, Latin alphabet and Lithuanian education. As a result of that Vilnius University was also closed<sup>13</sup>. Consequently, the cultural life was not very notable during this period. Even though, the architectural artefacts from the XIX c. displayed on the website, namely Manors and the Presidential Palace, can be considered as the remains of this particular period of the history, most of them seek earlier times, but were rebuilt or refurbished during the XIX c. In 1918 the independence of Lithuania as a democratic State was restored, but without the capital city of Vilnius, which was

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<sup>13</sup> "The University of Vilnius was founded in the 16th century [1579] under the influence of ideas of the Renaissance, Reformation and Counter-Reformation and can be considered one of the oldest universities in Central and Eastern Europe." (Bumblauskas, 2004, p. 2).

ruled by Poland. The country remained independent until 1940. Surprisingly, there are no heritage objects promoted from this period of the Lithuania's history. During the first independence, the new capital city of Kaunas widely adopted a Modernism and Art Deco architectural styles for the urban city revival, which is now recognized by the UNESCO and included in the tentative list. For tourists seeking to explore Soviet Heritage the website offers to visit Grūtas Park, where many sculptures and artefacts displayed during Soviet era have been moved into. Modern culture is underrepresented. Even the music and theater, appraised in the manifesto, are described very briefly. Only a few museums are promoted and art galleries are not receiving much attention on this website. So, by representing the Lithuanian culture for visitors the LSDT emphasizes the historical heritage of the ancient Lithuania and only passingly present today's culture that is not related to folklore, history or traditions.

Next, to the heritage of the Grand Duchy and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, there are quite a few objects exhibited that are related to religion, more specifically – Roman Catholic Church. Catholic churches promoted on the tourism website represent different architectural styles, namely St. Anne's and Bernardine church represents the late gothic and the early renaissance, St. Peter and Paul church – baroque, Pažaislis church and monastery – mature baroque and Vilnius Cathedral – classicism. Additionally, the icon of The Blessed Virgin Mary in the chapel of the Gates of Dawn is one of the most famous Renaissance paintings in Lithuania. All these religious sites originate from the 16<sup>th</sup> c. onwards, thus they represent a historical period of the late Grand Duchy and the Commonwealth.

Lithuanians were the last pagan nation that adopted Christianity in Europe. The Grand Duke Mindaugas was the first noble to adopt Western Christianity in 1250. After that, his power was acknowledged by Pope Innocent IV, who proclaimed Lithuania a Kingdom with the first King Mindaugas. Christianity was necessary to gain the recognition and the status of the State but more importantly to protect the lands from Christian orders (the Teutonic and the Livonic Orders) (Bumblauskas, 2004, p. 7). Thus the Dukes who ruled after Mindaugas used the religion as a diplomatic tool and not for the purpose of nation building. The Christianization of the population was held only at the end of 14 c. after the Grand Duchy made a union with the Kingdom of Poland that later led to the Commonwealth. During the ancient history, Lithuania inhabited many different religious and ethnic communities – Jews, Tatars, Crimean Karaites, Latvians, Ruthenians, Poles and Prussians. One of the most notable Lithuanian philosophers Leonidas Donskis (1999) describes

Renaissance and Baroque Lithuania's identity as a "multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious" (p. 474) and argues that "later it was brainwashed by a new ideology whose consequences and impact on contemporary Lithuania are too obvious to be emphasized" (p. 488). The oppression of the foreign power led to the prevalence of cultural and nationalistic ideas that were considered as the only path to political freedom and resistance. The restoration of independence in 1918 proved this to be true. However, as a nation building was based on nationalistic ideas it consequently led to the negative stance towards minorities. As Donskis (1999) explains:

The Russian- and / or Yiddish-speaking Jewish community in Lithuania was always alienated from the Lithuanian interwar intelligentsia, which, for its part, cultivated linguistic and cultural nationalism both as a means of self-definition, and as a way of distinguishing rurally oriented Lithuanian compatriots from rootless, cosmopolitan urban professionals. (p. 486).

Later in his article Donskis comments that the nationalism of interwar period evolved into the conservative Catholic nationalism, which was even more excluding of other religious and ethnic groups. To be Lithuanian meant to be the Catholic and even though this identity formula was decisively important during the Soviet occupation and helped to keep Lithuanian identity alive through the religious resistance (Donskis, 1999) it had negative consequences as well. As Donskis explains the clash between two facets of Lithuanian nationalism can be called "the struggle for historical memory" and can be visible to this day, whereas Lithuanian humanities lean toward study of multi-cultural Renaissance and Baroque Lithuania while conservative nationalists follow the idea of 'one nation, one language, one culture, one state' (Donskis 1999, p. 489).

The selection of heritage objects on the tourism website is quite ambiguous. Even though, the emphasis is on the representation of objects, namely the castles of the Lithuanian Grand Dukes and Catholic churches, from Renaissance and Baroque periods, it does not involve the heritage of the other ethnic or religious groups who lived in Lithuania during these periods. Many heritage sites of these religious and ethnic groups have been preserved until this day, but they are not even mentioned on the official tourism website. The most striking fact is that Jewish heritage is neglected while their community made a huge impact on the cultural and social life until the Second World War, especially in Vilnius. The Slavic and Orthodox heritage are also not displayed on the website, even though 41 Orthodox churches remain in Lithuania's territory and some of them even precede the

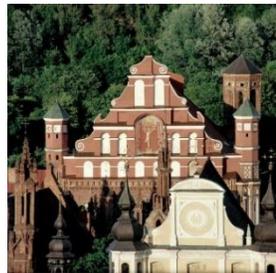
Catholic ones. Does it mean that tourism authorities are being guided by conservative nationalism? There might be more practical reasons for that. It might be true, that the Slavic heritage is not promoted intentionally so prospective tourists would not confuse Lithuania with Russia, which is a common stereotype among Western countries. On the other hand, the heritage that has any links with Russia is not very well perceived by Lithuanians as it reminds them of an oppressed past. Nevertheless, the representation of Lithuanian history through the heritage for tourists is fragmented and highly selective. As Donskis (2005) argues without critical self-questioning and sympathetic understanding of its painful history, Lithuania cannot become a modern actor of the history because the reflection of moral dilemmas and major political issues contribute to the awareness of what it means to be a human being in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world (p. 85).

### 3. Visual texts analysis

#### Heritage



**Figure 12.** Ensemble of Pažaislis church and monastery.



**Figure 11.** St. Anne's and Bernardine church.



**Figure 14.** The Hill of Three Crosses.



**Figure 13.** St. Peter's and Paul's church.



**Figure 10.** Vilnius Cathedral.



**Figure 15.** The Hill of Crosses.

Churches promoted on the Lithuanian tourism website (Figures: 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15) have indeed high historical, cultural and aesthetic value. As mentioned before, they represent different architectural styles that were adopted in Lithuania later than in the Western Europe. Religious sites are illustrated with several photographs, varying from two to six pictures for each object. At least one photo from each object's representation (except Gates of Dawn) depicts the church or other religious

sites (The Hill of Three Crosses and The Hill of Crosses) surrounded by nature, more specifically with the fragment of the forest. Each picture depicts the religious objects at the centre of the images and this maintains viewers' attention to those objects. As they have been made the salient in the representation, it shows that they are the carrier of the meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Religious objects are seen from the distance, thus it shows that the viewer (potential visitor) does not have personal or intimate relationships with them. This suggests that these religious sites are somehow different from the ones in the countries, where the observant lives. The compositional meaning suggests that these sites are not just religious symbols, but are unique in themselves as cultural artefacts. The high camera angles make these objects in the photos appear to be in an inferior position relative to the viewer's dominant and more powerful point of view (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The distance and the point of view do not invite visitors to learn about these religious objects because the representation makes the observer distant and uninvolved. The aerial display adopted by those pictures is not a typical view that a tourist sees from looking to the objects from the ground. Thus, these pictures, create an impression of convergence of natural and social forces; wilderness and civilization, which creates a perception that even though the religion found its place in Lithuania centuries ago, it never fully superseded the role and impact of nature on human lives. On the other hand, it suggests that religious objects have always been the most sacred places full of mystery and have not been turned into the public spaces. This argument can be supported by another feature of these pictures – they are represented in solitude, without human presence.



**Figure 16.** Vilnius Cathedral at night.



**Figure 17.** The Gates of Dawn.

Only two religious sites – Vilnius Cathedral and Gates of Dawn - are represented with pictures that include people (Figure 16; Figure 17). These pictures portray the events held in the city with crowds of people participating in them. The photographs of the procession at the Gates of Dawn and

the event held at night in the Cathedral Square with the light beams, juxtapose traditional and contemporary Lithuania. Hence, it signifies that spaces outside the churches can sometimes be turned into the spaces of celebrations of cultural events. This signifies that both traditional and contemporary culture are valued and highly appreciated by Lithuanians. These pictures are constructed around a binary opposition and with that, it conveys that while visiting Lithuania tourists can find the balance between the nature and culture, tradition and modernity, solitude and entertainment. These photographs are more interactive and engaging as the viewer is positioned as is s(he) would be in the crowd of the people. Hence, they are inviting visitors to participate in the culture. Crowds represent the 'real' as they are depicted at the bottom of these photographs, while religious artefacts are the 'ideal' as they are at the top.



**Figure 18.** Gediminas Castle.



**Figure 21.** Trakai Castle.



**Figure 20.** National cultural reserve of Kernave.



**Figure 19.** The Royal Castle.

The photographs of historical sites and castles (Figures: 18, 19, 20, 21) represent them in the natural landscape and with only a few people visible next to. The tourism website promotes the medieval residencies of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania – Gediminas Castle, The Royal Palace, Trakai Castle and National Cultural Reserve of Kernavė. These objects represent the medieval capitals of Lithuania, chronologically Kernavė, Trakai and Vilnius. The sites are represented by the photographs capturing these objects at a daytime and at a nighttime. Kernavė and Trakai Castle are situated in the natural landscapes and the source of light in the nightscape photographs comes from the sunset, thus from the natural source. Sunset casts shadows of trees in the Kernavė's picture and dark reflection on the water in the Trakai Castle picture. Gediminas Castle and the Royal Palace are both located in the centre of the capital city of Vilnius, thus they are part of the urban environment. The source of light in those objects' nightscape pictures comes from the city lights. In the nightscape picture of Gediminas castle, there are no shadows, only the city lights reflected in the water, whereas in the picture of the Royal Palace shadows are clearly enhanced by the city lights. These are not the Palace's shadows, but the shadows of the Grand Duke Gediminas (who established a city) monument. Night pictures juxtapose with the daytime images of the same sites. So what do the opposition of daytime and nighttime pictures convey? One can see that the subjects are at the top position of each picture, thus they represent the 'ideal', while the shadows lying at the bottom of each picture represent the 'real'. Therefore, the nocturnal mystery may signify that the Grand Duchy (the 'ideal') is long gone and its power and secrets lie only in the shadows (the 'real'). Daytime images portray very well preserved buildings and landscapes, thus this connotes that these historical monuments are not only reminders of the past but are also very important objects of the country's and the nation's identity; a source of pride for local people. The low camera angle suggests that the objects depicted in the photographs have power over the viewer and not vice versa. The long shots of the pictures suggest impersonal relations (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), the subjects in these pictures are not inviting to interact but rather to observe from the distance.



**Figure 22.** Ensemble of Vilnius University.



**Figure 23.** The Presidential Palace.

Objects that represent significantly important institutions of today's country's life, namely the Presidential Palace and the Ensemble of Vilnius University are represented quite differently than the other heritage sites. In the pictures representing these two places, there are no wild nature only constructed garden-like environment with flowers. Spaces are very well structured and maintained, so it shows the ability to "produce their own nature" (Williams, 1975, p. 122), which suggests that the owners of these buildings have power and control over the environment. Moreover, the information value of the compositions adopted in these photographs represents these institutions as the 'ideal' while gardens as 'real'. Those institutions are the salient objects of the photographs, so they are the carriers of the meaning. Thus, these pictures suggest that the education and the democratic system are under control and function very well, without disturbances and 'wildernesses'. The sunny weather and blooming flowers signify that the country is flourishing, as it takes a good care of its relevantly new democratic system and simultaneously values long seeking traditions. The distance and the low camera angle show that the visitor cannot have power over these institutions and s(he) is only welcome to passively observe rather than interact or engage with the promoted objects.

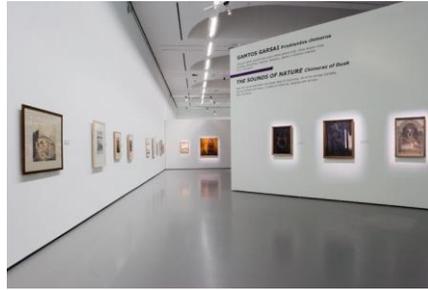
### **Contemporary culture and museums**

On the tourism website, the LSDT promotes four museums – the Devils', M.K. Čiurlionis, Maritime, and Ethnographic open-air museums. Art galleries are not distinguished but few of them are briefly presented. Interestingly, there is an internal page devoted to 'Lithuanian fashion and designers' but it is illustrated with the only one picture, which depicts a designer Ramunė Piekautaitė next to the hanging winter coats, thus it does not really say much about Lithuanian fashion or

designers. Contemporary culture is represented by the 'Music and Theatres' and 'Concert Halls'. Among the cultural sites promoted for tourists website includes 'Park of Europe' and 'Grūtas Park'. These two parks juxtapose the contemporary and the past periods of country's social and cultural life.



**Figure 25.** Devils' museum.



**Figure 24.** Contemporary Arts Centre.



**Figure 26.** M.K. Čiurlionis museum.

Photographs that illustrate museums focus on the representation of the museums' interior and exhibitions. Museums are depicted without human presence as there would be no people visiting them. From the pictures, museums seem small and cozy in contrast with overcrowded, grand size ones in the Western countries. These pictures imply that tourists can enjoy the cultural artefacts slowly and in a solitude. The low camera angles suggest that the viewer does not have power over the subjects but the vector lines created by the lightening and perspective creates depth and by doing so invites the observer to engage with the subjects and explore the museum.



**Figure 27.** Grūtas Park.



**Figure 28.** Park of Europe.

Similarly, pictures of the Park of Europe and Grūtas Park focus on the presentation of sculptures exhibited in these parks. Both sites are illustrated with four pictures for each. However, while there are no people visible in the photographs of Grūtas Park, Park of Europe is illustrated by the picture depicting children running to the park. The metaphor is created by the binary opposition of still sculptures in Grūtas Park and the motion of young children in the Park of Europe. This metaphor suggests that the Soviet past is only remembered by the displaced monuments and that Europe is the future towards which the young country is running without turning back. The picture of Park of

Europe is also more interactive because the viewer is positioned as s(he) would be part of the group running into the park. Moreover, the rest of the photographs of Park of Europe contrast with those used for Grūtas Park representation, as the formers are of higher modality because they are bright and vivid in contrast with the latter that are represented with old and less professional photographs.



**Figure 31.** Basketball match.



**Figure 30.** Kaunas Jazz festival.



**Figure 29.** Event in the arena.

The appearance of people is finally visible in the photographs representing Lithuania's contemporary cultural life, namely concerts and theater. Interestingly, the most vibrant atmosphere is depicted in the photograph, which portrays fans cheering in the basketball match. Pictures representing cultural events depict the calmer and reserved atmosphere with people quite passively listening to the concerts. However, the photographs are interactive and engaging as they position the viewer at an eye level as part of the crowds. This suggests that the visitor is welcome to participate in the cultural events while in Lithuania. On the other hand, people in these pictures do not create any contact with the viewer, thus this implies that the tourist is welcome to come and observe the events rather than interact with the other participants.

## **Gastronomy**

Not very much attention is given to the representation of Lithuanian gastronomy, as it is presented with only three categories of 'Homemade Bread and Cheese', 'Lithuanian National Cuisine' and 'Restaurants'. Moreover, pictures for the representation of these categories seem old and are not very attempting. National cuisine is portrayed as archaic. The composition adopted for the portrayal of food is very similar to the still life paintings. The food in these pictures is either naturally grown or made from naturally grown products, which resembles the content of the brand manifesto.



**Figure 32.** Lithuanian National Cuisine.



**Figure 33.** Homemade Bread and Cheese.

One of the pictures (Figure 33) depicts an old woman with a head scarf slicing bread, which signifies that the recipes and preparation of food are very traditional. There is no silverware in these pictures only the wooden spoon. It implies that traditional food has to be eaten with hands, which creates a negative connotation of primitivism. One photograph (Figure 33) depicts an old woman slicing the bread, but she is not the main subject of the image. The bread and buns depicted on the right side are being brought in the first plan, it makes them the most salient objects of this photograph and the information value shows that the bread is the 'real' and 'new' element for the observer thus worth trying. The woman is the 'ideal' element of this photograph, which connotes that the recipes of the bread are idealized as they are old and traditional. The woman is represented as a servant for the visitor as she is not trying to make any contact with him/her. It shows that the observer has more power over her.



**Figure 34.** Restaurant.



**Figure 35.** Outside Café.

There are four photographs that represent the restaurants in Lithuania. Restaurants again are depicted as empty and waiting for tourists' presence. The only picture with people is the one that depicts the outside café. The photographs of dining places in Lithuania are of low modality because they seem old. The choice of the places with which to represent the dining culture in Lithuania also seems a bit strange. The interiors of the restaurants are quite primitive and old-fashioned.

Photographs are not engaging or interactive. People, who are depicted sitting in outside café are not trying to make any contact with the viewer and are again depicted as the subjects ‘to be observed’. The passive observer can see what the people are doing, but s(he) is not invited to become part of that group activity.

### Activities and services

For the tourism promotion in Lithuania, the LSDT displays many different free time activities on the official tourism website. Activities and services vary from the rehabilitation to extreme entertainment. Almost all activities are represented with people appearing in the pictures. However, the representation of them differs. Especially photographs illustrating Health tourism stand out from others as they seem very professional and the settings seem to be carefully staged. The good lighting and high level of detail and color suggest high modality. The pictures capture either young heterosexual couples or young women.



Figure 39. Rehabilitation services (2).



Figure 38. Lithuanian Bath.



Figure 36. Rehabilitation services (1)



Figure 37. Amber therapy.

Photographs of health tourism promote beauty and rehabilitation services in Lithuania. They signify the relaxation and do not impose highly sexualized images. Thus, these services are promoted

for the younger market, i.e. young couples or families with small children, who are searching for the calm and revitalizing vacation. The picture, which portrays family in the Lithuanian bath signifies that not only couples but also young families with children can find the peaceful environment and quality services in Lithuania. Again, spaces, where those pictures take place, are occupied by only one couple or a few people, which implies that they are not overcrowded with people, hence those who seek peace and calmness can find it here, in Lithuania. The photographs are depicted at an eye level, thus it signify the engagement and equal power relations between people depicted in them and the viewer. In the Figure 36 and Figure 39 couples are depicted at the top and appear in the second plan. The elements that signify the relaxation services (the amber and the glasses of water respectively) are at the bottom and are brought on the first plan. This composition suggests that by acquiring the service ('real') the visitor will be provided with the relaxing experience ('ideal'). These couples are not the main subjects of these photographs, rather the elements that signify services are. The man in the Figure 38 makes an eye contact with the viewer, thus the demanding picture establishes an imaginary relation and as the smiling man suggests the friendly invitation.



**Figure 41.** Canoeing.



**Figure 40.** Air Balloon flight.



**Figure 42.** Walkways and trails.

Among the activities, tourism website offers to explore and gaze upon the country's landscapes from the ground ('Walkways and trails'), from the water ('Canoeing') and from the sky ('Air Balloon flight'). Photographs representing these activities are constructed around the romantic gaze, hence the solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze are emphasized (Urry & Larsen, 2011). However, pictures of these three different activities differ. Photographs illustrating 'Walkways and trails' are without people presence, 'Canoeing' is illustrated with a young couple canoeing during the sunset and photographs of 'Air Balloon flight' emphasize the scenery and landscapes, but also depicts few people, looking up to the flying air balloons, in one of the photographs.

The representation of these activities implies that one can not only gaze upon country's landscapes from different dimensions, but also can experience the gazing differently. Thus, one can choose an isolated, pilgrimage like activity of walking and enjoy scenery in solitude; or s(he) can spend time with a significant other and have a romantic and at the same time an adventurous experience; air balloon flight is for those tourists who seek a romantic holiday but aim not only to gaze upon but also capture the picturesque landscapes. The photograph portraying people looking up to the air balloons in the sky suggests that it is an exclusive, extraordinary activity, which others can only dream for. Interestingly, the sightseeing, in both urban and natural environment, is represented as a somehow sacred activity, reserved for intellectual tourists who seek not just to see but explore and gaze upon with the romantic gaze. The photographs of 'Canoeing' positions the viewer just behind the couple who is canoeing as the observer would be the participant of the activity. This composition suggests equal power relations and a stronger engagement. In other words, the picture is inviting to follow the couple who is canoeing. The couple is leading to the right, so the information value of a 'new' experience is also conveyed. The walking paths in the picture representing 'Walkways and trails' depicts a crossroad at the center of it. This suggests that the visitor can choose different directions and the high camera angle suggests that s(he) has a power over the depicted subject. The photograph of 'Air balloon flight' shows the observers on the bottom and air balloons at the top of it. This composition implies that the aspiration of the visitor should be the air balloon flight (the 'ideal'). Low angle suggests that the viewer does not have the power over the depicted place, but s(he) can acquire it by choosing this experience, which provides an opportunity to gaze to the landscape from the sky.



**Figure 45.** Snow Arena.



**Figure 44.** Summer Toboggan trail.



**Figure 43.** Horse riding.

The entertainment and extreme activities are illustrated quite differently from the previously discussed ones. Most pictures portray groups of people engaging and actively participating in the activities. Young people dominate in the photographs, but in this case not couples, but supposedly

small groups of friends. The promotion of these activities is directed to the younger market. However, it is doubtful that young people would choose Lithuania as a holiday destination from the display of these activities promoted on the website as there are only a few of them and they are offered in various different locations around Lithuania. On the other hand, young people usually plan their trips by using different information sources, so probably the young market is not the number one target of the official tourism website. The photographs are depicted at an eye level, so the power relations are equal and more personal. However, people in these pictures do not make any contact with the viewer. Thus this implies that the viewer is the passive observer, who is not invited to make interaction with them.

### Events, festivities and people

National events and celebrations can reveal much about a country's citizens. What kind of events they value and how do they celebrate them. The website focuses exclusively on folklore events with old seeking traditions. Moreover, three of five events displayed on the website are tightly related to Christian traditions, namely 'Feast of St. John', 'Carnival frenzy', 'St. Casimir's Fair'. It creates an assumption that Lithuanians are very religious and committed to Christian traditions. However, as one can observe from the pictures, nowadays they are more related to folklore than to religious traditions.



**Figure 47.** Carnival Frenzy.



**Figure 46.** St. Casimir's fair.



**Figure 48.** Feast of St. John.

These celebrations seem more pagan than Christian from the clothes and symbols of nature (amber pendants, water, fire, linen fabrics) that people wear or are engaged with. Visual representation implies that the celebration of these festivities has not changed since ancient times, which is not completely true as nowadays these festivities also has a more contemporary side. The participants of the events are the focal points of the photographs as they are at the center of each image. The picture representing the 'Feast of St. John' (Figure 50) is depicted with the low angle shot, which suggests that the observer does not have power over the ones observed. Moreover, it seems

that the photograph was taken secretly and people depicted in it did not know about it. It creates an impression that the celebration is highly sacred and the visitor can only observe it secretly from the distance. Consequently, no contact is maintained, so the viewer is not invited to celebrate together or make any interaction with the participants. The photographs of 'Carnival Frenzy' and 'St. Casimir's fair' are depicted at an eye level, thus the viewer has equal power relations with the ones depicted. However, as no contact is maintained by depicted participants, these pictures suggest that the visitor can only be a passive observant and is not invited to directly participate in the events.



**Figure 50.** Song Feast.



**Figure 49.** Culture Night

Another two events promoted on the website contrast with one another because the Song Feast is a traditional folklore event and the Culture Night is a celebration of the contemporary art and culture. The visual representation of the Song feast (Figure 51) depicts participants in traditional folk costumes, dancing and singing folklore songs. One can see, that there are a lot of people participating in this event. Thus, it shows that the folklore traditions are still very much alive and popular even among young people. It connotes that Lithuania is a very archaic country, which managed to preserve the folklore traditions. Oppositely, Culture night (Figure 52) is represented by a photograph from the night club and for the first time from the visual representation of events participants are wearing normal, everyday clothes and are engaging in today's cultural activities. However, only young people are visible in the picture, thus it suggests that the contemporary culture is interesting only for the youth. The visual representation of Song feast and Culture night differs in a way that the photograph of Song feast seems much more professional, thus of higher modality than the one of Culture night. It reveals that authorities of the LSDT regard traditional events as more important or as more potential to attract tourists.

## Nature

From the analysis of former categories, one can see that nature is a common theme in the visual representation of different aspects of a country. From previously analyzed photographs seems that nature plays an important role in the local peoples' lives and has been strongly influencing Lithuanian folklore, traditions, and culture. Lithuanian natural landscape can be regarded as one of the most important unique selling points for tourists as it is mentioned in the brand manifesto and frequently co-occurs in the various photographs representing Lithuania as a tourism destination on the national tourism website. No other aspect of the country receives as much attention as nature does in the representation of Lithuania for tourists. The vast majority of sites and attractions related to Lithuania's culture, heritage, religion, entertainment or relaxation services displayed on the tourism website are geographically located in the eastern or northern part of the country around the two biggest cities – Vilnius and Kaunas. The western part of the country, more specifically the region called Minor Lithuania, situated on the Baltic Sea shore, does not receive much attention on the website. This particular region was established and for many years belonged to Prussia, later German Empire and was joined to Lithuania only in 1923. Even though the historical heritage sites of this region are not presented for tourists (except for the Sun clock on Parnidis Dune), the LSTD devotes quite a lot of attention for the representation of the Seashore landscape of this region.



**Figure 53.** Baltic Sea Shore (1).



**Figure 52.** Baltic Sea Shore (2).



**Figure 51.** Baltic Sea Shore (3).

Among the pictures representing Baltic Sea shore, there is only one photograph, which depicts people spending time on the beach. Other pictures portraying sea shore and dunes adopt the theme of wild nature. Similarly, lakes, rivers and national parks are represented as remote and isolated places, without human presence. Beaches in the photographs seem wild, isolated and untouched by people. Visual representation implies that beaches in Lithuania are not for the lazy vacation, but more for the exploration of nature. Thus, this again signifies the sacred role of nature in Lithuanians' lives as

the beaches are portrayed as unvarnished and untouched by humans. These pictures have been manipulated by the photographer because in reality and during the summertime beaches in Lithuania are not only full of people but there are also some bars and other services. In the Figure 54 and 55 walking paths create vector lines that create the depth and lead the eye to some place, which is not visible in the photographs. This enhances a curiosity of the viewer and creates the feeling that nature is inviting to explore it. So it is represented as an experience in itself. As Williams (1975) argues in such cases “to justify the experience one needs to seek not a kind of nature is depicted but a kind of man is looking at it” (p. 121). In other words, “a self-conscious observer is being invited to the nature from which he/she may learn the truths of his/her own sympathetic nature” (Williams 1975, p. 127). Thus, these photographs invites visitors to escape the highly ordered, stressful environment and find peace in the unspoiled nature. Contrastingly, Figure 53 is not that that engaging. The high camera angle shot suggests that the viewer has power over the depicted site. From the composition of the photograph, one can see that the beach with people is placed on the left side and the fragment of the grass is depicted on the right. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) ‘given’ elements depicted on the left gives the viewer the familiar, already known information and elements depicted on the right presents the ‘new’ information, to which viewer has to pay special attention, because it is something unfamiliar and unknown. Thus, one may argue that the photograph suggests that the viewer has a power to choose the familiar ‘lazy vacation’ on the beach or more adventurous, unconventional experience of the exploration of the nature.

#### 4. Discourse practise

The visual representation of Lithuania as a tourism destination on the national tourism website managed by the LSDT resembles the myth narrated in the brand manifesto. However, as there is only one trace of the new brand, namely the logo, and many of the photographs seem quite old it leads to the assumption that the website has not been updated according to the new branding campaign. This shows that the vision of how to represent Lithuania as a tourism destination has been dominant for a while. From the objects on display and from the photographs illustrating them, one can observe that two mostly emphasized features of the destination are heritage and the natural landscape. With the emphasis on the representation of the historical sites, the LSDT constructs the image of Lithuania as a new country with old seeking traditions. Photographs on the website rarely include people. So, it implies that a country is remote and has not yet been discovered by tourists. The visual analysis

revealed that these photographs that include people, almost never depict them as trying to make contact with the viewer. In other words, they can be called the 'offer' pictures that suggest that the environment and the people can only be passively observed in a detached way. Thus, it does not invite to get acquainted or learn about Lithuania or Lithuanians while visiting a country but to only gaze upon. This implies that the country and its inhabitants are closed and not willing to interact. It adds up to the myth of 'exotic' destination. More importantly, it signifies the unequal power relationships between the tourist and the locals, in which the one who is visiting has more power over those who live there.

The selection of promoted heritage sites shows that the representation of the history of the country is very fragmented. Objects displayed for tourists represent mostly the ancient Lithuania's past, more specifically the historical periods of the Grand Duchy and the Polish-Lithuania Commonwealth. A great emphasis is on the representation of the Catholic Churches while the objects and sites of other religions or confessions are totally neglected. As there are no traces of the heritage of the other ethnic or religious groups within the country, it creates an impression that Lithuania is and always has been a very homogenous country, which is not completely true. The fact, that there is no Orthodox Churches or other Slavic heritage promoted to tourists shows that the Tourism Department tries to avoid even a slight chance of confusion of Lithuania with Russia. However, the filming sites of the BBC 'War and Peace' series that literally implies that urban scenery in Lithuania is very similar to the one in Russia, are promoted on the website. Therefore, one may argue that this shows the lack of ethics of the tourism authorities as the ethnic groups living in the country are not represented while the mainstream film route receives special attention (the widget, which promotes the route of filming sites is embedded on the home page). The heritage of other ethnic and religious minorities are also ignored on the website. One can see a paradox here, because the Renaissance and Baroque Lithuania was a multi-cultural and multi-religious state, which inhabited many different ethnic and religious groups. However, this multi-cultural face of country's history is ignored and hidden. Thus, this shows that the LSDT is trying to create an image of Lithuania as a very homogenous country. The absence of the heritage objects from the period of the first Independence of Lithuania (from 1918 to 1940) seems very strange. This was a significantly important period of the country's history and also left a lot of aesthetically and culturally valuable artefacts and objects that have been well preserved. From the proportion of pictures representing historical sites and those representing contemporary Lithuanian culture, it can be said that the authorities try to direct tourists' attention to

the exploration of country's history rather than contemporary culture. The events promoted on the website also proves this argument, as the website exhibits only the traditional, folklore events (with the only one exception of 'Cultural Night'). Nevertheless, the visual representation of events is not inviting visitors to come and participate, but suggests to rather passively observe and do not interrupt them. Thus, it adds up to the myth of the timeless and the archaic country with a closed community. Lithuania and its culture is represented as wrapped in time, as 'being' instead of 'becoming'.

The representation of leisure services brings a lot of questions. First, from the people who are participating in the promoted activities, one may assume that the services are directed to a younger tourists' market but it is doubtful that those specific activities will be appealing for this audience. Secondly, the couples in the pictures promoting relaxation services are only young and a heterosexual ones. Morgan and Pritchard (1998) argue that "the heterosexual couple as the epitome of the tourist image and the celebration of youth, beauty and sexual encounter lies at the core of the tourism marketer's art" (p. 123). However, as the homosexual couples are not addressed on the website, does it mean that they are not welcome to come and enjoy these services? To answer this question one has to remember the myth that the tourism authorities are trying to maintain about Lithuania. They are not trying to create an image of the dynamic and open country but to suggest that Lithuania is an archaic and a highly traditional place. Thus, it is a destination for those who seek to go back in the 'uncomplicated' past, so the depiction of gay couple would subvert the attempts of the authorities. On the other hand, it also reveals the attitude towards homosexual couples. Looking from the broad perspective it is difficult to identify what specific audience the website is targeting. It seems that it speaks to the mass audience rather than any specific category. Thus, it again proves that the tourism authorities do not consider targeting as an important variable for the tourism marketing.

Landscapes, sceneries and fragments of nature very often occur in the various photographs displayed on tourism website. After visiting a website one can observe that in Lithuania nature is everywhere – forests surround the Catholic churches and castles, traditional events take place outdoors as well as promoted activities. The nature aspect of the country is represented as the wild and unvarnished by humans. Lithuania's land was once covered by forests, lakes and rivers. Today, around 30% of the territory consists of woodlands, not to mention other natural landscapes, such as lakes, rivers or fields. Nature has always played an important role in local peoples' lives and it is very well reflected in the folklore traditions. The fact that Lithuanians were the last pagan nation in Europe

to adopt Christianity also speaks for itself. The sacred meaning of nature is emphasized in the representation of the Catholic churches, where, even though these churches are located in the urban scenery, the photographs depicts them surrounded by forests. However, it is important to say, that it would be difficult to see the same sceneries while visiting these religious objects because the view from the ground is slightly different than the one manipulated by the aerial photographs. The representation enhances binary oppositions of nature and culture, wilderness and civilization and conveys the meaning that Lithuania as a country has always been balancing between those oppositions. This helps to legitimize the myth of 'authentic' and 'exotic' destination. On the other hand, this representation and articulation of natural landscape may be appealing for the tourists coming from the Western countries, in which the wild nature was taken over by the industrialization. Nature is offered as an experience in itself, through the promotion of walkway paths, canoeing, air balloon flights and the wild beaches. The photographs of these subjects rarely include people. As Williams (1975) argues "nature offers a 'still life': an image against stress or change" (p. 130). Thus, it can be said that the nature is offered for the lonely wanderer, who is looking for the silence and isolation as oppose to the noise and, as outlined in the brand manifesto, 'conveyor belt of tourism'. The visual representation of nature is framed around the romantic gaze - it signifies the personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze (Urry & Larsen, 2011). From the photographs one can observe that natural settings are not dangerous and the wilderness is not extreme. Therefore, nature offers an emotional rather than physical adventure.

## 5. Conclusion

Even though it is not clear whether the national tourism website was updated after the introduction of the destination brand project, one can observe that the visual representation of Lithuania resembles the meaning conveyed by the brand manifesto. However, the photographic representation has much more capacity to persuade the potential visitor because "the camera seems to reflect not distort and the pictures have a special value of evidence or proof" (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998, p. 173). People may disregard written text as the distortion of reality, but tend to trust visual representation as the reflection of it. Therefore, visual rhetoric has much more capacity to influence the knowledge of the one, who is addressed by it. The analysis of the visual representation of Lithuania as a tourism destination revealed that the romantic gaze is the dominant discourse adopted by the authors of the photographs. As a result of that, the signs of modernity are ignored and the

sceneries are depicted as empty, sublime and timeless. Consequently, this type of representation helps the tourism authorities to legitimize the myth of the 'unspoilt', 'authentic' and 'exotic' European destination, which is wrapped in time and has not been touched by the modernization. Thus, with the visual representation tourism authorities offer tourists a travel not only in space but also in time – to the 'less complicated' past.

The representation of country's history through the display of heritage objects is very fragmented. The ancient Lithuania's history of the Grand Duchy and Commonwealth is emphasized, but it does not include the heritage objects of other ethnic or religious groups, who not only live (or have lived) in Lithuania but also helped to build the country as it is. While the Slavic heritage is not promoted on the website for assumingly ideological and political reasons, the filming sites of the BBC World and Piece series are offered for the tourists for commercial reasons. This shows the lack of ethics and the narrow attitude of the tourism authorities. The heritage promotion implies that Lithuania is and always has been a homogenous country, which is also not true. These representations also "affect how the people represented see themselves, their culture, and their place" (Campelo et al., 2011, p. 6). So, the homogenization of the heritage does not lead to the empathy and acceptance of minorities within the country. In other words, the visual representation implies that Lithuanians value and are proud of only those heritage artefacts that signify achievements of the Lithuanian nation. This suggests that Lithuanians are a stubborn and intolerant nation. Photographs displayed on the website rarely depict people, but when they do people in them are not trying to make any contact with the viewer. So, this also creates an impression of a closed community, unwilling to interact with foreigners. In other words, tourists are welcome to come and impersonally observe people celebrating festivals or using leisure services, but one is not encouraged to interact with them. One can even argue, that local people are offered as an objects to gaze upon. In any way, this type of representation signify unequal power relations, in which tourists have more power over the local inhabitants.

The analysis of linguistic and visual text representing Lithuania for tourists revealed the dominant promotion strategy adopted by the LSDT. The destination is being represented as an 'archaic', 'timeless' and 'exotic'. This may be an appealing and interesting selling point for the Western European tourists, who live in the highly developed countries, where the industrialization and urbanization took over the natural landscapes and which are facing mass tourists' flows. Therefore,

the remote and unvarnished destination may be appealing for those, who seek calmness and slow vacation. However, it is questionable whether this type of representation is beneficial to Lithuania outside the tourism domain. For the newly established countries, such as Lithuania, tourism promotion can be a very effective tool for the positive image creation not only for the international but also for the local audience. Now, the representation of Lithuania suggests that most of the subjects that stand for 'real' and 'beautiful' were created in the past. The contemporary culture, services, social life are dull and not worth exploring. This implies that Lithuanians lack social and cultural capitals as they have not been capable to create almost anything interesting during the new modern era. It consequently creates a rather negative image of the primitive nation and a country that are stuck in time and is immutable to changes.

## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to analyze Lithuania's official destination brand and national tourism website in order to find out what kind of discourse about the country the LSDT is projecting for an international as well as the local audiences. Destination branding project introduced at the end of 2016 can be regarded as the first serious attempt to brand the country for foreign visitors. In today's highly dynamic and competitive tourism market countries actively adopt modern marketing and branding tools to enhance positive and appealing associations about the promoted destinations' in tourists' minds. Hence, some scholars argue that branding became an inevitable part of destination success in the tourism market. After the significant decrease of the Russian tourists the LSDT re-evaluated its marketing strategy and turned its focus to the Western European and Scandinavian tourists. Additionally, in the National Tourism Development Programme for 2014-2020 the governmental institution set the goal to increase an awareness about the destination by implementing modern marketing tools. Thus the destination branding project can be regarded as one of them.

Nowadays, many scholars agree that destination branding is not just about 'selling' the place to a target audience, but it has to function as a source of pride for local stakeholders and help to revitalize the country's image for the international audience. The latter is especially relevant to the post-Soviet countries that still have to fight negative stereotypes and make themselves heard in the international arena. Place branding provides an opportunity for those countries to introduce themselves to the foreign audience with the imagery that would be desirable not only for the visitors but also for the local inhabitants. From a marketing perspective, local stakeholder involvement or at least careful investigation of their views on a country is vital for any kind of place brand because local residents are not only the co-creators of a place but also they are the ones who deliver 'brand promise' for tourists during the visit. From a cultural perspective, the destination brand and a tourism promotion have a capacity to affect not only tourists' but also local residents' perception of a place. The CDA of the Lithuania's destination brand material and online communication revealed that local people are not involved in the creation of country's imagery. However, the brand manifesto speaks on the behalf of all Lithuanians and even urges them to act in a certain way to fulfill foreign visitors' expectations. The photographs exhibited on the tourism website represent Lithuanians as a closed community, unwilling to interact or make any contact with the tourists. Thus, it can be said, that local people are

depicted as part of the 'tourism offer' or experience. This representation signifies the unequal power relations, in which both the tourism authorities and tourists (even prospective ones) have much more power over the local residents. Consequently, it shows that tourism authorities lack ethics, which may be a result of the lack of professionalism, knowledge or expertise. Unfortunately, the tourism marketing is regarded as the commercial one. The authorities fail to acknowledge that tourism promotion is much more powerful than a commercial marketing as it has a capacity to affect the country's and the nation's image outside the tourism domain and can influence not only tourists' but also locals' assessment of the place.

Looking from a branding perspective, one may argue that the destination brand and its online communication are not very effective. The brand does not entail anything unique about Lithuania. Instead of focusing on the unique selling points or competitive advantages, brand practitioners emphasize the emotional selling proposition, which can be regarded as the myth. With this myth, they try to 'sell' the remote, exotic, archaic, 'real and beautiful' destination, which happens to be Lithuania but by replacing Lithuania's name in the brand manifesto or logo signs, the same myth could be applied to any other lesser known place. Moreover, brand practitioners try to legitimize this myth by presenting it from the local residents' perspective or as they call it from their 'point of view'. The negative local public reaction after the introduction of this brand reveals that this 'point of view' is neither dominant nor desirable. Thus, it shows that Lithuanians will not be willing to live up to the brand and act as its ambassadors. Consequently, the tourists convinced by this brand promise are less likely to fulfill it. The exhibition of attractions on the tourism website revealed that it speaks to the masses rather than clearly distinguished target segments. The heritage objects are emphasized as the most interesting tourism attractions. However, these heritage objects represent a very fragmented interpretation of the history. It shows that tourism authorities not only miss a chance to create a positive image of the country, which is capable to deal with its complicated history, but also fail to recognize other ethnic groups, whose ancestors lived in Lithuania, as prospective target audiences. The brand and the website clearly address and privilege the Western tourists and leave local people behind. Lithuania is being represented as an escape destination. Tourists are offered to leave their ordinary world and travel back in time to the place, where everything is unchanged, uncomplicated and primitively simple. But the visual representation suggests not to get involved in country's cultural or social life but only passively gaze upon it, impersonally and from the distance. This also does not seem as an effective marketing strategy, as tourists nowadays are seeking not just *to see*, but *to*

*experience* the place or learn something during the visit. Through the implementation of creative tourism<sup>14</sup> it is very likely that Lithuania would gain more competitiveness in the tourism market. Moreover, the collaboration with local people for the development and promotion of creative experiences would make Lithuania more sustainable as a tourism destination and would help small businesses and craftsmen to gain financial rewards. Not to mention, that this would engage not only tourists but also locals and would consequently gain more support from them. Instead, the LSDT underestimate local culture by presenting it as an archaic and wrapped in time only to fulfill the expectations, and possibly the stereotypes of the Western tourists, more specifically the Western European and Scandinavian ones. And this is the practice of the governmental institution of the country, which is a member of European Union. Interestingly, the recent Eurobarometer survey<sup>15</sup> revealed that the vast majority (75%) of Lithuanians feel like the citizens of the European Union (EB87, 2017, p.15). This shows that Lithuanians embrace and willingly accept the changing dynamics within the country, while the LSDT depicts them oppositely.

Fairclough (2003) argues that “discourse figures alongside bodily behavior in constituting particular ways of being, particular social or personal identities” (p. 26). Following this idea, it can be said that the discourse, which is being created by tourism authorities has a capacity to affect not only locals’ understanding of a place but also their self-perception. The tourism representation suggests that Lithuanians are stubborn and not willing to change as they enjoy and are even proud of their unchanging, imperfect reality and instead of looking forward they tend to look backward. In the face of globalization, it may seem as a desirable way of living for some groups of people. However, the Lithuanian emigration rate is the highest in the EU (OECD, 2016b) and this is a very good indicator that Lithuanians are not proud of the imperfections that they face. On the other hand, one may argue that instead of trying to improve their life conditions within the country they are looking for a better life abroad. In my opinion, the branding campaign (which by the way failed to target local people) had a strong potential to create a positive image of Lithuania in the eyes of the emigrants and increase their trust and pride of their home country. Unfortunately, by privileging Western gaze the branding campaign and tourism communication increase the feeling that the Western world is better, more developed while Lithuania is still wrapped in time and immutable to changes. One can argue, that

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<sup>14</sup> “Creative tourism is travel directed toward an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place, and it provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture.” (UNESCO 2006, p. 3).

<sup>15</sup> The Eurobarometer survey is conducted by the European Commission and polls the view 33,000 people across the EU.

tourism communication is always staging the reality to appeal to tourists, thus it cannot be taken for granted. However, branding is not just about 'what the place is' but more about 'what it would like to become' and as Boisen et al. (2011) argue "sooner or later the place brand should help to realize this ambition" (p. 143). One can see that the current tourism communication managed by the LSDT does not entail any ambition and just try to 'sell' the place in the most primitive way.

Considering that the tourism industry in Lithuania accounts for only about 3% of total GDP the LSDT could have devoted (or required to devote) more attention to creating a brand that would be not only attractive for tourists but also favored by citizens. The highly fragmented exhibition of heritage objects on the tourism website is not only unethical but also shows that the LSDT fails to acknowledge the diaspora as a promising target audience. Interestingly, destination brand elements seem to be not incorporated on the website. However, the display of objects and visual representation resembles the brand manifesto, which leads to another assumption that this myth that brand creators tried to induce is far from new. Thus, it proves that it is not a country that is immutable to changes but the tourism communication, which is still wrapped in time and 'proud of imperfections'.

### **Limitations and further research**

The scope of this thesis did not allow for wider analysis of advertising and communication material used to promote Lithuania as a tourism destination for both domestic and international markets. The examination of social media communication was also not included in this research, which may have delivered additional results. For further research, it may be interesting to assess and compare the pictures shared on social media by native-Lithuanians and foreign visitors. This would allow to make a deeper investigation of whether the official Lithuania's tourism communication has an impact on place perception and whether it affects tourists' behavior while on site. Furthermore, an additional research could also analyze and compare advertising material directed to different geographical segments. This type of analysis would reveal if the promotion of the destination is consistent throughout different markets and whether it delivers similar messages about the place.

For the examination of the destination branding material and online communication, I applied the CDA and interpreted the results from the native Lithuanian perspective. The researcher with different cultural background may have interpreted the research material in a different manner and arrive at the different conclusion. Also, I analyzed Lithuania's brand project and website

communication from the cultural perspective while the examination from marketing or advertising domains may have delivered different conclusions. Another implication is that the thesis was written soon after the introduction of the new destination branding project. The analysis led to the assumption that the branding material has not yet been incorporated on the tourism website. Therefore, it can be said that this branding project is still in its early stages. Thus, it would be interesting to study promotional material of the LSDT after a year or a few years as it would show how the branding project is being executed by tourism authorities. Lastly, the survey or interviews with native-Lithuanians and people, who are not familiar with the country, would reveal how people with different backgrounds assesses the content of tourism communication and branding and would show how it affects their perception of the place in general.

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## Appendix A

### Transcript of the Brand Manifesto

To get a picky traveler interested in visiting a small Northern European country that doesn't boast spectacular wonders of nature or architectural miracles and is doomed with a hard to pronounce English name is an incredibly tough task. Not to forget, it still lacks direct flights from major cities and of which most of the world's citizens know next to nothing.

The intensive white noise of tourism communication will not spare those who talk like everyone else. We need to stand out and be different.

We value real things. From the food we eat (hardcore believers of naturally grown food) to the enviable part that nature takes up in our landscape (nature is where one can meet all of the Lithuanians during weekends or in the summertime). From the realness of people (we keep our word, we despise pretentiousness) to the realness in the streets (unpolished architecture). From the real culture that we value (famous theatre, overwhelmingly popular world cinema, booming music festivals) to the real, earnest hospitality.

We have a message to the world: real things are beautiful to us. Real is beautiful.

When you want to get away from fake smiles, concrete jungle, industrial madness, plastic architecture or conveyor belt of tourism, visiting Lithuania is a great decision.

Lithuania is the place where real things are valued. Even if they are a bit off or imperfect. We're proud of our imperfections. In other words, we see the beauty in them.

This is our new tourism communication. Unvarnished, with no makeup, sincere, real.

Lithuania. Real is beautiful.

## Appendix B

### Original version of the Brand Manifesto



To get a picky traveler interested in visiting a small European country that doesn't boast spectacular wonders of nature or architectural miracles and is doomed with a hard to pronounce English name is an incredibly tough task. Not to forget, it still lacks direct flights from major cities and of which most of the world's citizens know next to nothing.

The intensive white noise of tourism communication will not spare those who talk like everyone else. We need to stand out and be different. And our message is inspired by the point of view that we can share. This point of view will determine how we are seen, what can be experienced in Lithuania or expected from us. This will be our emotional selling proposition.

We value real things. From the food we eat (hardcore believers of naturally grown food) to the enviable part that nature takes up in our landscape (nature is where one can meet all of the Lithuanians during weekends or in the summertime). From the realness of people (we keep our word, we despise pretentiousness) to the realness in the streets (unpolished architecture). From the real culture that we value (famous theatre, overwhelmingly popular world cinema, booming music festivals) to the real, earnest hospitality.

We have a message to the world: real things are beautiful to us. Real is beautiful.

When you want to get away from fake smiles, concrete jungle, industrial madness, plastic architecture or conveyor belt of tourism, visiting Lithuania is a great decision.

Lithuania is the place where real things are valued. Even if they are a bit off or imperfect. We're proud of our imperfections. In other words, we see the beauty in them.

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**LITHUANIA. REAL IS BEAUTIFUL.**

## Appendix C

### Objects displayed on the official tourism website

Explore culture	Meet people	See nature	Stay active	Taste food
Vilnius Old town	Carnival Frenzy	Nature	Water parks	National cuisine
Ensemble of Vilnius University	Feast of St. John	The trail of Nagliai nature reserve	Shopping opportunities	Homemade bread and cheese
Pilies street	St. Casimir's fair	Lakes	Rehabilitation	Restaurants
The Royal Palace	Song feast	Nemunas Delta	Beauty services	
Uzupis	Culture night	National Parks	Amber therapy	
Gediminas Castle		Samogitia National Park	Lithuanian Baths	
Presidential Palace		Walkways and trails	Snow arena	
Vilnius TV tower		4 seasons of the year	Free time activities	
The Gates of Dawn		Seashore bicycle route	Air balloon flight	
The Hill of Three Crosses		Baltic Sea shore	Horse riding	
Ensemble of Pazaislis church and monastery		Parnidis Dune with Sun clock	Golf	
St. Anne's and Bernardine church		National Park of Curonian Spit	Summer toboggan trail	
Vilnius Cathedral			Adventure parks	
Angels across Vilnius			Bobsleigh sailing	
Churches			Camping	
Hill of Crosses			Canoeing	
National cultural reserve of Kernave			Bison Paddock of Pasiliai	
Kaunas Town Hall				
Kaunas Old town				
Kaunas castle				
Devils museum				
M.K. Ciurlionis museum				
Klaipeda Old town				
Maritime museum				
Trakai castle				
St. Peter and Paul church				
Ethnographic open-air museum				
Folklore and legends				
Amber Road objects				
Butautu Manor				

The most impressive manors				
Park of Europe				
Grutas Park				
Art galleries				
Music and theatres				
Concert Halls				
Fashion designers				