SHINE OUT OF DARKNESS:
METAPHORICAL IMAGE OF BELARUS
IN ENGLISH TOURIST DISCOURSE

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Дается аналитический обзор метафор, используемых для формования имиджа Республики Беларусь в английском туристическом дискурсе. Описываются метафоры, общие для белорусского и английского туристического дискурсов, а также случаи несовпадения в восприятии и описании Беларуси белорусами и иностранцами. Материалы о Минске, белорусской истории и природе, национальной кухне и сфере развлечений проиллюстрированы примерами. Анализируются основные метафорические модели Беларуси в туристическом дискурсе («просветление», «оставшийся в живых», «подрывая стереотипы» и т. д.). Выводы исследования имеют важное значение как для теории менеджмента туризма, так и для специалистов сферы гостеприимства.

The paper provides an analytical review of metaphors used to mold the image of the Republic of Belarus in the English tourist discourse. Metaphors common for the Belarusian and English tourism discourse are described, as well as cases of clashes in representation of Belarus by natives and foreigners. The descriptions of Minsk, Belarusian history and nature, food and entertainment are illustrated by examples. Basic M-models of Belarus in the tourist discourse (enlightment, survivor, subverting stereotypes, etc.) are manifested. The conclusions have important implications for tourism marketing and for professionals in the hospitality industry.

Ключевые слова: метафора; метафорическая модель; туристический дискурс; дискурсивные стратегии; национальный образ; прагматическая интенция; рекламные материалы.

Keywords: metaphor; M-model; tourist discourse; discourse strategies; national image; pragmatic intention; promotion materials.

Metaphors in language represent one of the most widespread cognitive instruments and thousands of linguists study the questions of what metaphors mean and how they do it. Metaphors are found in every type of discourse, and tourist discourse is not an exception. What is specific about metaphor in tourist discourse, it is that its nominative and characterizing function is accompanied by a very specific pragmatic function. Metaphors used by tourism managers serve not only to represent and attract, but they claim to mold recipients' opinion about a destination simultaneously appealing to the background knowledge and layering new attitudes in accordance with the author's pragmatic intention.

Today, when Belarus is becoming more and more attractive for foreign visitors and stops being a blank spot on the map of Europe, investigation of mechanisms of creating a country's image in tourist discourse acquire actuality. For contemporary Belarusian tourism management, the research of metaphorical image of Belarus in English tourist discourse would be of use, on the one hand, to reveal some problematic fields that can be made up for by further web-sites improvement and, on the other hand, it would provide our tour operators and guide-book authors with efficient instruments of metaphorical representation of our country which will be well-understood by native speakers of English.

In this paper we try to present basic trends in representing Belarus in English tourist discourse paying attention to images that have their artistic and persuasive potential and serve a marketing instrument of promotion. Such images as "shine out of darkness", "Soviet nostalgia", "subverted stereotypes" and others will be considered and illustrated by examples from the English tourist discourse.

Tourist discourse has been manifested as a specific "hybrid discourse possessing features of regulatory-rhetorical and creative discourses, generating new pragmatic and linguistic innovation", "a separate subspecies of advertising discourse, combining different types of tourism and advertising aimed at positioning and promotion of tourism services via argumentation strategies," [3, p. 7]. As "consumers' cognition is likely to be influenced by the linguistic and visual means employed in travel brochures" [2, p. 4], it is clear that the lexical contents of a tour guide text has much more than informative and marketing function.

The image of a country, so called 'national image', is created by means of a range of nominative and discourse strategies and refers to the political system, landscape, natural resources, civilizational and cultural image of the country in the framework of social-mental features and the system of national values. Nominative strategy involves the selection of landscape descriptors, representations of the national cuisine and the like. Discourse strategy, in its turn, determines the selection of nominative strategies, such as euphemisation or mythological and poetic allusions [3].

Tourist discourse strategies have been studied by a range of linguists including G. Cook [1], N. Tiuleneva [8], N. Filatova [3] and others who particularly noted the strength of tourist discourse pragmatic potential due to extended use of emotional and evaluative tools which perform manipulative function [3, p. 20]. Scientists also suggest that "when the mind is

stimulated by the key linguistic features in the text or by the context, an existing schema (i.e. background knowledge) will be activated and employed in the interpretation of the present discourse. This process would occur with the relevant schemata of readers who have had previous exposure" [9].

Analyzing metaphors in the tourist discourse, linguists study the relations between the source and target domains based on the theory suggested by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson [4]. N. Tyuleneva highlights metaphors linked to anthropomorphic sphere, nature, unreal world, food, apparel, storages, intoxicating substances, etc. [7]. As we can see, ideographic structuring of the source domain is much similar disregarding the target domain of metaphorization, for example, in our research on emotion metaphors in Belarusian and English we manifested four basic M-models referring to anthropomorphic, object (artifacts), nature and abstract spheres [7].

Other metaphors and concepts widely spread in the tourism discourse include *heaven*, *paradise*, *dream*, *unconsumed product*, *fantasy world*, *joy*, *fun*, *experience*, etc. [9]. At the same time, exploring a wide range of images, scientists mostly pay attention to their rhetoric or stylistic function, while for us a more important question is — how metaphors mold the public's opinion about a destination or a county on the whole.

The image of Belarus created in the English tourist discourse is quite controversial, let us look at some excerpts: "Imagine you discover one of the most bubbling cultures in Europe, right between the influences of the East and the West, of Rome and Byzantium" [6]. "While geographically landlocked by Russia, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Ukraine, many Europeans fail to locate Belarus on a map. It has the strange distinction of being both widely known in terms of metaphor, yet elusive in terms of its reality through direct knowledge" [5]. "A land of rusty tractors and tacky fashion; a Soviet state in all but name; Europe's last dictatorship: suffice to say Belarus has something of an image problem" according to the World Travel Guide.

While for a linguistic purpose is would be of more interest to study the source domain of metaphors, for the purpose of tourism management development, it is more relevant to analyze what images and spheres are used traditionally to describe such thematic groups as the capital, history, people, food, etc. Thus we choose the way to structure our analysis in relation to the target domain, namely to the things denoted by metaphors.

On the basis of two English tourist internet resources, "Rough Guides" (www.roughguides.com/country/belarus) and "World Travel Guide" (www.worldtravelguide.net/belarus), we made a selection of metaphors that are used to form the image of Belarus in the named promoting materials. We consider the conclusions and basic metaphorical models used in these English sites to be representable enough though further research of native speakers' texts about Belarus

will probably set forth more models and images characterized by typologically common features.

Looking through English travel guides we can't but notice the attitude to Belarus as to "Russia", unfortunately too often disapproved of in the Western world. Maybe this is one of the reasons why the pragmatic connotation of the marketing materials about Belarus sometimes contradicts the "highlighting and hiding" function of tourism discourse. While it is normal for travel guides to "present only the positive and attractive sides of the potential touristic experiences, while the negative aspects are often ignored" [2, p. 12], it is the same — normal for the Western people — to show some sort of disapproval or reserve in relation to "Russians".

So, in the promotion materials, we find a range of metaphors describing **Belarus as a post-soviet country**: *tired* stereotypes; proudly *bearing* Soviet style murals thrust towards the clouds; *lazy* stereotypes; *misunderstood* country. The same is true for descriptions of our politics: *Belarusian politics that* *whiff* of Soviet nostalgia; an authoritarian *iron fist*; a country that finds itself increasingly *isolated*. Interesting enough, the post-soviet heritage of Belarus is looked at as a rudimentary thing, as something of nostalgia, not something negative or dangerous for the Western world — compared to "the Russian bear" image, for example. The authors of promoting materials often apply "highlighting" strategy and present Belarus as a *multifaceted destination rich in history*, *brimming* *with culture where a cosmopolitan* *vibe sits alongside* *an intense national pride*.

Talking about the **Belarusian character**, English web-sites characterize Belarusians as *warm and* *generous inhabitants, who are gradually* *pulling* *themselves from the* *shadows* *of their past*.

Even though Belarusian **nature and landscape** is described in every destination advertisement, there is a very unexpected thing in these descriptions. While for the Belarusians the national image contains such concepts as *blue lakes / rivers*, *ancient forests*, *wide lands*, *virgin nature*, etc. and one will find lots of similar images in the Belarusian tourist discourse (also translated into English), such concepts can not be named as traditionally used in English tour guides about Belarus.

Let us compare: *nestling on the border with Poland*, *time appears to have* *stood still for centuries; landlocked*, *relatively* *flat* country, *crisscrossed* by thousands of streams and major rivers. As we can see, Belarus is characterized as "flat" (we can't but mention that the Russians tend to refer to Belarus as a flat and dull country) and rivers and lakes are not enchanted with such strong power as they are in Belarusian culture. At the same time, there are some references to rich wildlife and forests: *dotted* with numerous islets, *rich* *in wildlife;* *straddling* the border between Belarus and Poland is Białowieża Forest, one of the last *stretches* of Europe's primeval forests.

Much of the **historical** stress is made on the war period and other periods of political unrest, and this

feature is common for both English and Belarusian tour guides: *has undergone **seismic shifts in** ownership, language and culture over the centuries; rebuilt from **smouldering rubble**, **grew** in prosperity, **ballooned** with swift industrialization and a population **boom**; [WW2] a tragedy that has left a **profound imprint** on succeeding generations; nowhere does the nation's sense of grief retain a greater **rawness** than Belarus; saw a **blossoming** of nationalism, **shady** past.*

Khatyn and Chernobyl, sort of 'dark' trademarks of Belarus, represent a range of images appealing to compassion and even mystical feelings: *[Khatyn] **sobering** yet suitable tribute to the one in four Belarusians that died in the war; [Chernobyl] **desolation** and **dereliction** brings home a **stark** reality; buildings **echo** an unstable period; gives visitors an eerie and almost **paranormal** sensation; misfortune **struck** again in 1986.* Analyzing these images we can conclude that uniting WW2 and Chernobyl as two 'misfortunes', two scars on the land's heart is common for both Belarusian and English tourist discourse.

In **descriptions of Minsk**, controversial images are used — those of a heroic, post-Soviet and a sprawling growing city: *Belarusian capital is a **survivor**, having time and time again, throughout its **tumultuous** history, refused to say 'die'; **grey**, post-Soviet megalopolis; an important **axis** of communication; wide embankments **flanking** the Svisloch River.*

The **architectural image** of Belarus is also quite controversial and reflects one of the basic assumptions about Belarus — as a country that really does subvert the expectations and old-fashioned myths. The tour guides cite: *architecture here **doesn't suffer** from Soviet uniformity; **lonely** monument broods; **uplifting** buildings to enliven this **sprawling** city; a **huge indigo diamond** [the National Library]; the skyline is **a forest of cranes**, skyscrapers and bulldozers; the city growing before your eyes; **dotted** with lavish baroque architecture; metro, itself **jazzed up** with amber lighting and statues **galore** is a **bohemian fusion** of art gallery and art and craft shop.* So, one of advertising hooks for the tourist managers is that Belarus does not live up to traditional expectations. Such strategy is sort of teasing tourists, making them interested and highly motivated to see with their own eyes whether all those things they know about this 'elusive Troy' are true or false.

Quite opposite to Belarusian hospitality industry resources, English sites do not lavish praise on the **Belarusian cuisine and restaurants**: *Belarusian cuisine has **evolved** from the days where the **humble potatoes** formed the basis for all dishes; mushrooms will **pop up** in a variety of guises on menus across the country; one **heck** of a blow-out here, young and beautiful **pile into** German-style beer taverns, **hop-head heaven**; haze of home brew.* As the excerpts show, sometimes the description is a little ironical and contains a hint of mockery so usual for the Western people describing Slavic cultures. The tour guides present the idea that *gastronomy is still influenced by the countries of Soviet days, a period which saw a number of Belarusian culinary traditions being lost.* At the same time, metaphors containing images of 'light' and 'blossom' are employed in the descriptions: *in Minsk, the following [places] **shine brighter** than the rest; is a **thriving** cultural scene with opera, ballet, theatre, circus and puppet theatre.*

As for **shopping**, Belarus is said not to be a good venture for shopping and *shopaholics shouldn't venture to Belarus in search of a **fix*** but at the same time *it is not the shopping **desert** it is often believed to be.* This example illustrates a very specific approach to the image of Belarus in the English tourist discourse: sometimes it is easier to say what Belarus is NOT than what it is. It means, contemporary Belarus subverts the faded stereotypes — it is not the country it used to be — and visitors are invited to the country to make their own conclusion about it.

So, we have presented the basic thematic spheres where different metaphors are used to create the national image of Belarus. On the basis of the mentioned examples we can make conclusions about most common metaphors that are used to describe Belarus in the English tourist discourse. They are: *isolation (landlocked, standing still, warm, isolated, lonely), **light out of darkness** (used to be shady and grey, is thought to be dull but it is not, insight, enlightment, light, amber lighting, shine brighter), **survivor** (misfortune struck, profound imprint, tumultuous history, seismic shifts), **enliven** (evolve, growing, booming, thriving, blossoming, pop up) and **subverting stereotypes** (the old town isn't old at all, bohemian fusion, jazzed up).*

So, as we can see, the content of promotion material and metaphorical images it appeals to help to subsequently control and mold the recipients' attitudes and behavior. It is very important to realize, that the assumptions and values of the Belarusian people, their vision of their country and the way and means they use to create its image in the tourist discourse are not always equivalent to those of people living abroad. Moreover, there are some traditional images used in English tourist discourse to describe Belarus which are reliable for English native speakers and most of Western Europeans.

That is why the study of lexical means of representing Belarus in the tourist discourse and conclusions about basic metaphorical images can help to improve the quality of promotion materials, destination descriptions and Belarusian hospitality management in general.

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