

COUNTRY IMAGES OF KAZAKHSTAN: FROM STEREOTYPES AND CRITIQUE TO POSITIVE NATIONAL BRANDING

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ABSTRACT

In the light of the nation-building process the Kazakhstani government works towards a positive national branding. For this, Kazakhstan pursued a policy to host a number of international mega events. In 2011, Kazakhstan hosted the Asian Olympic Games which took place in the cities of Astana and Almaty. The following events have been scheduled for the future in Kazakhstan: the World Expo 'Future Energy' in 2017; the 28th Winter Universiade in 2017; and the Winter Olympics in 2022.

After the ambitious transfer of the Capital city from Almaty to Astana, these mega events serve to **promote Kazakhstan's** economic growth, infrastructure upgrades, and leadership in the Central Asian region.

The paper shows that the country branding should not contradict the views and beliefs of the citizens. It is a sociological study of the national identification of the people, their assessment of positive and negative sides of life, and cultural heritage and traditions. The paper also examines intercultural communication in one research area within the mega projects planning and management.

Keywords: Country image, National brand, Mega events, Kazakhstan, Ethnic identity

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PROBLEM DEFINITION

In Kazakhstan, the government believes that it is possible to achieve national unity from the top, if people are inspired by state ideology. After the independence, several variations of the national idea were formulated. The last one was created in January 2014 in presidential address to the nation "Kazakhstan's Way 2050: Common goal, Common interests and Common future", where a new variant of national idea was named 'Mangilik Yel' - 'the Eternal Country'.

Contrary to the official views, skeptics question the overall national idea can be formulated and accepted by all the population of a multi-ethnic country like Kazakhstan. They believe that the official ideology could be shared by most citizens, but for this the country would need a more developed political culture, more matured civil society, and less visible differences in incomes between haves and have-nots. Organizing global mega events, the government tries to create a positive country image both for external consumers and own citizens.

This article investigates a set of research questions related to Kazakhstan's national branding.

ANALYSIS OF RECENT RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

The national revival in the Republic of Kazakhstan, under the leadership of Nursultan Nazarbayev, was accompanied by confrontation between two approaches: (a) the general civil unity of all citizens and (b) the ethnic nationalism of the Kazakhs. An attempt to fix the first as a public policy approach in the official governmental document "Doctrine of National Unity of Kazakhstan" ("Doctrine of National Unity", 2009, 2010) met an unprecedented surge of ethnic nationalism and created heated debate among intellectuals and civil society. Failures with the project of one national idea have shown that the society was not ready to unite on the principles of political and civic unity until some significant socio-economic differences were not rectified (Ashimbayev, 2011; Ismagambetov,

2009; Kozyrev, 2009).

National Patriots filled the debate in the media by the exigencies of anti-Chinese alarmism, pathos and critique of linguocentrism, and contradictions between “real” and so called “asphalt” Kazakhs (Asanbaev & Mamiraimov, 2009; Gali, 2007; Zhakupov, 2009; Nauryzbayeva, 2013; Open letter, 2011; etc.).

The main groups of the nation-building ideologists are *organic intellectuals and critical intellectuals* (see Shakirova, 2011). Conceptual differences between the two groups touch upon issues such as the status of the Kazakh language, the grounds of social cohesion and cultural development between the preservation of tradition and openness to innovation, choice of geopolitical partners, and perception of gender equality.

Along with the nation building processes, and especially after the negative publicity associated with the film “Borat”, the government raised the issue of creating a positive rather than a negative national image of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Borat, an infamous character portrayed by British entertainer Sasha Baron Cohen, gave negative but strong global publicity to Kazakhstan. To improve the country’s brand, the government decided to host international mega events such as the Olympics and World Expo. Specifically, in 2011, the Asian Olympic Games took place in the cities of Astana and Almaty. In 2017, Kazakhstan will host the World Expo ‘Future Energy’ and the 28th Winter Universiade and in 2022, Kazakhstan is planning to host the Winter Olympics. After the ambitious transfer of the Capital city, from Almaty to Astana, these mega events serve to give a favorable image of the country and to promote economic growth, infrastructure upgrading, and leadership of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Central Asian region.

The scheduled Expo and Olympics are providing challenges to developing the tourist sector of the country. As it is known, citizens of host countries do not always positively perceive mega events that promote tourism. For example, Pappas (2014) stated:

Locals consider several negative effects emanating from tourism development. Economically these include the increased price of goods, services, land and property, lack of economic diversification, increased prostitution, vandalism, pressure on local services, change of local culture, psychological tension, increased environmental pollution,

mismanagement of public funds, increases in local taxes, and other effects. (p. 13)

Other researchers have also described megaprojects as unhealthy. In their 2003 book, *Megaprojects and Risk: an Anatomy of Ambition*, Flyvbjerg, Bruzelius, and Rothengatter stated that megaprojects are promoted by governments using an “unhealthy cocktail of underestimated costs and over estimated revenues” (as cited in Trubina, 2012).

On the other hand, international mega events stimulate patriotic feelings of the local population, increase its national pride and unity, boost economic growth and improve tourist infrastructure. This stimulates higher incomes and standards of living; creates investments and business development, strengthening the brand image of destination and creating opportunities for local people (Pappas, 2014). With regard to tourism, Su, Wang and Wen (2013), stated that “the core business is not to maximize surplus value and private profit, but to directly increase community wellbeing, especially for the groups who are economically marginalized” (p. 233).

Country branding is deeply interrelated with the feelings and beliefs of the local residents, in particular, on how tourism should be developed and, in general, how the economy and society should be improved. In this sense, national identification of the people, their assessment of positive and negative sides of life, as well as cultural heritage and traditions, intercultural communication, tolerance and other related issues, lay in one research area within the mega projects planning and management.

FORMULATION OF OBJECTIVES FOR THE ARTICLE

The objective of this article is to study how positive and negative perceptions of the population can support or weaken the national image of Kazakhstan that is systemically built by official Astana. A favorable image of the country is needed to all major stakeholders of the national branding process, namely: government, business, and society.

Considering this macro issue at the example of a limited sample allows to further research into existing approaches and suggestions for the development of tourism in Kazakhstan.

METHODOLOGY

Findings of the survey presented in this article

are not claimed to be of a global scale and magnitude, rather they give a characteristic pattern for inter-ethnic relations in the country. The idea of this survey appeared as a part of my research interests devoted to the nation-building processes in the Republic of Kazakhstan, with a specific gender-sensitive focus. In 2005, the Author conducted a study on ethnic stereotypes of women and men from different ethnic groups of Kazakhstan.

The survey described in this article was conducted from October 2010 to February 2011 using the “snowball” method with a specially designed questionnaire. The questionnaire

contained 39 questions and consisted of following parts: (a) country image of Kazakhstan for external usage; (b) country image in reality as perceived by locals and for locals; (c) ethnic identification of respondents; (d) ethnic traditions of people of Kazakhstan in their gender-sensitive evaluation; (e) nationalism and ethnic discrimination in modern Kazakhstan; (f) attitudes to inter-ethnic marriages; and (g) gender equality in family and work.

This article is devoted to interpreting only parts a, b and c of the above-mentioned topics.

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Variable	Number	Frequency (%)	Variable	Number	Frequency (%)
<i>Sex</i>			<i>Marital status</i>		
Female	66	66	Married	63	63
Male	34	34	Single	24	24
<i>Age</i>			Divorced	9	9
16-24	15	15	Widowed	4	4
25-44	30	30	<i>Occupation</i>		
45-64	52	52	small business	20	20
65+	3	3	students	11	11
<i>Ethnicity</i>			education	10	10
Kazakhs	36	36	non-commercial organization	8	8
Russian	28	28	budget organization	7	7
Tatars	14	14	healthcare system	7	7
Turks	7	7	industry	7	7
Others	15	15	large commercial firm	7	7
<i>Place of residence</i>			construction	5	5
Almaty	78	78	unemployed	5	5
Taldykorgan & Almaty oblast	15	15	self-employed	4	4
Uralsk & West Kazakhstan oblast	4	4	housewife	3	3
Shymkent & South Kazakhstan oblast	3	3	public service	3	3
			Retired	3	3

Some questions and statements were adopted from the previous survey done by T. Chelysheva, a graduate student of Kazakh-German University (see also Chelysheva, 2007). The survey sample consisted of 115 citizens of Kazakhstan and Germany who ranged in age from 18 to 63 years.

Part of the respondents of the current survey filled out the questionnaires by themselves, and another part were interviewed by the author. Every interview lasted about 30-45 minutes depending on the personal attitude of respondents to the survey topic. The snowball method approach allowed representatives of different age, social status, professional background to make up the sampling ratio representative of the social composition of the Kazakhstani population (17.2 million people of which about 1.5 million live in Almaty city).

Profile of the respondents

In total, 100 people were interviewed. Among them were 66 females and 34 males between the ages of 16 and 72 years and identified by the following ethnic origin: Kazakhs, Russian, Tatars, Turks and many others. Most of them were residents of Almaty, the smaller part lives in

three areas – Almatinskaia oblast (administrative center Taldykorgan), South Kazakhstan (Shymkent) and Western Kazakhstan (Uralsk). Nearly two-thirds of respondents were married, having 1 or 2 children in average, and by property status, consider themselves as middle class (See Tables 1 and 2).

Table 2. To what social group belongs your family?

Answers	Males	Females	Total
Rich	1	0	1
Secured	4	10	14
Middle	22	47	69
low-secured	7	8	15
Poor	0	0	0
no answer	0	1	1
Total:	34	66	100

The survey confirmed the thesis of moderate but enough massive religiosity of people in Kazakhstan (see Table 3).

Table 3. Do you consider yourself a religious person?

Answers	Males	Females	Total
Yes, I perform the rituals of my confession and attend mosque / church	5	4	9
Yes, sometimes I attend mosque / church	9	22	31
Yes, I feel spiritual connection with religion, but do not perform rituals and do not attend mosque / church	7	15	22
No, but sometimes I attend mosque / church	4	4	8
No, but I take part in religious rituals at home with my family, friends	4	10	14
No	5	10	15
No answer	0	1	1
Total:	34	66	100

To achieve the research objective, the following hypotheses were developed:

Hypothesis 1. Respondents tend to associate the country image of Kazakhstan firstly with its nature and people, and these images are always positive.

Hypothesis 2. Economic and political features of the country images are influenced by the

public perceptions of complicated socioeconomic situation of the country with its sharp division between rich and poor, haves and have-nots, possibilities of the citizen to satisfy their everyday economic needs (job, safety, health, respect, and confidence in the future).

Hypothesis 3. There is no direct correlation between satisfaction from the country image

(external and internal) and own ethnic identification, e.g. a person can be very critical to the status of Kazakhstan as a nation-state and simultaneously can possess not nuanced ethnic identification and weak attachment to his/her ethnic culture.

General perception of Kazakhstan country image by respondents

To start the core part of the survey, the author decided to pose a question which sounded simple but in fact contained deeply-rooted images, perceptions, and beliefs. The question was formulated as following: "If foreigners ask you about Kazakhstan, by what three words or phrases would you describe our country?" Respondents could use any words or images, expressions, and names. All collected answers were divided into three groups: positive, mixed, and negative images of the country.

Most of respondents (61%) gave positive images, phrases and expressions reflecting their satisfaction, and pride of the country. Only 5% gave exclusively negative images, and 20% gave mixed images combining both positive and negative words and descriptions. In addition, 14% found no words or expressions to describe the country (see Table 4).

Table 4. Country image given by respondents

Answers	Males, %	Females, %	Total, %
Positive	21	40	61
Mixed (positive and negative)	7	13	20
Negative	3	2	5
No answer	3	11	14
Total:	34	66	100

First of all, respondents listed the characteristics of the country, expressed by *adjectives*. By frequency they were as following: (See Table 5)

Table 5. Country characteristics (adjectives) given by respondents

Answers	Total, %
multi-ethnic	16
hospitable	11
large	5
rich in natural resources, minerals	4
rich	3
friendly	3
beautiful	3
spacious	2
safe	1
boundless	1
great	1
ninth country in the world by area	1
friendly	1
spiritual	1
intellectual	1
interesting	1
musical	1
independent	1
educated	1
prospective	1
distinctive	1
strong	1
quiet	1
rapidly developing	1
good	1
economically developed	1
relatively stable	1
relatively tolerant	1
corrupted	1
dependent	1

Images and characteristics of Kazakhstan expressed by nouns had also positive, neutral (or mixed) and negative connotations (see Table 6).

Table 6. Country characteristics (nouns) given by respondents

Positive	Total, %	Negative	Total, %	By proper names	Total, %
Steppes	2	'Agashki' (old men)	1	Nazarbayev	3
mountains	2	high prices	1	Astana	2
tolerance	2	inertness	1	Baikonur	2
bashbarmak (Kazakh national dish)	1	corruption	1	Abai	1
welfare	1	'pofigizm' (indifference)	1	Asia	1
richness	1	protectionism	1	Borat	1
possibilities	1			Chimbulak	1
hospitality	1				
democracy	1				
goodwill	1				
dombra (musical instrument)	1				
friendship of peoples	1				
ethical values	1				
unity	1				
the land of my ancestors	1				
nomads	1				
beautiful nature	1				
leader	1				
youth	1				
courage	1				
oil	1				
nature	1				
simplicity	1				
prosperity	1				
equality	1				
motherland	1				
kinship	1				
freedom	1				
freedom of speech	1				
cattle breeding	1				
justice	1				
happy future	1				
creativity	1				

It is not surprising that Kazakhstan is associated with its first president, 'the leader of nation', Nursultan Nazarbayev. One of the foreign researchers (Uffellmann, 2011) noticed that Nazarbayev 'privatized state brand of Kazakhstan' (p.181). The logic of choosing Astana as a country brand is also clear. Other above-mentioned proper names represent different achievements of the country among

which are Baikonur Cosmodrome, national Kazakh writer #1 (Abai), subcontinent where Kazakhstan is located and the region associated with the Orient (Asia); Borat.

And the last but not least was named a mountain resort Chimbulak near Almaty which is often considered a tourist destination which has got business potential of attracting thousands of Europeans.

Adjectives and nouns gave a wide panoramic view of public perception of the country's image. Often respondents have given descriptions of the image using just three words either borrowed from national history and literature, or from the current societal life. They were also categorized as positive, neutral, and negative.

1. Positive evaluation

"The land of my ancestors" (female, employee of state institution, Kazakh, 49, Almaty)
 "Our Kazakhstan - a great country!" (female, employee of medical facilities, Korean, 45, Almaty).

"Homeland, Otan, Motherland» (male, entrepreneur, Kazakh, 35, Almaty).

"The best country in the world where I live, there is not blown and do not shoot" (male, technician, Russian, 51, Almaty).

"Hospitable people, tolerance, families" (male, retired, Tatar, 72, Almaty).

"Friendliness of people, tranquility, the potential of rapidly developing country" (female, entrepreneur, Kazakh, 49, Almaty).

2. Neutral evaluation:

"The young state, the transition period, with the beginnings of democracy" (female, book-keeper, Kazakh, 36, Almatinskaya oblast).

"As long as you can live ..." (male, builder, Tatar, 39, Almaty).

"I have no delight" (female, self-employed, Bulgarian, 54, Taldykorgan).

3. Negative evaluation

"Emotional comfort, economic anarchy, mismanagement, political dependence" (female, teacher, Kazakh, 45, Shymkent).

"Non-compliance with the words of the leaders of business, cost of living, non-insurance against unemployment " (male, entrepreneur, Kazakh, 52, Almaty).

"Police state, illiterate economic policies, false media organizations" (male, entrepreneur, Tatar, 50, Almaty).

4. Mixture of positive and negative characteristics

"Big, infinite, corrupt" (male, technician, Chechen, 48, Almaty).

"A very rich resource base, double protection,

apathy, inertia" (female, entrepreneur, Russian, 45, Almaty).

"Warm, cozy, but dirty" (female, unemployed, Tatar, 52, Shymkent).

"Dirty, beautiful, spacious" (male, student, Azerbaijani, 20, Almaty).

ATTITUDE OF RESPONDENTS TO THEIR COUNTRY

The author believes that perception of the country by an external audience (foreign citizens, businesspersons, tourists, journalists, etc.) can be fed by perceptions, images and attitudes to the country by its own citizens. National branding as a part of foreign policy and the nation building process can never be successful if the majority of the country's population does not feel comfortable or proud of their own life.

While a country image can be branded internationally, the government attempts to create a positive image of the country nationally prove to be ineffective. When asked about giving their opinion on the country's image to the outsiders, people usually give positive views, however, behind closed doors their assessments are more frank and negative.

When answering the question "What do you like in Kazakhstan?" respondents primarily noticed the following:

- geographical features of the country ('mountains', 'climate', 'open spaces', 'large territory', 'abundance of natural resources');
- the socio-economic conditions ('the ability to work and have a relatively quiet life', 'opportunity to engage in entrepreneurial activity', 'foreign policy of peace', 'social peace', 'stability', 'traditionalism', 'transparency');
- inter-ethnic relations ('friendship', 'multinational', 'tolerance', 'peace', 'understanding between people', 'holidays, national cuisine and decorations', etc.);
- the quality of human relationships ('people', 'hospitality', 'freedom', 'goodwill', 'attitude to the elderly', 'the environment of native people');
- patriotism ('it is my motherland', 'my people', 'my city', 'my home');
- other ('I used to live here', 'all is good', 'beautiful girls', 'fishing', etc.).

Responses to the opposite question "What do you dislike or find annoying in modern life in Kazakhstan?" showed that the causes of rejection

were: corruption from the bottom to the top (11%), illiteracy of bureaucrats, bribery, nepotism, injustice, instability, protectionism, non-compliance with laws, non-democratic society, absence of order, that the government does not think about the common people, false information about the welfare of the majority of the population, the society is ruled by money, reducing the level of culture and education, copying other cultures and policies, and others.

The economic situation was described by respondents with the following words: unemployment (few jobs, and if there is, not everyone can get), the high cost, absence of social protection for the poor, expensive higher education, bad roads, and others.

One respondent mentioned 'imitation of the West, where it is necessary and where it is not' (female, Kazakh, secondary school teacher, 47, Almaty oblast).

A young woman employed in the sphere of design noticed that she dissatisfied with the place of Kazakhstan which can be described as a 'backward, developing country, lagging behind the United States for 10 years, including fashion'. Another respondent (male, Russian, 44, construction entrepreneur, Almaty) mentioned that 'local show business' is a factor which annoys him most of all.

Contrary to the responses about the friendship

between peoples, several respondents gave a very harsh assessments of inter-ethnic relations like: 'nationalism (3%), insecurity, the state of obscurity', 'issues or problems are solved on a national basis, or due to the presence of large amounts of money', 'language policy'. Nationalism is described by respondents as 'irritating nationalism', 'stupid nationalism', and 'sometimes nationalism'.

The situation can be described by the following expression of the respondent: 'Providing unfair advantage for career prospects and business to persons of Kazakh ethnicity'. Hence people feel 'not assured in tomorrow', 'unclear condition', 'constant feeling of living on trunks for Russian-speaking people'.

Language policy of Kazakhstani government is perceived by some respondents as 'imposition of Kazakh language', 'forced state language'.

Another subject of major concern is the religious situation: 'the growth of religious fanaticism, which can lead to the development of an Islamic state'. There is a growing ethno-cultural pressure, expressed in intrusive religious propaganda. Firstly, of course, Islam. In response, manifested no less disturbing propaganda of pro-Russian Orthodox religion. Both are risky games, says the head of a nonprofit organization from Almaty, female, Russian, 45 years old.

Table 7. What does your ethnicity mean to you?

Possible answers	Respondents, %
a. my ancestral roots, connection with ancestors	27
b. belonging to a great nation	18
c. feeling of belonging to the great history and culture of my people	18
d. special ethnic character, which I am	17
e. nationality dictates my way of life	10
f. simply mark in the passport	9
g. ethnicity determines my position in society	8
h. nothing	7
i. feeling that the historical homeland will not leave me in the lurch at a difficult time	5
j. my rare ethnicity makes me different from others	2
k. a sense of ownership on the land	1
l. obstacle to closer relations with people of other nationalities	0
m. No answer	8

Table 8. Descriptive statistics

Possible answers	Kazakh	Russian	Tatar	Turk	Uighur	German	Other	Males	Females	Total
	N= 36	N=29	N=14	N= 7	N=2	N=2	N=10	N=34	N=66	
a. my ancestral roots, connection with ancestors	15	2	5	1	0	2	2	8	19	27
b. belonging to a great nation	6	6	1	2	0	0	3	10	8	18
c. feeling of belonging to the great history and culture of my people	10	3	1	2	1	0	1	6	12	18
d. special ethnic character, which I am	2	5	5	2	1	0	2 (Azeri F, Jewish -F)	6	11	17
e. nationality dictates my way of life	2	3	2	2	1	0	0	5	5	10
f. simply mark in the passport	2	5	1	0	0	0	1 (Kyrgyz -F)	2	7	9
g. ethnicity determines my position in society	2	2	2	1	0	0	1 Azeri M	3	5	8
h. nothing	0	5	1	0	0	0	1 Chechen-M	4	3	7
i. feeling that the historical homeland will not leave me in the lurch at a difficult time	1	1	2	0	0	0	1 Korean -F	2	3	5
j. my rare ethnicity makes me different from others	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 Dargin - M, Jewish - F,	1	1	2
k. a sense of ownership on the land	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
l. obstacle to closer relations with people of other nationalities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
m. No answer	3	2	0	2	0	0	1	1	7	8
N of responses	44	33	20	12	3	2	15	49	126	175

The quality of human relations is evaluated by the words: 'absence of culture in interpersonal relations', 'claims against each other', 'evil people, even against those with the same ethnicity', 'laziness', 'slow pace'. The evidence of social disparities in Kazakhstani society can be described by the expression which is widely used in common communication: 'mambets'. It categorizes Kazakh rural people, marginals who are not adapted to urban life. Another social category with ambiguous connotation is 'oralmans' (Kazakh repatriates from neighboring countries).

Except economic, political, religious and cultural aspects of dissatisfaction, there is one more area of concern - environmental issue, which is described by following words: 'poor ecology', 'squandering of natural and cultural resources', 'traffic jams', 'fear of earthquake', 'dirty city', 'pollution on local and neighboring territory'.

The question "What does your ethnicity mean to you?" with the possibility to give several answers showed that, in matters of personal ethnic identification, there is a diversity of opinion and no simple unambiguous answers (see Tables 5 and 6).

Knowledge of Kazakh language among the respondents as a whole is typical of the inhabitants of the southern capital of Kazakhstan - Almaty. Of the 36 respondents, 33 Kazakhs responded that they spoke Kazakh (21 respondents spoke perfectly and 12 had basic level), and three people understood the language, but did not speak it. Of the 29 Russians, only one woman replied that she spoke Kazakh language, and 16 people understood it, but did not speak.

Representatives of other ethnic groups know Kazakh language better than Russian. Of the 35 respondents in this group, 12 non-Kazakhs and non-Russians spoke Kazakh at basic level (Turks, Tatars, and others), 10 people understood and 13 people did not speak the national language (see Table 7).

Table 9. Do you speak Kazakh?

Answers	Males	Females	Total
Yes, perfectly	6	17	23
Yes, at basic level	6	17	23
Understand but do not speak	13	16	29
No	9	16	25
Total:	34	66	100

Answers to the question "What are your plans for the next 5-10 years?" showed that two-thirds of respondents believe that they would like to live in Kazakhstan. Only 4% are intending to leave the country, but there were a high percentage of those who found it difficult to answer - 28% (mostly Russians and Tatars).

Table 10. What are your plans for the next 5-10 years?

Answers	Male	Females	Total
To live in Kazakhstan	19	41	60
To live abroad and return to Kazakhstan	4	1	
To go abroad forever	1*	3**	4
Difficult to answer	10	18	28
No answer	0	3	3
Total:	34	66	100

*Male Tatar, 39.

**Female Russian, 35; Female Russian 52; Female Tatar, 20.

To the question "Which of the traditions of your people you think should be to develop and maintain?" respondents indicated first of all, respect for the elderly (18% of respondents), hospitality (8%), religion (3%), families with many children (2%), diligence (2%), patriotism, allegiance to country (2%), traditional wedding ceremony, the rite of newborns (2%). As demonstrated by the statements of two Russian female Almatyers aged 43-45 years, "Originality of thought (to be a mystery to the other, or you'll be vulnerable), reflections, search for the meaning of life, the deepening of themselves" and "Do not cling for any tradition. This hinders the development".

To the question "Which of the traditions of your people you think conservative and negative?" Kazakhs noted: "the division of the people, high self-esteem, humiliation, threats", "wide celebration, *toi* for any occasion, show-off, the desire to please others", "tribalism" "division by zhuzes", "inter-clan division", "nationalism", "polygamy", "preference for men", "Kalym (bride-price)", "stealing girls", "national laziness: Kazakh like to lie down, and allow the belly to grow", "accommodation of daughter from her husband's parents after the birth of her child within 40 days".

Russian respondents noted among the negative

features of their ethnic group: “drinking”, “excessive use of alcoholic beverages with or without reason”, “alcoholism, rudeness, crime,” “disorder,” “great power”, “alarming throwing in religion - the most successful business of all people and nations”: “divide and conquer”.

According to the Turkish Akhiska, conservative features of their ethnic group are the “traditions that do not give women to express their opinions in public, to give children marry or marry against their will, and bride kidnapping”.

To the question “In your opinion, are the rights of any ethnic groups being violated in Kazakhstan?” 32% of the respondents answered “yes” (all; all, except for the Kazakhs; Russian; Russian-speaking Kazakhs), 28% respondents said ‘no’ and 40% of respondents gave no answers. For a bilingual society with a strong pro-Russian orientation in policy, economy and culture, which is the country today, such a division between the respondents becomes an eloquent testimony of a problematic citizenship. Information received from this part of study corresponds to the data from previous question (see Table 8).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, the study confirmed the main hypotheses and ideas expressed at the beginning of the article.

The first hypothesis was confirmed which stated that respondents tend to associate the country’s image firstly with nature and people, and these images are mostly positive. The second hypothesis was also verified by the survey data: Economic and political features of the country images are influenced by the peoples’ perceptions of socioeconomic reality. Mega events like sports contests and business exhibitions with huge financial expenditures give only short-term unsustainable results if the basic economic needs of local population are not satisfied properly inside the country.

And, finally the author considers that the study gave good material to support the last hypothesis. In practice, there is no direct correlation between satisfaction from the country’s image (external and internal) and one’s own ethnic identification. Critique or pessimistic views on the status of Kazakhstan as a nation-state can be seen in parallel with not nuanced ethnic identification and weak expression of personal ethnic markers (language, traditions,

gender roles, family history, etc.).

One of the limitations of this study is that it did not include evaluation by respondents of the forthcoming mega events (Olympics, EXPO, Universiade). This study gives enough food for thought to be continued by a subsequent research and further analysis of the tourism development in Kazakhstan with wider representative samples.

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