



# Eye on Poland's Promotion

The promotion and image of Poland  
in the eyes of international place marketing experts

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**BEST PLACE**

European  
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Marketing  
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A study carried out by



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## ABOUT THE STUDY

At the end of November and beginning of December 2011 a team of the Best Place Foundation - European Place Marketing Institute conducted **an expert study on the image and promotion of Poland among the world's leading place branding experts**. Of the 19 international experts permanently cooperating with the Institute, 14 have taken part in the survey. The surveyed group included primarily representatives of European countries (e.g. France, Germany and Spain), but also ones from the USA and New Zealand. The study used the **expert method**, in which experts' knowledge, experience and opinions are used to formulate conclusions (in this particular case - foreign external experts).

The aim of this study was an up-to-date evaluation of Poland's image and promotional activities and their effects from the place marketing specialists' perspective.

The study analyzed the major associations related to Poland in the following categories: famous Poles, recognizable cities and regions, distinctive Polish brands and familiar events. Then an overall assessment was made of country's image in the selected areas on such issues as tourist and investment attractiveness. While diagnosing Poland's promotional activity, its visibility abroad, recognition and impact of promotional signs were all taken into account. The experts surveyed have also made an overall assessment of Polish promotional activities and made suggestions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of projects promoting Poland in the world.

**An international team of Best Place experts** consists of experienced practitioners who specialize in areas such as place branding, destination marketing, reputation management, public diplomacy as well as urban planning and tourism. Among them are representatives of foreign universities, agencies involved in the promotion of cities, and organizations fostering sustainable place development.

Among the professionals surveyed, 64% have visited Poland, of which nearly one in four has been to the country at least once. Individual profiles of the Institute's experts are to be found at the end of the report.



Source: [polska.regiopedia.pl](http://polska.regiopedia.pl)

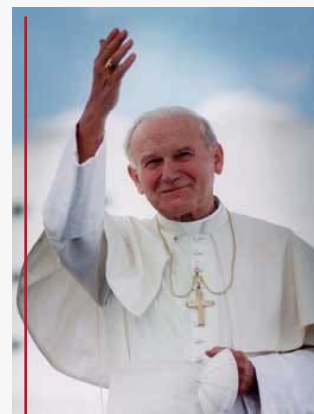
## MAIN ASSOCIATIONS CONNECTED WITH POLAND

Among the primary associations of Poland the respondents indicated the following in the first place:

- Pope John Paul II
- Eastern Europe
- End of Communism
- Family
- Vodka
- Shopping
- Football
- Cold



Source: [www.mojeopinie.pl](http://www.mojeopinie.pl)



Source: [insilesia.pl](http://insilesia.pl)

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The experts had the opportunity to list three elements they most associate with Poland. Overall, most (30%) indicated the figure of **Pope John Paul II**. Given that the responses also included associations such as **Catholicism, conservatism, bureaucracy and family**, it can be concluded that Poland is still perceived as a **conservative country with traditional values**.

Another set of associations was related to the history of Poland. The responses of the experts featured events such as **the end of communism and strikes in 80s**. Respondents also pointed to the **Auschwitz** camp as part of an association to Poland. These responses suggest that Poland is a country with **a rich historic past and traditions of freedom**, which are noticed beyond its borders.

Best Place experts also pointed to some of the characteristics of Poles - hard work and friendliness. They treat Poland as **a place of cheap labour**, where live **nice and intelligent people**, so one can easily acquire a worker here. Poland, therefore, has the potential to become a **good place to make investments based on human capital** due to the friendly and willing to work population of the country. Still the experts mentioned **bureaucracy**, among the associations, which, in turn, can be a perceived barrier to investment in Poland.

Poland is also associated with shopping. Foreign experts appreciate mainly **nice food**, and especially **dumplings (pierogi)**. In turn, **vodka** was mentioned among the alcohol. These rather stereotypical associations show that Poland cannot boast of success in introducing new product categories that would have a chance of becoming Polish flagship products.

The last group of Polish associations is that related to Poland's geographical location. Respondents define it as **a cold country in Eastern Europe**, but **with beautiful countryside**. Poland is also seen through the prism of two cities - **Warsaw (Warszawa) and Cracow (Kraków)**. In turn, the emergence of **football** the responses is probably the effect of co-hosting the UEFA EURO 2012.

It should be noted that nearly **one in three respondents (29%) did not have any associations with Poland**, which means that promotion of the country's image abroad is not effective enough and lacks strong distinctive traits. In recent years, many attempts have been taken by various organizations and institutions to define the brand identity of Poland and establish the guidelines of communicating the country's image. However, the only comprehensive initiative in this regard was the project "Brand for Poland", launched in 2004. It was the first step of the "Polish National Marketing Program", implemented with the help of international consultants led by one of the most respected practitioners in the world of competitive identity and branding - Wally Olins. The project involved the most prominent Polish institutions such as: the National Chamber of Commerce, the Ministry of Economy and Labour, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency and the Polish Tourist Organization. What is important, the initiative also involved private business, as the project partner was the Academy of Brands, which includes about 100 companies representing Polish strongest corporate brands.

The main result of Olins' team work was to define the theme concept of a Polish national brand, defined as creative tension, which can also mean "creative defiance". This term reflects the "contradictory nature" of Poland, which draws its strength, vitality and unique personality from a wealth of seemingly contradictory qualities (e.g. it is part of the West, but also understands the East)<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately, the project got stuck in the conceptual stage and has been waiting for further developments for several years.

## FAMOUS POLES

More than half (57%) of respondents ranked **John Paul II.** as the most famous Pole. Exactly every other expert indicated **Frederic Chopin**, slightly fewer (42%) mentioned **Lech Wałęsa**. Such responses only confirm the earlier conclusion that our country is associated with strong personalities who have made a significant impact on the course of world history. In turn, Chopin's frequent occurrence might be due to **the effect of promotional activities during last year's Chopin Year Celebrations.**



Source: rzeszow4u.pl



Source: ofsajd.onet.pl

Interestingly, the top three best-known Poles are exactly the same as in a 2004 study conducted by the Pentor<sup>2</sup> research center, where foreigners had to indicate a person from public life or a historical figure they most appreciated and identified with Poland. No new names in top positions means that over the past years there has been no-one who could become a noticeable ambassador for the country and have a positive impact on its image.

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It is, however, worth drawing attention to **athletes**, who are considered to be famous Poles abroad - among them tennis player **Agnieszka Radwańska** and former ski jumper and now rally driver **Adam Małysz**. In this group respondents have also mentioned important personalities from the science circles (**Marie Skłodowska-Curie** – but without the first, Polish, part of the surname and **Nicholas Copernicus**) and culture (**Roman Polański** and **Joseph Conrad** – a Polish-born English writer). Although Polański and Conrad have been used to promote our country abroad (including in the campaign “Make history - Visit Poland”), the image of science people is not being used enough. Meanwhile, according to the „Framework Polish Promotion Strategy until 2015” it is the outstanding researchers, our best manufacturers, and foreigners educated at Polish universities who will serve as Polish ambassadors abroad<sup>3</sup>.

It is worth noting that in the statement of famous people associate with Polish - the modern form - was also said Prime Minister **Donald Tusk**. It may be indicative of a distinctness of Polish leadership and of effectively utilizing the Polish Presidency in the Council of the European Union in the international arena.

## RECOGNIZABLE CITIES AND REGIONS

By far **Warsaw** is the city that is most identified with Poland - every other expert mentioned it in the first place. This is due undoubtedly to its role as the capital, which in any country is usually the most famous city among foreigners. The next most recognizable Polish city is **Poznań**, indicated in the first place by one in five (21%) experts. Such **good position of the capital of Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) is probably the result of organizing a number of conferences and sporting events of international character by the city** (e.g. COP



Source: konkursfotograficzny.upc.pl



14 Climate Conference in 2008 and Rowing World Championships in 2009). Among the first associations with Polish cities and regions, the experts also mentioned **Gdańsk, Masuria, and Pomerania** the recognizability of Masuria is no doubt due to the participation of the Great Masurian Lake District in the competition for the New 7 Wonders of Nature and accompanying promotional activities for the region. On the other hand, these cities and regions could be mentioned as they were visited by experts – the fact that also supports their importance and enhance their recognition.

The summary list of the three most popular Polish cities (mentioned in 1st, 2nd and 3rd place) shows a strong domination of Warsaw - indicated by more than 70% of respondents. Second place goes to Kraków mentioned by more than half (57%) of the Best Place experts surveyed. **The capital of Małopolska has been a Polish tourist showpiece for several years, thanks to intense promotional activities that foreigners acknowledge.** Among the best rated European cities by tourists, Kraków took second place (after Berlin) in the ranking presented by a Dutch tourist portal Zoover<sup>4</sup> in December 2011.

Every third expert surveyed (35%) rated Poznań as the best-known Polish city overall (all indicated it in 1st, 2nd or 3rd spot), whereas of Gdańsk was placed on the list by every fifth one (21%). Cities such as **Łódź, Szczecin, Wrocław and Zakopane**, as well as the **Western Pomerania** region received one indication each. It is worth noting that the recognition of Polish cities among experts is relatively high, as two out of three (64%) were able to name as many as three cities or regions of Poland.

## DISTINCTIVE NATIONAL BRANDS

The recognition of Polish products and brands looks far worse among place branding experts. **Only every fifth Best Place expert was able to name three brands of Polish origin.** The following products were indicated in the first place:

- Vodka
- LOT
- Żubrówka (Bison Vodka)
- Star Petrol Station
- Cheap grocery
- E. Wedel
- PKP



Source: a.pl

**Among the three best-known Polish brands associations with alcohol occurred most frequently (33%).** Apart from the **vodka**, mentioned above, including Żubrówka (**Bison Vodka**), the responses of foreign experts included, the **Belvedere Group** (which produces Sobieski vodka), **Slivovitz (Plum Vodka)** and **Lech beer**. These results show very stereotypical perceptions of Poland abroad as a well-known vodka producer, which has not been reflected in the global alcohol market research. For example, lists of world's top

100 premium spirit brands (Impact Databank), based on data from 2010, show that Polish vodka brands are ranked outside the top thirty<sup>5</sup>.



Source: sky-watcher.pl

The second most recognizable Polish brand is **LOT Polish Airlines**, indicated by nearly a third of the experts (29%). No doubt such huge brand recognition resulted from the famous emergency landing of the LOT Boeing 767 by Captain Tadeusz Wrona, which took place on 1 November 2011. A film from the 'belly landing' has spanned the entire world and was shown by major television stations in the world, including CNN. Media hype surrounding this event and positive

comments about LOT's experienced pilots, which took place in the same month as the study have most certainly contributed to the recognizability of the brand by the experts. This also means that **current facts and events can have a strong media reception and significantly influence the recognition of brands and places they come from.** To be successful, however, they need to be immediately exploited in image promotion and creation.

**Wedel's brand awareness, in turn, has to do with its economic condition.** To a survey carried out in late October and early November 2011 on behalf of *Rzeczpospolita* (a Polish daily) Wedel is now the strongest brand in the country, particularly excelling in the category of prestige and quality<sup>6</sup>. The surveyed also recognized **Hotel Mercury** and **Krakus** the food company, as familiar Polish brands.

What is interesting, Best Place experts **also recognized "cheapness" in terms of - building materials, food and clothes as the brand distinctive feature.** Poland, therefore, has the potential to become a shopping mecca for foreigners. It is important, though, to simultaneously communicate the high quality of Polish products, which will prevent our country from being perceived as the "China of Europe", which build its lead on the basis of cheap substitute goods. **It is, therefore, worth ensuring that Polish products offer both competitive prices as well as adequate quality** (the so-called – value for money).



## FAMILIAR EVENTS

Best Place experts had **the fewest associations with Poland in the category of events**. Only one of them was able to name three events associated with the country, and **over half (57%) of respondents listed none**. The responses could be grouped in three categories. The first concerns **historical events** - World War II and the end of communism were indicated here, but also the plane crash, in which the Polish president was killed. The second group of **associations** refers to **Polish tradition**. Here, experts mentioned St. Andrew's Day, Śmigus Dyngus (Easter Monday) and Kraków cribs. The last category pertains to promotional events, as the respondents mainly pointed out the UEFA EURO 2012, but also the Year of Chopin.



Source: rzeszow4u.pl

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Such poor result of Polish recognition through the prism of organized events means that **Poland still failed to create a flagship cyclical event, which would become a magnet for tourists and affect the perception of our country**. For this reason, the hosting of the European Football Championships by Poland is an opportunity to present a true face and fight against false and obsolete stereotypes.

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF IMAGE IN SELECTED CATEGORIES

According to Best Place experts, **the image of Poland is neither strong, nor weak and rather mixed, but it is closer to positive connotations**. This is confirmed by other results, according to which in the eyes of foreigners Poland is a nice country with potential, although we cannot say anything specific about it<sup>7</sup>. As for individual categories of perceiving Poland, the assessment in the opinion of Best Place experts was varied in each category.

**Compared to European countries Poland is seen as an important country**, because one-third of the respondents identified its significance on the Old Continent as high or very high (Figure 1). Such a good result in this category probably stems from the country's presidency of the European Union Council, which occurred right in the second half of 2011. **The recognition of Poland abroad also is at a fairly high level**, which creates a high promotional potential at first, but which - as earlier findings showed - is not properly exploited.

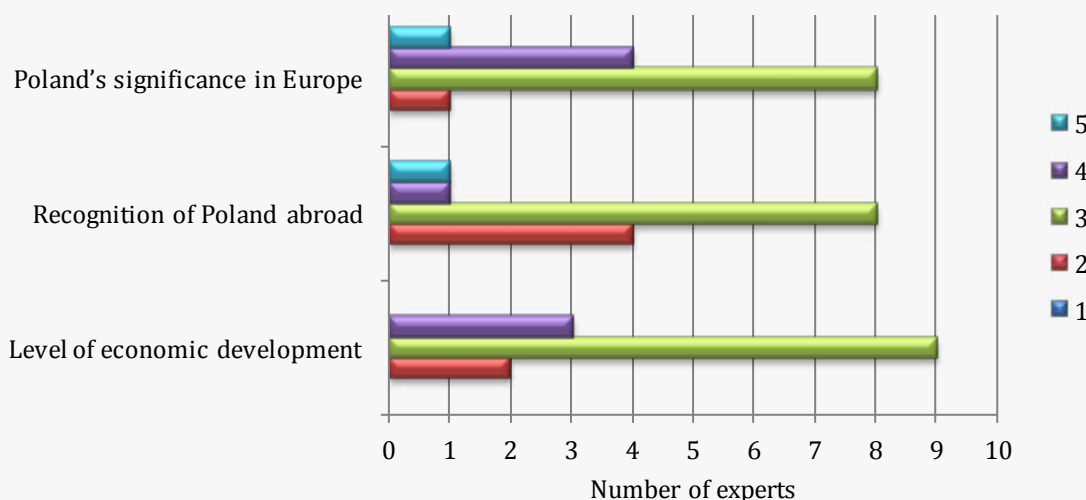


Figure 1. On the basis of information rate Poland in the following categories (Scale: from 1-very low to 5-very high)



Source: www.economist.com

**Poland has been less well evaluated in the level of economic development.** None of the experts awarded the highest number of points and the most frequent rating is “neither high, nor low”. The relatively poor assessment “of the country on the Vistula” in this area may result from the prevailing stereotype that our country was poor and backward with terrible condition of roads. However, the evaluation of Polish economic growth may gradually

improve, among others, owing to articles in quality foreign press, which familiarize foreigners with the actual condition of the Polish economy. One of them was a well-known January 2010 article published in *The Economist* under a revealing title “Horse power to horsepower”<sup>8</sup>, which debunked outdated perceptions about Poland.

In the opinion of Best Place experts, **Poland fares quite well in terms of culture, tradition and cuisine** (Figure 2). More than half of respondents rated highly its attractiveness in this category although none gave top marks. One could say that over the last few years, the perception of Poland has improved in this area, because even in 2004, Polish cuisine, rated as greasy and unhealthy, was the most frequently mentioned negative point about Poland as indicated by foreigners, along with the drinking culture and a lack of manners manifesting itself in rudeness<sup>9</sup>.

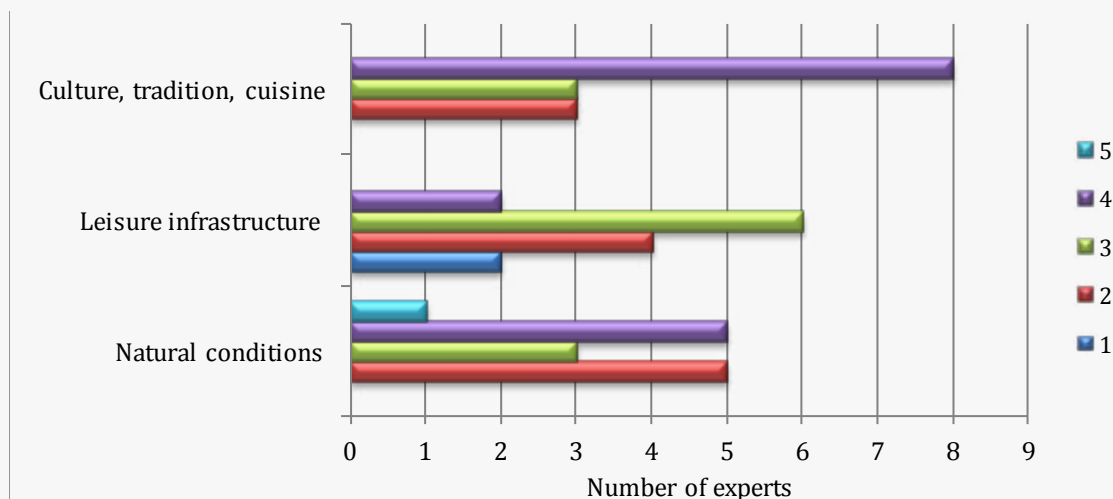


Figure 2. Rate the attractiveness of Poland in the following categories (from 1-very low to 5-very high)

**Polish recreational infrastructure received a much worse rating by the experts in the survey.** More than a quarter of respondents gave it a low or very low rating. Any deficiencies in this department may contribute to hampering the development of tourism in our country. This is why an important impulse to improve the situation has become the issue of organizing the UEFA EURO 2012 which will force the existing tourist base to be quickly modernized.

**Access to the sea, mountains, lakes and forests in our country is not unequivocally rated as attractive. Experts' views on the matter are split.**

Poland's overall decent general rating as regards tourist attractiveness results from a more strategic approach to this kind of promotion in the recent years. An important project in this area is "Poland's marketing strategy in the tourist sector for the years 2008-2015" which forms the basis of operation of the Polish Tourist Organisation to carry out a coherent and long-term promotion policy in the sector. What is important, the document is in accordance with the "Development Trends in Tourism until the year 2015" made by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, and "A framework strategy for the promotion of Poland until 2015" developed by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>10</sup>.

Poland's investment attractiveness rating looks fairly good (Figure 3). **Exactly half of those surveyed highly evaluated Poland from the perspective of investors who consider starting a business in the country.** However, it can be concluded that the perception in the investment attractiveness of Poland is gradually changing for the better, because as early as in 2004 the country was regarded by foreigners as a place with major barriers to business development and acquisition of foreign investors<sup>11</sup>. Meanwhile, recent efforts in this area (e.g. the creation of the Polish Chamber of Commerce in one of the fastest growing cities in the world Shanghai<sup>12</sup>) provide an opportunity for improving the situation of Poland in the economic field in the coming years. In this context, one cannot forget

about the phenomenon of the Polish pavilion at the EXPO in Shanghai, which attracted most attention of visitors to the exhibition and became a great opportunity to open Poland to China. A good showing at this world event was of great importance for the promotion of Polish investments and has resulted in a number of direct contacts between Polish and Chinese entrepreneurs<sup>13</sup>.



Source: www.mg.gov.pl

The improvement of Poland's investment attractiveness may also affect the project: „Polish Economy Brand” launched in September 2011. It is part of a systematic program entitled “Promotion of the Polish economy in international markets” which is implemented by the Ministry of Economy under the Innovative Economy Operational Program - Sub-measure 6.5.1. The concept of visualizing the promotion program of the Polish economy was based on the findings

of Poland's image carried out in the countries of the main economic partners<sup>14</sup>. The project has also the Brand Book of Polish Economy, which sets out brand attributes, presents visual identity system and the arguments for verbal messages. Studies have shown that Poles as skilled professionals are viewed positively and evaluated very highly, which was considered Poland's greatest asset. Consequently, the concept of “Brand of the Polish Economy” is captured in the leading motive of *Polish Power!*<sup>15</sup> The coming years will show whether “Polish power” will also be noticed by potential investors.



Figure 3. Rate the attractiveness of Poland in the following areas (from 1-very low to 5-very high)

**In another study area – relating to foreigners considering a job in the country - Poland received a negative mark.** Nearly two out of three Best Place experts rated Poland's attractiveness in this area as low or very low. This result may be due to the foreigners' perception of Poles as intolerant<sup>16</sup>. However, it should be noted that over the years the attitude of Poles to foreigners has been improving because as early as in the early 90s of the twentieth century, the presence of foreigners in the domestic labour market was supported by only 48% of Poles, and in 2009 the figure was already 86%<sup>17</sup>. The reason for the above evaluation may also be difficulties associated with the need to settle numerous formalities for foreigners planning to start work in Poland, which can be linked to the above-mentioned bureaucracy, that is considered one of the main negative distinctive features of Poland<sup>18</sup>.

The above considerations are also taken into account by foreigners about to take a decision to live in Poland. In this area the situation is even worse, since **5 in 19 experts surveyed rated the prospect of moving to Poland very low**. This is also reflected in the statistics. The Eurostat report published in 2010 shows that Poland is in the "tail" of the European Union countries in terms of attractiveness for foreigners, where the latter account for only 0.1% of the population<sup>19</sup>.

The only category which received at least one very high rating in this section from Best Place experts regarded the purchase of Polish products by foreign customers. In addition, more than every fourth respondent assessed Poland's attractiveness in this area as average and high. On the other hand, exactly the same proportion of respondents considered it to be very low. And while the export of **Polish products raises a lot of controversy**, it should be noted that as many as 10% of tourists come to Poland just for shopping purposes. In particular, the destination of these trips is the western region, where the number of shopping tourists is still increasing (e.g. Szczecin visited by the Danes, the Dutch, and Swedes and, above all Germans). In 2010 Poland received about a million shopping tourists. What is more, Poland's eastern neighbours are increasingly replaced by the British and Irish who find incentive in cheap flights, low price of beer and in addition - a weak złoty<sup>20</sup>.



## PROMOTING POLAND

### PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

The Best Place experts also rated the Polish recognizability on the international arena (Figure 4). The diagnosis of the country in this field fares very unfavourably, because **none of the respondents found that the Polish promotional efforts are significantly noticeable or very visible in the world.**

**Currently, online and outdoor campaigns enjoy the best, but still weak recognizability according to the experts surveyed.** One of the best known billboard campaigns encouraging foreigners to visit Poland was the one done in 2008 in Britain and France by the Polish Chamber of Tourism under the slogan "Make history - Visit Poland"<sup>21</sup>. Educating the Polish flag from the British and French ones and an indication of well-known Poles in these countries served as the background for the advertising creative idea. For example, the British advertisement included the Polish Air Force, a Polish builder and Joseph Conrad, who perhaps because of this campaign was mentioned in the group of famous Poles by one of the Best Place experts.

**Poland is also beginning to take care of its image by using custom channels of promotion.** In 2011 Poland realized a few bold and original ideas. One of them was the Polish Tourist Organisation project developed specifically for the latest edition of the ITB International Tourism Fair in Berlin under the theme Move Your Imagination. During the event, Poland's tourist attractions were presented in 3D during an interactive presentation led by Tomasz Bagiński (nominated for an Oscar for the animated film "The Cathedral"). The innovative element of the campaign was the introduction of colourful creatures stylized for vinyl toys that a few days before the fair, "had attacked" Berlin. Their few-meter high versions were set in points of interest around the city, arousing interest of passers-by.

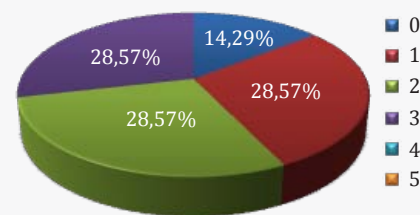


Figure 4. Is Poland visible in the scope of promotion internationally? (on a scale from 0-not visible at all to 5-very visible)



Source: [www.kampaniespoleczne.pl](http://www.kampaniespoleczne.pl)



Source: [www.itb2011.pl](http://www.itb2011.pl)



Another unique promotional initiative taken one month before Polish Presidency in the EU Council was the creation of multimedia project *Do You Know Polska?* by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The service was intended to promote contemporary Poland in an unorthodox form, combining a Polish language dictionary of young Poles with photography gallery, showing the country as seen through their eyes. The project was communicated abroad to reach out particularly to young people willing to visit Poland as part of a scholarship, but also as a tourist or during the UEFA EURO 2012<sup>22</sup>.

Despite action taken to promote Poland, according to experts it is still not visible enough. Respondents expressed similar feelings as far as promotion of cities and regions is concerned. While **as many as two in three (64%) met with the promotional activities of Polish cities or regions**, no promotional initiative was mentioned more than once, which means that so far there has been no outstanding campaign that would be noticed by a larger number of foreign experts monitoring the place marketing market. The only promoted cities mentioned were Warsaw, Poznań, Gdańsk and Katowice, and as for the regions – Pomerania only. Among other responses was the statue of Christ in Świebodzin and the Polish Year in Great Britain.

## RECOGNITION OF SIGNS (LOGOS) AND THEIR IMPACT

Best Place experts were also presented to evaluate the four Polish promotional signs, which have most often been used to promote the country abroad. The first was **a white and red kite introduced in 2002 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)** as a logo based on the Council of Ministers resolution on the establishment of the logo design for the general promotion of the Republic of Poland. The colours used therein were intended to emphasize the national identity of Poles, being clearly legible among the citizens of the country and fully intelligible abroad in the context of European culture. This mark was to contribute to building such an image beyond our borders that would **combine elements of respect for national traditions and Polish historical links with Europe, and also symbolize modernity, dynamism and openness of the Polish society at the turn of the century**<sup>23</sup>. With the standardization of symbols, a graphical language of communication for Poland was to be developed and created a modern brand of the country in Europe and worldwide. However, the study shows that **none of the experts surveyed has seen the Polish logo in the form of a kite**. What is more, they underestimated the postulated trade clarity by the MFA, **assessing rather low the strength of its impact** (2.09 pts. on a scale from 1-very low to 5-very high).



Source: jakiznaktwoj.pl

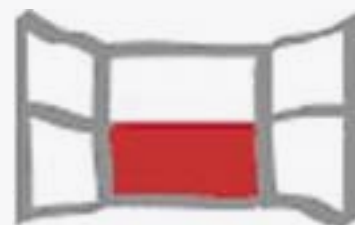
A study on the recognition of the logo was also conducted in Poland, a few weeks after the introduction of the kite symbol. Then it turned out that only 16% of the respondents met with a new promotional Polish logo. Over half (58%) of respondents declared positive feedback associated with it, but more often (48%) the mark was associated with an aviation chessboard than with Solidarity (40%), which the logo was intended to refer to<sup>24</sup>. It should be noted, however, that the kite logo was created by one of the advertising agencies for a token sum, and its first review in the *Financial Times* was very favourable<sup>25</sup>.



Source: [www.terazpolska.pl](http://www.terazpolska.pl)

Another promotional sign evaluated by the Best Place experts was **“Teraz Polska” (“Poland Now”) logo (promotional emblem)**. The sign was introduced in **1992 by the Promotional Emblem Foundation** under the Polish Promotional Program aimed at promoting the best Polish products. Although this sign has existed for already nearly 20 years **none of the Best Place experts surveyed in the study declared being familiar with the logo**. This probably results from the fact that the „Poland Now” emblem has been created primarily for the promotion of products and services in the domestic market, hence such low recognisability in the foreign markets. Nevertheless, experts were asked to estimate its potential and impact from the standpoint of promoting the country. In this area, the sign also **received a very low rating** (1.35 pts. on a scale from 1-very low to 5-very high).

The study of the “Poland Now” logo recognition was conducted on a group of Polish respondents by MARECO Poland, an opinion and market research center, in September 2011<sup>26</sup>. The data collected show that the “Poland Now” emblem is associated with a high price, high and stable quality, prestige, moderate exclusivity, high recognizability, a definitely Polish origin, and relative modernity. Importantly, the majority of respondents (78%) believes that marking products and services with the “Poland Now” emblem is a good way to promote Poland abroad (more often white collar workers (85%) and managers (83%)). **The sign accompanying the 2000 Expo exhibition in Hanover** is also not known to those surveyed. An open window filled with the Polish flag **was to show that we are open to the world and that we can be a bridge between the West and the East**. The reason why the sign had negligible identification is the fact that it was prepared only for this one event - the Expo 2000



Source: [www.kotbury.pl](http://www.kotbury.pl)

exhibition in Hanover (even though it was subsequently used in promotional materials of the National Chamber of Commerce and its graphic modification was found in the logo promoting Poland at the following EXPO exhibition in Aichi). Meanwhile, the stork mascot owned by Atlas, a building materials manufacturer, surpassed the “Polish window” at the event in terms of popularity (30 thousand plush toy storks were handed out at the Expo and the toy even received an honorary citizenship of the exhibition)<sup>27</sup>. Best Place experts **identified the impact of the sign as very weak** (1.33 pts. on a scale from 1-very low to 5-very high).

**Polish promotional sign that best fared in the assessment of experts surveyed was the logo developed by the Polish Tourist Organisation (POT).**

The sign has been prepared for promoting Poland in the field of tourism and took effect in 2001 under the Regulation of the Minister of Economy, Janusz Steinhoff. The logo consists of stylized letters in red, a green treetop, a navy blue mountain top and blue water waves symbolizing Polish forests, mountains and the sea, respectively. The sign is to be used solely for the promotion of Polish tourism in the domestic and foreign markets. It should also be regarded as a distinction of a branded tourist product and a tourist seal of quality.



Source: eventmapa.pl

The high recognition of the POT sign indicates that **half (57%) of Best Place experts have come across the logo**. In addition, **the strength of its impact has been assessed as the highest among all the Polish promotional signs, although it can only be described as average** (2.91 pts. on a scale from 1-very low to 5-very high).



Source: www.promujmypolskerazem.pl

The reason for the “Poland” logo’s relatively good rating is probably its intense exposure at a number of events held by the POT. One of them was a special promotional project in conjunction with the Polish Presidency in the European Union Council. For this

purpose, the POT logo and the promotional graphics *Move Your Imagination* were placed on a LOT Polish Airlines aircraft. This new POT visual identity appeals to the latest global trends in modern art design and graphic folklore themes. The visualization, in which Polish architectural icons combine with symbols representing different types of activity, as well as people or events in Polish history, fulfils the role of advertising aimed at intriguing foreigners in the country, and enhancing a sense of identity among Poles<sup>28</sup>. The new identity will contribute to overcoming stereotypes about Poland, stressing that it is a modern country and reaches for unorthodox promotional, marketing and art solutions. The campaign was targeted mainly at the British, French, and German markets, which happen to be destinations most often operated by LOT Polish Airlines<sup>29</sup>.

On behalf of the POT Millward Brown SMG/KRC held 500 interviews in October 2009 among persons over 18 years of age, active tourists in order to explore the perception of a new Polish promotional slogan - *Move Your Imagination*. The assessment of the POT promotional initiative also proved to be very good because it shows that the slogan appeals most to nearly half of the respondents on the emission markets (45% of respondents from the UK and Germany rated it highest). In addition, nearly one in four respondents concluded that the best slogan encourages coming to Poland (39%) and is most suitable for the Polish tourist logo (37%)<sup>30</sup>.

In summary, **the evaluation of Polish promotional signs shows that apart from the communicative and symbolic force of the sign (here, none received a high rating), what matters is its consistent exposure and in this context the POT logo appears to be the most effective.**

## EVALUATION OF PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Lastly, Poland's overall promotional activity was also subject to the study. According to Best Place experts, the promotion looks disastrous. None of them gave it a good or very good rating (Figure 5). **However, 71% of respondents in total rated it as 3, which means a C (satisfactory) at the highest according to the school marking system.** Taking into account the average value of the responses, the rating amounts to 2,71 points out of a total of 6. What is the reason why Poland received such a poor grade on the certificate of promotion? Most likely, **it is the lack of knowledge about the promotional activities carried out by our country, which as earlier responses showed, are not visible enough and fail to attract attention.**

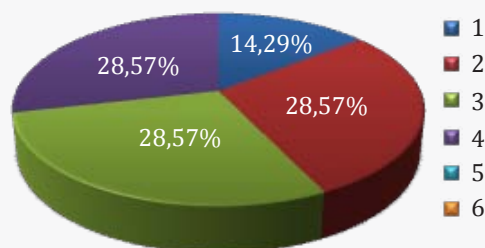


Figure 5. How do you overall rate Polish promotional activity? (from 1-very poor to 6-outstanding)?

Six out of 14 experts were able to name an asset on which Poland should build its brand. The following have been mentioned here: as rich history of cities, Chopin, youth and intelligence, nature and culture, but also the fact that Poland is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. **Best Place experts formulated a number of lax guidelines to the authorities responsible for the promotion of Poland:**

- Develop a clear message and vision
- Determine what distinguishes Poland, especially as compared with the rest of Europe
- Be consistent and visible in action
- Make the people the best brand ambassadors of the country
- Use Poles in promotional activities
- Create an idea of a new society brand, break away with the conservative image
- Publish articles in American newspapers, magazines and appear on American TV
- Increase activity through the work of international embassies
- Do not focus the promotional message on cheap tourism
- Establish a single body to coordinate Polish promotional activities

## A VISIT TO POLAND CHANGES PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE COUNTRY

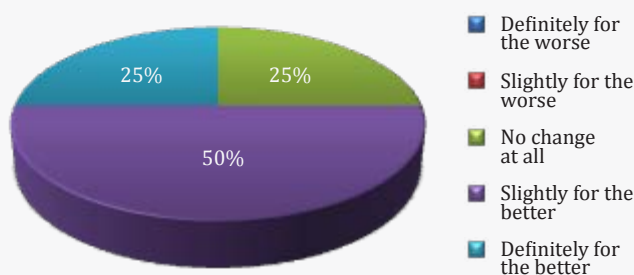


Figure 6. Has your opinion about Poland changed after visiting this country?

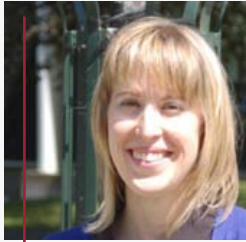
Among the experts who have been to Poland at least once, 55% visited the country last year, thus their impressions of staying in Poland are up-to-date. Others visited Poland in 2003, 2007 and 2009. The experts surveyed were asked whether their opinion on the country had changed after visiting it and they gave very positive responses (Figure 6). It turned out that **as many as half of the respondents slightly changed their opinion about Poland for the better and one in four definitely improved their opinion of our country.** None of the experts deteriorated their opinion about Poland after the visit.

Similar results were obtained in a 2008 study on 121 foreign respondents, of whom 39% considerably changed their opinion about Poland and 36% only a little after a visit to Poland<sup>31</sup>.

These results clearly show that Poland is an example of a country, which has a worse image than it is in reality. On the one hand, this means that **Poland has enormous potential to attract new tourists and foreign investors, which is still under-exploited.** On the other hand, it clearly suggests that **Polish promotional activities abroad should be much more intense and better reflect its real strengths.**



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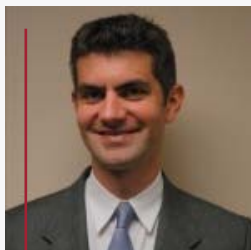
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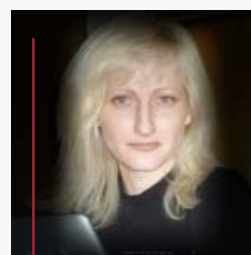
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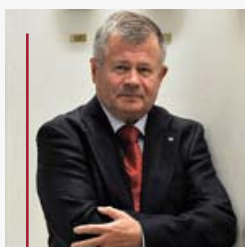
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## BEST PLACE - EUROPEAN PLACE MARKETING INSTITUTE

### Mission

**Support for the city, region and country development, all through improving the methods of place marketing as well as building effective coalitions of public institutions together with other subjects, all of which aim at the dynamic development of places.**

We are a community of place marketing experts working for the development of cities, regions, and countries. We support the development of territorial marketing; we study, teach, advise, and work on perfecting marketing methods in the service of sustainable place development. We are seeking new ideas and work on enhancing the tools already known and used. We combine science with practice. We effectively use the media to promote our ideas. We build good relations and cooperation with local governments, NGOs, businesses and other entities whose mission is to make place development more dynamic. Our success is the success of local governments and organizations with whom we work. The strength of the Best Place brand lies in the brand equity of places for which we work.

### Our values

- **The synergy of knowledge, practical experience and skills in marketing of places in diverse locations of varying sizes,**
- **Place marketing as a tool for sustainable local development,**
- **International cooperation, exchange of thoughts and experiences,**
- **Interdisciplinary approach to place development,**
- **Openness to new ideas,**
- **Media and public activity – both popular and educational,**
- **Critical approach to the administered schemes and used pathways,**
- **Priority for teaching and learning from the experiences of others, and the exchange of knowledge.**

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