

# The Song and Dance Celebration Tradition as a Brand of the “Singing Nations” of the Baltic Countries: Similarities and Differences

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The article focuses on the Baltic Song and Dance Celebration, which is analysed in the context of the nation branding concept. It is possible to conditionally distinguish between two kinds of methods how to increase international recognition – special strategies created by professionals, and spontaneous or natural branding, based on marking of significant cultural and symbolic aspects of a particular nation. A strategic process of nation branding in the Baltics became particularly active in the beginning of the 21st century, when the governments of all three nations started a purposeful, state-financed development of nation brands, but generally neglecting the informal brand of the Baltic states as the “singing nations”. Nevertheless, the latter, having been developed alongside with the statehood ideas and particularly manifesting itself in the Song and Dance Celebration phenomena, is still very strong in the Baltic states. Based on the sociological survey data, the authors compare the attitude of the residents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania towards the Song and Dance Celebrations and discuss their role in the nation brand development.

**Keywords:** Song and Dance Celebration tradition, nation branding, cultural heritage, tradition bearers, specialised survey (*ad hoc*)

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## INTRODUCTION

The preparations for the independence centennial celebrations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have rekindled interest in the concepts of national identity and belonging, and brought to the foreground issues related to the preservation of national and ethnic values, traditions, rituals, symbols, and cultural heritage. At this significant point in history, special attention is being paid to the creation and development of the brands of the Baltic countries, purposefully drawing upon the systems of cultural signs. The programmes of the events celebrating the independence centennials include cultural elements that confirm the individuality of each country and in a way serve as tools for developing a nation brand. The Song and Dance Celebration tradition is one of the most striking elements of the intangible cultural heritage on a national scale, which is

used to characterise the identity of the Baltic nations, and it has been included in the independence centennial celebrations of all the three Baltic countries. The performative manifestations of the tradition are used in the nation brand management, for their unique nature allows the Baltic countries to gain advantage in the controversial competition between cultural diversity and global unification. The inclusion of the Baltic Song and Dance Celebration into the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (2008) prompted Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to explore the common traits in the performative manifestations of the tradition, however, the political, economic, social and cultural context has introduced several differences in the course of the celebrations and in the way they are used as part of nation brand management.

The present research characterises and compares the attitude of the residents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to the Song and Dance Celebrations and their role in the nation brand development. The main objectives of the research are the following: 1) to explore the specific traits of the nation brand development; 2) to characterise the experience with nation brand management in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; 3) to explore what the attitude of the residents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is to the Song and Dance Celebrations as an element of the nation brand. In order to gain data relevant for achieving the last objective, an empirical research was carried out. In August 2017, the research agency Kantar TNS carried out a survey of the residents of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia commissioned by the Latvian Academy of Culture. The target group of the survey were the residents of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in the 15- to 74-age bracket. The method of the research was a specialised survey (*ad hoc*) in the whole territory of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). The population of the survey was 1 611 326 residents in the 15- to 74-age bracket in the whole territory of Latvia, 2 150 968 residents in the 15- to 74-age bracket in the whole territory of Lithuania, and 980 821 residents in the 15- to 74-age bracket in the whole territory of Estonia. The survey used stratified multistage random sampling, monitoring socio-demographic parameters of the target group: gender, nationality, age, and region. The sample size was  $N = 1\ 010$  in each country.

## DISCUSSION

A brand in a broader sense is an integrated body of appearance, words, symbols and other elements, focused on the construction of identity with the aim to differ from others through demonstration of one's abilities, views and values in the competition-oriented public space. The value of the socio-economic system of modern consumption is a continuous increase of commodities and services, and the purchasing capacity is the main indicator of individual and social welfare. Therefore, almost all the spheres of human life including the discourse of national identity are adopting marketing terminology. Over the last years, different countries have been literally obsessed with the construction of self-identification. Not so long ago, the idiom "to sell one's country" was perceived as a euphemism of high treason, whereas nowadays "to sell the country" (Saffron Brand Consultants 2009) as if it was, according to the nation branding expert Simon Anholt "tin of beans or a box of soap powder" (Anholt 2011: 8), is a necessity enforced by globalization, because it is the nation brand that helps to attract investments and to improve the image of the country. The reason why it happens is very simple: we have no time to go into details with the cultural diversity, therefore we build our own ideas of one or another country with the help of clichés, stereotypes and brands. Among the variety of nation brand definitions we have given preference to the one, proposed by place branding expert Keith Dinie, as "the unique, multidimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences" (Dinie 2016: 5).

The nation brand, being essentially the quintessence of the image of the country created for foreigners, has a double nature: it is grounded in the past but it is functionally aimed at the development and future (Jordan 2014: 22–23, 45). The main aim of nation branding is to improve the nation's reputation, and despite the nation brand being closely linked with the image of the country, its mission fundamentally coincides with economically determined goals: to attract tourists and investments and to increase export. Though indirectly, a strong brand can be helpful in other ways, for example, to attract talented, highly qualified employees and specialists, to win the confidence of investors, to strengthen international partnership, and even to stabilise local currency (Dinie 2016: 17). As a result, the body of nation's identity, its self-confidence and backbone, can develop more harmoniously. It is needless to say that the branding of national identity is of special importance to small, poor countries, so that they might announce themselves quickly and effectively as competent players on the global stage.

While watching and analysing the nation-branding process, it is possible to distinguish between two kinds of methods how to increase international recognition: special strategies created by professionals and spontaneous or natural branding based on marking the significant cultural and historically symbolic aspects or stereotypes of a particular nation. A nation's brand usually includes several elements topical in international communication, such as people, places, culture, language, history, culinary heritage, iconic personalities, global brands, etc. (Fan 2010), which, *inter alia*, also exist on their own, independently of the intention to attract investments or tourists. A strategic process of nation branding in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia became particularly active at the beginning of the 21st century, when the governments of all three nations started a purposeful, state-financed development of national identity brands, which might acknowledge the peculiarity of each country upon inclusion into the EU. At the time foreign branding experts recommended disentangling each individual country from the idea of Baltic commonality on the basis that it precludes individual recognisability of the countries. They recommended avoiding the concept of the Baltics, as it seems to be advantageous only to Latvia, which, mostly because of its capital Riga, might represent a kind of a regional centre, whereas the images of Estonia and Lithuania are overshadowed by this concept, absorbing their individuality and strength (Saffron 2009: 88) needed for the so-called brand capital or brand value (Lee et al. 2015: 41). Then, for instance, Estonia chose the brand of "Positive transformation" which in 2009 was replaced by the "Positively surprising". At present the Estonian brand proposes to make the country better known (Welcome to Estonia. Make Estonia known) and advertises Estonia as the land of information technologies, making use of a witty transformation of the name of the country to e-Estonia (E-Estonia). It was in 2003 that the Latvian Institute invited the Oxford University team led by the nation branding expert Wally Olins to prepare the pilot project "A Brand for the Nation of Latvia", which offered 5 scenarios and suggested positioning Latvia as "The Keystone of the Baltics" (Fraser et al. 2003: 41–47) or as the "Baltic Rim" because of Latvia's geopolitical position and because of Riga. In spite of this, the slogan "The Land That Sings" was chosen as the nation brand. However, it was replaced in 2010 by "Latvia – best enjoyed slowly" offering to enjoy sauna. Lithuania in 2008 created a logotype promoting the concepts of courage, innovative thinking and diversity alongside with such values as unique nature, warm-hearted people and progressive science (Beta Tourism). Yet the creation of the half-developed brand "Lithuania is a brave country" was stopped in 2009 because of inner disagreements and unclear financing issues (Puidokas, Kinzytė 2014: 50–64). The Lithuanian State Department of Tourism presented a new logo in October 2016, inviting to visit Lithuania when a desire "to escape from artificial smiles, concrete jungle, plastic architecture and tourism routines" has awakened (Valstybinis Turizmo Departamentas).

Obviously, the nation brand that has been created strategically by professional business companies is dominant in today's formal intercultural communication space, however, the spontaneous or natural brands, based on cultural heritage, also have not lost their role (Dinie 2016: 139). It is cultural heritage – both in its tangible and intangible forms – that is a gratifying source of inspiration for creativity, new aesthetic forms and artefacts. Cultural heritage is successfully represented in various regional and local cultural practices, such as slow food, Do it yourself (DIY), ecological food, which, on their own, are closely related to the national self-stereotypes or the so-called “national crowd symbols”, which may form the basis of naturally-formed nation brands. According to the Nobel-prize winner writer Elias Canetti, “National crowd symbol” is a designation of concepts and feelings, attributed by nations to themselves. His opinion is that no member of a nation looks upon himself as a loner, rather he attributes himself to a larger formation which is humanly significant and for which he would be ready to fight. Humans usually associate themselves with a symbol, which contains characteristics of a crowd such as density, growth and infinite openness, surprising ability to unite and to reach common rhythm (Canetti 1984: 169). These symbols can be represented by natural phenomena, mythical, historical events and artefacts, which in the process of self-definition are crucial to one or another nation. The “crowd symbol” and also the kind of natural brand of the states on the Eastern shores of the Baltic Sea is the song, which, according to Herder, “loves masses and harmony of many: it deserves the listeners' ears and the choir of voices and hearts” (Herders 1995: 116). Precisely the collective singing that developed into a transnational phenomenon in the 19th century Europe became one of the strongest tools to mobilize people, a symbolic construction of people forming national states (Leerssen 2015: 32; Häbermäss 2012: 36; Brüggemann, Kasekamp 2014). This is especially true in respect to the Baltic countries, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, whose national identity, from the very beginning of the statehood and till the regaining of their independence at the end of the 20th century can be hardly imagined without the collective singing (Šmidchens 2014). Collective singing reaches its broadest and highest manifestation in a phenomenon which is known as the Nationwide Song and Dance Celebration. The Nationwide Song and Dance Celebration is one of the most distinguishable traditions in the Baltic countries. It has confirmed its vitality and sustainability since its beginning in 1869 in Estonia, 1873 in Latvia and 1924 in Lithuania. In 2008 the Baltic tradition of song and dance celebrations was included into the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, where it is also considered one of the most important national events, “a unique cultural phenomenon of particular historical, cultural, aesthetic, and social significance” and “an essential and symbolic instrument of cultural affirmation and revitalization for the three Baltic nations <...>... the process of purification, exaltation and renewal” (UNESCO. Multinational). It has been described in public space, in media and even in academic discourse as “the wonder”, “the pilgrimage of the nation” (Latvijas Nacionālais Kultūras centrs), “the most magnificent artwork, precious”, “the ritual of the national identity” (Repšienē, Žukauskienē 2015: 9; Amols 2013; Bula 2000: 95), the “celebration of ethnicity” (Kuutma), etc. It has been characterised through these and similar metaphors, thus stressing its uniqueness and significance in the process of the preservation of national and cultural identity. The main event of the celebration is massive concerts held in the capitals of the Baltic states once in five or four years, where choral singers, dancers and musicians demonstrate their skills. However, it should be kept in mind that the Song and Dance Celebration cannot be reduced to mere grand choral concerts or dance performances. No less important aspect of the celebration is the sense of local belonging and the practice

of creativity in the period between the consecutive celebrations. This is the time when local amateur arts groups are practising intensely and traditional costumes, jewellery and symbolic artefacts are being crafted, etc., thus the Song and Dance Celebration can be treated as a social movement whose functional aspects are related to the reaffirmation of national identity, the promotion of social self-initiative and self-organization, as well as social inclusion, and altogether this can be described as one of the functional goals of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO 2). As a quintessence of traditional collective performative practices it is one of the most significant natural rather than strategically formed nation brands, uniting the whole region. Nevertheless, in spite of the joint application for the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, each of the three Baltic countries has its own attitude towards the Song and Dance Celebration as a national symbol and brand, which is demonstrated by the variety of legislative and normative basis, financial support and attitudes in the public space. Nevertheless, it is exactly the Song and Dance Celebration tradition that has a very strong influence upon national culture and sustainability of identity in all three Baltic countries, and it continues to cultivate the idea about the “singing nations”, especially in the context of the approaching centennials of the Baltic republics, where the central role is allotted to the Nationwide Song and Dance Celebration.

The similarity in the historical development of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian traditions of the Song and Dance Celebration and their contemporary performative manifestations, as well as the jointly prepared application for the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage allows considering this tradition a striking element of culture that unites the Baltic countries. However, there are several indications pointing to different heritage strategies of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian traditions of the Song and Dance Celebration. There exists a set of preconditions ensuring the longevity of a tradition. It includes politico-ideological, administrative, economico-financial, cultural, artistic, social, educational and other factors that in every country create a specific environment for passing down a tradition in space and time. Heritage strategies depend on the attitudes of peoples and nations to this phenomenon, among them the perception of the Song and Dance Celebration as a nation brand. Of crucial importance is not only the contribution of the tradition carriers to inheriting the tradition both at a social and an individual level, but also the policies implemented by the state and local authorities. The analysis of the legislative regulatory frameworks in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania testifies to various degrees of the state intervention and different objectives in providing political support and political tools with which the state regulates passing down the tradition. Latvia and Lithuania have passed the Song and Dance Celebration Laws (Saeima 2013) that establish the financial and organizational responsibility of the state and local authorities to prepare the Song and Dance Celebrations and to ensure their cyclic continuation. In these countries, the public power and competence have a very prominent part in passing down the tradition. In Estonia the organisation of the Song and Dance Celebrations has been delegated to the non-governmental sector, which correspondingly indicates a wish to develop the potential of society and communities to participate in passing down the tradition. Furthermore, there are national and even regional differences in the models of formal and informal cultural education, which is relevant to inheriting and recreating the tradition. The differences in delegating responsibility influence both the processes in the periods between the celebrations and the celebrations themselves. The Baltic countries have different funding and decision-making models that regulate the types of arts groups involved in the Song and Dance Celebration movement, the selection of the reper-

toire, the course of the celebrations and other important elements of the tradition. In August 2017, a representative survey of the residents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (N 3 030, 1 010 from each country) was carried out to assess their affinity with the Song and Dance Celebration as a tool for constituting the national identity and forming the nation brand. The survey investigated the following: 1) the affinity of the population with the Song and Dance Celebration and the forms of participation; 2) the assessment of the organisation, influence and benefits of the Song and Dance Celebration; 3) the evaluation of the elements and rituals of the Song and Dance Celebration (parade of participants, repertoire); 4) the evaluation of the Song and Dance Celebration as a part of the intangible cultural heritage; 5) the opinions of the development and future of the Song and Dance Celebration.

The research revealed a wide range of opinions and experiences based on the involvement of the respondents in folk arts groups and the Song and Dance Celebrations. The data disclose both similarities and differences in the attitude of the residents of the Baltic countries to this tradition, its link with identity and its potential as a nation brand. Within the scope of the present paper it is impossible to give a thorough analysis of the data obtained but we shall focus on the analysis of the traits which characterise the attitude of the residents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to the Song and Dance Celebration as a nation brand. In this context, special attention should be paid to the results of the research characterising the forms of involvement and participation in the tradition, as well as the benefits from the involvement in the Song and Dance Celebration movement.

On the whole, the level of active involvement in the Song and Dance Celebration process in the Baltic countries is very high, although the forms of participation differ. Within this research we have differentiated three levels of participation: **active participation, passive direct participation and passive indirect participation**. The term **active participation** covers several activities: 1) being a participant of the Song and Dance Celebration (members of choirs or folk dance groups, conductors, dance group leaders, etc.); 2) working as a paid professional with the arts groups participating in the Song and Dance Celebration (repetiteurs, accompanists, etc.); 3) organising the celebration (also as a volunteer or an assistant/a co-ordinator appointed by the organisers); 4) supporting the celebration, for example, rendering financial support/providing accommodations/sewing the costumes, etc.; 5) informing about the celebration (journalist, researcher, etc.); 6) rendering services during the celebration (catering, trading, providing technical support, etc.).

According to the data obtained, a significant percentage of the residents of the Baltic countries practise some form of **active participation** in the Song and Dance Celebration: 41.5% in Estonia, 44.6% in Latvia, and 36.5% in Lithuania. A considerable number of these people participate in the performative practices of the celebration (singers, dancers, conductors, dance group leaders, etc.): 32.3% in Estonia, 27.4% in Latvia, and 25.0% in Latvia. Latvia with 17.2% has the highest percentage of active participants who are not involved in the artistic activities but provide support to the celebration, while in Estonia this percentage is only 9.2% and in Lithuania 11.5%. Latvia has also the largest number of people who have participated as paid professionals in the organisation of the celebration (3.5%).

The scale of the celebrations is also attested by a large number of residents in the Baltic countries who at some point in their lives have practised one of the forms of **passive direct participation** in the Song and Dance Celebrations: 1) went to some events of the celebration (the closing concerts, concerts during the celebration and other events); 2) went to see the parade of the participants. Estonia has an especially high level of attendance at the events. As we can see in

the Figure, more than a half of the residents of Estonia have noted their attendance at the events, for example, almost 60% of the residents have gone to some event, while in Latvia and Lithuania 30–45% of the residents have been present. The term **passive indirect participation** covers

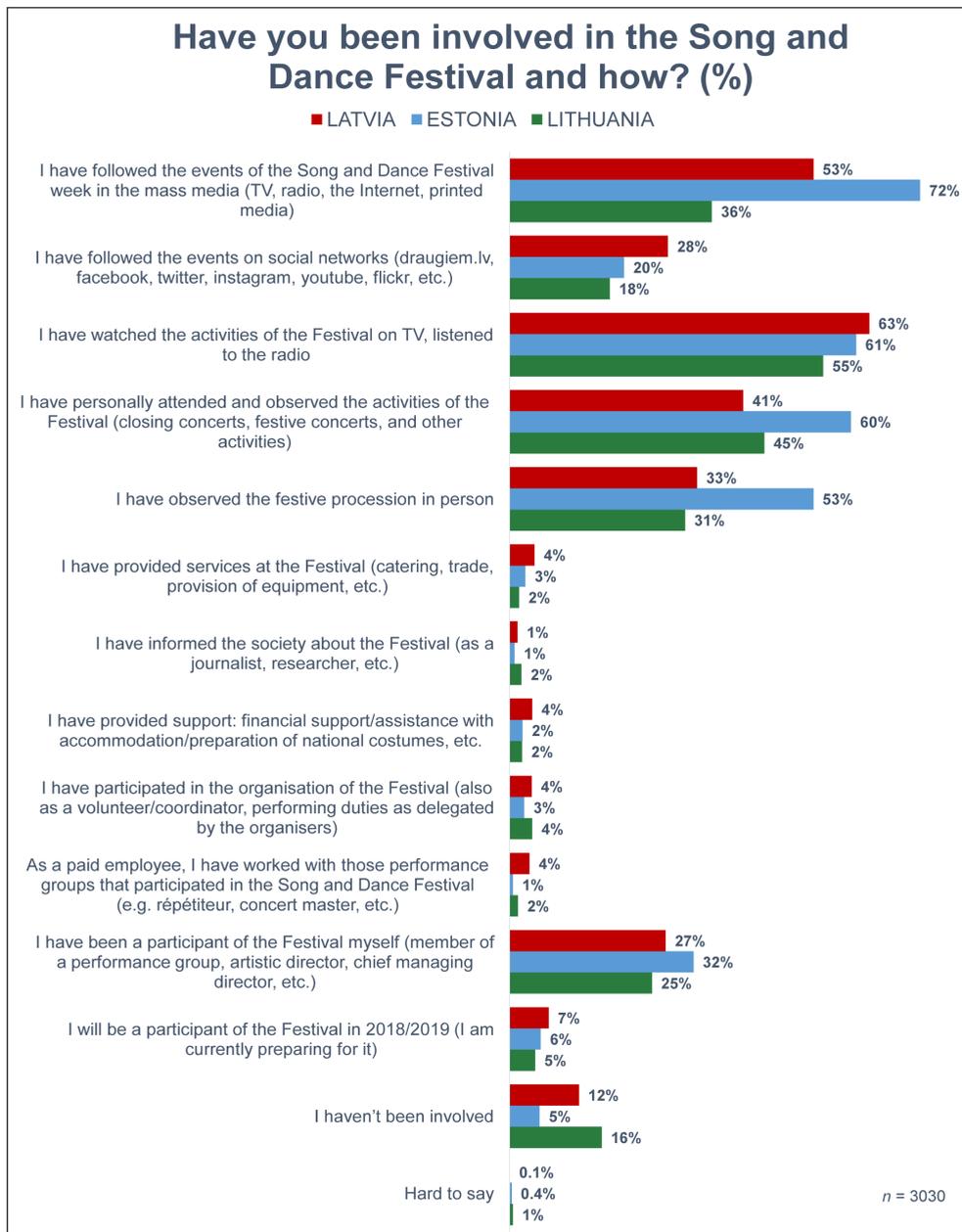


Figure. Involvement in the Song and Dance Celebration process in the Baltic countries (%)

following the events of the Song and Dance Celebrations through the media. The following forms of such passive participation were differentiated: 1) followed the events of the Song and Dance Celebration week through the mass media (TV, radio, the Internet, press); 2) followed the events through the social networks (draugiem.lv, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Flickr, etc.); 3) watched the events of the Song and Dance Celebration on TV and/or listened to the radio broadcasts.

The number of people indicating various forms of indirect participation proves that those who are not personally involved in the performative and organisational or administrative activities of the Song and Dance Celebrations are still interested in the tradition. 2/3 of the residents of Estonia have practised some form of passive indirect participation, which indicates a widespread interest in and some degree of solidarity with the tradition bearers, as well as a demand for the continuation of the tradition. Among the Baltic countries Lithuania has the lowest percentage of residents that have practised some form of passive indirect participation.

## CONCLUSIONS

The comparison of the forms of participation in different Baltic countries helps to formulate some observations about the national differences in the attitudes to the Song and Dance Celebration as revealed by various forms of participation. The involvement of the residents in Estonia is most poignantly characterised by the solidarity of a large sector of society with the tradition bearers and extensive passive (direct and indirect) participation. The facts mentioned above lead to the conclusion that in Estonia the tradition is inherited largely due to the democratic support rendered to the community of tradition bearers by a high percentage (up to 72%) of the residents and their interest in the celebrations, following them in person or through the media. Latvia, however, can boast a statistically large number of people who practise active participation. In comparison to Estonia and Lithuania, Latvia has the largest number of people involved in the artistic and administrative or organizational activities of the Song and Dance Celebrations, as well as a relatively high percentage of paid professionals who prepare the arts groups for the celebrations. Moreover, the community of the tradition bearers in Latvia is supported by a sufficiently large sector of society practicing the forms of passive participation, such as following the events of the Song and Dance Celebration in the social networks (28%). Latvia pays great attention to the administrative and organisational aspects of passing down the tradition and it is supported by a relatively large part of the residents following the events of the Song and Dance Celebrations in person or through the media. Lithuania has the lowest percentage of the residents directly and actively participating in the celebrations, however, the number of people who have been involved in the celebrations as the leaders of the arts groups, artistic directors or chief conductors is very large: 1/4 of the residents of Lithuania. It demonstrates that the community of the tradition bearers in Lithuania is very considerable. More than 1/3 of the residents of Lithuania have gone to the concerts of the celebrations or watched the parade of the participants. A statistically lower percentage of the residents has practised some form of passive indirect participation indicating that the community of tradition bearers in Lithuania enjoys a relatively lower amount of solidarity and support from the social sector which is not directly involved in events of the Song and Dance Celebrations. Lithuania also has the highest percentage of people who admit that they are not involved in the Song and Dance Celebrations: 16.2% (12% in Latvia, 5.3% in Estonia).

The forms of population participation in the Song and Dance Celebrations described above indicate that the practices related to this element of the intangible cultural heritage vary both within the territory of one country and from one Baltic country to another. In the case of Estonia

the tradition is perceived as a striking national symbol, which is proved by support for the tradition deeply rooted in the democratic participation of the population. 64% of the residents of Estonia admit that one of the most relevant benefits reaped from participation in the Song and Dance Celebrations is a stronger affinity with the Estonian people and 48% admit that their sense of belonging to the Estonian state and nation has been strengthened. The residents of Estonia position the tradition of the Song and Dance Celebrations as a nation and ethnic brand. This opinion manifests itself in an emotionally charged attitude towards this phenomenon and the experience of ethnic unity stimulated by these celebrations. Furthermore, in the context of the celebrations the association with the ethnic belonging predominates over the association with the national or state belonging. In Latvia the artistic quality and administrative organizational framework are guaranteed by the financial and administrative support of the state and local authorities. It indicates that the Song and Dance Celebration is strategically and purposefully used as a nation brand. The state intervention in upholding the brand is supported by a large sector of society (almost 45%) that at some point in their lives have practised one of the forms of active participation in the processes of the Song and Dance Celebration. The fact that more than a half of the residents of Latvia have followed the events of the Song and Dance Celebration week through the mass media (TV, radio, the Internet, press) indicates that there exists a large community of passive participants. Moreover, the residents of Latvia more readily perceive the Song and Dance Celebration as a cultural artefact strengthening the sense of ethnic belonging (43%) rather than the sense of national belonging. In Lithuania the Song and Dance Celebration is rather seen as the brand of the community of the tradition bearers (members of the arts groups, artistic directors and chief conductors). Only 1/5 of the residents of Lithuania considers that the celebration strengthens their sense of belonging to the Lithuanian state (22%) or their affinity with the Lithuanian people (20%). The data cast doubt on the assumption that the residents of Lithuania predominantly perceive the Song and Dance Celebration tradition as a symbol of national or ethnic belonging and a nation brand. The main benefit of participating in the Song and Dance Celebrations, mentioned by the residents of Lithuania, is the opportunity to be together with other people and learn to know them better (30%) or new friends and acquaintances, among them the members of other arts groups, acquired during the celebrations (24%). The facts mentioned above imply that in Lithuania participation in the Song and Dance Celebration associates rather with opportunity to increase one's social capital than to strengthen one's sense of identity and national belonging.

As it has been formulated in the application for the UNESCO List of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, the Song and Dance Celebration "continues to be the most massive manifestation of cultural identity; shapes and strengthens national self-confidence and serves as a symbol of national identity" (UNESCO 1: 10). However, an empirical research of the opinions among the residents of the Baltic countries proves that heritage practices vary from country to country. These differences allow considering the Song and Dance Celebration a vital and contemporary tradition re-created by the general population and the tradition bearers of each country, investing it with various, also historically novel meanings. The Baltic Song and Dance Celebrations are a unique element of the regional intangible cultural heritage and its application in the natural branding of the three nations has varied. This leads to a discussion of the three different heritage strategies enriching and developing the tradition, for the communities of the tradition bearers in each country are open to co-operation and are inspired by the experience of other nations.

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## **Baltijos šalių dainų ir šokių šventės tradicija kaip „dainuojančių tautų“ simbolis: panašumai ir skirtumai**

### *Santrauka*

Straipsnyje analizuojama Baltijos šalių dainų ir šokių švenčių nacionalinio prekės ženklo plėtra. Santykinai galima išskirti du būdus tarptautiniam atpažįstamumui plėtoti – specialias ekspertų sukurtas strategijas ir natūralius nacionalinio tapatumo prekės ženklus, kurie formuojami iš tautai svarbių tradicinių kultūrinių simbolių. XXI a. pradžioje Baltijos šalys ėmėsi kryptingos, valstybės finansuojamos nacionalinio prekės ženklo formavimo politikos. Šio proceso metu sąmoningai buvo vengiama naudoti Baltijos šalims būdingą neoficialųjį „dainuojančių tautų“ simbolį. Vis dėlto jis, ypač besireiškiantis dainų ir šokių švenčių forma, yra svarbus ir įtakingas veiksnys kultūriniu, socialiniu, ideologiniu ir ekonominiu požiūriu tiek savasties suvokimo, tiek ir tarptautiniuose komunikacijos kontekstuose. 2017 m. rugpjūtį Latvijos kultūros akademijos užsakymu informacijos ir tyrimų agentūra Kantar TNS Baltijoje šalyse atliko specializuotą tyrimą (*ad hoc*), kurio duomenys atskleidžia kiekvienos šalies požiūrį į dainų ir šokių šventę, išryškina šios šventės suvokimo Lietuvoje, Latvijoje ir Estijoje panašumus bei skirtumus.

**Raktažodžiai:** dainų ir šokių šventės tradicija, nacionalinis prekės ženklas, nematerialusis kultūros paveldas, tradicijos puoselėtojai, specializuotas tyrimas (*ad hoc*)