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## **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BRANDING CONCEPT**

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**Summary:** The article is addressed to the issues of territorial branding, the mechanism of developing a territory's brand and advancement in the strategy of a region's development.

**Keywords:** brand, territory branding, region development strategy, citizen self-identification.

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The modern realities of Ukrainian society and the state demand talking not only about the competition of product brands, but also about the competition of the territories

Territorial competition is above all the market for investment and tourism, the market of the labor ready to live and work in the given territory. Place branding is an integral part of the political and economic policy of Ukraine and its regions. Obviously, the success of the territory depends not only on the geographical location, but also on such factors as the availability and fulfillment of the regional strategy and the self-identification of local residents.

Successful place branding promotes the effective competition for investment and tourist flows. In accordance with the intensification of competition between certain regions of Ukraine concerning the share of consumers, tourists and investment, the brands have become centers of attracting capital. In this context, the subject topicality of place branding is undeniable and the problem of regional brand promotion needs to be solved, therefore the objective of the paper is to develop a mechanism of place branding, consistent with the socio-economic objectives and strategies for the regions of Ukraine.

Based on this specific purpose, the main objectives of the paper are: identifying the key areas of brand formation in the regions of Ukraine and the development of a gradual mechanism of its formation.

The strategic development of Ukraine's regions against the background of the branding concept is not subject to fashion, but a logical stage of the development of any successful territorial integrity. A positive image of the region ensures the involvement of various resources, including financial. In addition, place branding

forms a cognitive background which allows the population to identify one territory from another.

When considering the experience of brand formation in the regions of Ukraine, it should be noted that the majority of the regions and cities of Ukraine became brands not in the process of the deliberate efforts of realizing the branding concept, but as a result of historical and cultural development.

The formation of the strategic regional development in Ukraine in the context of the branding concept involves the following problems: 1) the continuous and prolonged period of implementing the administrative reform; 2) the application of the branding concept in the regions reduced to the formation of a logo and slogan; 3) branding is not considered in the strategic development of the regions as an intangible asset that can make a profit.

Such limited use of the branding concept by the regions of Ukraine allows us to consider this problem from a theoretical point of view which can be effectively implemented in practice.

The existing approaches to branding were studied by such scholars as K. Kotler, D. Asplund, D. Haider and I. Rein, 2005, who first clearly substantiated the use of marketing as a mechanism for the comprehensive promotion of the territories, and studied the specific issues of modern branding and the role of countries' brands in the context of globalization. S. Anholt introduced the concept of «place branding», developed a complex differentiated approach and the concept of competitive identity presenting it as a hexagon (tourism, export potential, management, investment and migration, cultural heritage, humans), a system of the evaluation of national branding results «Anholt Nations Brand Index», and offered the concept of the “competitive identity of the territory” [Vizhlov 2010, p. 35]. Other developments consider the branding of goods and services at local and national levels, but do not contain the exact gradual mechanism of brand building.

A special role should be given to the problems of the theory, methodology and practice of territorial marketing which are highlighted in the works of such authors as: A.V. Popov [Popov 2011, p. 47], [8], A.P. Pankrukhin [Pankrukhin 2006, p. 166], I.V. Kniazeva [Kniazeva 2007, p.62], A.N. Lavrov [Lavrov 1994, p. 1994].

Besides this, in the authors' opinion, the peculiarity of such products as “territory” influences the process of brand building, requires a separate, more distinct mechanism for its formation. Examination of the existing approaches to the branding of goods and services showed that a brand is an intangible asset which has a monetary value and provides income.

The realities of modern life clearly show the increasing competition of territories. In this situation, regional leaders interested in developing their own regions should define a clear vision of regional development strategies. Economic development is a priority for Ukrainian regions. In connection with the above, it is important to leave behind the narrow view of economic development and choose a wide range of strategies aimed at attracting new business, creating an effective system of



cooperation with other territories, developing tourism and attracting investors. It is necessary to determine the competitive advantages of the territory, form its image and organize local resources in order to meet the needs and desires of the target audience.

The concept of place marketing is a field of research and practice in which the object of the realization of the marketing instrument is a territory which has a geographical border, and the subject is the attractiveness of this place for different targeted groups [Braun: online]. Place marketing is long-term from the point of view of the realized actions and expected results, it forms the basis for the strategic planning of the territory [Kotler 2005] and makes them more useful for the environment.

Each region has its image and brand. Creating a positive image and brand is one of the key challenges of a territory which seeks to provide its citizens with a decent standard of living.

In the above context, let us consider the system of concepts widespread among the modern Western scholars, which can be found in the works on place branding (see e.g. Keller [Keller 1993], Kavaratzis [Kavaratzis, Ashworth 2005], Zenker and Braun [Zenker, Braun 2010]). Summarizing their views, it can be argued that a place brand is a visual, behavioral, verbal expression of the territory's uniqueness with regard to the competitors, and has a positive connotation.

Place branding is an idea which unites people in the region and is the basis for communication with the external environment. Taking into account the above, place branding is a process for the creation and development of a regional brand, which, unlike many disparate measures to promote the territory, ensures the integrity of the visual text display and 'mode of territory', both as a mental image and a physical one. In the process of branding, it is important to preserve this integrity even from the point of view of the brand perception by different consumer groups, inasmuch as this practice shows the distance in the process of the brand's interpretation by internal and external consumers.

From a functional standpoint, place branding fulfills two main tasks. On the one hand, it provides an attractive area for the different target groups: being a recognizable trade mark, the brand can presuppose the quality characteristics of the territory, and thus ensures the satisfaction of needs by the complex product of the territory. On the other hand, the brand sets a clear framework for understanding the value system which is the basis of territorial development.

Based on the analysis of the categorical apparatus, we can say that place branding is a modern weapon for the competitive struggle between regions and cities for resources (material, human, information).

In fact, investing in regional branding is an investment in the development of the region and its future. The development of a successful brand showcases the region among the international community, forming its positive image. Nowadays there are many examples of successful regional branding. Most of these examples relate to

regions with developed knowledge-intensive sectors of economy, as well as tourist areas which have great potential.

Investment in regional branding has a quick payback, and as a result, brings a considerable profit; therefore an effective regional branding realization should be an issue of national value. In developed countries, the need for it is very well understood, therefore, in order to build a positive image of the country, considerable funds are allocated in the developed countries. In the process of branding, the formation of a brand as a well-known trade mark is formed. It has a set of expectations associated with a product or service which typically occurs to people [Ivanov 2012, p. 5].

A territory or region, from the point of view of marketing, (in the author's opinion) [Serehina: online], is also a commodity, has its own significant attributes and its promotion is subject to the standard set of marketing instruments. The peculiarity of the territory is the fact that the bearers of the attributes are the population of the region – the owners of the area's identity – the impact on which will be implemented in the process of branding. Besides, very often the place brand already has a set of attributes which have been developed historically and are influenced by the nearest territories and internal socio-political processes.

Therefore the aim of place branding is to inform the wider public about its uniqueness. Ultimately, the aim of place branding realization is to improve the quality of life. Achieving the desired objective will help to solve the following micro and macro-economic tasks: the creation of an attractive tourist product, the formation of the investment attractiveness of the region, the involvement of labor and/or the reduction of the outflow of people to other areas, the removal of internal social tensions, the strengthening of the competitiveness of local producers in national and international markets; the additional information in the business and specialized mass media, their own contribution to the brand of the region, the creation of such an image of the region, which would allow for developing new types of activities for it (diversification and/or reorientation of the regional economy).

On the basis of the strategic development programs of the regions which reflect the goal setting of the development of different territories, we can note that the majority of territorial development strategies are aimed at improving the quality of living standards and provides: the development of the industrial and social infrastructure of local and national significance, increasing of investment in priority sectors of the regional economy, promoting the introduction of innovations, resource and energy saving technologies, quality management systems and environmental management, the promotion of small and medium enterprises development, the development of environmental protection infrastructure, improving the environment, the protection of the population and territories from man-made and natural disasters, the support for artistic and cultural potential and traditions, the development of modern tourism and recreation infrastructure and tourism products, creating conditions for the productive employment of the working population, the prevention of unemployment, an effective system of social services. A famous place brand will promote the successful realization of the strategic development programs.

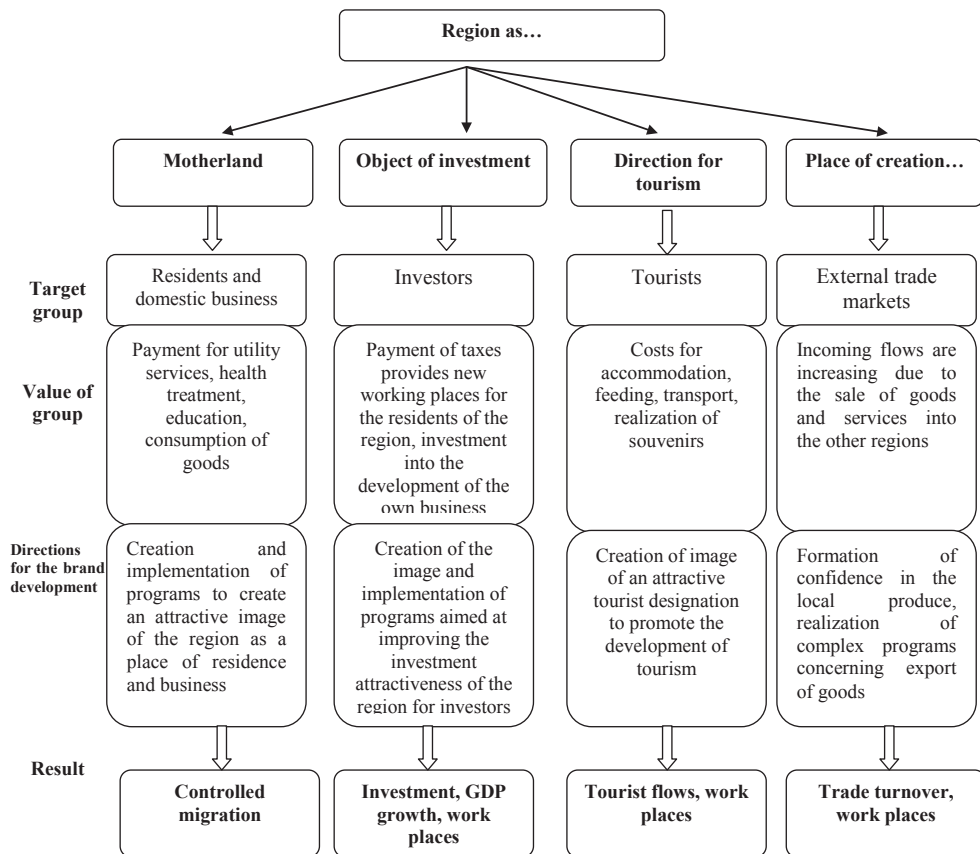


Figure 1. The main areas of regional brand formation

Source: [Sachuk 2009, p. 45].

In general, a city brand is a coherent set of features which include the unique original characteristics of the city, its image and perception, which allow the identification of this city in the eyes of the target groups. The brand should perform the following functions:

1) to identify the region among others; 2) to form a sense of attachment to the region, identification with it; 3) to act as a guarantor of the region's quality.

The above mentioned functions form the system – a complex of interrelated properties which influences the behavior of different contact audiences. To obtain the desired result, it is necessary for the brand to fulfill all the functions comprehensively. Territorial branding as an instrument of strategic development received widespread attention abroad over the last 30 years. Nowadays this intangible component of regional development has become a new instrument on the path to its social and

economic welfare. Branding is a process of brand management by means of the complex use of marketing and management strategies.

In the formation of a regional brand we can define five target groups: 1) tourists, 2) local population, 3) business and production sector, 4) investors; 5) export markets. Based on data from the target groups, the key trends of the regional brand formation are defined in Figure 1.

The brand of the region is defined as a set of unchanged values which reflect the unique original consumer characteristics of the territory which are widely known and which obtained a public recognition.

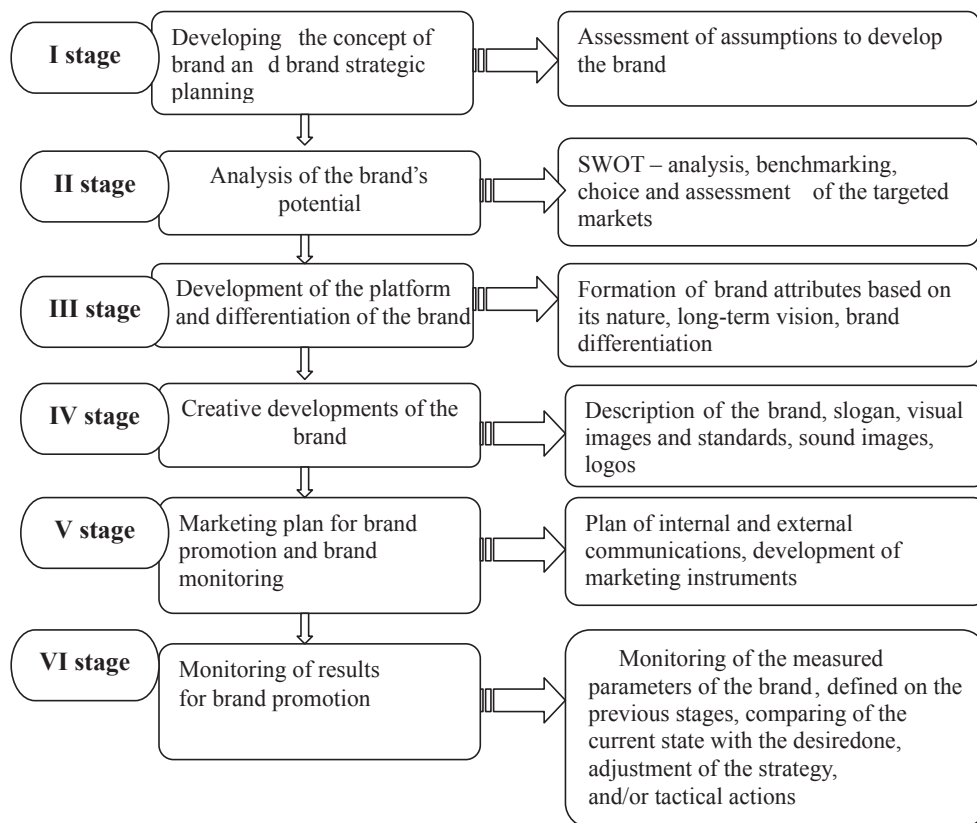
A successful brand promotion means the growth of the economic opportunities of the territory, city, namely attracting investment and new opportunities to develop the territory. Foreign business people and foreign tourist very often simply do not know the meaning of the names of the cities and territories, what they are famous for, their possibilities and features. Many tourists and business people often did not come for that reason to Ukraine.

On the basis of analysis of the available domestic and foreign developments in branding, the following mechanism of regional brand development is shown (Figure 2).

The first stage of the offered mechanism involves the development of the concept of brand and brand strategic planning, and in the opinion of the researchers in the field of branding it should consist of the following sub-stages: 1) analysis of the regional development strategy, 2) identification of the tasks and objectives of the region, 3) determination of the desired state of the brand, 4) formulation of the design specification for research. The result of the first stage is a project document which states the strategic tasks and objectives of the territory and the desired preferences and values of the brand, which will help to achieve these objectives. The document also draws up the key indicators of the brand's effectiveness, monitored to assess the strategic and tactical goals of the region and respond quickly to any change of the current situation, identify and exclude ineffective actions during the completion of the tasks.

The second stage is characterized by carrying out an analysis of the brand's potential and includes: 1) segmentation of the target audience, 2) conducting qualitative research, 3) monitoring the hypotheses by means of quantitative studies, measuring the actual ratings in the mass media, 4) analysis of the data and report in accordance with the design's specification.

As a result of studies, we obtain the indicators of the target groups' awareness concerning the knowledge of the territory, the history, the economy, points of interest and benefits, and the attitude of the target groups to the region. The conducted analysis of the brand potential will provide the comparative characteristics of the region in relation to others, similar in socio-demographic criteria, and analyze information about the life of the territory by its residents and residents of the other regions.



**Figure 2.** Mechanism of regional brand development

Source: developed by the author.

This information will determine the level of brand development, compare the current position of the region relative to the others and describe the target groups, their key motivations and expectations; the ratings received from the local mass media will provide the development means of an effective media strategy.

The third stage of the mechanism of the place brand includes the development of the platform brand, namely: 1) analysis of the real perception of the brand, identification of the typical brand attributes and values, 2) analysis of the actual state of the desired brand, 3) setting of the design of specification for the development of the essence of the brand based on the strategic goals and the analysis of the real situation of the desired brand, 4) formulation of the essence of the brand, 5) description of the combination of attributes, benefits, values, personalities and essence of the brand.

The result of this stage is a descriptive document which contains information about who is the target audience of the brand, how to stimulate interest in it, and what image of the region should be formed?

The fourth stage of place branding includes: 1) logo design, 2) creating the brand's identification elements, 3) developing the model rules for the allocation and monitoring of visual communications.

The result of the fourth stage is a creation of the visual image of the brand which will reflect the essence of the brand, its values and preferences. Also within the framework of this stage, there are the key elements of the brand identification and the rules for the use of the logo, and the elements which will successfully promote the basic idea and the brand values of the region to its target audience are developed.

The fifth stage involves the formation of a marketing plan to promote the brand which consists of two components: 1) development of the creative brand strategy (definition of objectives to be achieved through the creative strategy, setting of the design specification and the formation of a creative strategy based on the analysis of the existing barriers in promoting the brand, creating the brand's key ideas, development of the communicative message, creating a key visual image). In the creative strategy, the key features of the target groups are described, promoting the idea and communicative message which express this idea. At this stage we obtain a complete image of the regional brand which will be implemented in the media – channels, 2) development of the mediastategy (focus, development of a preliminary communication plan with the key target groups, drafting of the corresponding fiscal plan of communicative activity realization, identifying the most effective media vehicles for the target group consideration in the budget, the formation of the final media plan, development of the procedures for brand monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the marketing activities). The result of this stage is a media plan which answers the following questions: the required volume of the target audience, the frequency of contact with the advertising message, the choice of the media and their interaction in the course of the advertising campaign, the period of advertising the campaign, the format of the advertisements. It is necessary to identify the key indicators of the effectiveness which will allow to assess the achievement of the strategic and tactical objectives of the place branding as defined.

During the sixth stage, the developed plans of the previous stages are realized, the key visual image of the plan for the brand promotion is adopted, the advertising materials and gifts are produced; the advertising according to the media plan is placed, the measured parameters of the brand, defined at the previous stages, are monitored, the current situation is compared with the desired one; the strategy and/or tactical actions are corrected.

At a given stage, the previously planned actions are implemented. The result of this stage is the production and placement of the advertising according to the media strategy. After the entire program concerning the creation of the place brand has been performed, it is necessary to analyze the brand, the correspondence of the obtained

result to the planned one, and making all the necessary adjustments in the tactics and strategy of the brand's development.

Conclusions. To expand the opportunities for the strategic development of the region and increase the welfare of its population, the regions should have the skills to attract investors, potential residents, tourists, and be able to form a clear and positive brand of its territory.

To ensure the strategic development of the region it is important to create its brand on the basis of strategy development. Territorial branding is the most effective instrument for region positioning, the process of the brand's construction, development and management, which aims to create a strong competitive region.

The availability of a positive brand will enhance competitiveness, the quality of life, attract external and internal resources, and create an attractive image of the region.

Successful branding indicates the attitude of the administration to the fate and prestige of the region, the ability to develop relationships with business, and therefore the region's chances for development and prosperity.

Taking into consideration the fact that this area of research is relatively new, it includes a range of the following problems: selecting the best matched instruments of the region's branding, the appropriate assessment of the existing and created brand, selecting the competent experts to conduct a SWOT analysis of the city, finding the most effective strategy and model for the city's development, selecting the most effective mechanism for realizing the branding strategic plan and other problems which require the further research.

This theoretical and methodological approach to creating a region's brand on the basis of regional branding strategy implementation, based on six stages with the corresponding instruments can play an important role fundamental for the creation of the effective methods of territorial brand management and the formation of their development strategies, considering the strong and weak points and the potential of development aimed at increasing the welfare of the population in the given territory.

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## STRATEGIA ROZWOJU REGIONU W KONTEKŚCIE KONCEPCJI BRANDINGU

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł poświęcony jest kwestii brandingu terytorialnego, mechanizmowi rozwoju marki terytorium i awansu strategii rozwoju regionu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** marka, branding terytorium, strategia rozwoju regionu, samoidentyfikacja obywatela.