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TOURISM ECONOMCS: FORMATION OF REGIONAL BRANDS

Abstract. *Tourism is a sector of economy with a widespread development. One of the most promising types of tourism is cultural tourism. However, the economic impact of tourism is positive when driven by the well-designed policy of promotion and formation of a positive image. This paper discusses the tourism brand of the Southern Ural. We conducted a study using the method of the focus groups. Our results showed that the visual identifiers of the territory cannot be combined with the identity and cannot be grasped by the audience. Underestimating the role of the graphic design for creating the style leads to the fact that it is not perceived as a real brand attribute or as a decorative element. When this is the case, the efficiency of the developed brand can be very low. The brand does not reflect the ways for improving the competitiveness of the region and its development strategy. In this case, there is a clear discrepancy between the actual situation and the brand platform.*

If one has to develop the new logo, special attention should be attributed to making it the "reflection" of the real situation, representing the advantages yielded by the region and the needs that are important for the key target group. Further research is needed to determine the competitive advantages of the Southern Ural in the context of the long-term planning.

Keywords: *brand; logo; territories branding; focus group; visual attributes; region's competitiveness; Ural.*

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ЕКОНОМІКА ТУРИЗМУ: ПРОБЛЕМИ ФОРМУВАННЯ БРЕНДІВ РЕГІОНУ

Анотація. *Туризм, як галузь економіки отримав широкий розвиток. До найбільш перспективним видам туризму відносять культурний туризм. Однак, економічний ефект від туризму високий в разі здійснення продуманої політики просування і цілеспрямованого формування позитивного образу. У даній статті розглядається бренд Південного Уралу. Дослідження проводилося з використанням методу фокус груп. Результати дослідження показали, що візуальні ідентифікатори територія не поєднуються з ідентичністю і не зрозумілі аудиторії. Недооцінка ролі графічного дизайну при створенні стилю, привела до того, що він сприймається не як атрибут реального бренду, а як декоративний елемент. У цих умовах ефективність розробленого бренду низька. Він не відображає шляхів підвищення конкурентоспроможності регіону та стратегії його розвитку. В даному випадку в наявності невідповідність платформи бренду і реальної ситуації.*

При розробці нового логотипу необхідно врахувати, що він повинен бути «відображенням» реальної ситуації, тих переваг, якими володіє регіон і тих потреб, які важливі ключовий цільовій групі. Необхідні дослідження щодо унікальних конкурентних переваг Південного Уралу і найскладніше питання - це довгострокове планування.

Ключові слова: *бренд; логотип; брендинг територій; фокус група; візуальні атрибути; конкурентоспроможність регіону; Урал.*

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ЭКОНОМИКА ТУРИЗМА: ПРОБЛЕМЫ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ БРЕНДОВ РЕГИОНА

Аннотация. *Туризм, как отрасль экономики получил широкое развитие. К наиболее перспективным видам туризма относят культурный туризм. Однако, экономический эффект*

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от туризма высок в случае осуществления продуманной политики продвижения и целенаправленного формирования положительного образа. В данной статье рассматривается бренд Южного Урала. Изучение проводилось с использованием метода фокус групп. Результаты исследования показали, что визуальные идентификаторы территории не сочетаются с идентичностью и не понятны аудитории. Недооценка роли графического дизайна при создании стиля, привела к тому, что он воспринимается не как атрибут реального бренда, а как декоративный элемент. В этих условиях эффективность разработанного бренда низка. Он не отражает путей повышения конкурентоспособности региона и стратегии его развития. В данном случае налицо несоответствие платформы бренда и реальной ситуации.

При разработке нового логотипа необходимо учесть, что он должен быть «отражением» реальной ситуации, тех преимуществ, которыми обладает регион и тех потребностей, которые важны ключевой целевой группе. Необходимы исследования относительно уникальных конкурентных преимуществ Южного Урала и самый сложный вопрос – это долгосрочное планирование.

__Ключевые слова:__ бренд; логотип; брендинг территорий; фокус группа; визуальные атрибуты; конкурентоспособность региона; Урал.

Tourism is one of the largest economy sectors of Europe and Russia, and key industry of the 21st century. Cultural tourism as one of the forms of tourism has great prospects in the future. Tourism industry has undergone great changes, and this, to a large extent, will affect the development of cultural tourism in the coming decades. The transition from traditional to new ways of cultural resources is due to the introduction of information and communication technologies (ICT) and new electronic services (e-services) and the innovations they bring [12]. Thus, there is a need to evaluate the tourist preferences of potential innovative service before, during and after a visit to the tourist destination of their choice. [22] This assessment can provide important ideas for politicians in the formation of the tourist market in order to respond to latent demand and provide a strategy for sustainable development of cultural tourism. Sustainable development of cultural tourism strategy helps to preserve local identities embedded in the relevant cultural heritage, and supports economic growth. [23] The economic impact that cultural tourism has on regional development, is important for the policy makers, the aim of which is to maximize the potential service consumption.

In the context of finding ways to improve profitability, new ways of resource use areas, the formation of stable structures of the economy, many areas pay attention to tourist complex creation. However, the availability of resources does not mean high attendance of the places, a considered policy of promoting and purposeful formation of a positive image is important. This case is also essential on account of the fact that a territory regardless of rank and status is actively competing for investment, tourists, growing prosperity. The success of this struggle is not only connected with the correct administrative policies, but also with the ability to find the strengths and weaknesses, to evaluate development opportunities, anticipate and prevent risks. At the same time branding objectives are long-term and favourable market positioning, brand presence in the information space, providing recognition, the flow of financial resources and the adoption of regional solutions. It should be taken into account that a territorial brand creation and development process is lengthy and resource-intensive, requiring long-term strategies and confidence.

On account of studying place branding issues we have focused on long-term studies of authors such as Philip Kotler, Keith Dinny, J. Randall and Simon Anholt. Simon Anholt first was to introduce the term "place branding " [10]. The works of these authors cover approaches to strategic and market planning, to the peculiarities of consumer perception to the constituents of place image, to the peculiarities of its main information, together with its distribution channels, brands are considered examples of developments that are examined to the last detail. It is possible to evaluate all the factors affecting the development of place branding and track their account in brand development of specific locations [3; 4; 5; 8; 10]. At the same time there is still no single precise definition of this concept.

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On the basis of available material, some authors, such as AP Pakruhin gives the following definition: "a place branding is the process of forming a place brand, based on an integrated approach to the search and development of place identity, as well as informing regarding its comparative advantages to different target groups by creating an attractive bright image, consisting of internal and external attributes"[7]. A brand role in place development is linked with positive image formation and is accompanied by the growth of economic and social indicators.

Works by Simon Anholt is of interest also due to the fact that he has repeatedly made comments about the Russian practice of country branding and its member regions. In particular, it was noted that the right approach to branding as a tool to enhance the territory attractiveness was not been formed in Russia, which reduces its effectiveness.

Comprehending the significance of the issue, many in Russia are attempting to develop their brands. Information on the positioning of Russian regions is reflected in the works of D. Vizgalova, AP Pankrukhin, NS Makatrovoy etc. [2; 6; 7]. Big enough for the volume of material, including a wide range of visual symbols of place brands, with an analysis of not only the essence of the developed brand, but also its visual identity, with peer review and comments on the branding of individual cities and regions represented on the Internet, for example, CityBranding, Advertology.ru et al. [1; 9].

The creation and use of the brand is increasingly becoming the subject of research and attract marketers.

Summing up the views of different authors we can note the following: the main stages of the territory of the branding process are reduced to:
• a statement of goals and objectives;
• choice of target groups;• conduct intelligence;
• drawing up development strategies;
• the creation of visual images;
• the search for channels of communication with the aim, as the promotion and development of the proposed brand.

The key thing in branding aspect is target determining on the basis of which, a plan for the designating all other works is made up. The aims of brand development can be very different. For example, in Southern Urals designing a brand development team set a goal to popularize the resources of the region, through the display of objects that can attract and impress: forests and lakes, rugged mountains and tranquil prairie rivers with an abundance of fish, spectacular mountains, waterfalls, rich flora and fauna. Such symbols were chosen for the logo as: deer, lizards, birds and pike. Why are just these symbols? Deer according to Slavic tradition has impersonation of the ancestors; it knows how to do various wonders. In heraldry deer means grace and moderation, creativity and abundance.

Lizard was chosen since its image is familiar on account of Pavel Petrovich Bazhov tales and is considered a symbol of wisdom, the guardian of copper ore deposits, of malachite, and precious stones.

A pike embodies the wealth of fish resources and is associated with a fairy-tale character, fulfilling all desires. The bird represents the beginning of all beginnings.

Brand developers believe that it has come out regardless of time and policy and should be familiar and recognizable, not only for the residents of the area, but also for all Russians, as well as foreign community representatives.

The objective of our study was to evaluate the present position.

Research Methodology. Over the past 20 years the focus group is widely used as a form of qualitative research analysis. Focus group is a group of people discussing a topic and expressing opinions online. Krueger and Casey (2000) indicate that the focus groups have begun to be used at the end of the 30s, that some social scientists expressed doubts about the accuracy of traditional methods of information gathering, after which they began to use the interviews in focus groups. [15] Stewart and Shamdasoni (1990) maintain that focus groups were originally developed to assess the audience responses regarding radio programs in 1941 by a prominent sociologist Robert Merton [21]. During the World War II Merton started using focus groups to study the morale of the US Army. According to Krueger and Casey (2000), while academic researchers were not very interested in the use of focus

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groups in the 1950's, the market researchers have begun to employ focus groups as a tool to study the attractiveness of their products to certain customers [15]. Morgan (1996) stated that focus groups were rediscovered by sociologists in the 1980s with marketing research using practical strategies [18]. Focus group as an interviewing is represented in many forms, since researchers in various fields have altered procedures in accordance with their own needs and goals [14]. Patton (2000) believed that focus groups were important elements in assessment process, regardless of whether it was in the course of the project, at the end of the project, or several months after completion of the project, since the discussions assist in understanding the opinion of the audience [20]. Morgan (1997) stated that focus group can be used as a preliminary step for further research, as they allow getting an idea about some issues that can be solved by using a specific set of questions at a later stage [19]. The purpose of a focus group is to gather information on the specific aim of the study. Morgan (1990) believes that the focus group is a qualitative method that allows to use it as an accessible form. [17] Greenbaum (2000) defined the focus group as a qualitative research of the market, where the group is represented by 8 or 10 participants with general demographic or other signs, and takes the form of a 2-hour discussion on a particular topic under the guidance of a trained moderator. [13] Makdonah- Philp and Bruseberg (1997) stated that in comparison with other qualitative methods, focus groups provide unique data: researchers do not only get an idea of different opinions on the level of detail, but also a lot of concentrated data about target group within a short period of time [16]. Morgan (1997) maintained that the focus group can be more effective than an interview, because it avoids duplication and overlap [19]. Cameron (2005) considered the question of focus group interview and quantitative method relationship. He believes that the combination of focus groups with quantitative methods is the way to solve problems in some studies [11]. Using focus groups as a brainstorming method, researchers can generate new ideas, which are often used to develop questions for further research.

The attitude to the use of this method is different in studies. Of course, each method has its benefits and disadvantages. With the right use of the method when the goals and objectives are consistent with the goals and objectives of the study flaws get smoothed and advantages get multiplied. Focus group method has become firmly established in the practice of marketing and is a form of quantitative and qualitative research.

Currently, this method is recognized as "flexible" or "qualitative" method of sociological research and is not only a variety of research methods, but also the industry sector, which serves not only the functioning of market institutions, but institutions of democracy as well. The introduction of these methods into practice is currently a necessary condition for improving the work culture of market and political institutions. This method quite often has been used in various studies in the field of tourism

Data description. We have studied the Southern Urals brand by focus group method. We tried to find out the opinion of the population since it is closest to reality. Information on the characteristics of the participants of the focus groups is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of participants in focus groups (%)

Information on the participants	results
Gender Male Female	 17,4 82,6
Age 18-25 older than 25	 75 25
Education Higher Average	 26 74
Status Single With family	 80 20
Source: personal results	

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The age of participants was driven by the fact that young people are the most mobile population group, to switch easily to different travel products. The main audience - students of different universities and majors: lawyers, managers, economists, students of tourism specialties.

Age from 19 to 24 years. Moreover those who have already started to work and work as a manager, economist, accountant, lawyer, and specialist were interviewed as well. Age from 25 to 40 years or more. Most of the respondents are single people on account of their age.

Focus Group Results. Totally we have performed 10 focus groups. The total number of participants was 66 people. Focus groups were held in Chelyabinsk in November - December 2015 Assistance in the focus groups was provided by the students of two Chelyabinsk universities.

The participants of the focus groups were offered the following questions for discussion:
• What a place is associated with?
• What a logo is associated with?
• Do you believe that it is successful?
• What would you add or change about the logo?
• Does the brand fit the residents` view?
• How common is the logo?
• To what extent is the place image competitive in comparison with other regions?

The results of the research on the associations that evokes the place are shown in Table 2. The calculation was conducted on the number of respondents.

The surveyed men as well as the respondents over 25 years with higher education and with family told that a place is associated with plants, industry, bad ecology and environmental issues. Natural objects (mountains, lakes, caves, meteorite, and flora) were noted by representatives of female respondents up to 25 years with secondary education. Thus, it turns out that the youth connects the region with natural component.

Table 2

Associations connected with the region and its image (%)

Information on the participants	Associations connected with the region	
	Industrial Centre	Unique natural objects
Gender Male Female	 83 48	 17 52
Age 18-25 older than 25	 47 94	 53 6
Education Higher Average	 78 46	 22 54
Status Single With family	 49 69	 51 31
Source: personal results		

Participants were asked questions about what logo was associated with and how successful it was. The results are shown in Table 3. The counting was carried out on the number of respondents.

Most of the participants responded that the logo is too abstract and is not associated with anything specific. Symbols are not successfully implemented. They are hardly recognizable. This was noted in regard to symbols like pike, deer and poultry. About 70% of respondents managed to explain the use of the "lizard" symbol. Concerning other symbols, such as "pike", "deer" and "bird" the situation was more ambiguous. In particular, it was suggested that the symbol "pike" has to do with the fishery resources and "deer" and "bird" are related to the animal world. But the surveyed managed to answer nothing specific, and pointed out that it would be desirable to take the already established symbols, such as camel, which is depicted on the emblem of the city.

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At the same time, the attitude to the colour scheme is positive. The use of 3 colours is associated with summer, winter and spring. Respondents consider the slogan "Southern Urals - the land where dreams come true" as negative one. It was noted that its use is not appropriate since the negative information about the media dominated region. Suffice is to recall pictures with comments posted by actor Leonardo DiCaprio about catching fish on the background of smoking pipes of metallurgical plant.

Table 3

Association, that the logo evoked (%)

Characteristics of participants	Logo Symbols	
	forming any association with the region	not formingany association with the region
Gender Male Female	25 46	75 54
Age 18-25 older than 25	40 12	60 88
Education Higher Average	11 49	89 51
Status Single With family	40 15	60 85
Source: personal results		

From this table it can be concluded that the visual area identifiers do not match with the identity of the audience and unclear. The participants of the focus groups were asked about the occurrence of the logo in the media. Results on the occurrence of the logo in the media are shown in Table 4. The calculation was conducted on the number of respondents.

Most responded that never encountered the logo. The assumption was made that the logo could be found on the Internet or on banners. However, students who were involved in the maintenance of competition as a volunteer said that the logo can be seen on banners and buses.

The study revealed that the logo is overloaded with small items such as animal characters reproduction of which is difficult. Logo Symbols do not form association of proposed image and the region.

In general, the associations that arise among the participants when reading the image and slogan have little to do with the prevailing place image. Underestimated was role in creating graphic design style, which leads to its perceiving not as an attribute of a real brand, but as a decorative element.

Brand does not reflect the ways to improve the competitiveness of the region and its development strategy, indicating the mismatch of the brand platform and the real situation.

The proposed logo does not meet the objectives. The region is positioned as an industrial one in the information field. The logo does not reflect this fact. The logo is almost never used in the media, despite the fact that each year international level competitions are held on the basis of the city's infrastructure in the regional center.

Based on these data, we can conclude that both the customer and the brand developers ignore the passivity of the population and the negative sentiment towards the created brand and other instruments promoting the region, for example, the slogan: "Southern Urals is the land where dreams come true."

The emphasis on the natural component and the symbolism of birds and animals, unlikely will have an impact on the foreign market, due to the fact that, firstly, even to locals, this symbolism is not too clear, secondly, PP Bazhov tales are not well known abroad (lizard), as well as images of Russian folk tales (pike).

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Table 4

Occurrence of the logo in the media (%)

Characteristics of participants	Occurrence of the logo in the media	
	Did not encounter	**Two or more times**
Gender		
Male	83	17
Female	63	37
Age		
18-25	51	49
older than 25	88	12
Education		
Higher	89	11
Average	46	54
Status		
Single	51	49
With family	85	15
Source: personal results		

Most respondents failed to recall how the logo looks like and account for the symbols used. Respondents pointed to the need to simplify the visual identity of the brand, to make it more clear and memorable. This indicates the impossibility of brand existence in its current form in the regional environment, especially in the foreign market. It turns out that the brand does not reflect any increase of region`s competitiveness, nor its development strategy. In this case, we observe the incompatibility of the brand platform and the real situation.

Conclusions. Conducted using the method of focus group research has demonstrated that, firstly, the logo design was a first step in creating a brand, without its platform development and the problem field. The mistake was that the logo should be a "reflection" of the real situation, the advantages enjoyed by the region and the needs that are of importance for the key target group. Secondly, there is no work with real problems (environment, rising unemployment). These issues, especially environmental ones can have much greater impact on consumer decision to visit a place than a logo that will be used in the media about the place. Thirdly, there were no preliminary qualitative researches, which are the best ways to explore the hidden motivations, feelings, values, attitudes and perceptions, as well as on the unique competitive advantages of the Southern Urals. This prevented the possibility of the region to "promote" itself to other target markets as well. The emphasize should have been done on the investment attractiveness of the region, based on favourable geographical position between Europe and Asia and favourable conditions for the development of public-private business partnership, including with foreign companies. This fact would have contributed to funds inflow into various economy sectors, both industrial and social. Fourth, thought-out policies in the promotion field are necessary. This is perhaps the most difficult issue, since Chelyabinsk region has no development plan. Under these conditions, a brand development does not serve the long-term prospects.

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