

## Geo-branding: Way from Image of the Territory to a Full-Measured Construct

**Aleksey A. Nikitin\***

Kazan Federal University

**Tatyana I. Nikitina**

Kazan Federal University

**Bulat I. Yakupov**

Russian Islamic Institute

### Abstract

Today, cities cannot be regarded as closed independent systems. Interterritorial competition for a variety of development resources is growing steadily. Not only the creation and implementation of a strategy for social and economic development but also territorial branding enable to ensure the effective use of the potential of the territory and increase its competitiveness. The article discloses the essence of the concept of geobranding, its development and application practice in Russia and is only a small part of a full-fledged study of the process of creating Russian geobrands. The purpose of the article is to give basic ideas about the branding of territories in the Russian Federation in the interconnection of key processes in this area. The methodological basis was provided by general scientific methods, such as synthesis and induction, the system approach, and also the normative method. The main conclusion drawn on the basis of the processing of the regulatory and empirical base is that the territory brand is based on the previous creation of a strategy for branding the strategy of development of the territory.

**Keywords:** Brand; Geo-brand; Geo-branding; Stereotype.



CC BY: [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

### 1. Introduction

The development of geo-branding as a science began in the 20th century based on a growing number of cases for branding cities, regions, and even countries. Simon Anholt was first who proposed using the definition of “place branding”. He suggested using marketing technologies in the sphere of management of the country’s image. The conception of competitive identity, proposed by Anholt, who also assumed that this identity is the brand of location, consists of a number of elements: politics (internal and external), historical heritage, export brands, human capital, investments, tourism and immigration (Fitzpatrick, 2007).

### 2. Methods

The following general scientific methods – synthesis and induction, made it possible to determine the initial theoretical postulates for the subsequent analysis of system processes in geo-branding in Russia. The system approach allowed considering the branding of territories as a system process, which includes certain components. The normative method determined the legislative basis and procedure for creating regional development strategies.

### 3. Results and Discussions

Today, the vast majority of case studies and empirical materials are focused on branding regions and cities, i.e. on the local level. It is worth noting that the conceptual apparatus of the theory of geo-branding is in the stage of development and the generally accepted definition of the city’s brand is lacking in the scientific literature. The most popular definitions of this term are:

Geobranding is a multiple construct, the structure of which consists of the basic elements: functional, emotional and material. The totality of these elements is the basis for the formation of stereotyped associations with a certain location (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005; Kavaratzis *et al.*, 2014).

Geobranding is an emotional mark of the target audience left by the territory. This is a synergistic combination of material and symbolic elements that creates a unique identity of the territory (Moilanen and Rainisto, 2009).

Geobranding is not just the creation of a unique place on the basis of positive associations, it is the process and result of the creative creation of these associations (Kavaratzis, 2004).

Geobranding is a branched system of stable representations for the audience of the territory, based on visual, verbal and mental Under such conditions, the creation of a brand is based on goal-setting, forming up a communication system and actively promoting the values inherent in all elements of the location (Zenker *et al.*, 2017).

Practitioners and theorists of the western school suggest that the brand of the territory is at the junction of image and identity and image. Urban identity is the deep feelings and emotions that are created by self-identification of an

individual with a specific territorial community. This large social group unites people living in the same city and accepting similar ideas about values, norms and rules of behavior.

The image of the city is the totality of stable representations about the city, which are stable and reproduced in the mass consciousness. a certain set of stereotypes. It is formed on the basis of objective, i.e. real, characteristics and subjective ones, i.e. depending exclusively on their bearer of factors.

It can be argued that the image of the city is a certain kind of stereotypes about it, and branding of the territory is the process of creating and managing this system of stereotypes.

On the basis of these concepts, there is an approach to the definition of the city's brand as a certain territorial identity, structurally represented in catchy, attractive slogans, values, images, symbolic forms being fully and adequately correlated in the image of the territory (Королева and КУРНИКОВА, 2018). So, territorial branding is a purposeful process of determining territorial identity and its translation into images that are interconnected for the audience.

The initiator of creating a brand of territory is usually the city administration. Practice shows that the creation of a brand often comes to design: the local government declares a creativity competition for the development of a logo and a slogan, or the specialists in the field of design are involved. But this graphic design is

the outward habiliment of branding and does not convey its essence. It will be better, as in the case of the strategy of social and economic development, for professional organizations to join the process and competitively conduct research and then express the brand's ideas in design. Here the initiators of the geo-branding project may face a shortage of qualified specialists. However, interest in the sphere is growing steadily, and more and more educational institutions offer appropriate training programs and courses, annual scientific conferences, round tables and forums discussing the problems of territorial branding.

A significant role in the project is again given to the local community, communication with which enables to determine identity. Meetings with interested parties are held in the form of seminars, public hearings, focus groups, etc. At the same time, the process of geo-branding is a soft planning: the transition to the next stage takes place only if the previous one is successful, and the work periods are approximate.

The complexity of the geo-branding process necessitates the creation of a brand strategy, which is "a long-term plan for creating and managing a brand", providing a holistic view of its development. However, in the scientific literature the concept of "brand strategy" is rarely found in reference to territorial branding. One can differentiate the components that should be considered in the brand strategy of the city. Problem, purpose, tasks (Shatilova *et al.*, 2018).

To determine the problem, it is necessary to collect and analyze the data on the territory using various methods:

PEST analysis,

SWOT analysis,

analysis of the image of the territory (estimated using two scales: fame and love),

analysis of the needs of primary audiences through surveys, in-depth interviews, focus groups.

The unique distinctive features of the territory become the basis of the mission, which summarizes the vision and purpose of the geobranding project. The goals and objectives are set by SMART technology: they must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-limited.

Interested parties, or stakeholders.

Sicco van Gelder, the theorist and practitioner in the field of geobranding, believes that the success of geobranding largely depends on the partnership of stakeholders. In his opinion, this is the way a strong brand is created, because the brand potential due to synergetic effects acquires more personalized capabilities of individual stakeholders (Van, 2008).

Target audience.

The following groups can be distinguished.

Residents, or urban community – the bearers of urban identity, which underlies the brand of the territory.

Potential residents.

An important target group is a creative class that can be part of a group of real and potential residents of the city. This concept was suggested by American economist Richard Florida in 2002 to define a group of people who earn money by designing and creating something new, unlike the industrial and service classes, working according to plan. According to the statistics for 2005, the creative class was 30% of the American workforce, which was 47% of the total salary earned in the USA. Thus, it is not numerous elite, but rather a large group with significant economic power (Lavanga, 2004).

For a successful geo-branding, it is necessary to understand what the creative class expects from a city or region in order to choose it as a place to live and whether these requirements should differ from the requirements of the population of the territory. Florida in his theory proposes the formula of three "T":

technology – the concentration of innovation and high technology;

tolerance – openness, inclusiveness and diversity for all ethnic groups, races and lifestyles;

talent – the representatives of the above- mentioned professions with higher education, i.e. the presence of other representatives of the creative class .

Tourists, or visitors to the territory.

Investors / businessmen.

Third-party groups of influence.

4. Performance indicators.

5. Territorial identity.

6. The concept of the brand.
7. The action program.
8. Monitoring.

On the basis of an analysis of the theoretical aspects of geobranding in Russia, its basic principles can be singled out: the existence of a behavioral and / or physical basis for the brand; team creativity: the geobranding project will bring the best results if it is created and supported by all interested parties; the existence of a stable group (groups) of the target audience; clear positioning based on the individuality of the territory; message integrity: consistency of messages for different segments of the target audience of the project; positive connotation.

Based on the established practice, the brand of the city is built on the basis of the development strategy of the territory. The development strategy is based on a systematic approach, as well as internal and external factors of influence, and the views of various stakeholders in realizing the potential of the territory. Actual for geobranding issue of positioning the city arises in the process of creating a development strategy.

The development of this strategy is carried out in accordance with the law of June 28, 2014 “On Strategic Planning in the Russian Federation” The analysis of the provisions of this law makes it possible to emphasize a number of important aspects.

- 1) Strategic planning is an activity that includes goal setting, forecasting, planning and programming of social and economic development.
- 2) The goal of strategic planning in Russia is to address the challenges of sustainable socio-economic development of the country and its subjects, as well as ensuring national security.
- 3) Strategic planning in Russia is carried out at the federal level, the level of the subjects and municipalities.
- 4) Activities on strategic planning are carried out by the participants, among them: authorities of different levels, “public, scientific and other organizations in the field of strategic planning”.
- 5) The strategy is developed every six years for a long-term period, not exceeding the period for which a projection of socio-economic development is being worked out.
- 6) The result of strategic planning is the development of documents at various levels.

With regard to geobranding, it is necessary to focus on the strategy of socio-economic development of the territory, which is a document that defines the priorities, goals and objectives of state or municipal government at the national level, the level of the subjects and municipalities for a long-term period.

Concerning significant documents in Russia, the government’s decree of November 17, 2008 approved the first version of the Concept of Long-Term Social and Economic Development of the Russian Federation until 2020, or “The Strategy-2020”, developed under the leadership of the Ministry of Economic Development. However, the global crisis required revision and adjustment of the document – due to the negative impact on the economy of our country, most provisions of the Concept could not be implemented. In January 2011, it was decided to update the content of the document. As a result of the work of the 21 expert groups on various areas, a 864-page final report was published in March 2012 on the basis of the Higher School of Economics and the Russian Academy of National Economy. Currently, in our country, there are the strategies for social and economic development of federal districts, the subjects and municipalities of the Russian Federation, and the Strategy for the Social and Economic Development of the Russian Federation until 2035, or “Strategy-2035”.

In accordance with the Federal Law of the Russian Federation “On Strategic Planning in the Russian Federation”, the development, approval and implementation of the strategy for social and economic development and the action plan for the implementation of the strategy of a municipal formation shall be carried out by decision of the local government. The initiator of the city’s strategy is the city’s highest official, the head of the municipal formation. The development of the strategy takes into account the priority areas of social and economic development, which are determined by the Concept of Long-Term Social and Economic Development of the Russian Federation for the period to 2020, the Strategy for Innovative Development of the Russian Federation for the period to 2020, the strategies of the respective federal districts and entities, the annual messages of President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. Financing of the strategy development is carried out at the expense of the budget of the municipal formation.

To create a generalized vision of the future territory, information is collected from the structural divisions of the city administration, business entities, public associations, and the public. The vision of the city, the idea of key problems in the minds of various groups of residents is determined through in-depth interviews, focus groups. It is common practice to conduct online surveys on the official website of local government. In addition, according to the federal law “On Strategic Planning in the Russian Federation”, it is necessary to stimulate conditions under which the citizens can be involved in the process of creating a strategy, namely, by participating in public discussions. So, when creating the Strategy of social and economic development of the municipality of Kazan before 2030, discussions were held with 80 representatives of the city on 80 communication platforms.

Based on Russian practice, it is the strategy of socio-economic development of the territory that is the basis for designing its image.

In world practice, there is an approach when the desired future image of the territory is determined first and, then, based on it, the search for meanings is carried out, which will help to arrive at the desired result. So, the socio-economic strategy can define a plan for 10 years ahead, and the brand will become a tool for solving the set tasks.

## 4. Summary

Based on the above, the brand of the city is at the intersection of its identity and image, and the process of branding is in the search for this identity and its representations that form the image.

When it comes to creating a successful brand, the process involves much more than just developing a logo and a slogan. The brand will work for all stakeholders in the case of a deep understanding of the territory, its inhabitants and the definition of long-term goals. It should be based on the uniqueness of the city, but in the process of creation one can single out universal steps: the analysis of the city and the definition of the project purpose, stakeholders, target audience and performance indicators, the identity search and the expression of the concept in the brand concept. Then the program of actions for brand introduction and promotion is defined, and monitoring is carried out during the project implementation and at its completion.

At the same time, the issue of the location of geobranding in strategic planning remains relevant. Both phenomena are aimed at addressing issues of local importance and, in general, improving the quality of life of the population. Russian practice shows that a brand can be based on a strategy of socio-economic development or become a support for a new strategy.

## 5. Conclusions

A small number of implemented projects does not allow us judging the effectiveness of the applied approaches to date. It is supposed that this research will be continued in the space-time perspective – the expansion of the number of cases studied by initiating the processes of geobranding by the territories, as well as by monitoring the projects being implemented before the end of the period for its completion.

## Acknowledgements

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

## References

- Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2007). Advancing the new public diplomacy, A public relations perspective. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 2(3): 187-211.
- Kavaratzis, M. (2004). From city marketing to city branding, Towards a theoretical framework for developing city brands. *Place Branding*, 1(1): 58-73.
- Kavaratzis, M. and Ashworth, G. J. (2005). City branding, An effective assertion of identity or a transitory marketing trick?. *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie*, 96(5): 506-14.
- Kavaratzis, M., Warnaby, G. and Ashworth, G. J. (2014). *Rethinking place branding, Comprehensive brand development for cities and regions*. Springer.
- Lavanga, M. (2004). Florida, R. The rise of the creative class, And how it's transforming work, Leisure community and everyday life. *Economia della Cultura*, 14(1): 177-78.
- Moilanen, T. and Rainisto, S. (2009). *How to brand nations, cities and destinations. A planning book for place branding*. Palgrave MacMillan: UK. 65-75.
- Shatilova, L. M., Borisova, V. V. and Kasatkina, O. A. (2018). Representation of the linguistic and cultural concept lie. *French And Russian Language Picture Of The World*, 34(85): 194-212.
- Van, G. S. (2008). *How to improve the chances of successfully developing and implementing a place brand strategy*. Placebrands Ltd.
- Zenker, S., Braun, E. and Petersen, S. (2017). Branding the destination versus the place, The effects of brand complexity and identification for residents and visitors. *Tourism Management* 58: 15-27.
- Королева, Е. Н. and КУРНИКОВА, М. (2018). Факторы имиджа территории в стратегическом управлении развитием сельских муниципальных районов. *Ars administrandi*. 10(2).