

Artículo de investigación

State image formation: Data from Russia

Формирование бренда государства: данные из России

Formación de la marca del estado: Datos de Rusia

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In the conditions of acute global competition, states and their territories – regions, cities – are faced with the task of searching for their identity and niche in the global investment market and tourist services market. The identity, reputation, and brand of the state are today becoming the most effective tools in the global competitive market. The purpose of this study was to study the process of forming the state brand and the factors influencing it (a case study of Russia). To achieve this goal, modern methodologies for assessing the brands of states were studied, a cross-correlation matrix of the impact of international rankings in areas of competitiveness on the state brand in real time over 2013-2018 was drawn up, and conclusions were made on the results obtained. The study revealed that the main factors affecting the brand of the state are business freedom, development of the innovative activity, and development of competitiveness.

Аннотация

В условиях острой глобальной конкуренции перед государствами и их территориями – регионами, городами стоит задача поиска своей идентичности и ниши на глобальном рынке инвестиций и рынке туристических услуг. Идентичность, репутация, бренд государства становятся сегодня наиболее эффективными инструментами на глобальном конкурентном рынке. Целью исследования явилось изучение процесса формирования бренда государства и факторов на это влияющих на примере России. Для достижения поставленной цели были изучены современные методологии оценки брендов стран, составлена матрица кросс-корреляции влияния международных рейтингов по сферам конкурентоспособности на бренд государства в динамике за 2013-2018 гг., сделаны выводы по полученным результатам. В рамках исследования выявлено, что основными факторами, влияющими на бренд государства, являются

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свобода предпринимательской деятельности, развитие инновационной активности, развитие конкурентоспособности.

Ключевые слова: Имидж государства, бренд государства, развитие территорий.

Resumen

En las condiciones de aguda competencia global, los estados y sus territorios (regiones, ciudades) se enfrentan a la tarea de buscar su identidad y nicho en el mercado de inversión global y el mercado de servicios turísticos. La identidad, la reputación y la marca del estado se están convirtiendo hoy en las herramientas más efectivas en el mercado competitivo global. El propósito de este estudio fue estudiar el proceso de formación de la marca estatal y los factores que la influyen (un estudio de caso de Rusia). Para lograr este objetivo, se estudiaron metodologías modernas para evaluar las marcas de los estados, se elaboró una matriz de correlación cruzada del impacto de las clasificaciones internacionales en áreas de competitividad en la marca del estado en tiempo real durante 2013-2018, y se sacaron conclusiones en los resultados obtenidos. El estudio reveló que los principales factores que afectan la marca del estado son la libertad comercial, el desarrollo de la actividad innovadora y el desarrollo de la competitividad.

Palabras clave: Imagen del Estado, marca del Estado, desarrollo de los territorios.

Introduction

One of the most frequently introduced components of a country's marketing is national branding – an activity seeking to measure, build and manage the reputation of the state. International rankings of national brands have a direct impact on the formation of marketing strategies of countries, defining decisive criteria for success in the global arena, powerful competitive indicators of the territories and setting the standards that countries must maintain.

Rankings allow researchers to see the ideal brand model, facilitating the perception of the overall situation, to analyze and predict trends and make decisions on adjusting the country's reputation or image, but they highlight the conventional vision of a country's brand in the international arena, while a country's position in a certain ranking is an element of the image, which can both positively and negatively affect its brand.

Therefore, participation in rankings allows countries to identify basic stereotypes, values, and unique features of a country with the help of basic techniques and to effectively use the data obtained. Today, international communication is carried out through national brands of countries, because states compete with each other for influence, power, prestige, tourists, investors, and consumers, creating their own unique identifications, developing expedient positioning and national branding strategies.

Despite the fact that in the context of globalization, the world becomes a single market, international rankings provide a definite vision of the brands of countries in the international arena and within the global economic system. The way a country is represented in a certain ranking can be interpreted as an element of the image that positively or negatively influences its brand. After analyzing the main ranking techniques, basic stereotypes, values, and unique features of a country, it is important to effectively use the data obtained on the country.

Countries are able to significantly influence the perception of their own brands, if they have a clear, credible idea of their somewhat higher purpose, and if messages on this topic arrive clearly and smoothly through some or all of the vertices of the hexagon. Today, Russia's policy is unthinkable without purposeful, constant and systematic efforts to improve its national image, to form a positive attitude towards the state among its citizens and social groups of other states.

For Russia, the issues of not only creating and promoting commercial brands in the world market but also forming the image of a strong and prosperous state is a necessity, as a strong national brand offers the country a number of advantages, including the following: improving currency stability, restoring international trust and confidence of investors, changing international

rankings, increasing international political influence, increasing exports of goods/services with branded status, increasing inbound tourism, growing opportunities for winning against regional and global business competitors and protecting domestic markets, which ultimately will ensure a high level of competitiveness of the country on the global stage.

Thus, the process of the formation of a national brand identity and the further development of the country's image should be carried out according to carefully analyzed historical, cultural, geographical, social, political and economic conditions of the context.

For the Russian Federation as a young state after the collapse of the USSR, which is just beginning to make the first attempts to form its brand, at this stage it is important to accurately identify its own positioning in the world. Using the experience of developed countries, it is possible to identify the basic principles of effective branding and build a successful strategy for promoting the country's brand. This paper is devoted to the factors and parameters of the state brand formation in the case study of Russia.

Research Background

The first to explore the topic of national branding is Simon Anholt, who regularly performs two global studies, known as the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index and the Anholt-GfK Roper City Brands Index. He is also the editor of the professional academic journal in this area – “Place Branding and Public Diplomacy”. Anholt defines the country's branding as a systematic process of coordinating the country's actions, behavior, investments, innovations, and communications to implement a competitive identity strategy (Morozov, 2008). The brand of a country is the associative model, which contains the consciousness of the individual (both a resident of this country and a citizen of another) and to which he/she appeals, hearing the name of the country.

According to the definition of the World Tourism Organization, a country's brand is a combination of emotional and rational ideas, which is the result of comparing all the signs of a country, its own experience, and rumors that affect the creation of a certain image about it (Andreev, 2008). Accordingly, during the mention of the name of a state (brand of the country), associations immediately arise with respect to that country, for example: promises of expected stability, security, hospitality, attractiveness for

living and recreation; accounting for experience; associating with a high level of quality and value; provoking the establishment of long-term, based on mutual trust, relationships; ensuring an increase in the income of the country. For example, Japan is a high-tech brand, France is a brand of high fashion and sophisticated taste, Switzerland is the “world's safe”, Austria is a country of music, Denmark is a country of fairy tales.

The concept of national branding is mainly used by well-known Western countries that seek to explore, analyze and manage their own reputation, image and status on the world stage. The development of a national brand has become an influential tool for emphasizing its distinctive features and strengthening the competitive positions of such countries as the United States of America, Canada, Switzerland, France, the United Kingdom, and other Western European countries. The last ten years have become crucial in the types of approaches of states that manage their reputation with relative ease.

The researchers assessed the competitiveness and sustainable development of countries, as well as the main factors affecting the development of tourism (Andrades & Dimanche, 2017). Cernat & Gourdon (2012), Cracolici & Nijkamp (2008), Yan et al. (2017) reveal the methodological basis for assessing the image of the state, to increase the competitiveness of tourism. Corte and Aria (2016), Marrocu & Paci (2013), Santos & Giraldo (2017) pay special attention to the competition between small and medium-sized tourism enterprises, aimed at improving the image of the state. Giglio et al. (2019) conducted a study to identify the tourist attractiveness of various tourist websites.

According to Anholt, countries have become much more aware of the value of their country's brand as a major asset (Morozov, 2008). How a country is perceived can play a crucial role in the success of government activities, business, trade, and tourism, as well as diplomatic and cultural ties with other nations (Andreev, 2008).

The dynamics of development of countries' brands can be recorded and their influence and effectiveness can be identified via annual international rankings of national brands, in particular, the Nation Brand Index, which is studied under Anholt's supervision by GfK, and the Country Brand Index according to the FutureBrand methodology.

The Nation Brand Index measures the power and quality of the image in each country by combining the following six parameters (Cernat & Gourdon, 2012):

1. Export – determines the image of goods and services of each country and the attitude towards them in the global market: which goods and services, based on their country of origin, are actively sought by consumers, and which are avoided.
2. Political governance – determines the public opinion on the level of competence of national governments and the fairness of their activities; describes the impressions and ideas of individuals about the government of each country, as well as its attitude to global issues such as democracy, justice, poverty and the environment.
3. Culture and heritage – show the global perception of the heritage of each country and its modern culture, in particular movies, music, art, sports, and literature.
4. People – determine the reputation of the population in connection with education, openness, friendliness, hospitality, politeness, and other qualities, as well as an idea of the level of potential hostility and discrimination.
5. Tourism – reflects the level of interest in visiting the country and the attractiveness of natural and man-made tourist attractions.
6. Investment and immigration – determine the measure of the attractiveness of the country among immigrants, the level of involvement of foreigners to work and study.

GfK researchers analyze the perceptions of citizens of developed countries and countries that are currently developing and play an important role in shaping the global foreign policy, as well as form business, cultural and tourist activity worldwide (Casier, 2016).

Interviews are conducted among residents of 20 countries. In each of them, about 1,000 online interviews are conducted with people over 18 years old. These countries include (Kaminska, 2014):

1. North America: Canada, USA.
2. Western Europe: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Ireland, Italy, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.
3. Central and Eastern Europe: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Turkey.
4. Asia-Pacific: Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand.
5. Latin America: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru.
6. The Middle East and Africa: Angola, Egypt, Iran, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, United Arab Emirates.

The second large-scale project is The Country Brand Index, founded in 2005 by the company FutureBrand, which is engaged in research in the field of branding, providing consulting services to brands and annually publishing a ranking of regional brands (Landa, 2015).

According to the company's researchers, a strong country's brand is determined not only by the sum of particular attributes, but in general, should make people's lives better (Rukavishnikov, 2011). In other words, a country's brand should reflect the symbolic view of the nation, its image, reputation, and positioning, but at the same time bring additional value in the form of improved international economic relations, competitive positions in the global arena, privileges and special conditions for representatives of the nation, in particular, residents and citizens who are associated with a particular brand (Shlapentokh, 2003).

Materials and Methods

The methodical research apparatus includes general scientific and economic methods, being a synthesis of abstract-theoretical analysis, system, factor and structural-functional analysis, logical approach, statistical methods, simulation, situational and quantitative approaches. Private methodical tools of economic and mathematical modeling and others were also used.

The information and regulatory base of the study was: statistical materials, reporting data of the executive authorities; materials of monographs and publications of periodicals, Internet resources of leading research centers of Russia, the results of own research, as well as various international rankings.

Results

The main approaches to the assessment of national brands are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Modern methodologies for evaluating country brands.

Ranking/ model	Organization/ research company	Methodologies	Spheres or components of analysis/brand parameters
Top 100 Most Valuable Country Brands	Brand Finance plc	Research on the strength and value of brands by determining brand royalties	Investments. Tourism. Goods and services. People and Talents
National Brands Index	Simon Anholt and GfK	Qualitative online research of consumer research preferences regarding brands of countries around the world	Hexagon of the national brand. Export. Government. Culture People. Tourism. Immigration and investment A study of four variables: economic revenues and growth, inquiries during Internet searches, a country's brand strategy, an estimate for previous years, official website, public relations, and media coverage
Country Brand Rating	The Bloom Consulting	Measuring a country's economic development using statistical modeling and analytical data	The number of references to or mentions of a country that determines a country's popularity. Media quality
Nation Brand Perception Index	East West Communications	Analysis of links and references of countries in global media sources through the content analysis system and relevant metrics	Government, diplomatic conditions, culture, educational system, business environment, national branding, infrastructure
Soft Power Research	Monocle	A study based on soft power, which is the concept of public diplomacy	External image and identity of self-perception of people, government, culture, export, tourism, investment
Brand Capital Model Wiesbaden	The Research Centre Nation Branding	Study of interdependencies between capital flow and factors, analysis of the country's image and the "wheel" of a national brand in order to identify weak points	Economy (high-quality products and services, education, labor, brand). Environment (lifestyle, culture, hospitality, nature). Government (business climate, politics, safety, efficiency)
Country RepTrak	Institute of reputation	A global study of ratings that measure the relationship between countries' reputations and their economic results, an analysis of the country's perception by stakeholders through online interviews	Science and technology. Culture. International peace and security. World order. Planet and climate. Equality of rights. Health and well-being.
Good States Index	Simon Anholt	Research of each country's assistance in the overall welfare of mankind based on a wide range of data from the UN and other international organizations	

To understand the situation regarding the national brand of Russia, the authors will analyze the position of the state in the framework of the

previously mentioned Nation Brands ranking over the last 6 years – 2013-2018 (Figure 1).

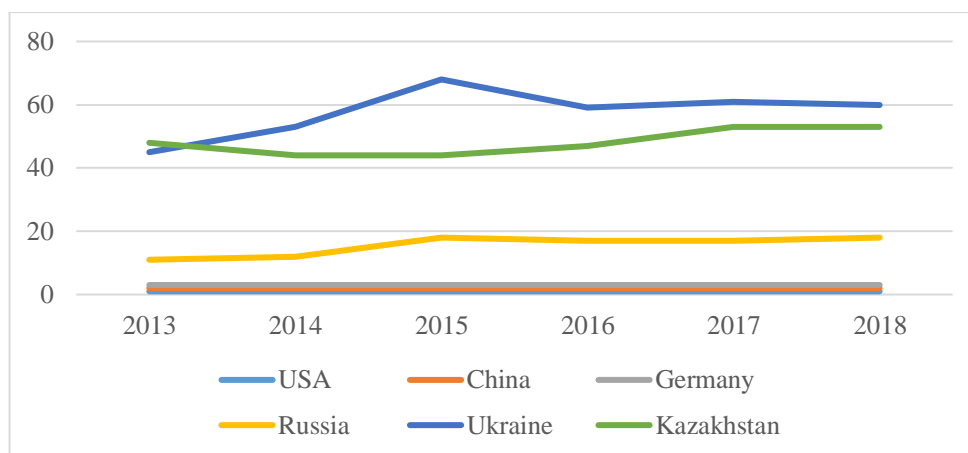


Figure 1. Dynamics of brands positions of various countries in Nation Brands ranking by Brand Finance over 2013-2018. Source: Nation Brands (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018).

In addition, it is possible to assess the presence, representations and application of initiatives regarding national branding in states not only directly by analyzing specially developed rankings of country brands but also indirectly by studying other world ratings, such as indices of economic freedom, ease of doing business, global competitiveness, global innovation business, press freedom and other. Such an

approach is considered expedient, since most of the above rankings do not concern, in particular, the country's branding, but evaluate those components that are integral components of a country's brand, for example, the above-mentioned modern methodologies for evaluating national brands. Table 2 shows the positions of the Russian Federation in the world rankings in 2018-2019.

Table 2. Russia in global rankings, 2018-2019.

Index of Economic Freedom – 2019	Doing Business – 2018	Global Competitiveness Report – 2018	Global Innovation Index – 2018	Worldwide Press Freedom Index – 2018	Corruption Perceptions Index – 2018	Development Programme. Human Development Report – 2018	KOF Globalisation Index – 2018	Index EF EPI
1 – Hong Kong	1 – New Zealand	1 – USA	1 – Switzerland	1 – Norway	1 – Denmark	1 – Norway	1 – Belgium	1 – Sweden
2 – Singapore	2 – Singapore	2 – Singapore	2 – Netherlands	2 – Finland	2 – New Zealand	2 – Switzerland	2 – Netherlands	2 – Netherlands
3 – New Zealand	3 – Denmark	3 – Germany	3 – Sweden	3 – Sweden	3 – Finland	3 – Australia	3 – Switzerland	3 – Singapore
97 – Moldova	30 – Spain	42 – Latvia	45 – Vietnam	148 – Venezuela	32 – Paraguay	48 – Oman	55 – Kuwait	41 – Costa Rica

98 – Russia	31 – Russia	43 – Russia	46 – Russia	149 – Russia	138 – Russia	49 – Russia	56 – Russia	42 – Russia
99 – Namibia	32 – France	44 – Cyprus	47 – Chile	150 – Bangladesh	144 – Comoros	50 – Montenegro	57 – Montenegro	43 – Ukraine
180 – PDRK	190 – Somali	140 – Chad	126 – Yemen	180 – Turkmenistan	180 – Somali	189 – Niger	207 – Virgin Islands	88 – Livia

Source: The Heritage Foundation (2019), World Bank Group (2018), World Economic Forum (2018), The Global Innovation Index 2018, Cornell INSEAD WIPO (2018), Transparency International (2018), United Nations Development Programme (2018), Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich (2018), Index EF EPI (2018).

Despite the fact that Russia's brand is not at the forefront, the dynamics are positive, which is a good sign for the country. Summarizing various approaches to the assessment of national brands, the main components of a successful country brand are the following: business, government, quality of life, people, culture, tourism. First of all, the authors' attention was focused on business parameters, the range of which is extended compared to most modern approaches and includes: resources, national goods and services, and their exports, foreign investments, currency stability, and infrastructure. Such a structural priority will contribute, in the authors' opinion, to the fulfillment of the basic requirements of a successful national brand, confirmed by the majority of institutions and experts involved in its assessments.

Consequently, countries should develop and manage their image in such aspects as business, socio-economic, tourist, cultural and political. It is worth noting that international rankings directly affect the national branding strategies of countries, because they determine the criteria on a global scale and the standards which the territories should maintain for a successful image.

As evidenced by the dynamics of the positions of the national economy in international ratings for 2013-2018, for some positions there was a significant rise, and for some – a decline and

deterioration. So, for example, taking into account the formation of a national brand, the index of global competitiveness of the countries of the global economy is an important indicator, in which in 2018 Russia ranks 43rd. It should be emphasized that, given the formation of a national brand, the volatility of this index for Russia seriously worsens the dynamics of foreign direct investment and the overall level of business activity. So, today, foreign investors are mainly guided by forecasts and estimates of international institutions, since they have a wide range of coverage for comparative analysis and, in their entirety, are accurate in predicting the main trends in national economies.

The authors carried out a correlation-regression analysis and constructed cross-correlation matrices of the influence of international rankings in competitive areas on the Nation Brands index of Brand Finance over 2013-2018. Thus, the value of the index of ease of doing business with a correlation of 0.9 most influences the dynamics of the national brand index. Also, the dynamics of the innovation component of the national economy has a significant connection with the index under consideration, which is reflected in the value of the global innovation index with a correlation of 0.82. In general, the cross-correlation matrix of the impact of international rankings in the areas of competitiveness on the Brand Finance Index of Russia over 2013-2018 is displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Matrix of cross-correlation of the impact of international rankings by the areas of competitiveness on the Brand Finance Index for Russia over 2013-2018.

Index	Index of Economic Freedom	Ease of Doing Business Index	Index of Competitiveness	Global Innovation Index	Worldwide Press Freedom Index	Corruption Perception Index	Human Development Index	Globalisation Index	English Proficiency Index	Brand Finance
Index of Economic Freedom	1									
Doing Business	0.69	1								
Global Competitiveness Report	-0.61	-0.44	1							
Global Innovation Index	0.48	0.80	-0.40	1						
Worldwide Press Freedom Index	0.26	0.26	0.03	-0.28	1					
Corruption Perceptions Index	-0.43	-0.27	0.66	-0.58	0.65	1				
Development Programme. Human Development Report	0.36	0.32	-0.20	0.66	-0.37	-0.66	1			
Globalisation Index	0.74	0.86	-0.44	0.58	0.51	-0.19	0.43	1		

Source: Brand Finance. Nation Brands (2013-2018), The Heritage Foundation (2019), The World Bank Group (2018), World Economic Forum (2018), Cornell INSEAD WIPO (2018), Reporters Without Borders (2018), Transparency International (2018), United Nations Development Programme (2018), Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich (2018), Index EF EPI (2018).

After gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, an attempt was made in the Russian Federation to build a national identity and transform the economy into a market one.

The development of its own territorial brand for countries in transition is an integral part of the success of their political and economic evolution. In addition, initiatives on national branding provide former communist countries with opportunities to develop a new image that is aimed at new perspectives. It is important to note that countries such as Russia are inevitably faced with acknowledging themselves on the global stage. Today, the economies of Central and Eastern Europe can get significant benefits from the use of marketing in order to gain competitive advantages in the global market. In general, attention to the phenomenon of national branding

began to appear at a time when the Russian Federation and similar countries found themselves in a new phase of development.

The Country Brand Index survey (conducted in December 2017 in five EU countries – Germany, Spain, France, the UK, and Italy) showed a low index of the Russian Federation brand. The target audience of the study was chosen based on the presence of an already formed civic position and ideological principles. In total, more than 2,000 respondents were surveyed, including:

- Foreign tourists who travel frequently;
- Business owners, top and middle management;
- Officials who have an influence on the formation of public opinion;
- Residents of large cities;
- Mass media representatives.

The study revealed a predominantly low level of awareness about Russia: almost 64% of respondents were never interested in the country and remember only some facts from news about Russia, 22% of respondents are superficially familiar with Russia, and only 14% are well informed about Russia because they have been to or regularly happen to visit Russia, and are interested in news from Russia.

Among the age categories, the lowest level of awareness about Russia was demonstrated by the age groups “under 20” (74%) and “over 51” (71%).

The assessment by foreigners of factors more typical of Russians as representatives of the ethnic group revealed a low degree of certainty in foreigners on this issue. On average, 36% of the surveyed respondents found it difficult to choose their own answer from among the 11 proposed characteristics. The most characteristic qualities of Russia were: hospitality (54%), hard work (53%), dignity (50%) and discipline (47%). The least characteristic features of Russians, according to foreigners, are tolerance (38%), creativity (36%) and reliability (last place, 35% of respondents).

The study of the Country Brand Index showed that, along with two leading indicators – visits to cultural and historical attractions (1st place, 56%) and rural tourism (44%), the respondents also include into prospective kinds of tourism in Russia the national parks (44%) and festival tourism (39%). The top three outsiders on this indicator are “seaside resorts” and “ecological tourism” (34% each), as well as “pilgrimage” (23%).

For foreign citizens, Russia is, above all, an agrarian (as 66% of respondents believe) and a religious country (55%). Only half of the polled foreigners believe that Russia is a European country.

In the least degree, Russia is associated by foreigners with personal security: only 25% believe that it is safe or predominantly safe in Russia.

Most foreigners agree that Russia is known worldwide for its traditions and historical heritage (62% of respondents).

Other factors that determine the positive image of Russia in the world, according to respondents, are arranged in the following sequence:

- Russia’s sporting achievements (49%);
- Russian music (39%);
- National cuisine (38%).

Least of all, foreigners tend to rank among the merits of Russia, high-quality medical care in Russia and the Russian fashion industry (15% each).

25% of respondents consider Russia to be investment-attractive, and 38% have no opinion about the positive modern image of Russia.

First of all, foreigners want to see Russia democratic (25%), open (15%) and economically stable (14%).

According to survey participants, the state should also be: safe and accessible to tourists (10%); a member of the European Union (9%); politically stable (5%); modern and modernized (4%); hospitable (3%); traditional and original (3%).

Among other wishes were the following: Russia should be cosmopolitan; independent of the influence of the former USSR; make active use of unconventional and renewable energy sources; pay attention to environmental issues; create new jobs.

The study revealed a kind of problem field, which has become an object for setting up in the development strategy of the “Russia” brand, together with the main components that influence the image, as identified by interviewing the target audience.

Discussion

The authors make the following comments on the previously identified strategic direction of Russia’s image.

First, image formation is a job not only for marketers, advertisers, and public relations specialists, but above all for the politicians, the national elite, and the population. PR must join the process of image formation at the stages when the system itself has already been changed. Image must attract financial flows, not just advertise. It does not depend on the billboards placed around Europe, which will show that the country is allegedly moving in a “speed lane”. If Russia is in the last place in the investment climate, then it will only waste its money on advertising.

Secondly, the country’s image should work to attract tourists. However, before advertising

really starts working in Europe, the entire promised infrastructure must be developed and maintained. Any discrepancy between the environment and the displayed advertising will destroy the developed image and will not leave any chances for the return of tourists in Russia. Thirdly, the country's image should work for Russian citizens if they go abroad, because today the most effective tool for advertising a country is individuals.

In previous campaigns that focused on the development of the country's image, various foci were exposed and various stakeholders were involved. However, the visually presented information and sub-projects of the campaign were very much diversified. An analysis of these initiatives showed that attempts to build a national brand were made despite the restoration of the principles of communication and branding, because marketing postulates usually allow a limited number of calls that can be transferred. Thus, the measures taken can be regarded as methods of branding a destination point, rather than a holistic branding strategy of the country. For example, these two concepts clearly distinguish, defining destination branding as a tool to attract visitors and increase tourist flow, while country branding is aimed at promoting economic, business and political interests both inside and outside the country.

Conclusions

It is worth noting that the main message of the previously developed strategy was carefully created in accordance with the revealed values and traditional properties of the country, but was not cultivated in all subprojects of the campaign. On the other hand, identifying the brand platform as an integral component of the national brand, which is intended for different audiences, it should be noted that the platform of Russia was successfully implemented in all elements of strategies, which became the connecting link of the subprojects. In general, one can conclude that the national identity of the image was not defined in detail, which is why there was not enough solid basis for image communications about Russia.

The information campaigns used were not enough to improve the attitude of the European public to Russia, because they had only a superficial character, demonstrating picturesque landscapes and national motifs. In one of the information campaigns, the issue was not raised on the reform necessary in the country and the introduction of public changes regarding the perception of the international community.

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