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BEST PRACTICES AND SOFT POWER TOOLS COUNTRY BRANDING AND ITS REFLECTION IN THE GLOBAL SOFT POWER RANKINGS

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to highlight the current problems of marketing the potential of "soft power". The authors consider the issues of national brand management by comparing the most advanced foreign and domestic models. The article reveals the factors of image formation, as well as methods for evaluating the effectiveness of branding in individual countries. The paper also reflects on the current situation regarding the Russian brand and discusses the possibility of applying the experience of foreign countries in managing information flows in Russia. The article contains arguments in favor of the need for the formation of the Russian brand and the corresponding brand management system. The authors also concluded that none of the indices is able to fully assess such a complex phenomenon as a country's brand.

The assessment of the image positioning of countries in the world cultural and humanitarian space is considered on the example of the most authoritative rating models and soft power rating indices.

The authors describe the methodology of forming each of the ratings, analyze their strengths and weaknesses. Based on the assessment of the five most significant and regularly updated soft power assessment indices, an index of existing ratings of the image positioning of countries in the world cultural and humanitarian space – the "rating of ratings" – has been created. Based on the developed rating, the most developed soft power rating index was selected. The article also concludes that it is appropriate to develop a Russian rating system based on a scientifically based and open methodology that takes into account the Russian characteristics of the domestic potential of "soft power".

Key words: soft power potential, national brand, branding model, image formation factors, brand management, image positioning, rating, soft power index, verifiable indicators.

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Introduction

Country branding originates from the emergence of brand management in business.

The development of the brand concept has led to its adaptation for various fields, including non-commercial and political. In relation to the image of a country, a brand can represent a set of characteristics that create a unique perception of the state [de Chernatony, 2008]. A strong positive image of the state encourages investment, export growth, increases the influx of tourists and immigrants, and generally contributes to the sustainable development of the country [Fetscherin, 2010].

At the present time, in an era of growing global competition in both foreign and domestic markets, states are acutely aware of the need to manage their brand, develop it, and control it [Kapferer, 2007]. Purposeful formation of a country brand is considered as a tool for effective interaction and promotion of national interests at the global level [Kotler, Gertner, 2002]. Despite the fact that country branding provides a wide field for practical activities of political strategists and specialized professionals, there is a weakness of theoretical justifications and recommendations based on them [Jacoby, Chestnut, 1979; Keller, 2012], and the level of academic activity in this area is relatively low [Dinnie, 2008].

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It can be noted that in the field of international relations, the development of marketing technologies has received a new impetus. With the advent of new media products in the global information field, States began to pay special attention to practical issues of image formation. In the well-known models of international political marketing, the potential of soft power is realized in such areas of activity as public diplomacy, state marketing, international communication, international PR, and its connection with the image of the country is established [Sun, 2008]. The quality of this work of states is reflected in the country ratings of "soft power", which signal to the world community about the level of attractiveness of a particular country in the world cultural and humanitarian space.

Thus, the recognition of the need for purposeful management of the country's image creates a corresponding need for its assessment, in consolidating the country's positions in authoritative international ratings. The complexity and complexity of such a phenomenon as a country brand requires active methodological work on the image rating system, especially in terms of identifying and adequately reflecting the characteristics of the Russian state and society that are attractive to the world community. Accordingly, this article examines the issues of image positioning of countries in the global cultural and humanitarian space and analyzes the most authoritative rating models and soft power rating indices.

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Analysis of existing methodologies for assessing the image positioning of countries in the global cultural and humanitarian space

A well-managed national brand is one of the main challenges that must be met in order to establish international connections and gain competitive advantage, using it as a real asset for all stakeholders, a magnet for attracting investment and talent, an engine of global cultural exchange, a powerful competitive advantage for exporters and a source of inspiration for the country's residents [Anholt, 2007; Social Europe Journal, 2012].

The essence of country branding, the factors that positively affect perception, and the directions that relate to the image management process in accordance with the goals of the state are described in detail in the works of J. Fan [Fan, 2010]. These include: shaping or changing national identity, strengthening national competitiveness, coordinating political, cultural, business and sports activities, promoting economic and political interests inside and outside the country, changing or improving the image/reputation of the country. At the same time, he believes that it is necessary to clearly distinguish between the concepts of "identity", "image" and "reputation" [Fan, 2008], and gives the following list of factors [Fan, 2010]: territory - geography, tourist resources; natural resources, local products; people - nationalities,

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ethnic groups; history, culture, language; political and economic systems; social institutions; infrastructure; famous people; visual components (pictures and images).

It is obvious that country brands will have significantly different strengths and identities, especially since countries use different models to assess brand success. For example, the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index is based on a "hexagon": indicators of exports, public administration, culture, people, tourism, and investment. They determine the good or bad name of the country, but it is important to remember that their impact on the overall indicator is uneven. For France and Italy, "culture" is more important than "people" and "public administration", the positive image of Germany is determined by "state management" and "export", Russia has the strongest place – "culture", and "public administration" - the weakest [Vedomosti, 2013]. Therefore, it makes sense to consider the five most significant (based on citations in the world's mass media) regularly updated ratings and indices for assessing "soft power»:

- 1) The New Persuaders III. A 2012 Global Ranking of Soft Power;
- 2) East West Global Index 200 (2011);
- 3) Failed States Index 20133;
- 4) Rapid-growth markets soft power index. Spring 2012;
- 5) Country Brand Index 2012–2013 // Future Brand.

New admonishers. Global Soft Power Rating 2012 (Jonathan McClory. The New Persuaders III A 2012 Global Ranking of Soft Power)

A joint research project of the British Institute for Government and Monocle Magazine 6 developed a composite soft power index based on a combination of objective and subjective criteria. The index has been calculated, published and updated since 2010. In 2011, the index methodology was significantly adjusted. A less significant adjustment to the methodology took place in 2012.

In accordance with the methodology of previous studies, the authors collected a number of statistical indicators, as well as data from qualitative studies (about 50 indicators in total), combined in five dimensions: 1) The "Culture" dimension reflects both the quality of the products produced in this area and their distribution on an international scale. The "kultura" sub-index includes such indicators as the annual number of tourists coming to the country, the global spread of the music industry and the country's sporting success. 2) The dimension of "Public administration" is aimed at assessing the country's state institutions, political values and reflecting the main results of political activity. This sub-index includes such indicators as human freedoms, human development, the level of violence in society, and the effectiveness of public administration. 3) The "Diplomacy" dimension characterizes the diplomatic resources and

global influence of States. It evaluates the number of diplomatic missions abroad, membership in multilateral organizations, and international development assistance. 4) The "Education" section assesses the country's ability to attract foreign students, establish educational exchanges, and create high-quality universities. 5) The "Business/Innovation" dimension is aimed at assessing the relative attractiveness of a country's economic model in terms of openness, ability to innovate, and the quality of government regulation. This dimension takes into account the indicators of innovation activity, corruption and competitiveness.

The countries included in the study were chosen not based on a pre - determined set of criteria, but in order to form a representative sample of the main centers of power in the world from each geopolitical region.

Country Brand Index 2012-2013 (Country Brand Index // Future Brand)

The annual index is calculated by Future Brand using quantitative methods and expert opinions, which, among other things, are focused on forecasting future leading countries. The study has been conducted since 2009.

The methodology includes the collection of data from 3,600 respondents from 18 countries of the world on the developed Future Brand questionnaire, which allows us to understand the attitude of different categories of citizens (residents, investors, tourists and foreign authorities) to the country under study. The questionnaire consistently asks questions about the availability of information about the country (from its existence to specific information), about the associations that the country causes, about the assessment of the country, about plans to visit the country (investment in it, purchase of services/goods), about tracking information about the country (the presence of business relations in the country), about the recommendation of the country (family, friends and colleagues).

In addition to the survey described above, the company conducts expert seminars (focus groups), to which the company invites specialists in the fields of public policy and management, international relations, economics and trade, international law, national security, energy and climate change, urban and regional planning, immigration and the media, with whom in-depth interviews are conducted.

In addition, the authors rely on a wide range of secondary sources of information: news agencies (Reuters, CNN, BBC News, etc.), data and indexes of international organizations (International Telecommunication Union, International Organization for Standardization, Freedom House Index of Political Freedoms, UN Human Development Reports, etc.), magazines (Economist, The New York Times, etc.), authorities of individual countries (Japan Ministry of Justice and JNTO, etc.).

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Countries are evaluated by 23 indicators, grouped into the following groups: 1) value system (political freedoms, environmental protection, stable legal environment, tolerance, freedom of speech); 2) quality of life (education system, health system, housing standards, safety, employment opportunities, preferred place of residence); 3) favorable business environment (investment climate, technological development, regulatory regulation, availability of qualified employees); 4) heritage and culture (history, art and culture, preservation of traditions, nature); 5) tourism (quality goods at an affordable price, attractions, accommodation and recreation opportunities, food).

The leaders of this rating are Switzerland, Canada, Japan and Sweden.

The weakest positions are in Somalia, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Russia is on the 83rd out of 118 places in the rating. Russia has shown relatively poor results in the "security" dimension. In addition, the rating of Russia reduces the perception of its "legal environment" and "political freedoms". Respondents are also concerned about corruption, the high level of bureaucratization of many public administration processes, and censorship.

Since 2013, the authors of the study began to identify countries that have the best prospects for the development of their brands in the near future. In particular, the following countries-future brand leaders-were noted: the United Arab Emirates, Chile, Malaysia, Qatar, Estonia, China, Iceland, Mexico, Brazil, Turkey, Thailand, Colombia, India, Kazakhstan, Vietnam.

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