

Research article

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Locus branding as an element of territorial marketing of Caucasian Mineral Waters Resort towns

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Abstract. *The city as a part of the socio-cultural space has its own uniqueness, which is expressed in the formation of its image. "Locus branding" (branding of the territory) is detailed by such concepts as "identity of the city", "identity of the territory", "cultural city code", "tourist city code". The mechanisms of branding the territory on the basis of "Locus branding" are considered. The factors that have a positive and negative impact on the formation of the tourist code of the resort city are identified. As a basis for the study of the locus branding of the resort city, it is proposed to consider the following factors affecting the coding of urban reality: natural, climatic; artistic works, historical events related to the city, architectural characteristics, symbolic connection with famous personalities. The mechanisms of forming a positive image of the city based on the emotional component are considered. Based on the conducted research, it is concluded that it is necessary to differentiate territorial marketing strategies for the formation and dissemination of a positive image of the resort city.*

Keywords: territorial marketing, territory branding, locus branding, city image, city brand, cultural city code, tourist city code, city identity

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Локус-брендинг как элемент территориального маркетинга городов-курортов Кавказских Минеральных Вод

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Аннотация. В статье исследуется Город как часть социокультурного пространства обладающей своей уникальностью, что выражается в формировании его имиджа. «Локус-брендинг» (брендинг территории) детализируются такими понятиями, как «айдентика города», «айдентика территории», «культурный код города», «туристический код города». Рассмотрены механизмы брендинга территории на основе «Локус-брендинга». Выявлены факторы, оказывающие положительное и отрицательное влияние на формирование туристического кода города курорта (бренда).

Ключевые слова: территориальный маркетинг, брендинг территории, локус-брендинг, имидж города, бренд города, культурный код города, туристический код города, айдентика города

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Introduction. In 2021, the Russian government presented the national project "Tourism and Hospitality Industry". The main goals of the national project are the development of domestic tourism, the creation of additional jobs in the industry, and the development of tourism infrastructure. Opportunities are also created for self-realization and development of talents, the creation of conditions for the education of a harmoniously developed and socially responsible individual based on the spiritual and moral values of the peoples of the Russian Federation, historical and national-cultural traditions, real growth in the export of non-resource non-energy goods, a comfortable and safe living environment, improved quality of the urban environment, etc. According to Rosstat, the total number of tourist trips of Russians for 9 months of 2023 amounted to 134 million trips, which is 16.48% more than for the same period in 2022. The tourist flow was distributed among the federal districts as follows: 30.1% went to the Central Federal District, 20.6% to the Northwestern Federal District, 18.8% to the Southern Federal District, 10.3% to the Volga Federal District, 7.5% to the Siberian Federal District, 5.2% to the Ural Federal District, and 3.8% to the North Caucasian and Far Eastern Federal Districts each.

Main part. The terms "country marketing" and "country branding" were first developed in 2002 by marketer S. Anholt. Subsequently, these terms were detailed depending on specific - marketing objects. For example, "territorial brand" or "city brand", etc. [1].

Researchers divide territorial brands into:

- Local (brand of a local territory within one city or city district)
- National (the brand exists within the borders of a certain country),
- Multinational (country brands are positioned on a global scale) [15].

Kotler F., Asplund K., Rein I., Haider D. consider city marketing as an activity that allows for a systematic development of a set of measures within the framework of urban policy with the involvement of basic marketing technologies, tools and strategies. The authors position residents, tourists, investors as consumers, and the goods are countries, regions, cities [8].

Arzhenovsky I. V. believes that the marketing strategy of each city is a unique product that cannot be automatically copied, but can only be cultivated based on local conditions. The author suggests including in the city marketing plan: The city's image, its attractions, infrastructure, public support, and city advertising [2].

Other researchers replace the term territory with the term "locus" (from Latin: locus - place, loca places, areas connected with each other academic.ru), and the term territorial with the term "locus". It is assumed that they are applicable to different types of city territories: center, district, streets.

"Locus branding" (territory marketing) is detailed by such concepts as "city identity", "territory identity", "cultural code of the city". The term "identity" is translated from English as identity, personality, originality. Authors Mantushkina A.Yu., Beketova T.S. claim that "identity"

by means of design conveys to the user the necessary information through recognizable images, meanings and symbols and is a powerful factor in the development of the city as a tourist center [10].

Fedotova N. G., Shcherbinina N. G. consider the cultural code of the city as a system of objects and symbols, recording and transmitting its individual style and identity. As a basis for studying the cultural code of the city, it is proposed to consider the following factors: nature and climate, artistic texts, where the city is understood and presented in an artistic context, mythology, historical events associated with the city, spatial characteristics (architecture, monuments, street names), symbolic connection with famous personalities ("geniuses of the place"), poems, memes and blogs [17, 18].

Some authors consider the locus- brand as a cognitive phenomenon, representing a set of expectations, memories, associations, caused by a particular geographical location and forming a stable emotional connection with the recipient. Thus, being part of the psychological sphere, the brand affects the feelings and emotions of consumers. All this makes its developers turn to human values [5, 6, 7, 9].

P.B. Parshin classifies national cuisine, drinks, architecture, commercial brands, etc. as the main attributes of a "locus brand" [11, 12].

The standard for building a "locus brand" is to create a certain image through a myth or legend associated with a given territory, landmark, etc. As a rule, otherworldly forces may act in a legend along with people and animals. Therefore, a legend may not always be associated with real events or phenomena. There are exceptions when the legendary hero was a historical figure [4,14].

"Locus branding" in Russia is being formed on the wave of development of domestic tourism, which uses patriotic feelings for the Motherland. Its peculiarity lies in the rebranding of Russia as an original country-civilization, possessing a unique production potential, which is based on scientific, educational opportunities, multicultural traditions, rich natural and recreational resources. The leading role is played by old and new regional brands of goods and services bearing the "Made in Russia" mark. For example, Vologda butter, resorts of the Altai, Krasnodar and Stavropol Territories.

Since 2022, the All-Russian competition for the best projects of the tourist code of the city center among the subjects of the Russian Federation has been held. Applicants for a subsidy must prepare a project of the so-called tourist code of the city center (a single space with attractions, pedestrian zones, fairs, photo zones and viewing platforms, a modern navigation system and infrastructure for people with disabilities)

Rostourism defines a city's tourist center as a city territory with an area of up to 100 hectares, at least 50% of whose capital buildings were built before 1960, which has tourist resources and is open for unimpeded use by an unlimited number of people [13].

Materials and research methods. The aim of our research is the need to conduct marketing research on the rebranding of Russian regions in the field of tourism, as an original country-civilization with unique production, natural, and human potential.

Our empirical studies have allowed us to determine indicators for assessing the "brand locus" of Caucasian Mineral Waters resort cities:

1. "Natural landscape and natural resources" (mountains, river, lake, open mineral springs),
2. "Architectural environment of the pedestrian part of the city center (resort boulevard)" (buildings of the 19th century and older, architectural styles, churches, colonnades, stairs),

3. "Tourist infrastructure" (hotels, catering facilities, places selling souvenirs and folk and artistic crafts (markets), cable car),

4. "Historical events, works of art where the city is understood and presented in an artistic context" (military actions, scientific expeditions, entertainment of the class elite, historical figures who visited the city, works of art (books, films, paintings),

5. "Identity (originality) of the city in visual symbols" (recognizable places of the city in souvenirs, advertising).

The sources of information used were official statistical reference books, scientific publications, mass media, etc. The indicators are presented in relative indicators of the structure, which is stable over time. The standard values of the indicators are based on the results of the analysis of studies by domestic and foreign specialists, industry characteristics, and author's observations. To process the obtained data, comparison and grouping methods were used.

There are three main stages in the development of rating systems [3]:

1. Formation of a system of indicators used to calculate the rating.

2. Formation of a regulatory framework for each indicator.

3. Development of an algorithm for the final rating assessment of the region's competitiveness

Each of the Caucasian Mineral Waters resort towns was given a score from 1 to 3 based on the specified criteria:

For each selected indicator, a regulatory framework of 3 reliability classes was formed:

1 point - this component of the tourist code is weakly expressed

2 points - this component of the tourist code is moderately expressed

3 points - this component of the tourist code is clearly expressed

In our study, in the block "Natural landscape and natural resources", "Architectural environment of the pedestrian part of the city center (resort boulevard)", the standard values of the indicators are set in reverse order according to reliability classes: the first is the worst, the last is the best.

Research results and their discussion. The famous European resort town of Karlovy Vary as a reference example and give a description of the "brand locus" assessment indicators for resort towns. The presence of a mountainous area (valley), a river embankment (natural lake) on two banks (Tepla River), a resort boulevard inscribed in the natural landscape, has dense development and an authentic color scheme and architectural style.

The resort boulevard is long enough for a leisurely stroll (from the Pup Hotel to the Postal Bridge 1.8 km). At the beginning or end of the pedestrian streets there is a resort park with a cable car and an observation deck.

There are colonnades, cascading stairs, squares, lawns. Pedestrian bridges are thrown across the river. The "resort boulevard" is usually pedestrian, stretches the entire length of the river or consists of small streets. The names of the street and squares reflect the historical stages of the city's development and bear the names of famous people who visited this place throughout the city's history.

There are buildings from the 19th century and older, the architectural style is baroque and neoclassicism, at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries. Art Nouveau and postmodernism. There are religious buildings of different eras (church buildings). The presence of architecturally designed drinking mineral springs and open springs for bathing. These are colonnades and pavilions built either next to the source or the source is under the roof.

The places of sale (one or two small markets) of souvenirs, folk and artistic crafts and food products authentic for the given area are highlighted. Recognizable places of the city, which are

present in souvenir products, are clearly identified. Within the resort boulevard there are hotels and catering facilities.

There is a railway station in the Art Nouveau or Post-Art Nouveau style of the late 19th - early 20th century. An art theater and a local history museum are a must. Infrastructure for concerts and other mass events (conventions, film festivals (modern concert hall) has been created).

There are myths and legends that reflect the history of the city. An extensive list of famous guests who visited the city at different historical times has been compiled: royalty, poets, philosophers, artists, writers, scientists, politicians.

Table 1 – Natural landscape and natural resources

Settlement	Mountain locality (up to 700m.-1 701-900m.-2 Bol.900-3)	River Valley (embankment) (No river-1 1 river-2 2 rivers-3)	Lake natural/ anthropog en something happened zhdeniya (natural-3) dam-2 pit-1)	Resort park terrain cures (up to 10 km.-1 11-30km.-2 Bol.30-3)	Sum points	Rating
K.Vary	1	3	2	3	9	3
Pyatigorsk city	3	2	2	2	9	3
Kislovodsk city	3	3	2	3	11	3
Essentuki city	1	2	2	1	6	1
city of Zheleznovodsk	2	1	3	3	9	3

Mountainous terrain is typical for most of the cities under study, except for Yessentuki. Elevation differences range from 500 m to 1500 m, which makes it possible to form terrain cures of varying difficulty. The cities of K.Vary and Kislovodsk have terrain cures over 30 km long. The presence of open water sources within the city (a mountain river or several rivers, lakes of various origins) allows differentiating the brand of the place. In the cities of K.Vary and Kislovodsk, there are rivers within the tourist pedestrian zone. All the cities under study have resort parks (national parks) of varying sizes (Table 1).

Table 2 – Architectural environment of the pedestrian part of the city center (resort boulevard)

Populated paragraph	Resort Boulevard (sum of streets) (up to 1 km.-1 1-1.5 km.-2 bol.1,5-3)	Continuous development rate % (up to 20-3 21-30-2 Bol.31-1)	Buildings 19th century and older than % (up to 20-1 21-40-2 Bol.40-3)	Buildings of the first half (20% v.) up to 20-1 21-40-2 Bol.40-3)	Buildings of the second half (20%). up to 20-3 21-40-2 Bol.40-1)	Colonnade (1 page - 1 2p.-2 3p.-3)
K. Vary	3	3	3	1	3	3
Pyatigorsk city	2	3	2	3	2	2
Kislovodsk city	1	3	2	2	2	2
Essentuki city	1	1	2	3	2	-

Zheleznovodsk city	1	2	1	1	1	1
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To differentiate the "brand locus", we have identified such a concept as a resort boulevard. A resort boulevard is a street or several streets that are located in the tourist center of the city, have a linear structure and continuity of development, architectural structures of the 19th century and early 20th century, associated with recreation and providing the cultural code of the city. Boundaries of the pedestrian zone of the resort cities of the Caucasian Mineral Waters:

– The resort town of Kislovodsk: pedestrian zone 0.8 km (Resort Boulevard from Kirov Street to the Narzan Gallery and further to the Colonnade of the resort park),

– Resort town of Pyatigorsk: pedestrian zone 1.4 km (Gagarin Boulevard from the karst lake Proval to the Academic Gallery and to Kirov Street (Flower Garden Park, Gukasov coffee shop),

– The resort town of Yessentuki: pedestrian zone 0.78 km. (from Vokzalnaya Street to Internatsionalnaya Street to Teatralnaya Square passes into the Kurortny Park (from Internatsionalnaya and Krasnoarmeyskaya Streets to Frunze and Razumovsky Streets along the border of the Kurortny Park),

– Resort town Zheleznovodsk: pedestrian zone 0.95 km. (from Lermontov Street to Tchaikovsky Street along the border of the Resort Park).

Continuity (sparseness) of development up to 20% is observed in the cities of K.Vary, Pyatigorsk, and Kislovodsk.

Buildings of the 19th century and older are more than 40% present in the city of K.Vary. Buildings of the first half of the 20th century predominate in the cities of the Caucasian Mineral Waters (Table 2).

Table 3 – Architectural environment of the pedestrian part of the city center (resort boulevard continuation)

Populated paragraph	Cascade stairs (1 page - 1 2p.-2 3p.-3)	Religious buildings Church (up to 3-1 4-5-2 Bol.5-3)	Architecturally designed mineral springs for drinking (up to 2 p.-1 2p.-4-2 Bol.4-3)	Architecturally designed mineral springs for bathing (up to 2 p.-1 2p.-4-2 Bol.4-3)	Sum points	Rating
K. Vary	1	3	3	3	26	3
Pyatigorsk city	1	2	2	3	22	3
Kislovodsk city	1	2	3	2	20	3
Essentuki city	-	1	2	2	14	1
Zheleznovodsk city	2	1	3	1	14	1

Colonnades and cascade stairs, architecturally designed mineral springs for drinking and bathing, as an indispensable attribute of resort architecture are present in most of the cities studied. The architectural environment of the pedestrian part of the city center is more expressed in the sum of points in the cities of K.Vary, Pyatigorsk, and Kislovodsk.

Table 3 – Tourism infrastructure

Settlement	Hotels (until 10-1 11-30-2 bol.30-3)	Sanatoriums (up to 20-1 21-40-2 more than 40-3)	Catering Facilities (up to 100-1 101-200-2 more)
K. Vary	3	3	3

Pyatigorsk city	2	1	3
Kislovodsk city	2	3	2
Essentuki city	1	2	2
Zheleznovodsk city	1	2	1

Tourist infrastructure (hotels, sanatoriums, catering facilities, cable car) is more developed in the cities of K.Vary, Pyatigorsk, and Kislovodsk. (Table 3)

Table 4 – Tourism infrastructure (continued)

Populated paragraph	City Theatre (no-1 60g.20v.-2 19th century - early 20th	City Museum (up to 3-1 3-6-2 Bol.6-3)	Cable car (no-1 1st page..-2 p.2-3)	Sum points	Rating
K. Vary	3	3	3	18	3
Pyatigorsk city	3	2	2	13	3
Kislovodsk city	3	3	2	15	3
Essentuki city	2	2	1	10	2
Zheleznovodsk city	1	1	1	7	1

City theatres built in the 19th century and early 20th century are located in K. Vary, Pyatigorsk, and Kislovodsk. According to the results of the tourist infrastructure table, the quantitatively highest rating was assigned to K. Vary, Pyatigorsk, and Kislovodsk.

Table 5 – Historical events, works of art, where the city is understood and presented in an artistic context

Populated paragraph	Historical events (Royal Hunt-3 Military Actions-2 Scientific expeditions-1)	Myths, legends (with the participation of king-3 prince, khan-2 common people-1)	Visiting famous people (Up to 50 people-1 51-100 people-2 More than 100 people - 3)
K. Vary	3	3	3
Pyatigorsk city	2	2	1
Kislovodsk city	2	1	2
Essentuki city	2	2	1
Zheleznovodsk city	1	2	1

The time of the foundation of Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad) and subsequent legends are associated with the hunt of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV in the 14th century. The foundation of the cities of the Caucasian Mineral Waters occurred as a result of military actions and subsequent scientific expeditions in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The myths and legends of the cities of the Caucasian Mineral Waters feature various characters from a prince (khan) to ordinary people (shepherd).

Visits of famous people (kings, Emperor Peter I, aristocrats, creative intelligentsia) to the city of K. Vary were associated with recreation and entertainment. In the first half of the 19th century, the cities of the Caucasian Mineral Waters were visited by officers and nobles who participated in military operations in the Caucasus, and famous writers and poets were present mainly in the role of war correspondents (Table 4).

Table 6 – Historical events, works of art, where the city is understood and presented in an artistic context (continued)

Populated paragraph	Feature films (up to 8 -1 9-15-2 Bol.15-3)	Event tourism (film festivals, city holidays, etc.)	Sum points	Rating
K. Vary	2	3	14	3
Pyatigorsk city	2	1	8	2
Kislovodsk city	3	2	10	3
Essentuki city	1	2	8	2
Zheleznovodsk city	1	1	5	1

For historical decorations when filming feature films, directors actively use architectural structures of resort cities. In terms of the number of feature films shot in the city, the city of Kislovodsk leads, in terms of quality, the city of K.Vary (the 2006 film about the adventures of James Bond "Casino Royale").

All the listed resort cities participate in event tourism (film festivals, city holidays, etc.). In K.Vary, the international film festival has been held in the Thermal Hotel since 1946.

Table 7. Identity (originality) of the city in visual symbols

Populated paragraph	Recognizable places Cities (up to 20-1 21-30-2 bol.30-3)	Historical street names, areas diversity (activists 19 and the beginning of 20th century)	Recognizable city places in souvenirs % (up to 50%-1 50-70%-2 more than 70%-3)	Recognizable Symbols Cities in Advertising (animals, birds, ceramics)	Sum points	Rating
K. Vary	3	3	3	3	12	3
Pyatigorsk city	2	2	3	3	10	3
Kislovodsk city	2	2	3	3	10	3
Essentuki city	2	2	2	2	8	2
Zheleznovodsk city	1	1	1	1	4	1

In terms of the total score for the indicators Recognizable places of the city, historical names of streets, squares, the city of K.Vary is definitely in the lead. Historical names of streets, squares in honor of public figures of the cities of the Caucasian Mineral Waters are not very diverse. These are poets and writers of the "Golden and Silver Age of Russian Literature" and revolutionaries and figures of the USSR.

The range of souvenirs is approximately the same: Becherovka liqueur (K. Vary), various herbal teas (KMV cities), mugs with a spout for drinking, cosmetics based on mineral waters and mud, porcelain tableware, crystal and boxes (K. Vary), wooden tableware (KMV cities), street art. The differentiation of souvenirs in K. Vary is more than 80%, in Pyatigorsk - 63%, in Kislovodsk - 54%.

Symbols of cities in the form of animals, birds, reptiles: deer (chamois) (city of K. Vary), eagle with a snake in its claws (city of Kislovodsk, city of Pyatigorsk), eagle with a mace (city of Yessentuki) (Table 6).

The deer is considered to be the embodiment of strength, courage, determination and prudence. The deer's antlers are connected to the branches of the Tree of Life and symbolize the sun's rays and fertility.

The Eagle symbol is associated with vitality, health, longevity, and the snake with illnesses and ailments. There is a legend about an Eagle who was healed from a fatal snake bite by falling into a mineral water spring.

There is a problem with differentiating the symbols of Kislovodsk and Pyatigorsk: an eagle with a snake in its claws.

Table 6. Summary table of the point-rating assessment of the “brand locus” of the resort cities of the Caucasian Mineral Waters

Populated paragraph	Natural landscape and natural resources	Tourists Czech infrastructure	Architectural Wednesday (resort boulevard)	Historical events, art military production	Identity originality cities in visual symbols	Sum points	Rating
K. Vary	9	18	26	14	12	79	3
Pyatigorsk	9	13	22	8	10	62	2
City of Kislovodsk	11	15	20	10	10	66	2
Essentuki city	6	10	14	8	8	46	1
G. Zheleznovodsk	9	7	14	5	4	39	1

Conclusion. The city of K. Vary received the highest score (79) for the following indicators: Natural landscape and natural resources (the Teplá River flows into the Ohře River), tourist infrastructure (the Pupp Hotel), architectural environment (spa boulevard) (Five Colonnades), and historical events, works of art (emperors Charles IV and Peter I), identity (originality) of the city in visual symbols (Deer-chamois on a rock, Geyser spring (Židlo), Becherovka monument).

The city of Kislovodsk received the highest score (66) for the following indicators: Natural landscape and natural resources (the Olkhovka River flows into the Podkumok River), tourist infrastructure (the building of the Narzan sanatorium, the former Grand Hotel), architectural environment (resort boulevard) (Narzan Gallery, Main Narzan Baths), historical events, works of art (the poet Pushkin, the singer Shalyapin), identity (originality) of the city in visual symbols (eagle, snake on a rock, Narzan Gallery, Colonnade of the Resort Park).

Pyatigorsk received the highest score (62) for the following indicators: Natural landscape and natural resources (Mount Mashuk, Mount Goryachaya), Tourist infrastructure (Bristol hotels, Intourist hotel), Architectural environment (resort boulevard) (Proval spring, Academic and Lermontov gallery), Historical events, works of art (poet Lermontov, writer Leo Tolstoy), Identity (originality) of the city in visual symbols (Eagle, snake on a rock, Proval, place of Lermontov's duel)

The city of Yessentuki received the highest score (46) for the following indicators: Natural landscape and natural resources (Resort Park), tourist infrastructure (Staro-Kazennaya Hotel (Healing Key Sanatorium), architectural environment (Resort Boulevard) (Balneological and mud therapy center named after Semashko, Theatre Square), historical events, works of art (General

A.P. Ermolov, Maxim Gorky), identity (originality) of the city in visual symbols (Balneological and mud therapy center named after Semashko, Theatre Park).

The city of Zheleznovodsk received the highest score (39) for the following indicators: Natural landscape and natural resources (Mount Zheleznaya, Mount Razvalka), tourist infrastructure (Gorny Vozdukh sanatorium), Architectural environment (resort boulevard) (Pushkin Gallery, the Palace of the Emir of Bukhara), historical events, works of art (the poet Lermontov, Gumilev, the writer Leo Tolstoy), the identity (originality) of the city in visual symbols (the mug "Byuvette", Pushkin Gallery, the cascading staircase of the Resort Park).

When developing territorial marketing strategies for the formation and dissemination of a positive image (brand) of a resort city, it is necessary to differentiate (Table 6):

- identity (originality) of the city in visual symbols, symbolic connection with famous personalities (cities of Pyatigorsk and Kislovodsk),
- the city center (Kurortny Boulevard) from the Kurortny Park, the identity (originality) of the city in visual symbols, symbolic connection with famous personalities (the cities of Yessentuki and Zheleznovodsk).

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