



Research Article

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## Territorial Branding as an Instrument for Competitiveness of Rural Development

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### Abstract

*The conceptual foundations, principles and mechanisms of territorial branding concerning the prospects of rural development in different countries are the subject of the study. The systematization and study of territorial branding problems and experience of the rural areas in Ukraine is the purpose of the paper. The main method of research was the study of the unique experience of individual rural communities. The methodology of the study foresaw the study of the prospects of rural development through the determining the role of territorial branding. Monitoring the potential of territorial branding for rural areas in Ukraine with using SWOT-analysis has shown the uniqueness of risks, limitations and prospects. It had been established that the conditions of neutralization of weaknesses and risks mean the combination of economic (primarily investment), cultural and political initiatives, where a significant role belongs to the effects of community self-organization. At the same time, the prospects are formed from the presence of unique institutional assets, natural, climatic and economic conditions, possible perception of this idea by the rural population which does not contradict the basic cultural values. The emphasis is placed on the fact that the realization of rural development in Ukraine as a national policy should take into account that Ukrainian rural communities remain "difficult", mostly depressed economies, where the level of economic activity is traditionally low and unemployment is high. At the same time, studying the experience of the effectiveness of territorial branding had allowed to generalize and to classify the factors of brand-forming idea in Ukraine. These factors are: 1) a unique institutional history; 2) landscape and recreational potential; 3) special economic behavior of local inhabitants; 4) investment attractiveness of the territory; 5) unique economic specialization of the territory; 6) tourism activity; 7) the role of local government. Significant socio-economic effect of these examples is fixed. The area of application of these results is the activity of local authorities at rural communities, non-governmental organizations and universities, regulatory policy in terms of decentralization.*

**Keywords:** branding, territorial branding, competitiveness, rural development.

## 1. Introduction

The modern paradigm of rural development should be considered in the context of the contradictory consequences of market reforms in Ukraine. That's why the search for new sources of rural development becomes the main purpose in correcting further rural reforms. Branding of rural areas should be considered as one of these sources which are based on the unique features of local areas and economies. The peculiarity of such technologies of development is the main role of internal factors of self-organization and development.

World experience confirms the trend of increasing the role of national, regional and territorial brands. Thus, the branding of rural areas is a new management technology, which has a very small practical spread due to the lack of necessary knowledge about the essence of the process and the possibilities of its modeling. It should be noted that the scientific basis of territorial branding in the context of rural development policy remains poorly developed. Hence, the problem requires a scientific and practical solution with taking into account that in these countries there is no financing for rural development programs, and the phenomena of self-organization are the only one alternative.

The concept of territorial branding in the context of socio-economic development of rural areas (analysis of recent research and publications).

The forming of the concept of territorial branding in the framework of the general theory of branding has a certain history and preconditions. So, the first works on branding of the territories belong to the 90's. XXcr. : in 1993 the first edition of F. Kotler's book was published [Kotler, Keller, 2005], where the potential and principles of marketing of territories were indicated. Also in S.Anholt's works in the 90's [Anholt, 2007] the basic categorial of apparatus and methodical basis of territorial branding were substantiated. In studies S. Ward [Ward, 1998] the practice of marketing the territories (cities) was researched in the late nineteenth century. Territorial branding had been researched in the 80's of the twentieth century as a trend in Europe due to the need to maintain economic activity in the cities and to save jobs. According to the authors mentioned, there are more than 36 types of the city brands.

In general, the most famous foreign research in the field of the theory of territorial branding became the above-mentioned work by F. Kotler, K. Asplund, D. Heider and I. Rein [Kotler, Keller, 2005]. They first found the marketing approach to considering the territory as a commodity. It should be especially emphasized to value of S.Anholt's works, who is the creator of the term "place branding" (branding of places). Since 1998, the popularization of this term had begun in the papers in quarterly journal "Place Branding and Public Diplomacy" ("Branding of Geographical Areas and Public Diplomacy"), as well as in the books "Brand of America", "Competitive Identity - New in the Issues of the Brand Management of the Nation, City, Region", "Territories: Identity, Image, Reputation", "Branding: A Road to the World Market" [Anholt, 2007]. A systematic interpretation of the territorial branding on the example of theory of city's brand had carried out by K. Dinny in the book "Branding Territories. Best World Practices" [Dinnie, 2004].

Other works of such brand consultants as Wally Olins, Simon Anholt, Mark Leonard and Peter Van Ham base on the position that branding can provide a conceptual basis for analyzing contemporary economic processes.

Particular attention deserves the studies of specific examples of regional branding. This problem is studied in David Jansson's paper (Jansson, 2012), Julie Aveline's paper (Aveline, 2006) and others. Thus, in the David Jansson's research (Jansson, 2012) it was emphasized that territorial branding is essentially social branding, territorial branding is an attempt to construct social identities, territorial branding is an opportunity for regional formation. The authors Lies Messely, Joost Dessein and Ludwig Lauwers (Messely, Dessein, Lauwers, 2010) have emphasized that in the globalized world regions and their identity are subject to great pressure, so regional brands should be considered as a response to such risks. Examples of rural development in Ireland, the Netherlands and Belgium had proved (Messely, Dessein, Lauwers, 2010) that, primarily, the internal marketing of such branding is a

determining factor in success. The authors (Vuorinen, Vos, Liping, Boyne, Hall) using on the experience of the development of the domestic brand of the estuary of the Mino River in Portugal, rural areas in Finland and in United Kingdom, had emphasized that branding of the area requires changes in the social organization of the territory and the transition to new management regimes. An important result of the researches (Vuorinen, Vos, Liping) means the description of the conflict between interests of various groups of branding agents, as well as the role of contractual relationships in ensuring long-term cooperation.

In studies (Aveline, 2006) related with UK experience, emphasis was placed on the prospects of food tourism in rural areas as the basis for territorial branding. The high dependence of the success of local development on rural branding was documented in studies (Vela, Barniol-Carcasona) on the example of Catalonia, which outlines the role of the transformation effect of local economic activity as a direction of particular consumption.

The experience of national programs in Japan, described in Anthony Rausch's paper (Rausch, 2009), can be regarded as a major success of the policy of branding of local products and services, where the role of creativity in branding played a role. A similar view is presented in the Julie Aveline's work (Aveline, 2006), where it is emphasized that branding of territories is essentially a "market of ideas", a model of new citizenship.

## 2. Methods

The analysis of this experience and conceptual ideas of territorial branding allows us to conclude that for the Third World countries with a high proportion of rural population, this practice and theory remains virtually unknown. At the same time, it can be argued that there are other sources, motives, models of territorial branding in the rural development policy of this group of countries, Ukraine in particular.

The purpose of the paper is to systematize the experience and problems of territorial branding in relation to the rural areas of Ukraine as its development technologies.

## 3. Results

To describe the potential of territorial branding for rural areas of Ukraine, it is necessary to monitor territorial branding from the positions of brand-forming factors of development. As the results of the SWOT analysis have shown, domestic branding of rural areas is characterized by its own risks, constraints and potential.

The main weaknesses of capitalization in Ukrainian rural territory are contradictory social atmosphere and critical attitude to the market changes. This causes the risks of branding at rural areas, which are caused with unfavorable competitive environment in the countryside, unfunctional regulatory policies and opportunism of the society. In our opinion, this is a real barrier to change. It should be added that this factor is more non-economic, so it is difficult to counteract it using only economic instruments. The conditions for neutralizing weaknesses and risks are the combination of economic (primarily investment), cultural and political initiatives, with a significant role of rural communities, local businesses and external public organizations.

At the same time, the prospects are quite significant given the strengths: unique institutional assets, climatic and economic conditions, possible positive perception of branding idea by rural population that does not contradict to basic cultural values.

Hence there are objectively created opportunities of branding development of rural society in the mental-demographic and financial-economic aspects. This means the development of the most diversified business in the village within the projects of territorial branding projects as sources of employment growth and economic conditions of the communities. Conditions of realization of opportunities at the same time can be the implementation of the whole range of appropriate regulatory measures, support of public organizations, self-organization of rural society through the

creation of "critical" mass of agents who want and achieve change in neutralizing indirect opportunistic tendencies.

It should be understood that branding of rural areas can only be realized at the level of local communities. Therefore, a national level policy should be considered only as an additional factor for the implementation of functions that go beyond the powers of local communities. Thus, at the national level, such regulations should foresee, possibly, a change in tax policy, in particular, the strengthening of the role of stimulative and supportive influence.

To understand the essence of the problem, it is necessary to present the generalized socio-economic "portrait" of a representative rural community in the dynamics of the last 10 years (in our case, on the example of the typical agricultural administrative region of Ukraine - Vinnytsia region). Table. 1. In our opinion, the indicators in Table. 1 give a full picture of the community's problems: the proportion of the population of retirement age indicates about the demographic situation, the number of unemployed is a direct reflection of the situation on the local labor market, the number of farmers and registered enterprises characterizes entrepreneurial activity. The state of depression of local economies was determined by the presence (or absence) of established positive changes for a long (more than 5 years) period. Also in tabl. 1 the individual indicators of the "ideal" socio-economic status of the representative rural community of Ukraine are simulated.

**Table 1:** Socio-economic status of village communities of Vinnytsia region in 2009-2019

Indicators	2009 year*	2019 year**	Perfect state (potentially possible under favorable conditions)
The value added dynamics index as a result of business activity in the community	1,00	1,19	max
The share of rural communities in a depressed state, %	72,0	64,0	min
Share of rural population of non- retirement age, %	61,0	63,0	till 70,0
Unemployment rate, %	25,0	15,0	4,0-5,0
Number of farmers per 1000 inhabitants	0,6	0,7	2,5
Number of private enterprises per 1000 inhabitants	0,5	0,9	till 3,0
Income growth index for local budgets	1,00	1,18	max
Number of full-fledged jobs created as a result of agrohholdings activity (large agrarian business), % to the total number of able-bodied population	5,0	6,8	15,0
Number of full-fledged jobs created as a result of small business activity, % to the total number of able-bodied population	17,0	21,0	till 80,0

Taking into account the data of the table 1. It can be said about a certain positive trend as a result of market reforms. On the other hand, Ukrainian rural communities remain "difficult", mostly depressed economies, where the level of economic activity is traditionally low, unemployment is high and hidden unemployment is even higher. At the same time, in comparison with the agrarian regions of Western Europe, the Ukrainian analogue is a comparatively large enclave (560 people on average in the region, at least 240 people and maximum - up to 3000 people) with high economic potential.

#### 4. Discussion

Despite the lack of practice of systematic branding of rural areas in Ukraine certain manifestations of these processes can be argued. It is important to analyse some really existing trends and their economic justification. For this purpose, selective analysis of individual rural areas was carried out (Table 2). It should be noted that the list of rural settlements in some cases could be continued, but the general classification of cases can be considered complete.

**Table 2:** Examples of unique features of villages at Vinnytsia region and the corresponding effect-forming factors of branding content

The name of the village	Feature of this territory	Effective factor
Busha, Yampil district Brailiv, Zhmerynka district	Tourist activity and a set of separate elements of the tourism competitiveness in this territory.	Tourist attraction through a special cultural-historical heritage
Stryzhavka, Vinnytsia district Pavlivka, Kalynivka district Nekrasove, Vinnytsia district	The high level of investment activity, accompanied with a relatively high level of entrepreneurship development, the number of enterprises and organizations, relatively high wages	Investment attractiveness of the territory (location in the suburban area, on the highway, a significant number of objects of investment interest, favorable labor and other resources, positive characteristics of local business, etc.).
Vedmezhe Vushko, Vinnytsia district	High level of economic activity of local small business, accompanied by relatively high level of income, prices for real estate and rent, wages, general level of quality of life. Formation of a well-established and effective specialization of local small business in the field of gardening	Availability of knowledge about unique gardening technologies. Availability of special cultural values and qualities of the local population and absence of social groups with destructive behavior
Volodymyrivka Zhmerynka district	High level of economic activity of local small business, accompanied by relatively high level of income and quality of life	The presence of special cultural values and qualities of the local population (in the former - Old Believers), respectively: the absence of groups with destructive behavior
Stepashky, Haisyn district Lavrivka/ Medvidka Vinnytsia district	Tourist activity and a set of separate elements of the competitiveness of tourism in the territory, which is related with recreation.	Tourist attraction due to the unique landscape and recreational features
Brailiv, Liudavka, Noskivtsi, Oleksandrivka, Severynivka, Stanislavchuk, Cherniatyn	Higher (in comparison with surrounding territories) level of entrepreneurship (primarily due to the development of small business) and quality of life, better demographic indicators, etc.	Tourist attraction through a special cultural and historical heritage
Snitkiv, Murovani-Kurylivtsi district	Relatively high employment rates and, consequently, better demographic and quality of life	Special actions of local authorities against other favorable preconditions (human and natural resources, effective investment activity, economic activity of the population, etc.)

The peculiarity of these data is, on the one hand, in selecting the differences between these territories, and, on the other hand, an attempt to identify the factors that determined this specialization of rural areas and its social interpretation. Such factors can be considered as historically and economically verified regularities of micro-regional development and, at the same time, as objective prerequisites for the realization of branding potential. After all, the artificial creation of territorial brands by a number of authors - for example, S. Anhold [Anholt, 2007] and others was recognized as a whole economically unpromising process, while it is emphasized on the necessity to use objective prerequisites during the process of constructing territorial branding, with which the authors of the papers certainly agree.

Analysis of these data showed that in each of the above examples, the features were created due to a separate effect-generating factor or synergy of a number of such factors.

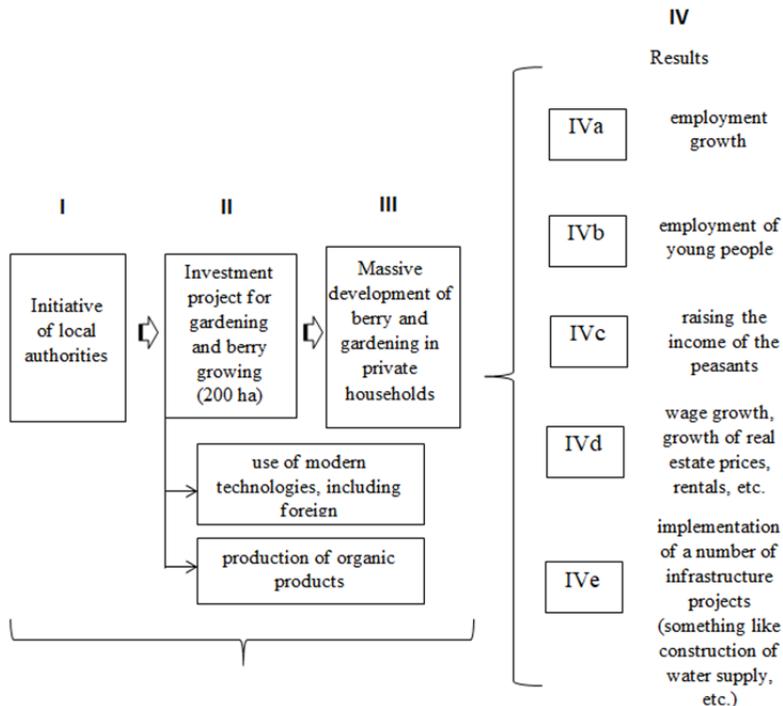
So, the factor of cultural and historical heritage is very important for the Podillia villages, which had determined the separate economic situation in these territories. In its turn, among the rural areas of the region are some with unique landscape and recreational features: as example is Stepashky village in Haisynsky district and Lavrivka and Medvidka villages in Vinnytsia district.

There are other cases. This was analyzed by the example of Volodymyrivka village in Brailiv settlement in Zhmerynka district, the level of development of small business in which and, accordingly, the quality of life differed considerably. In this case, the existence of territories of high investment and entrepreneurial activity (for example, Stryzhavka and Nekrasovo village in Vinnytsia

district) were recognized. We believe that a related to these cases may be the fact of a unique economic specialization in Vedmezhe Vushko village, on the basis of which, this rural area achieved significantly higher socio-economic characteristics.

Also the fact of the features of individual rural areas was noted as a special case due to the well-known tourist activity (urban village Brailov in Zhmerynka district and another case Busha village in Yampil district) due to the presence of a unique cultural and historical heritage. The factor corresponding to the territorial branding had a concrete manifestation in terms of creation the elements of the tourism business.

The special factor that potentially carries features of creation the territorial branding is the effectiveness of local government. This is presented by the example of Snitkiv village in Murovani-Kurylivtsi district. Thus, primarily due to the initiative of local authorities from 2012 on this rural territory an investment project for the development of berry and gardening was initiated. This had led to a sharp improvement of the current indicators such as employment at the level of medium-sized businesses and at the level of private rural farms (currently even a shortage of labor is felt), improvements in demographic indicators (an increase in the proportion of young people who actually ceased to leave the village in search of work), a sharp rise in dwelling prices, etc. Although on the territory of the community there is a reserve in the form of a unique field of wild yellow irises on an area of 10 hectares, strategic changes were not based on this unique difference. Changes were initiated with local authorities. In this case, this example represents a pronounced cascading effect, which is appropriate to all examples of branding territorial development of rural settlements; it should note in this example the possibility of a clear time-based interpretation of the processes (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1:** Effective content of the implementation of unique competitiveness factors for the rural territory (for example, Snitkiv village in Murovani-Kurylivtsi district of Vinnytsia region, 2012-2019)

That's why on the basis of the foregoing, we can generalize and classify the factors of brand-forming content for the rural territories of Ukraine. They are: 1) a unique institutional history; 2) landscape and recreational potential; 3) special economic behavior of local inhabitants; 4) investment attractiveness of the territory; 5) unique economic specialization of the territory; 6) tourism activity; 7) the role of local government.

It should be noted that in practice the particularities of certain rural areas are caused in most cases by the synergistic influence of several factors, among which it is possible to identify a certain one (one or more). So, it is expedient to build territorial branding on the basis of existing advantages, which have confirmed their effectiveness. At the same time, in a number of cases, the cause-effect mechanism of the action of individual factors can be identified. For example, the factor "unique institutional history" in certain conditions led to an increase of the role of the factor "tourist activity", "landscape and recreational potential led to an increase the tourist activity," etc.

What extent of territorial branding experience has to economic situation in an individual community? Descriptive analysis of variations in branding in rural areas in relation to the above-mentioned examples was supplemented by comparison of certain socio-economic indicators compared to the average in the Vinnytsia region, as well as in relation to geographically neighboring communities (Table 3). This table is based on the description of the seven factors of brand-building content where some rural communities with elements of brand-formation (so-called "standards") were compared with neighboring (so-called "analogues"). Using the difference in the indicators the effect of branding can be estimated. The estimation of the state was carried out according to indicators such as: "land prices" (in US dollars), "the state budget of the village council" (according to the subsidy criterion, that is, the budget was subsidized or unsubsidized in 2019), the dynamics of the socio-economic state (under the heading of "depressive state" and "state of development"), "real estate supply" (the share of non-utilized / unpopulated housing in an abandoned/emergency condition or put up for sale), "the number of farmers / entrepreneurs", "the share of population non-retirement age (up to 60 years)", "population density".

For the post-Soviet economies, the criterion of land prices and real estate has not been distributed yet. Meanwhile, it is a direct indicator of development. We emphasize that the land market in Ukraine still does not exist formally, but land prices actually operate. This variation as believed is very significant (Fig. 2, Table 3-4).

To determine the number of groups in this totality, the Sterges's formula was used with the corresponding procedure for determining the interval value, which resulted in the allocation of 5 groups of territories.

$$n = 1 + 3,322 \lg N, \tag{1}$$

where n - number of groups;  
N - population totality.

**Table 3:** Socio-economic indicators of the studied rural areas (in 2019)

Populated areas	Indicators for assessing the state of the local community						
	Land prices, USD USA for 0.01 hectares	he state budget of the village council	The dynamics of the position	Property supply, %	Number of farmers per 1000 inhabitants / officially registered entrepreneurs per 1000 inhabitants	Share of non-retirement population (up to 60 years old),%	Population density, persons / sq. km
<i>The factor of unique institutional history</i>							
<i>Standard: Cherniatyn village</i>	180-230	Undotary	State of development	5-10,0	2,1/2,7	70,0	67,3
<i>Analogs: villages: Khatky, Mateikovo, Holubivka</i>	20-50	Dotary	Depressive	до 40,0	0,3/0,6	57,0	25,9

The factor of landscape and recreational potential							
<i>Standard:</i> <b>Stepashky village</b> <i>Analogs:</i> villages: Bubnivka, Kharpachka, Basachylyvka	420-550  20-50	Dotary  Dotary	State of development Depressive	less 5,0  20-30,0	0,9/1,5  0,6/0,8	79,0  63,0	51,3  22,4
The factor of special economic behavior of local residents							
<i>Standard:</i> <b>Volodymyrivka village</b> <i>Analogs:</i> villages: Demydivka, Potoky, Leliaky	20-50  20-50	Undotary  Dotary	State of development Depressive	less 5,0  till 40,0	1,4/1,5  0,4/0,9	75,0  72,0	39,9  34,0
The factor of investment attractiveness of the territory							
<i>Standard:</i> <b>Stryzhavka urban village</b> <i>Analogs:</i> villages: Maziakiv, M.Slobidka, Tiuniunnyky	900-1000 and more  20-50	Undotary  Dotary	State of development Depressive	less 5,0  20-30,0	5,4/8,6  0,4/0,7	77,0  59,0	69,4  18,4-33,2
The factor of the unique economic specialization of the territory							
<i>Standard:</i> <b>Vedmezhe Vushko village</b> <i>Analogs:</i> villages: Horbanivka, Rovets, Maidan	600-700  20-50	Undotary  Dotary	State of development Depressive	less 5,0  20-30,0	3,2/4,0  0,7/0,9	81,0  67,0	60,5  33,5
Factor of tourist activity							
<i>Standard:</i> <b>Busha village</b> <i>Analogs:</i> villages: Derzhanka, Dzyhivka, Vetrivka	420-550  20-50	Dotary  Dotary	State of development Depressive	5-10,0  20-30,0	2,0/5,0  0,7/0,9	75,0  65,0	40,1  25,9
The factor of actions of local authorities							
<i>Standard:</i> <b>Snitkiv village</b> <i>Analogs:</i> villages: Riasne, Polove, Dolyaniy	180-230  20-50	Dotary  Dotary	State of development Depressive	20-30,0  till 40,0	1,9/2,7  0,3/0,5	74,0  65,0	25,9  17,3



Fig. 2: Ranking of a number of rural areas of Vinnytsia region by the indicator of land prices within the corresponding settlements (USD 0,01 ha, in 2019)

Thus, at present, the significant impact of territorial branding using the criterion of land prices has taken place for a very limited group of communities. In general, the differences in the socio-economic indicators of different rural areas have confirmed the hypothesis of direct positive economic interpretation of the branding effect of the territories or some of its elements.

**Table 4:** Characteristics of rural areas of the Vinnytsia region in terms of the statistically grounded price of land, USD. US \$ 0.01 hectare, in 2019

Nº	Group borders	Number of rural areas	Share, %
1	20,0-50,0	676	45,5
2	180,0-230,0	481	32,4
3	420,0-550,0	183	12,3
4	610,0-720,0	111	7,5
5	900,0-1000,0 and more	35	2,3
	Number	1486	100,0

## 5. Summary

Interest to territorial branding as a kind of alternative, non-traditional marketing technology is usually dictated by the possibilities of a new type of rural development as an anti-crisis program with socio-political priorities. According to Ukrainian realities, rural development based on territorial branding can become the main source of post-industrial growth.

## 6. Conclusions

The theory of territorial branding is universal. Instead, the practices of its realization in countries objectively have high variation. Currently, 7 types of branding of rural development are described in the paper. From this experience it can be argued that the success of branding rural development is determined by the following elements: 1) the completeness of representations about the functions of branding as a factor of the definition of new economic relations; 2) the motives and behavior of agents in the process of implementation of branding projects; 3) completeness and availability of market information about projects; 4) models of decision making by agents when implementing branding projects; 5) institutional norms that defining content of the project.

Proposals: The potential of territorial branding can be realized primarily through the study and dissemination of effective branding experience. For Ukraine, adaptation of European experience is important. This should be the task of universities and public organizations.

For Ukraine, prospects for further research are seen in the development of national programs of branding of rural development.

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