

Urban Settlements Branding Issue as an Important Part of the Tourism Cluster Development in the Case of Samtskhe-Javakheti

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Summary

The Main Objective of our article is to rise the integration of different institutions and social layers into the problems of urban development, to identify and implement the contents of the business engineering in urban planning and management by the way of promotion, advertisement faced in different branding activities, which significantly strengthens the communication and connection between the urban environment and tourism cluster. The methods of expert assessment and system analyze were used in the case of Samtskhe-Javakheti Region of South Georgia. We developed ideas for City Branding for most popular Resort Cities in south part of Georgia. These are: Akhaltsikhe, Borjomi and Abastumani. We choose these cities as most interesting and multilateral settlements having big impact on the regional development. We are aiming to define right ways for urban planning solutions to improve their conditions. We investigated possibilities how the middle or small resort cities in South Georgia can become green / smart settlements with good city marketing and management, with green environmental policy. For the marketing strategy we developed slogans of these cities.

City Branding/Marketing is a very important input for settlements of former Soviet Union to be awakened from the condition of "Sleeping Quarters", to become contemporary, modern, comfortable and beautiful cities.

Keywords: Tourism, Cluster¹, Urban Branding²

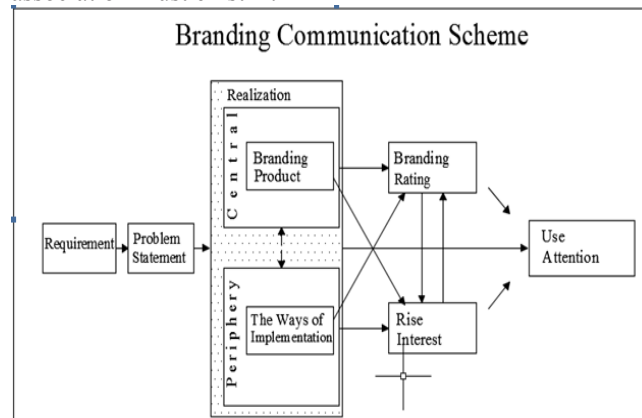
Urban Branding, which really replaced Urban marketing, is relatively new comprehensive discipline, which includes the subjects of Urban infrastructure, Economical, Cultural development and other issues. The main purpose of urban branding is to impact and rich the benefits by the way of their promotion and popularization. Sometimes these efforts are accompanied by different problems caused by the mentality of people, different visions of inhabitants and city authorities, develop undesired results. To avoid these unwanted effects branding strategy should be based on real preconditions, priorities, potent strengthened with positive effects, which are really typical, desired for the settlement. "As a result of successful branding in the vi-

1 Cluster – a Group with similar characteristic. Cluster analysis - or **clustering** is the task of grouping a set of objects in such a way that objects in the same group (called **cluster**) are more similar (in some sense or another) to each other than to those in other groups (clusters).

Here is to define that application of Tourism Cluster and Cluster analysis for Samtskhe-Javakheti belongs to well-known Urbanist, V. Vardosanidze.

2 Branding(creating and managing brand; The Process involved in creating a unique name and image for a product in the consumer's mind. <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/branding.html>

sion of target group a particular city should be identified with particular visual scenes and vice versa. The successful results depends upon the rate of coordination between the city and branding issues. So, between the city and it's branding-creating natural-geographic unit, building, or their combination sustainable and permanently coordinated association must exist"³.



During the past years some similar activities were developed in several Georgian cities: Batumi, Kutaisi, Signaghi etc. Among them was the City of Akhaltsikhe, regional center of Samtskhe-Javakheti, South Georgia. The correctness of these activities – the ways of implementation, influence and demonstration created many different opinions in the society.

The objective of our study is to research the impact of urban planning solutions and to find the appropriate ways of urban management to improve the existing situation. Therefore we consider branding / marketing issue. We are mapping out the whole layer of subjects related to tourism and formulate them as Tourism Cluster. Tourism cluster doesn't mean only Tourism separately. Almost whole economic activities in the region are related to the Tourism Cluster. From this point of view we define what is important for the development of Tourism Cluster and determine several factors of City Branding for Akhaltsikhe, Borjomi and Abastumani. In this study we less discuss Bakuriani, hyper-development of which can be performed in negative way and the problems developed there should be considered separately in other section.

But in the case of Tourism Cluster concept development we can't avoid the case of Bakuriani and have to investigate it along the number Borjomi Municipality resorts.

In this work Main Problems were defined - Insufficient using of economic and touristic potential of small and middle settlements, most of which are considered as resorts; decreasing of functions, unemployment, poverty, environmental

3 Vardosanidze V. Civilization Researches, №10, 2012, New Reality of Urban Culture – City, as a "Consumer Good" and it's Branding. What Vitruvius couldn't Consider, pp 46-57.

problems, etc; Lack and insufficient quantity of urban planning documents. There is no unified General Plans for spatial, land usage development and urban regulation planning for Samtskhe-Javakheti. We have only part of these documents.⁴

While modern urban development strategy should be based on the complex of “Green activities”, including construction, communications, transportation, green areas in optimal proportion. From this point of view Akhaltsikhe, Borjomi and Abastumani can become first demonstration cities with such benefits. Targeted branding of these cities will support local population and regional development in general.



It must be mentioned that Akhaltsikhe is listed as balneologic, spa resort from soviet time⁵ up today⁶. It's formation as resort, like Borjomi and Abastumani, related to 19-th century Russian Kingdom development time in Georgia. Akhaltsikhe is University City. It is important that there is comfortable, valuable environment for seminars, learning and business meetings. Also here are middle-class hotels for different ranks of guests.

Lately renovated Rabati rise the interest of many guests. Although still not calm down disputes of art historians and other specialists about the fact, how correctly it's reconstruction process was conducted. However Rabati became very interesting touristic place. In any case, in Akhaltsikhe is more observed the international connecting, communicating function, as a hub.

Popular practice of branding is to work out city slogan, which have to outline its advantages and to reflect the deep and wide research results. For example, based on the above analysis, it is possible to express such slogans: “Akhaltsikhe – historic and contemporary city”; “Akhaltsikhe – education and travel center of Samtskhe-Javakheti”; “Akhaltsikhe – discover and rest”; “Akhaltsikhe – smart regional center”.

Borjomi is a well-known resort city especially in former post-soviet area, with it's Mineral Water Park; neighboring to Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park, with a lot of small resort settlements and villages around. Name “Borjomi” is known from 19-th century. Old name of this place is “Tori”, revival

of which has some benefits. Slogan “Borjomi – Successor of Old Tori” can be interesting for tourists who likes antiquities and archeology. “Tori-Gujareti Area”⁷- We can give this artistic definition to wide territory around Tsagveri, Tba, Bakuriani and also new travel packages can be worked out for less known touristic objects and attractions in this area.



Expressing the brand is likely to reflect urban strategy, to have a city forming function. Consequently, it is important to introduce and implement it at all levels – legislative, planning and executing.

As marketing slogan for Borjomi can be used it's old well-known definition: “Borjomi – “Pearl of Georgia” in past and modern Spa-resort today”.

But What is interesting in Borjomi today? How can be created it's branding? Nowadays lack of cultural life is obviously to feel, there is no appropriate exhibition or concert space related to city ambition. Last years opened several high-class hotels with spa-packages. Forever, for ordinary Georgian inhabitants organized rest and treatment are not available, they have to provide it themselves. What can be done for a new understanding of health-treatment spa-sanatoriums? May be new investments under State Insurance program, activation of resort-related treatment with a general complex activities strategy – Spa and medical function, State decision and directive, investment in creating new Spa-balneology packages, achievable for social public community.

From the point of Urban management many tasks are to solve. Often public opinion is not included in projects, influencing appearance of the city. Public participation in decision-making is only formal. Long-distance transportation is not sufficiently regulated. The famous brand of Borjomi, for many associated with Borjomi from childhood “Kukushka”, narrow mountain railway, enabled in 1902, is in very bad condition. It's necessary to consider it as Engineering Heritage Monument and an important part of resort infrastructure.

Resort city is surrounded with forests, damaged from many years of wrong or illegal tree-logging, forest disease and fires. In faceless suburbs, renovation of poor appear-

⁴ Land Usage Development Plans of Borjomi and Abastumani (2007-2008), Urban Planning Documentation of Cultural Landscape of “Khertvisi-Vardzia-Oloda”

⁵ Resorts, encyclopedic Dictionary, Moscow, “Sovetskaia Enciklopedia”, 1983. Курорты, Энциклопедический словарь, Москва, «Советская энциклопедия», 1983

⁶ About Resorts and Resort places of Georgia, Direction of Georgian President #655, 2-th July, 2005, Tbilisi

⁷ Authority of this name belongs to tourism expert, historian Sh. Givishvili.

ance of the houses is attributed to population. Therefore would be very useful to organize green recreation city spaces instead of old disfunctioned industry objects, for example, the territory of former glass plant on the way to Bakuriani.

Abastumani is a unique climatic and balneology resort in South Georgia, which have quite unordinary microclimate. The air transparency and insolation are very high here. Compared to the local natural conditions superior than Davos (Switzerland) and noting that Abastumani's natural conditions are even more than the Swiss resorts.

Historical sources tell us about rich history of this place (Prince Vaxhushti Bagrationi)⁸ and early medieval monuments⁹.



Astro-Physical Observatory is an only one scientific center for Astronomy in Georgia. In Abastumani we have also excellent warm healing thermal springs. This place is especially rich in historical monuments and buildings with monument signs. Appearance of Abastumani architecture is an original synthesis of European, Georgian and Russian styles, these are buildings, survived from 19-th or constructed in the beginning of 20-th century. In this small settlement we have approximately 122 cultural heritage monuments. This gives us the right to state that Abastumani is completely cultural heritage monument and the intensive care and maintaining of this resort is the most important objective.

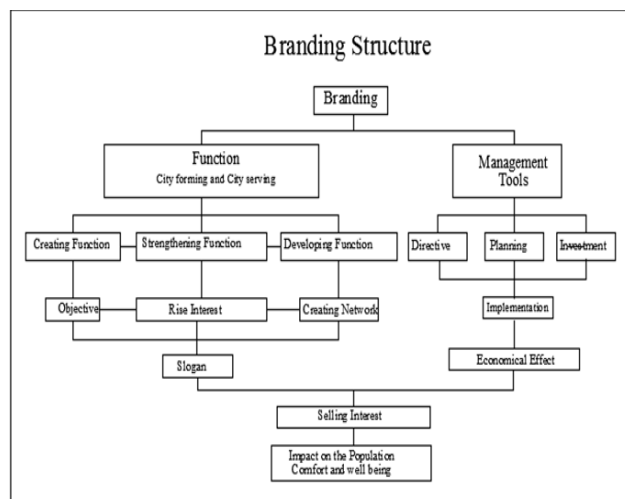
There was an rebranding attempt of Abastumani from previous government: it was planned to fully remove lungs treatment function to place it in another river gorge, and to perform Abastumani in high-class entertainment and recreation place. Nowadays this behavior is rejected and other vision is presented to perform negative factors into positive. Development Strategy Document is created for Abastumani, with a part of marketing strategy.¹⁰

Slogans for Abastumani: "Abastumani – Health and Science", "Abastumani – Place for International Humanitarian Meetings", "Abastumani – place for Science, Art, Health and Recreation".

⁸ Georgian historian of 18-th century, related to Georgian Kingdom.

⁹ For example, "Tamari Castle", ruins of "Daredjani Monastery", bridge on the river Otskhe, towers, ruins of settlements, churches, etc.

¹⁰ Sustainable Development Strategy for resort Abastumani, implemented by: GIS and DZ Consulting Center Geographic, Pekini Str. 27, Tbilisi, 0160. In order of Municipal Development Foundation, D. Agmashenebeli Ave. 150, Tbilisi, 0112.



According to all above, based on questionnaires and analysis of international studies, it can be concluded that analyzing and targeted using of City branding in Urban development policy Branding can become reference point and realization vector of planned objectives; it can clearly reflect city development potential, strategy, goals, results, recommendations and implementation ways. Branding will significantly support: strengthening, extension and development of city forming functions;

To target an attention of different departments, organizations, private and public sectors under condition of contemporary market economy and to implement complex activities to achieve planned objectives and results;

To revive urban elements to be awakened from passive condition of "Sleeping quarters" and to perform them in lively, modern and comfort environment;

To develop Tourism and Recreation Cluster of Samtskhe-Javakheti – in the way of working out common policy of managing, executing, banking, insurance and other investment sectors and to perform coordinated actions.

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