

**SMART BRANDING OF TERRITORIES
WITHIN THE GEO-ECONOMIC SPACE
OF “THE THREE SEAS” INITIATIVE**

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Currently, socio-economic problems and issues related to the transformation of the territorial-political structure and regional policy are coming to the fore in Ukraine. Regions have been granted new powers and have become independent participants in socio-political processes. Regional authorities work directly with the local population and businesses, carrying out state tasks within the framework of national projects.

A region's image is an essential component of the information and political landscape, as well as being an effective tool for interaction between the centre and the regions. It plays a role in social consolidation, state integration and increasing the territory's investment attractiveness. Creating and promoting a positive regional image ensures information security, the development of local communities, and socio-economic development. A region's image is formed on the basis of significant political, economic and socio-cultural events.

A strategic partnership is a model of economic behaviour involving entrepreneurial structures that creates shared value by combining the resources, competencies and capabilities of partners. The result of such relationships is a positive synergistic effect, whereby the partners' combined actions are more efficient than their individual actions [1].

In this context, the Three Seas Initiative is an important platform for the smart branding of territories within the geo-economic space. This strategic project aims to deepen cooperation between Central and Eastern European countries in the fields of energy, transport, digital infrastructure, and innovative development. Within this framework, a new space for economic integration is emerging, founded on the principles of smart partnerships, sustainable

development and digital interaction between territories. This is why smart territorial branding in this space is particularly important as a tool for increasing regional competitiveness and attracting investment by effectively communicating their strengths, unique resources, and innovative potential.

The proposed methodology for the smart branding of territories and the management of competitive development is based on dynamic modelling methods and a cluster approach. This includes analysing competitiveness factors, modelling the socio-economic system, considering correlation effects, forming clusters and identifying growth points (see Table 1). This process identifies 12 competitiveness factors, 90 criteria and approximately 250 quantitative and qualitative indicators, providing a thorough evaluation of the territory's development [2].

A territory's brand is considered an intangible asset – a resource with no physical form that brings future economic benefits. Effective brand management attracts people, companies, investments and other resources. Brand management is carried out by public authorities in accordance with Ukrainian legislation.

Competition for investment, tourists and residents is fierce in the market for territories. Therefore, regions' development strategies must combine infrastructure changes with effective positioning in consumers' minds. In this context, the concept of a 'smart city territory' is important. This involves introducing innovative technologies into the city management system, creating a comfortable and safe living environment, and increasing residents' involvement in urban processes [3].

As the digital economy develops, so do the needs of the population. Therefore, cities must develop infrastructure and creative industries, and inform their target audience effectively. Many Ukrainian cities are already achieving this thanks to modern territory marketing tools and the Smart City Territory concept.

Effective territorial marketing requires an understanding of the impact of media representation on competitiveness, the importance of intangible assets, the growing role of creative and digital technologies, and the need for balanced infrastructure development. The most successful territories combine marketing with smart development tools to ensure their sustainable positioning in the geo-economic space. The Three Seas Initiative is a platform that promotes smart territorial branding through the exchange of innovations, technologies and investments between countries in the region. For Ukraine, this opens up opportunities for integration into the European space and for strengthening the competitiveness of its territories.

Table 1

Methodology for the smart branding of territories and the management of competitive development

Stage name	Main content
1. Analysis of the external environment and its influencing factors.	1.1 Identification of factors affecting the territory's competitiveness; 1.2. Determining their levels of significance; 1.3. Decomposition of the factors and formation of criteria and quantitative and qualitative indicators.
2. Modelling the socio-economic state of the territory.	2.1 Formation of the target function of the competitive development model. 2.2. Construction of a system of constraints based on competitiveness factors; 2.3. Assessment of the level of development and determination of the need for managerial influence.
3. Management of the correlated effects of competitiveness factors.	3.1 Establish vectors of inter-factor correlations and group interrelated factors. 3.2. Forming the target function of the management model. 3.3. Defining the system of constraints and modelling the management process. 3.4. Assessing the aggregate direct and indirect effects of managerial influence.
4. Cluster spatial-structural organisation of the territory.	4.1 Identification of cluster systems within the territory. 4.2. Formation of cluster characteristics and determination of initial management conditions. 4.3. Structuring factors to take into account the specifics of clusters and the formation of management priorities.
5. Dynamic modelling of cluster system management	5.1 Modelling the competitive development of managed clusters. 5.2. Modelling the development of self-organised clusters.
6. Formation of organisational and economic management mechanisms	This is based on an analysis of the correlation between competitiveness factors and the results of dynamic modelling.

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