

Digital presence of Tatarstan Republic as means of Web-branding

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Abstract

The article describes the analysis of existing web-branding approaches and tools used by the government and officials of Tatarstan Republic in the context of forming a modern regional brand of the republic. The research reveals the lack of a promoting culture itself and using new technologies for advancing national and traditional values on a world arena. The authors believe that the situation can be caused by the mentality of the people inhabiting the area: nations living in Tatarstan are very proud of their original heritage, they respect their customs and traditions, tend to follow the tendencies developed, but they are prone to keep their pride hidden, not having any need to share it with the other people. The research relies on the analysis of internet presence of the republic, the activity of its government members on the basis of their digital activity, the number of publications, the frequency of public responses. Thus, there happen to occur a paradoxical situation: one of the highly developed republics of the Russian Federation is not promoted enough in a digital sphere and remains hidden worldwide or even not familiar to the most of Russian regions.

Keywords: international relations, Web Branding, Social Networking sites, promoting, logo, brand, linguistics.

1. Introduction

1.1. *The importance of the problem*

The modern realities have caused the need in digital representation that comes as the basic criterion for being successful and the tendency is often used in marketing and goods promotion. Surrounding, where the bloggers and digitally active people are gaining high level of popularity and can easily earn a fortune, makes a hint on the fact that the forms of digital presence, considered to be effective in product placement and market niching, should be used in regional promotion on a country or global level. Modern socio-economic situation within Tatarstan Republic can come as a fruitful bed for further developments of the region's image and, thus, contribute to the formation of a new vision of traditional customs and values. The republic already has effective administrative sources which, if there is a need, may be transmitted to a digital sphere. Very often, little amount of refreshments causes a positive effect on the government's consolidation and economic outcome. Abovementioned represents the fact that there is a big demand in forming the digital image for social networking presence.

1.2. *Status of the problem*

Creating digital image, being an essential part of any branding activity, needs a continuous effort on forming and supporting the brand status for the sustainable development of the region. That is why the problem considers a complicated activity of non-stoppable supervising and administering the digital accounts, which is not an easy thing to do. Furthermore, running a digital profile needs profound understanding of the sphere and means having specific computer knowledge. All these peculiarities make the process of regional branding interlaced with active forms of social media marketing. That, by its own way, is considered to create a new challenging question for consideration: "What should be the account like?" and "Who should be the supervisor of an official account?", "What should be the priorities in creating the digital image?" and so on. Of course, Tatarstan recently has made a big leap from a simple "no-name region" to the one that is currently forming the policy of international expansion. Nevertheless, observing the existing social networking presence, we can conclude that the situation can be improved on the results of further investigations of social platforms and their integration into the governmental regulation of the republic.

1.3. *The Research Hypothesis*

In this article we consider the tools of web-branding and analyze the ways of forming a strong and sustainable brand for a special region of the Russian Federation – the Republic of Tatarstan. The research hypothesis is that the detailed analysis of existing digital presence can contribute to the former development of Tatarstan Republic on national and international arena via social networking services and other means of world society integration.

2. Methods

The research is based upon the observations of existing social networking service platforms where the republic is represented via its officials and official governmental accounts. Studying the literature on the issue displayed that the problem is highly relevant and needs comprehensive investigation. This can explain the extensive theoretical and methodological research framework: which includes scientists concerned on the regional and city branding: David Aaker (Building Strong Brands) (David, 1996), José Filipe Torres (Nation Brand Builders) (Jose Filipe Torres, Nation Brand Builders. Uzina Books, 2019), Bill

Baker (Place Branding for Small Cities, Regions & Downtowns) (Bill Baker, 1996), Keith Dinnie (Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice) (Keith Dinnie, 2008) to name few. Most of the authors define regional branding as a special approach to the very understanding of the process, as an absolutely new way of city or town reshaping.

Theoretical and practical material is mainly formed on the basis of internet related material analysis, where we mean official pages, social networking accounts, social communication platforms.

3. Results and discussion

According to the recent researches in the sphere of regional development and social integration and relying on the basic principles of web-branding and social media marketing we can conclude that implementing the methods of promotion is available not only on governmental but also a regional level. Moreover, the process of developing any municipal entity has a sustainable by-product that comes as a precursor for the integration of an absolutely new economic model where the socio-economic health of any region joined into a big cluster can form a highly effective economic surrounding of a whole country. That's why switching the realities of personal branding to the branding of any town or city we can embody an ideal road map for the future integration into the digital world, being recognizable and popular on governmental and international level. Taking into consideration the basic forms of internet presence of a brand we can name several options which are essential for successful representation: special identity created on the basis of background brand story that supports the historical steps of brand development, niching down the market intensive and crafting the brand strategy itself. Crafting a brand strategy is usually based on three aspects that are the body part (includes purpose, vision, mission and values), the message (includes brand essence, tagline, value prop and messaging pillars) and visual identity (includes a logo, typography, colour, imagery and additional elements). In this article we would like to highlight existing social networking and digital presence of Tatarstan Republic and determine its effectiveness as well as the absence of any possible solutions essential for the government global integration and development.

The one of the best developed and maintained websites is the main website of the republic *tatarstan.ru* that is available in three languages: Russian, Tatar and English. It has modern structure and contains all the necessary information about the basic aspects of the republic (geographical location, symbols, population, history, education and foreign relations, sport and so on), reveals the issues, concerning the activity of governmental structures, gives an opportunity to have a direct communication with the president and by Tatarstan State Council by means of email and a phone call via the press service provided. The official page also provides all the necessary information about the most important events planned and reveals the news of the republic. At the bottom of the web page there are the links to different governmental structures and services. Taking into consideration the fact that this is the official page and in order to find this site you should know about the web page and the republic. Thus, there is little chance of an accidental rambler discovering it and it is better for business purposes. But the fact of having such a fully-fledged web-site organized following all the international criteria of electronic publishing is rather commendable. Being a hub of almost all of the branches of the Republic the Site Official Tatarstan has huge amount of categories and links that lead to a great deal of database about different features of the republic, services provided, about educational, employment and entertainment facilities. At the same time, we can notice that the site is linked only to one social networking service –

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Vkontakte, which is rather popular in Russia, Ukraine and in the Middle East, but which is not known in European and Asian countries and in the USA. If we pay attention to the statistics of the web-site, we can see that the traffic varies between 50 000 and 100 000 in a month. The data received from open sources indicate that the most views are from the Russian Federation (approximately 96 %), Uzbekistan (1,6 %), Ukraine (0.70 %), Germany and the USA (about 0.50 %) and all the other countries is about 1 % (<https://be1.ru/stat/>). This information can help us to understand the fact that the web-site is mainly used by the natives. On the one hand, this fact is evident, because the main purpose of a governmental web-presence is to assist the citizens in expert finding and problem solving. On the other hand, increasing the site attendance from within can contribute into developing tourism and forming a brand image of the region.

Analyzing social networking activity of the Republic of Tatarstan and its offices, we revealed the fact that the region is vastly integrated into the social networking sphere: mainly the social accounts of governmental structure are formed on the basis of Vkontakte, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Telegram, Odnoklassniki and Youtube.

In Vkontakte there are the following official pages: common pages for the region (<https://ok.ru/nashtatarstan>; <https://twitter.com/NashTatarstan>; <https://www.facebook.com/nashtatarstan/>), Ministry of Justice Official page (<https://vk.com/id556556092>), Kazan city hall official page (<https://vk.com/kzn>) and of the president (<https://vk.com/rnm>), Minister of Youth Affairs of the republic (https://vk.com/d_fattakhov). The main peculiarity of the official pages in vk is that they are continually supervised and the owners are actively uploading new content during the day (there are at least 3-5 publications each day). The sources provide a wide variety of information about the popular life of the nation, publish photos, videos and news on the events which are considered to be significant for the region. The sites are full of commentaries by the citizens of the republic and of the Russian regions. Augmented with the official page of the president they form a good network of internet presence and come as a friendly and useful platform for the citizens. The analysis proves this fact: 80 % of viewers are from Russia, the others are of Ukrainian, Uzbekistan and Belarus nationalities. About 1 % of viewers are from the USA and Germany.

Instagram comes as the most popular Social Networking Service for the region and has the largest amount of registered official users from Tatarstan. The public accounts contain governmental pages (*tatarstan_official* (https://www.instagram.com/tatarstan_official/), *kzn_official* (https://www.instagram.com/kzn_official/), personal and official page of the President – (<https://www.instagram.com/rusminnikhanov/>)), official pages of different national offices and ministers (Chairman of the State Council of the Republic of Tatarstan (<https://www.instagram.com/farid.muhametshin/>), Presidential Press Service (<https://www.instagram.com/presa.president.rt/>), Head of Kirov and Moscow Regions of Kazan (https://www.instagram.com/mironov_kzn/)), ministries (Ministry of Youth Affairs (https://www.instagram.com/minmol_rt/), Ministry of Health (<https://www.instagram.com/minzdravrt/>), Ministry of Education (<https://www.instagram.com/mon.rt/>)), news agencies (Tatar news agency (https://www.instagram.com/tatar_inform/)), national TV and Radio accounts (Tatar Bolgar Radio official page (<https://www.instagram.com/bolgarradiosi/>), Tatar official TV (<https://www.instagram.com/tvtnv/>), Tatar electronic newspaper (<https://www.instagram.com/intertat.tatar/>)) and many others (Official Kazan beautiful places (<https://www.instagram.com/kazan.offi/>), Visit Tatarstan Touristic attraction page

(<https://www.facebook.com/visittatarstan/>) having high level of views, reposts and forum activity.

The president of the republic is very active in Instagram and publish daily events from the life of the Republic and he has more than 500 000 followers. Among the publications of the president there are the congratulations, shares of an interesting content, encouraging speeches and just discussions with the nation. Moderated by the president himself the source is the unique example of a government-citizen interaction model. Almost all the posts of the president are viewed about 10 000 times and has at least 200 commentaries each. It proves the involvement of the nation into discussing the issues with the head of the government.

Official pages of Tatarstan Republic basically publish the information about the coming events and congratulations on different issues, but they are regular even with lower number of views and reposts. The number of commentaries is also not so high as of the president's page.

Chairman of the State Council of the Republic of Tatarstan's page is not highly politicized and contains good deal of information about social and cultural issues while the pages of Ministries and Ministers are mainly about business matters. Almost all the ministers and ministries are active and publish on a daily basis.

Twitter presence of Tatarstan Republic is not so high as in Instagram but well-organized and completely covers all the issues published on the other official pages. The official page of Tatarstan Republic on address <https://twitter.com/tatarstanrt> is no more active and instead its digital presence on twitter is represented by the following accounts: the President's official page *rusminnikhanov* (<https://twitter.com/rusminnikhanov>), the Official Page of the Republic on *NashTatarstan* Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/NashTatarstan>), Business Centre of Tatarstan account available at *TatCenter_ru* (https://twitter.com/TatCenter_ru), Ministry of Digitalization of Public Administration, Information Technologies and Communications of the Republic of Tatarstan – *digitaltatar* (<https://twitter.com/digitaltatar>), Minister of Youth Affairs (<https://twitter.com/dfattakhov?lang=ru>), Chairman of the State Council of the Republic of Tatarstan (https://twitter.com/mukhametshin_f) also has his twitter account. Some of the accounts are active and publish on daily basis, some of them seldom share any information. Twitter not being important on the territory of Russia is not highly represented in Tatarstan Republic, too.

Almost the same official pages we can find in Facebook (Official Page of the Republic (<https://www.facebook.com/nashtatarstan/>), Touristic Attraction Homepage on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/visittatarstan/>)), in Odnoklassniki (Official Page of the Republic (<https://ok.ru/nashtatarstan>)), there are also many fake pages of the president and it is very difficult to define the official one) service, in YouTube (Tatarstan Republic official channel – (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIAaz3PB5eFaohVIOabznCg>)) and on a Telegram (https://t.me/tatarstan_official official channel). Also, there are some pages on Facebook, registered as if they were the presidents, but it is very difficult to define their being official, moreover, they are almost empty.

There is one more structure of the republic that is widely integrated into the internet. Here we mean an Industrial Giant – Kamaz, that has its account on most of the world wide social networking services. To begin with, there is the official page of the plant available on *kamaz.ru* and that provides all the necessary information in English and Russian. The *Res Militaris*, vol.12, n°3, November issue 2022

organization has plenty of other accounts: in Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/kamaz_officia), in Vkontante (https://vk.com/kamaz_officialgroup), several platforms on YouTube – one for the plant itself (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrsX1TiUIsOX2VJ8krTlvYA>) and one for Kamaz-master (<https://www.youtube.com/c/kamazmastersport/videos>), in Twitter (https://twitter.com/kamaz_official), in Facebook (<https://ru-ru.facebook.com/paokamaz/>). Being beneficial for the company, this active internet activity cannot, but contribute into the entire image of Tatarstan.

4. Summary

The brand of Tatarstan Republic is consolidated by Innopolis media coverage, that has all the possible accounts in different types of social media and remain active on a daily basis, publishing a good deal of content for the global use. It is represented in Instagram – (<https://www.instagram.com/innopolis/>), in Vkontakte (<https://vk.com/innopolis>), in Facebook (<https://ru-ru.facebook.com/innopolis.ru>), has its official page on Twitter - <https://twitter.com/innopolisu> and an official web-site with a user friendly organization - <https://innopolis.com>. Created as a self-sufficient city, Innopolis comes as the completion of the Republic's image of a well-developed and modern region of the Russian Federation.

The study has also revealed the fact that most of the websites and social networking accounts are not or just partly exist in several languages. It means that basically they are aimed at the citizens of the republic and for those who obtained the governmental languages of the country. But it would be a lie to say that about governmental web-sites: they are available in Tatar, Russian and English. Even though some blocks are not translated into English, they can provide all the information about the republic, about the values, customs and traditions of the people who live in the region, can introduce the brand. Universalized the same way, the accounts on social networking services can increase the interest of the other countries into the political, cultural and economic life of the region, can positively influence on tourism and international integration, attracting new finances and human sources from within.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of existing social networking presence of Tatarstan Republic revealed the fact that the region is widely integrated into the social networking: there are different means of digital tools that represent different features of Tatarstan and almost touch upon all the important spheres of a countries being. A net of Social networking services carries a big amount of information and easily can be used for the further development of the regions popularity and integrity as a unique part of the Russian Federation. Interlaced into the daily activity of the government, aimed at the domestic affairs and at the world beyond its borders, digital means of communication can become a megaphone and attract the global attention. That by its own way can have some positive impact on the economic and social development of the region. Thus, all the efforts joined together are essential for the health of Tatarstan Republic and of the Russian Federation as well.

The presence of governmental structures, mass media and public figures in a digital area gives a go to modern tendencies in region developing and strengthen the image of Tatarstan.

Acknowledgements

This paper has been supported by the Kazan Federal University Strategic Academic Leadership Program.

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