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The Impact of Regional Economic Conditions on Place Branding Results: The Survival Analysis Approach¹

Abstract. Place branding became a part of regional development processes; therefore, regional conditions could affect the place branding success. Nevertheless, studies on place branding success are mostly focused on management issues, and the role of regional conditions is yet to be revealed. In this regard, the paper aims to explore how regional economic (including social and spatial) conditions affect the results of place branding activity. We assumed that regional conditions have a certain impact on place branding activities, yielding better or worse place brands survival, which we treated as the fact of observable place brand attributes continuing to exist. To test this hypothesis, a survival analysis on brands of 15 Russian regions was performed for the period from 2010 to 2021. Using the Kaplan-Meier method, we examined the impact of seven variables on place brands survival. The obtained findings confirm the positive impact on brands survival of such variables as gross regional product (GRP) per capita, regional investment, and migration attractiveness. The following variables have a negative impact: unemployment rate, the adjacency to regions already having place brands. Additionally, place brands of regions with administrative centres in smaller cities have a better survival rate than the ones with bigger cities. Finally, the impact of change of the federal subject's head on survival was not confirmed. Thus, the present article contributes to place branding studies by unveiling the influence of regional conditions on place branding outputs and extends the methods of place branding research by using the survival analysis.

Keywords: place branding, regional economic conditions, survival analysis, Kaplan-Meier estimator, federal subjects of Russia, place marketing, place brand

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ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКАЯ СТАТЬЯ

П. Ю. Макаров ^{a)}  , А. А. Чуб ^{b)} ^{a)} Владимирский филиал Российской академии народного хозяйства и государственной службы при Президенте Российской Федерации, г. Владимир, Российская Федерация^{b)} Финансовый университет при Правительстве Российской Федерации, г. Москва, Российская Федерация**Влияние региональных экономических условий на брендинг территорий:
анализ выживаемости**

Аннотация. Поскольку брендинг территорий стал частью процессов регионального развития, на его успех могут влиять различные региональные условия. Существующие исследования успешности брендинга территорий в основном сосредоточены на вопросах управления, а роль характеристик региона еще предстоит раскрыть. Цель данной статьи – изучить влияние региональных экономических (в том числе социальных и пространственных) условий на брендинг территорий. Предполагается, что условия региона определенным образом влияют на деятельность по брендингу территорий, а также на выживаемость бренда, которая трактуется как продолжение существования его наблюдаемых атрибутов. Для проверки этой гипотезы был проведен анализ методом Каплана – Мейера для выборки из 15 брендов субъектов РФ за период 2010–2020 гг., в ходе которого было исследовано влияние семи показателей на выживаемость брендов. В результате была выявлена положительная связь между выживаемостью брендов и такими переменными, как валовой региональный продукт (ВРП) на душу населения, инвестиции в региональную экономику, миграционная привлекательность. В то же время уровень безработицы и наличие по соседству регионов, уже имеющих собственный бренд, оказывают негативное влияние. Кроме того, бренды субъектов РФ с административными центрами в сравнительно небольших городах имеют более высокий уровень выживаемости, чем бренды субъектов с центрами в более крупных городах. Связь между выживаемостью брендов и показателем смены главы региона после начала процесса брендинга не была обнаружена. Полученные результаты дополняют теорию брендинга территорий в части изучения связи экономических характеристик региона с успешностью брендинга и расширяют методологию исследований брендов территорий в части использования анализа выживаемости.

Ключевые слова: брендинг территорий, региональные экономические условия, анализ выживаемости, метод Каплана – Мейера, субъекты Российской Федерации, маркетинг территорий, бренд территории

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1. Introduction

Over the past decades, place branding initiatives, i. e., development and promotion of place brands, have become widespread. The tendency of increasing place branding activities was reflected in place branding studies in different years (e.g., Boisen et al., 2011; Cleave et al., 2017). Recent review studies (e.g., Lu et al., 2020) illustrate many cases of city and place branding around the world. These multiple place branding initiatives are not limited only to place promotion. Place branding is closely tied with sustainable development issues (Rehan, 2014; Zouganeli et al., 2012), migration (McManus & Connell, 2014; Schade et al., 2018), and stakeholder communication (Hudson et al., 2017). Therefore, place branding is admittedly involved in regional development processes.

Place branding is considered as a multidisciplinary field (Hankinson, 2010; Niedomysl &

Jonasson, 2012). However, since it became a part of regional economic activities, place brands could be also considered as an object of regional economics research. Hence, economic, social, and spatial conditions of a region potentially constitute a specific set of place branding factors.

Nevertheless, place branding studies seem to be principally focused on management issues of place branding process, i. e., internal place branding factors. There exists a wide array of such factors, revealed in different studies (e.g., Ashworth & Kavaratzis 2018; Eshuis et al., 2013). These factors are related to the resources available (budget, political support, expertise, etc.), organisations (organisation structure, objectives, integration in marketing programmes), and communications (with target groups, between stakeholders). Management-related factors also appear in a more general way while considering approaches to

place branding (Bassols & Leicht, 2020) or strategic/operational thinking (de Noronha et al., 2017). In this context, studies on the role of regional economic conditions in place branding are less represented in the current research stream, and thus, they are yet to be revealed.

In this regard, the purpose of this paper is to demonstrate whether regional economic conditions (including social and spatial conditions) affect the results of place branding activity. Therefore, this paper contributes to the place branding theory by studying the role of regional economic conditions in this process.

In the following sections, we will assess the conceptual background and the methodology of the study, and then proceed with the results and discussion. An empirical research will be conducted based on the data received from Russian regions, where place branding initiatives share similar characteristics as described above. There are more than 20 brands of constituent entities and several dozen brands of cities and municipalities that have emerged over the last decade (Makarov & Illarionov, 2020). Therefore, this set of regions seems to be a relevant empirical basis for this study purpose. Since place branding practices in Russian regions were not systematically reflected in the literature, the secondary purpose of this paper is to make an overview of the place branding patterns in Russia.

2. Conceptual Background and Research Hypothesis

2.1. Place Branding and Place Brands

According to the recent bibliometric studies (Ma et al., 2019; Vuignier, 2017), place branding is a fast-growing research field. The concept of place branding is thought to have evolved from place promotion and place marketing concepts (Ma et al., 2019). Some authors (e. g. Hankinsson, 2010) point out that place branding domain is based on a wider range of concepts, including, in addition to the already mentioned, corporate branding, destination branding, services, and non-profit branding.

As an activity, place branding could be defined as “the development of brands for geographical locations, such as regions, cities or communities” (Eshuis & Klijn, 2012). The essence of the brand development is characterised as “the manipulation of urban space and imagery to create a sense of place that is leveraged to facilitate the flow of capital” (Cleave et al., 2017, p. 5). In terms of its effects, place branding is represented as the following chain of effects (Cleave & Arku, 2017, p.

431): communication of a place brand results in the place brand awareness and image, which later form a sense-of-place and, finally, lead to decision-making outcomes; at the same time, sense-of-place and decision-making affect place identity and thus drive changes in communication and awareness.

Thus, the result of a place branding process is a place brand, which could be defined as “a symbolic construct meant to add meaning or value to places” (Eshuis et al., 2014). Another broadly accepted definition of a place brand treats it as: “[...] a network of associations in the consumers’ mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place and its stakeholders. These associations differ in their influence within the network and in importance for the place consumers’ attitude and behaviour” (Zenker & Braun, 2017, p. 275).

Place brand definitions mention that place brands are more than just logos and slogans. Central to place branding are the concepts of identity and image (Boisen et al., 2018). There are studies on the role of non-visual senses in the place brand’s identity (Medway, 2015; Rodrigues et al., 2020). However, there are also many studies focused primarily on the analysis of visual components of a place brand: colours, logos, and slogans (e.g., Adamus-Matuszyńska et al., 2021; Huang & Jen, 2020; Wilson, 2020).

In this regard, place brands could be considered as existing on two planes. On intangible symbolic plane, it exists as a set of associations. On the tangible plane, a place brand is expressed and supported by various observable activities and artefacts (logo, style, slogan, etc.). From the dynamic perspective on place branding (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013), the planes of place branding are mutually changing in time simultaneously with changes in place culture and image. The place branding activity expresses and shapes the place brand’s identity, and changes in place identity affect its tangible expression.

Since our empirical study is based on the data received from the regions of Russia, we should clarify the terms that are used within the national context. In Russia, the terms ‘brend territorii’ and ‘brend regiona’ (literally, “territory brand” and “region’s brand”) are most commonly used. Taking this into account we, however, will use the general term “place brand”, meaning Russian regions within this paper.

2.2. The Role of Regional Economic Conditions in Place Branding

As stated above, the role of regional economic conditions in place branding is less described in

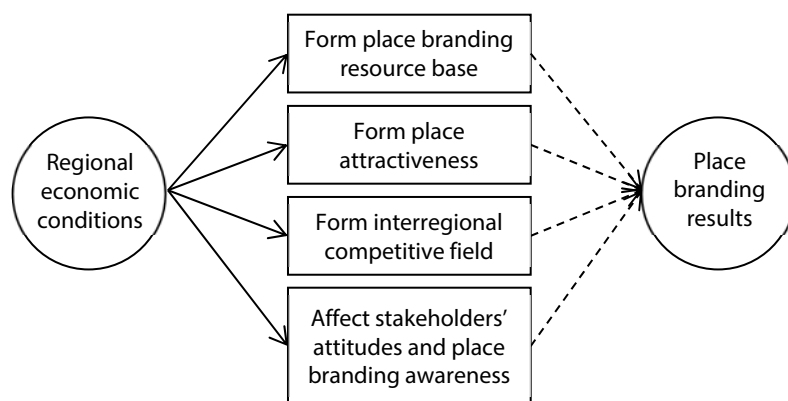


Fig. 1. Conceptual model of the study (source: own elaboration)

the literature. This statement is consistent with the findings of literature reviews (e.g., Vuignier, 2017), which also do not point out the wide presence of this topic. However, there exist studies, which give grounds for proposing tenability of research in this direction.

Numerous studies (Giovanardi, 2011; Kotler et al., 1999) describe regional economic conditions in general among the place attraction factors, dividing them into hard factors (economic stability, productivity, costs, etc.) and soft factors (quality of life, culture, flexibility, and dynamism, etc.). Oliveira (2016), considering place branding as a spatial planning instrument, pays attention to regional economic conditions and perceives them as a region's qualities and constraints. The model of place branding success factors (Rainisto, 2007; Rinaldi & Beeton, 2015) describes mostly managerial factors but also names several factors related to regional and macro-environmental conditions. Among them are the global marketplace, local development, political unity, and process coincidences. Such studies treat regional conditions as a kind of place features, which could become the resource basis for place branding (Vazhenina, 2008). Therefore, they show that the place branding process is linked with regional economic conditions, which form a resource base for place branding.

More specifically, the study analyses the possible correlation between the regional economic conditions and particular properties of the place branding process. Thus, Boisen et al. (2018) study the link between the presence of mandated entities, responsible for place branding, and municipality development, population size, and the share of jobs in the tourism sector. Ma et al. (2021) describe the correlations of city size, level of economic development and industrial structure with city branding strategies applied. These studies provide evidence that regional level of development affects the process of place branding activities.

Another line of research deals with the spatial aspect of place branding. Thus, Niedomysl and Jonasson (2012) add a spatial dimension to the place branding theory and suggest that places use branding and marketing activities to compete for capital. The means these activities use depends on the position of a place in the hierarchy of power and the distance between them. According to this assumption, regional economic conditions form an interregional competitive field, where place branding activities are performed. From this point of view, regions may differ in their attractiveness: place branding activities in a more attractive region could benefit from better starting conditions. Therefore, regional economic conditions may affect the factors crucial for place branding: investments (Jacobsen, 2009; Pasquinelli & Vuignier, 2019), migration (Schade et al., 2018), and tourism (Gertner et al., 2007).

Finally, there is the well-developed line of research, which argues for an increased involvement of stakeholders in place branding activities (e.g., Kavaratzis, 2012; Ma et al., 2020). There are different stakeholder groups (residents, public managers, and businesses), which have an influence on the place branding process: on spatial planning policy, on tourism/leisure policy (Eshuis et al., 2018). Within the topic of our study, we assume that regional economic conditions could affect the stakeholders' attitude to place branding and thus have an impact on place branding results. For example, should there be any issues concerning well-being and quality of life, residents could become less supportive of place branding initiatives. Another example to be mentioned is that the proximity of competing regions may build up awareness among stakeholders.

Therefore, the literature review allows us to conclude that regional economic conditions affect place branding in different ways (Fig. 1). First of all, they form the resource base for place branding competitive fields and place attractiveness; they

<i>Input</i>	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Output</i>	<i>Outcome</i>	<i>Impact</i>
<i>Budgets of individual projects</i>	<i>Project implementation</i>	<i>Direct, immediate, tangible action effects</i>	<i>Mid-term effects for the products' beneficiaries</i>	<i>Long-term effects for the stakeholders of given strategy</i>

Fig. 2. Logic framework for the efficiency measurement in public sector (source: Bouckaert and Halligan (2008))

also affect place branding awareness and attitudes of the stakeholders.

Therefore, these findings call for further studies of the role of regional economic conditions in place branding. Our study on this topic managed to expose a link between particular regional economic conditions and the results of place branding activities.

In the next section, we will consider in more detail the concept of place branding results and will formulate the hypothesis of the study.

2.3. Place Brands Survival as an Output of Place Branding Activity

The results of place branding could be decomposed based on a logic framework considering the diverse timeframe of their occurrence (Fig. 2): short-term output, mid-term outcome, and long-term impact (Hereźniak et al., 2018). Based on this framework, we could narrow the term “results” within this paper and study the research question in terms of the outputs, since this type of result is supposed to be influenced directly by regional conditions of place branding activity.

In terms of place branding planes, considered in section 2.1., output of place branding activity could be associated with the existence of a place brand on a tangible plane, since it represents the direct, immediate, tangible effects, i. e. the primary place brand manifestation embedded in observable actions.

From this point of view, we propose the term of place brands survival as an output of place branding activity, treating it as the fact of a place brand continuing to exist. In general, it may be problematic to measure the existence of place brands as a set of associations in the minds of stakeholders. However, in terms of the outputs of place branding process, if nothing reminds one in a particular region that there once was a place branding initiative then a place brand seems to be no longer in use. Thus, the existence of a particular place brand could be specified on a tangible plane by aggregating the data on using place brand visuals (logo, style, etc.), place brand semantics and ideology (slogans, catch-phrases, names, etc.), and place brand-related activities.

Naturally, securing survival as a one type of results (output) does not necessarily lead to achieving further results (outcome, impact). However, we

suppose that knowing the factors affecting place branding output is important, since it is the necessary step for further progress, and if there are no tangible signs of place brands, then the long-term results are hardly to be expected.

Thus, our research is based on the following hypothesis: there are particular regional economic conditions, which affect place branding activities in different ways, yielding better or worse place brands survival, treated as the fact of observable place brand attributes continuing to exist.

Now we need to operationalise our conceptual model: to describe the method of study, select the variables for the study, form a research sample, and elaborate our working hypothesis in terms of the assumptions associated with particular variables representing regional economic conditions. These issues will be described in the next section.

3. Methodology

3.1. The Survival Analysis Approach to Place Branding Studies

To study our research question, we resorted to survival analysis. The survival analysis is a branch of statistics for studying the expected duration of time until some event occurs. This method was initially applied in medical research for measuring and evaluating patients' chances for recovery with the different types of therapy. Nowadays, the survival analysis is used in economics and management, e.g. for employment estimations (Trentini, 2021; Woya, 2019), risk analysis (Sarwar et al., 2018), and decision-making (Serio et al., 2020; Russell et al., 2013). However, there is a lack of survival studies on place marketing or place branding purposes.

With this approach, we could compare how long place brands of different regions will last with regard to their economic conditions. The difference in the lifetime of place brands will be an indicator of the impact of regional economic conditions on place branding outputs.

The survival analysis is also referred to as the “duration analysis” in economics and “event history analysis” in sociology, but we held to the general name “survival analysis”, since it is applicable to our research, as in fact, we study how the tangible form of place brands survives.

In empirical research, we used the Kaplan-Meier estimator (Kaplan & Meier, 1958), which is

a standard survival analysis tool. In general, the survival analysis simulates the onset of a “death”, which is considered an “event”, for elements of a particular sample. The Kaplan-Meier method allows to estimate the proportion of elements that did not have an event, and to estimate the probability of not having an event (i. e., to “stay alive”) at a certain point in time from the beginning of the observation. This probability is called survival, and the dependence function of survival on time is called the survival function.

The Kaplan-Meier survival function is given as:

$$\hat{S}(t) = \prod_{i: t_i \leq t} \left(1 - \frac{d_i}{n_i} \right), \quad (1)$$

where t_i is the time when at least one event happened; d_i is the number of events that happened at the time t_i ; n_i represents the number of objects survived up to time t_i .

If an object survives until the end of a study, it is called “censored”. It becomes censored in the sense that nothing is known about that object af-

ter the end of study. A censored object may or may not have an event right after the end of an observation. The advantage of the Kaplan-Meier method is an ability to evaluate the survival function both for complete and censored data. In our study, the data on the place brands that are still in use at the end of the observation period will be considered censored, while the data on the un-survived place brands will be considered complete.

3.2. Measures, Working Hypotheses and Data Sources

Based on the conceptual model, we formed a set of variables and conducted a working hypotheses testing on how they impact place branding outputs (Table 1).

As the Kaplan-Meier survival analysis technique allows us to apply the scores obtained through content analysis, we use both statistical data collected from the statistical database of the Federal State Statistics Service and results of a content analysis of open-access websites.

Table 1

Variables and working hypotheses

Variable, measure	Working hypothesis	Rationale
<i>Dependent variable</i>		
Existence of a place brand, qualitative scale: Active, Supposed active, Supposed inactive, Inactive	There are significant links between this variable and others	Place branding is a part of the region’s economic activity and therefore is affected by the economic, social, and spatial parameters of this region
<i>Independent variables:</i>		
Gross regional product (GRP) per capita, roubles	Positive impact	Successful regions provide more resources for place branding activity and have more strengths to be promoted
Administrative centre development, qualitative scale: Developing / Developed	Positive impact	In developed cities stakeholders possibly have better access to financial, human, information, and other resources for place branding
Investments, million roubles	Positive impact	Investment attractiveness partially reflects the cumulative place image, so attractive regions are in the better position to start place branding process
Migration rate, per 10 000 people	Positive impact	Migration attractiveness partially reflects the cumulative place image, so attractive regions are in the better position to start place branding process
Unemployment rate, %	Negative impact	Place residents are an important stakeholder of place branding. Unemployment rate is considered as a proxy for residents’ well-being
Change of the head of a federal subject after the place branding was initiated, qualitative scale: yes / no	(a) Positive impact or (b) Negative impact	Public managers are an important stakeholder of place branding. According to some studies, regular changes in administration have a positive impact on the development dynamics of Russian regions. Therefore, it could be the same for place branding. The successors of a previous administration may have no interest, and that is why they may postpone place branding initiatives
Adjacency to regions already having place brands, qualitative scale: yes / no	(a) Positive impact or (b) Negative impact	Availability of a nearby example of place branding increases awareness among stakeholders about it and may positively effects on place branding process At the same time, it may also encourage simple imitation of place branding initiatives to demonstrate the capability to do the same

Source: own elaboration.

The time of the data differs for the variables. Thus, according to the survival analysis method, we got an estimation of the “Existence of a place brand” variable, as it was on the time of data collection (at the beginning of 2021). For “Administrative centre development” variable, we used the estimation given in the particular information source (2019). We assume that the development status (especially relative to each other) of the selected cities was not significantly changed within the last decade, so this estimation is relevant both for old and new branded regions. Other variables were estimated when the place branding initiative was started. For quantitatively variables, the average indicator for a 10-year period before the beginning of branding was used.

3.3. The Sample

We carried out data sampling of the federal subjects of Russia (or simply “federal subjects”). The federal subject is an official general name for Russian first-level administrative division units that includes such constituent entities as republics, krais, oblasts, cities of federal importance, autonomous oblasts, and autonomous districts.

The data collected cover all of the federal subjects. By the observation date (mid-2021), only 22 federal subjects had developed a place brand; another 22 federal subjects announced their place

branding plans in different years but still have not realised them; and 41 federal subjects have not declared any place branding intentions.

Some regions had initiatives similar to place branding, however, it was not officially considered in these terms. For example, the Perm Design Development Centre initiative was developed in 2010–2014. Within its scope, some place branding-like projects were planned to form the city image as one of the capitals of culture: a logo and design style for Perm, various cultural activities, etc. Nevertheless, this initiative was not associated with the discourse of place branding or place marketing. To avoid such ambiguous cases, we counted only regions, where the place branding process is recognised in these terms, since we need to get a homogeneous sample to allow the comparability of our cases.

There are also regions (e.g., the Republic of Tatarstan) that have two or more place brands developed in different times. For such cases, we counted only first place brands, presuming that they are not affected by any previous branding experience.

Therefore, our statistical population (Table 2) covers the whole situation of place branding of Russian first-level administrative division units.

These regions are similar in terms of place branding process organisation. They all imply the

Table 2

The federal subjects of Russia having place brands

No	Federal subject	Years active	Place brand focus
1	Omsk Oblast	2010–2012	investment, tourism, quality of life
2	Ulyanovsk Oblast	2010–2018	self-identity, investment
3	Kaluga Oblast	2011	investment
4	Nenets Autonomous District	2011	self-identity (as declared), tourism (de facto)
5	Penza Oblast	2012–2013	investment
6	Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug	2013–2019	self-identity
7	Tula Oblast	2013–2014	self-identity
8	Vologda Oblast	2014	self-identity, regional products
9	Kaliningrad Oblast	2014	tourism
10	Republic of Tatarstan	2014–2016	self-identity
11	Altai Krai	2015–2020	tourism
12	Arkhangelsk Oblast	2015	tourism
13	Astrakhan Oblast	2015	regional products and services
14	Novosibirsk Oblast	2015	self-identity, investment, tourism
15	Perm Krai	2015	tourism
16	Kamchatka Krai	2018	tourism
17	Lipetsk Oblast	2018	tourism
18	Magadan Oblast	2018	tourism
19	Tyumen Oblast	2018	tourism
20	Yaroslavl Oblast	2018	investment, tourism, work-force migration
21	Republic of Bashkortostan	2019	tourism
22	Chechen Republic	2019	tourism

Source: own elaboration.

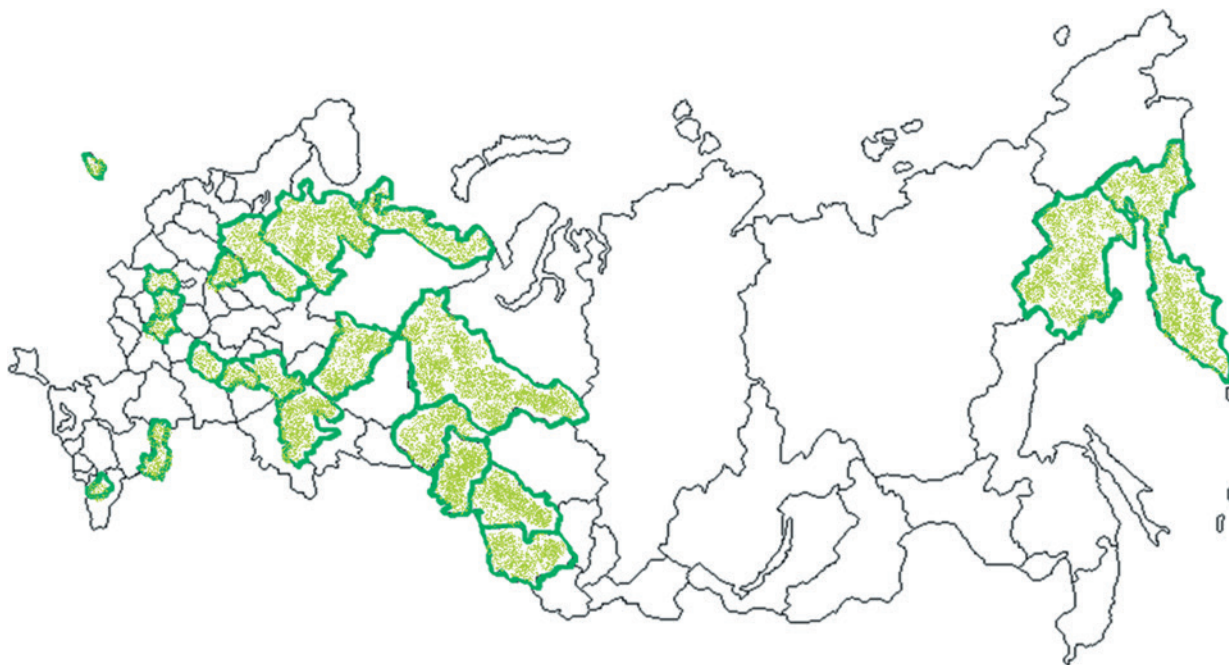


Fig. 3. The location of the federal subjects of Russia having place brand (source: own elaboration)

top-down approach with the place branding initiative on the side of regional administration. Their place brands were developed by consulting companies, which were chosen by administration in the tendering process. Therefore, we suppose that there are no significant differences in terms of management-related factors, which could affect the results of our study.

The regions having place branding are mostly located together and create geographic groups (Fig. 3). Place brands are created both by central and peripheral regions; this observation is similar to the findings of Boisen et al. (2018) on municipalities in the Netherlands. Therefore, it seems that place branding activities do not depend on the proximity of regions to bigger cities.

In terms of time, there were two waves of place branding activities (Fig. 4) peaking in 2015

and 2018. As a plausible explanation, we advocate for the idea that place branding was part of the government investment programmes of 2015 and 2018 to overcome economic crisis consequences.

Thus, our set of regions is not homogenous from the time perspective: many place brands have been created in recent years, which could bias the survival analysis results. To avoid this, we calculated an average lifetime of place brands in the observed regions, which is 5.53 years, and consequently excluded from further analysis the place brands created after 2015. Therefore, our sample includes 15 regions that developed place brands from 2010 to 2015 (see Table 2). Consequently, we suppose that all the remaining place brands have comparable survival chances within the period of 2016–2021.

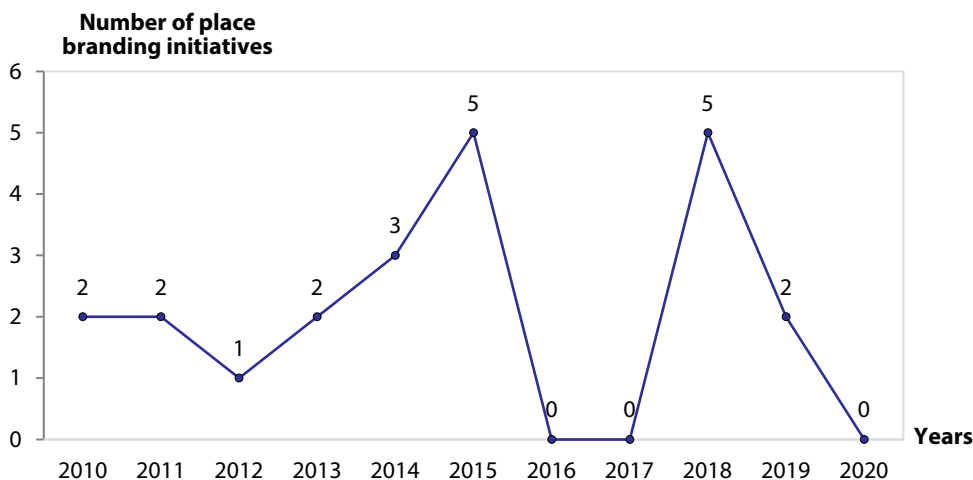


Fig. 4. The waves of place branding activity in the federal subjects of Russia (source: own elaboration)

In the next section, we will consider the descriptive statistics of our sample and describe the results of the survival analysis.

4. Findings

4.1. Descriptive statistics and comments on variables evaluation

At first, we will provide descriptive statistics of our sample and comment on how the data were collected (Table 3). All variables were transformed to a binary scale since the Kaplan-Meier survival analysis technique requires binary data representation. For the quantitative variables, we used simple transformation rules based on its average meaning. For qualitative variables in most cases, it was quite clear which group they should be classified into. However, for some qualitative variables there is a need to comment on the estimation procedure.

The main qualitative variable is the “Existence of a place brand” because it is the key parameter for survival analysis; therefore, we describe its estimation in more detail.

In general, the estimation of the existence of a place brand is based on analysis of the documents and publications related to a particular place brand. Our data sources were: the websites of regional administrations, regional media (e.g. “Penza online”, “Ulprensa”), thematic websites (e.g. “sostav.ru”, “The Center of cultural heritage of Tatarstan”), and social media. These sources

quite evenly represented the place brands in the sample. In most cases, the place brands were presented on the regional administration website, described by regional news agencies, and discussed by thematic websites. Through these sources, it is possible to follow the examples of a place brand use, if it is still active. Many place brands also have supporting pages in social media or a thematic website, however not all.

We used a four-grade classification to specify the existence of a place brand: “Active”, “Supposed active”, “Supposed inactive”, and “Inactive”. The decisions were made based on information about how place brand visuals, semantics and ideology are represented. For example, if there are activities related to the place brand, or corresponding elements are used in official region representation, or does the place brand’s website or its page in social media provide the relevant information.

We did not use quantitative estimations, since described types of place brand mentions are in comparable quantities for most regions. The significant difference is in the time distribution of these mentions: the number of publications related to a place brand is quickly decreasing from the time of its development; so, recent place branding activity was observed in relation closer to the time of data collection.

To elaborate on the details with examples, we will further describe criteria for each category.

Active place brand — there were clear signs of its use: related events, up-to-date websites, actual

Table 3

Sample description

Variable, measure	Min	Max	Average	Transformation rule	Binary choice	
					0	1
<i>Quantitative variables</i>						
Gross regional product (GRP) per capita, roubles	75 224	504 819	219 186	Above average — 1; Below average — 0	8	7
Investments, million roubles	24 393	485 364	120 467		7	8
Unemployment rate, %	4.44	8.86	6.94		7	8
Migration rate, per 10 000 people	-62.4	56	—	Positive migration flow — 1; Negative migration flow — 0	8	7
<i>Qualitative variables</i>						
Existence of a place brand	Not applicable			“Active”, “Supposed active” — 1 “Inactive”, “Supposed inactive” — 0	7	8
Administrative centre development	Not applicable			Developed — 1 Developing — 0	10	5
Change of the head of a federal subject after the place branding was initiated	Not applicable			Was changed — 1 Wasn’t changed — 0	6	9
Adjacency to regions already having place brands	Not applicable			Adjacent — 1 Nonadjacent — 0	7	8

Source: own elaboration.

examples of visual or verbal representation, etc. The case of Kaluga Oblast could be an example. Despite the criticism at an early stage of the place branding process, the visual style of Kaluga Oblast brand is still in use by the Agency for Regional Development of Kaluga Oblast, which is attracting investments, according to the investment-focused brand conception.

Supposed active place brand — there were signs of brand use, however intertwined with other promotional efforts. For example, the brand of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug is the case: its visual components were in use at festivals and websites at the time of data collection. However, this place brand seems to be shadowed by other promotional activities and, therefore, does not focus marketing activities around itself.

Supposed inactive place brand — there were non-systematic separated facts of brand use, e.g. one place brand-related event or one using of place brand visuals among similar others. The case of Altai Krai is an example: only a single use of its place brand logo and slogan in early 2020 was observed, and there were no signs of place brand-related activities from the date of its presentation. It is a tourism-focused brand, but all tourist attraction activities are actually not connected with it and are realised separately.

Inactive place brand — there were rebranding attempts, outdated examples of visual or verbal representation of the studied brand, no place brand related events, etc. An example is the case of Ulyanovsk Oblast, where in 2018 the Governor directly voiced the need of rebranding, and discontinued the current place branding initiative. Another example is the Republic of Tatarstan: its brand was not officially discontinued, but we did not find evidence of this brand activity after the time, when new place brand was developed at 2016.

Among 15 place brands in a sample, only five fell into intermediate categories “Supposed active” and “Supposed inactive”. To perform the Kaplan-Meier procedure we later transformed these categories to a binary representation.

Other qualitative variables were easier to evaluate. To present spatial characteristics, we use a variable “Adjacency to regions already having place brands”. To assess it, we looked for adjacent regions during the year of the development of a particular place brand and counted as “Yes” if there was one or as “No” if not. The “Administrative centre development” variable is based on the data taken from the officially adopted “Strategy of Spatial Development of the Russian Federation”, where Russian cities were classi-

fied in four groups by the level of development. In our scale, the group “Developed” is for two categories of cities: “The biggest cities (more than 1 million residents), which provide more than 1 % of GDP” and “Cities with more than 500 000 residents, which provide 0.2–1 % of GDP”; and the group “Developing” is for the categories of cities with fewer than 500 000 residents, which provide 0.2–1 % or up to 0.2 % of GDP. Finally, we use the “Change of the head of a federal subject after the place branding was initiated” variable to represent the political conditions. The “Yes” and “No” categories were based on the fact that the head of a federal subject was changed in the period after the place branding activities had been launched.

4.2. The survival analysis

We used the statistical package IBM SPSS Statistics to perform the Kaplan-Meier procedure. The estimation of place brands survival probability uses data on place brands active lifetime based on Table 1. The place brands in a sample are divided in two groups for each variable, as described in Table 3. The analysis results are presented in Table 4.

To be precise, these results are presented in a set of survival curves (Fig. 5). The horizontal axis of each plot shows how long these place brands survived. If the line reaches 10 on this axis, it means that there is at least one place brand in a group, which is 10 years old. If not, the end of the line shows the maximum place brand age in a group. The vertical axis shows the probability to survive at a particular age. The meaning at the end of the line shows the probability to survive at a maximum age in a group. If the line falls to 0, it means that no place brand survived a particular age, thus, the cumulative probability for this group is also 0 within the whole observation period. The marks on the lines show censored place brands, which were excluded from the study at a particular age due to the end of the observation period.

There are two survival curves in the plots, which correspond to the groups for each variable, according to Table 4. For example, the plot “a” on Fig. 5 shows that place brands of the federal subjects with GRP below average have less probability of survival after the first year. Both groups have place brands whose maximum age is 10 years, but for each year the survival probability of the “above average” group shows better results in correlation with the average lifetime (6.29 vs 4.86). This all results in the 28.6 % survival rate for place brands of the regions with GRP below average against 75.0 % otherwise. Therefore, we can see the pos-

Table 4

The results of Kaplan-Meier analysis

Variable	Group	Average lifetime	Total	Events	Censored	Survival rate, %	Total survival prob.	St. err.	Working hypothesis
Gross regional product (GRP) per capita	above average	6.29	8	2	6	75.0	0.750	0.153	Confirmed
	below average	4.86	7	5	2	28.6	0.214	0.178	
Administrative centre development	developed	4.40	10	6	4	40.0	0.000	0.000	Not confirmed
	developing	7.80	5	1	4	80.0	0.800	0.179	
Investments	above average	5.57	7	2	5	71.4	0.714	0.171	Confirmed
	below average	5.50	8	5	3	37.5	0.333	0.180	
Migration rate	arrivals prevail	6.00	8	3	5	62.5	0.625	0.171	Partially confirmed
	outflows prevail	5.00	7	4	3	42.9	0.000	0.000	
Unemployment rate	above average	4.72	7	4	3	42.9	0.429	0.187	Partially confirmed
	below average	6.25	8	3	5	62.5	0.000	0.000	
Change of the head of a federal subject after the place branding was initiated	was changed	6.50	6	3	3	50.0	0.333	0.255	Not confirmed
	was not changed	4.89	9	4	5	55.6	0.556	0.166	
Adjacency to regions already having place brands	adjacent	4.13	7	2	5	37.5	0.375	0.171	Confirmed (b)
	non-adjacent	7.14	8	5	3	71.4	0.571	0.249	

Source: own elaboration.

itive effect of the “Gross regional product” variable on the survival of place brands, which confirms the working hypothesis.

Other survival curves for the confirmed hypotheses (plots “c” and “g”) also could be interpreted in this way. We will further comment on the partially confirmed and not confirmed assumptions.

A positive connection with the survival of place brands was not confirmed for the administrative centre development. The results show that developing cities show an 80.0 % survival rate for place brands in their regions, which is far better than for developed cities, which constitute 40.0 %. The same applies to the survival probability and the average lifetime. However, the survival plot and the difference between the groups allow us to assume that there is another kind of relation, which will be discussed in the following section.

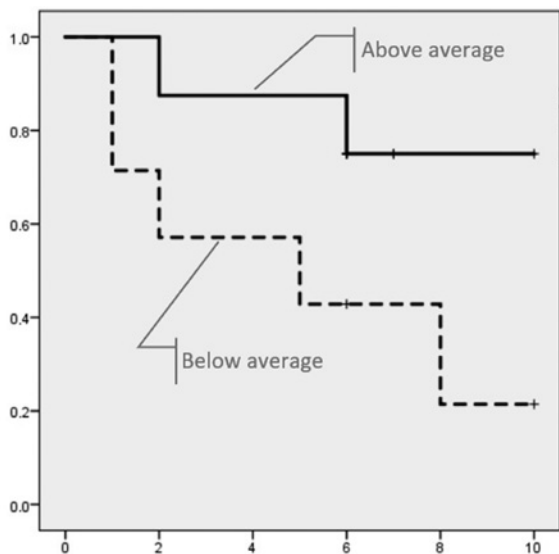
The effect of the migration rate was partially confirmed. The reason is that all parameters of the survival analysis (survival rate and probability, maximum and average lifetime) are more suitable for the regions with income migration, but this

difference is not substantial. Even the cumulative probability gap is wide only for place brands over an eight-year period (Fig. 5d).

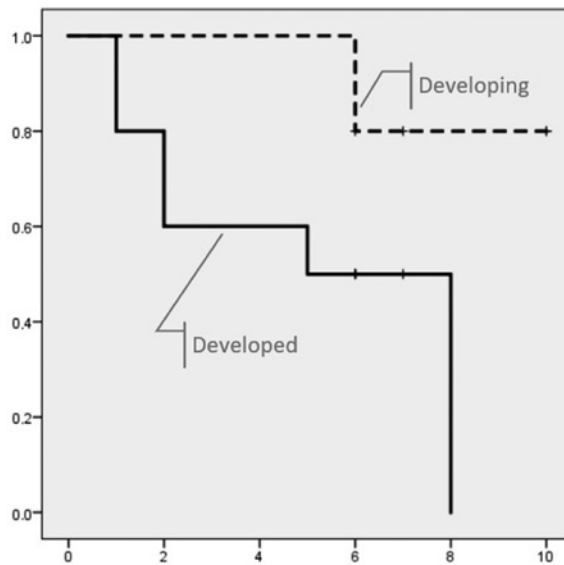
We also partially confirm the effect of unemployment on the place branding output. Place brands have a better survival rate, a cumulative survival probability and lifetime in regions with lower unemployment rate. However, regions with unemployment problems have better survival parameters for place brands of 2–8 years old (Fig. 5e).

Finally, we did not confirm the hypothesis on the role of the change of the head of a federal subject after the place branding was initiated. Even though the survival analysis shows an advantage for the regions where the head of a federal subject was not changed, the lifetime is better for groups with changes in leadership and the survival rate is almost similar for both groups while the survival curve shows the change of group’s position on a different lifetime (Fig. 5g).

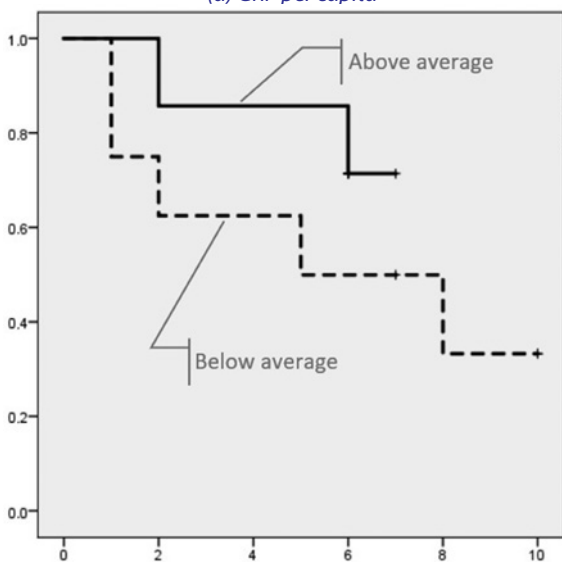
In the next section, we will clarify these findings.



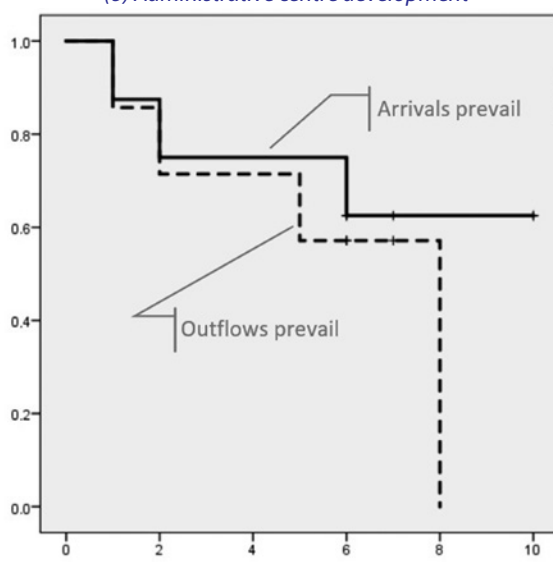
(a) GRP per capita



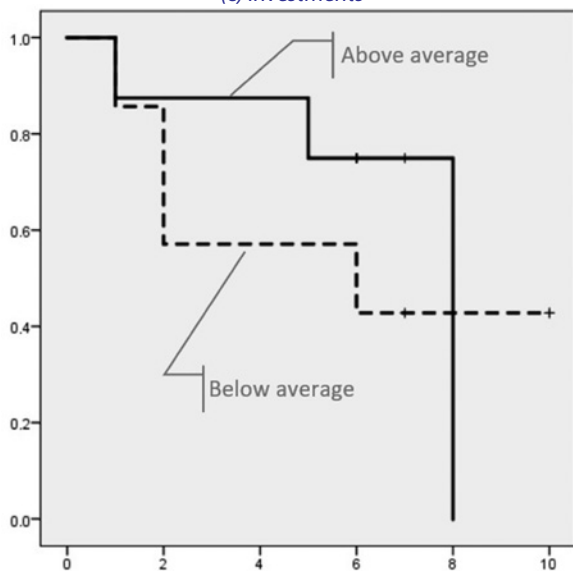
(b) Administrative centre development



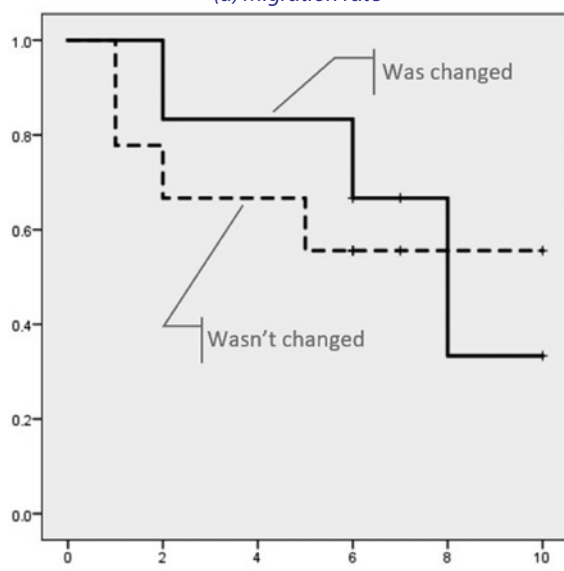
(c) Investments



(d) Migration rate



(e) Unemployment rate



(f) Change of the head of a federal subject head after the place branding was initiated

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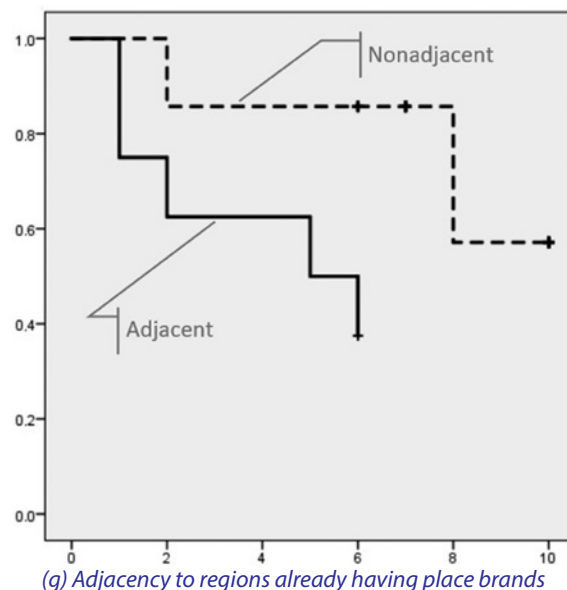


Fig. 5. The survival curves for studied variables (source: own elaboration)

5. Discussion

5.1. Implications for theory

Our study makes several contributions to the literature. First, it extends the place branding theory by proposing that regional economic conditions have an impact on the outputs of place branding and by providing empirical evidence for this idea. More specifically, we empirically confirm the positive impact of the role of the regional level development in terms of GRP, which is consistent with other studies of this parameter (Ma et al., 2021). We also confirm the positive place branding impact of regional attractiveness in terms of investment and migration flows. This finding is considerable for studies of a place branding role in increasing place attractiveness, since there is a mutual connection revealed. Other findings are the negative impact of unemployment, which strengthens the idea of a resident as one of the key stakeholders of place branding (e.g., Braun et al., 2013), and the negative impact of adjacency to regions already having place brand, which shows that the spatial position of a region among others may affect its place branding activities (Niedomysl & Jonasson, 2012).

For two variables, our working hypotheses were not confirmed. However, for the “Administrative centre development” variable, our findings show an opposite case scenario on place branding: place brands were more successful in the regions with smaller administrative centres. This situation can be explained by fewer strategic goals and better concentration of resources to the development of a place brand. It also could be due to the “over-

branding” issue (Rozhkov et al., 2020), when a big city has several brands that compete against each other, and therefore none of them prevails. The impact of the change of the regional administration was not confirmed, either positive or negative. Thus, we cannot treat place brands of Russian regions as only “fast policy” ones (Cleave et al., 2017), but also do not observe a positive effect of the changes in the administration (Orekhovskiy et al., 2021).

Hence, our findings strengthen the place branding theory by overcoming its focus on the internal management-related factors and building connections between place branding studies and studies in regional economics.

Furthermore, we contribute to the methodology of place branding studies by using survival analysis. Survival analysis may be used not only for measuring the probability of something “to stay alive”, but also for measuring the probability of any other place branding events within some observation period. Thus, this paper extends the methods of multiple case studies in place branding research (Ćwiklicki & Pilch, 2021), which is useful due to the repeatedly declared lack of comparative and multiple case studies in place branding (Boisen et al., 2018; Lucarelli & Berg, 2011; Lu et al., 2020). In doing so, we contribute to the future potential research, applying survival analysis to place branding issues.

5.2. Implications for practice

Our findings have practical implications for public managers on the regional and country levels of governance.

On the regional level, there are two possible situations. The first situation is when the region already has a place brand. In that case, the further elaboration of this study's topic could reveal the optimum period of place rebranding, i. e. how often administrations should initiate the changes in place branding activity. In general, place rebranding could be needed to maintain awareness and loyalty within the changes in environment (e.g., new strategic goals, activity of competitors, changes of key stakeholders, etc.) In that context, our findings show that regional conditions affect the place brand lifetime, which potentially could be measured. Therefore, public managers would benefit from better-grounded changes in place branding policy.

The second situation is when the region does not have a place brand, and regional administration considers the need in it. In this case, public managers and other place branding stakeholders should take into account that place branding is affected by regional economic conditions. Therefore, decision-makers would benefit from studying regional conditions before deciding on a place branding initiative. In fact, place branding process includes some kind of regional analysis, but it usually aims at revealing branding potential of a place. In the context of our findings, there is a need in estimation of chances for place branding activity to bring successful output. Doing it this way will allow to think over the reinforcements for place branding in adverse conditions or even focus on the alternative approaches (e.g., place marketing activity without brand development). This could result in improved incorporation of place branding in regional administration systems, better resourcing and support of place branding activities, and therefore could increase chances to achieve the place branding goals.

On the national level, policymakers may want to propose place branding to regions as a typical development instrument within some macro-level strategy, programme, or policy. Our findings show that the output of place branding will differ to various regions due to different regional economic conditions. Therefore, some governing entities could recommend place branding to be implemented at the regional level, though not

as a uniform solution. Decision on whether place branding is appropriate should be done regarding the conditions of a particular region. Thus, the country-level policy would benefit from more balanced development programmes and rational distribution of efforts.

5.3. Research limitations and future research directions

This study falls short of addressing several points, which also indicate potential future research directions. First, we considered only place branding factors related to regional economic conditions. Other factors could be considered in future research. Survival analysis may be applied in future studies to investigate the internal factors of place branding, for example, to analyse the impact of particular activities of place branding or management parameters of a place brand. Studies may also explore the additional regional economic conditions or the role of other regional differences, e.g., in terms of culture. Such studies can expand our understanding of place branding factors.

Next, we based our analysis on the data of the federal subjects of Russia and, thus, have a limited variation of variables. Future research would benefit from applying our conceptual framework to other countries and types of regions to extend the validity of our findings. In particular, we assume that it will be reasonable to shift to the municipal level and investigate if the findings of this paper are applicable to the places of a smaller scale.

Finally, we acknowledge that regional economic conditions and other factors may influence place branding in combinations. This study is of an exploratory nature and is aimed to reveal significant regional economic conditions separately. Future studies may benefit from adopting a more holistic approach and integration of regional economic conditions and management-related place branding factors in one model.

Despite these limitations, our findings contribute to the place branding theory by demonstrating the relevance of regional economic conditions to understand the place branding outputs and paving the way for more nuanced exploration of place branding success factors.

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