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CULTURAL IDENTITY AS A FACTOR IN THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL GROWTH OF A TERRITORY: THE ROLE OF YOUTH ECONOMIC PATRIOTISM

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Introduction: Today, the cultural sphere is increasingly regarded as a resource for regional development; however, the conditions under which cultural identity is converted into the economic potential of a territory remain insufficiently studied. This paper analyzes this relationship through the economic behavior of young people.

Aim: To determine under what conditions the cultural identity of a territory is converted into economic potential through the economic behavior of young people, and what role state support plays in this process.

Materials and Methods: A comparative analysis of six Russian regions with pronounced cultural heritage was conducted using a uniform indicator of tourist flow and its dynamics, as well as indicators of institutional support for local brands; documents of federal grant programs were also analyzed. Young people's attitudes regarding attachment to their region were assessed using secondary survey data from the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (hereinafter VTsIOM).

Results: The cultural identity of a territory is a potential economic resource that is actualized once it acquires an institutional form. The analysis of six Russian regions shows that the cultural code can be converted into tourist flows, investment, and entrepreneurial initiatives.

Conclusion: Sustainable economic development of territories is impossible without the active participation of young people. Cultural identity can act as a key factor in retaining the younger generation and attracting investment, while state support can strengthen the link between identity and youth entrepreneurial activity, creating conditions in which the cultural code can be capitalized. Since the study is based on secondary data for six regions, the conclusions are preliminary and require verification using primary data.

Keywords: cultural identity; cultural capital; economic patriotism; territorial brand (place brand); regional development; youth policy

INTRODUCTION

In the search for new sources of economic growth and ways to ensure the sustainable development of Russian regions, the cultural sphere is attracting growing attention from researchers and practitioners. Culture is no longer perceived solely as a social institution and is increasingly regarded as an economic resource capable of generating value added, jobs, and investment attractiveness for a territory. At the same time, preserving and expanding cultural capital is impossible without the younger generation. It is young people who decide whether to stay in the region or leave, whether to start their own business or choose salaried employment, and whether to prefer local or imported goods. The article examines the relationship between culture and the economy through the behavior

of young people and through the lens of economic patriotism.

The theoretical starting point is the concept of "cultural capital." In sociology, it was introduced by P. Bourdieu, who distinguished three states of cultural capital: embodied (skills, habits, knowledge, and manners acquired in childhood), objectified (cultural goods such as paintings, books, and instruments), and institutionalized (education and qualifications that confirm status) (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241–258). Bourdieu regarded cultural capital as a form of capital that, under certain conditions, can be converted into economic capital. It is important to understand that this conversion does not occur automatically, and it is precisely this conversion that constitutes the central question of the present study.

D. Throsby extended this concept by applying it to the economics of culture and defined cultural capital as "an asset which embodies, stores or provides cultural value in addition to whatever economic value it may possess" (Throsby, 2001, p. 46). Anholt (Anholt, 2007, pp. 26–27), complementing the theory of cultural capital, developed the idea of competitive identity: territories compete on the basis of reputation, but only a clear, well-formed identity helps attract tourists, investment, and talent. Place branding research also emphasizes that a territorial brand should rest on a stable identity and be aligned with the interests of stakeholders rather than be reduced to marketing communications (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005, pp. 506–514). In the context of this study, the cultural capital of a territory is understood as the totality of a region's cultural resources (traditions, crafts, gastronomic heritage, architectural monuments, linguistic and folklore material) that, under certain conditions, can be converted into economic assets.

In this study, "cultural identity" is understood as an individual's or a community's awareness of belonging to a particular cultural tradition, expressed in language, customs, gastronomic preferences, visual codes, and behavioral norms.

The concept of "economic patriotism" requires clarification with respect to the Russian market. The introduction of the term into scholarly use is attributed to B. Carayon, a deputy of the French National Assembly, who in 2003 used it in reports on improving the competitiveness of French enterprises, which provided, in particular, for support of national capital (Verbitskaya & Orinina, 2014, p. 2248). In the international literature, economic patriotism is defined as "economic decisions and interventions aimed at supporting actors, sectors, or territories that decision-makers regard as 'their own' on a territorial basis; this understanding is not reduced to economic nationalism and may also encompass local and regional levels" (Clift & Woll, 2012, pp. 307–323). Russian scholars N. O. Verbitskaya and L. V. Orinina define economic patriotism as the desire to protect domestic producers and to prefer domestic goods to imported ones (Verbitskaya & Orinina, 2014, p. 2250); in their survey of students, support for domestic producers, the creation of favorable conditions for small and medium-sized businesses, and the formation of an emotionally positive attitude toward the national economy were named as its key features (ibid., p. 2249). In the context of this study, "youth economic patriotism" refers to the willingness of young people to support local brands, to create their own entrepreneurial projects based on the region's cultural heritage, and to remain in the region to implement their own initiatives.

A territorial brand is defined as a recognizable symbol, product, or practice that is associated with a specific region and draws on its cultural code. In turn, the cultural code of a region is the set of values, images, myths, and legends of a territory that can be reflected in local brands (Roscongress, 2024).

To interpret youth behavior, the study uses A. Hirschman's triad of "exit, voice, and loyalty" (Hirschman, 1970). When conditions deteriorate, a person may leave, try to change the situation, or remain loyal. Applied to the economic behavior of young people in a region, this means leaving ("exit"), participating in local development, for example, by launching a startup or implementing a grant-funded project ("voice"), or staying in the region ("loyalty"). The triad is used below to interpret data on youth migration, grant

activity, and regional attachment. Data on youth attitudes are drawn from the publicly available results of VTsIOM sociological surveys.

The aim of the study is to determine under what conditions the cultural identity of a territory is converted into economic potential through the economic behavior of young people, and what role state support plays in this process.

Since the study is based on secondary data and does not involve statistical testing of causal relationships, the hypotheses are formulated as research questions:

- Q1. Are regions with more pronounced institutionalization of local brands based on the cultural code associated with higher levels and growth rates of tourist flow compared with culturally similar regions with weaker brand support?
- Q2. What conditions are associated with the formation of economic patriotism among young people?
- Q3. How is state support related to the entrepreneurial and project activity of young people in the regions under consideration?

A limitation of the study is that secondary data make it possible to assess the consistency of the observed indicators with the research questions but do not allow hypotheses to be formally tested or causal relationships to be established with precision. The limitations are described in more detail in the DISCUSSION section.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is comparative and descriptive and is based on the analysis of secondary data. The methodological framework comprised a comparative analysis of six Russian regions in terms of tourist flow, its dynamics, and its density relative to population size; an analysis of Rospatent data on registered geographical indications and regional brands; an analysis of federal and regional measures to support youth initiatives; and a secondary analysis of VTsIOM sociological survey data.

The theoretical framework of the study draws on P. Bourdieu's work on the forms of capital, the works of D. Throsby, S. Anholt's concept of competitive identity, M. Kavaratzis and G. Ashworth's approach to place branding, A. Hirschman's triad, B. Clift and C. Woll's concept of economic patriotism, as well as the works of Russian scholars.

The empirical base comprised official data from Rosstat and regional statistical agencies on tourist flows, open data from Rospatent, publications of regional authorities, materials of the Presidential Fund for Cultural Initiatives (hereinafter PFCI) and Rosmolodezh, the Strategy for the Development of the Creative Economy of the Russian Federation and the Concept for the Development of Creative Industries until 2030, survey data, and academic publications. To analyze young people's attachment to their region and assess their life orientations, secondary data from the VTsIOM survey "Russian Teenagers: A Generation of Opportunities" (2026) were used.

The study was conducted in several stages. At the first stage, the author carried out a theoretical analysis of the concepts of "cultural capital," "cultural identity," "economic patriotism," and "territorial brand" based on Russian and international sources. Next, a comparative analysis of six Russian regions was performed (the Republic of Tatarstan, the Chuvash Republic, the Republic of Kalmykia, Vologda Oblast, Krasnodar Krai, and the Republic of Karelia). The criteria for selecting the regions were the presence of a recognizable cultural code (traditions, crafts, gastronomy, historical and cultural sites); differences in institutional support for local brands, assessed by the number of geographical indications and regional brands registered by Rospatent, the existence of regional support

programs, and positions in the national rating of territorial brands; and differences in the type of economy and tourist attractiveness. This combination of selection criteria made it possible to distinguish regions with strong and weaker institutionalization of their own cultural code.

At the final stage, parameters such as young people's attachment to their region and their patriotic sentiment were assessed on the basis of secondary sociological research data (VTsIOM surveys), the results were summarized, and general conclusions were drawn.

RESULTS

In the context of the country's cultural diversity, particular importance attaches to Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 962 of December 25, 2025, which declared 2026 the Year of the Unity of the Peoples of Russia (Kremlin, 2025). In addition, President V. V. Putin instructed the government to consider declaring 2027 the Year of Geography (TASS, 2025). These initiatives create an institutional background within which the cultural code of the peoples of Russia, expressed in clothing, music, traditions, gastronomy, and crafts, receives additional support at the federal and regional levels.

For the comparative analysis, six regions were selected that have a pronounced cultural code but differ in the level of institutional support for brands, type of economy, and tourist attractiveness: the Republic of Tatarstan, the Chuvash Republic, the Republic of Kalmykia, Vologda Oblast, Krasnodar Krai, and the Republic of Karelia (the selection criteria are described in more detail in the methodology section).

The Republic of Tatarstan provides one of the most striking examples of the institutionalization of a cultural code. According to the State Committee of the Republic of Tatarstan on Tourism, the tourist flow to the republic grew from 2.5 million people in 2014 to 4.3 million in 2024, an increase of 72% (Realnoe Vremya, 2025). In 2025, the tourist flow reached 4.5 million people, reflecting the positive dynamics of tourist flow in the region (EMISS). By this indicator, the republic ranked 6th among Russian regions and 1st in the Volga Federal District.

The foreign tourist flow grew by 37% in 2024, reaching 97 thousand foreign tourists (TASS, 2025). The cultural code of the region is shaped by elements such as national holidays, Tatar national cuisine, the works of the national poets G. Tukay and M. Jalil, the KAMAZ automotive brand, and historical sites, including the Kazan Kremlin, the Kul Sharif Mosque, and the historical territories of Bolgar and Sviyazhsk (AiF Kazan, 2026). According to a 2024 survey of Kazan residents, the cultural code of the Tatars comprises 26 iconic elements (AiF Kazan, 2026). Local brands based on Tatar culture are actively developing in Tatarstan: the gastronomic brand "Bakhetle" with a range of more than 3,000 national cuisine items, and designer clothing brands (Lusi, Your Yool) that convey Tatar culture through contemporary imagery (T-J, 2025). Youth entrepreneurship in the creative industries receives active support: among student startups, projects related to digital technologies account for more than 40% of participants and creative industries for more than 20% (Tatcenter, 2026). Presentations of student startups in the creative business sector are regularly held in Kazan (TRT-TV, 2026). According to the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, culture, technology, and entrepreneurship generate products that influence the cultural identity and investment attractiveness of the region (Tatar-inform, 2026).

The Chuvash Republic also shows growth in tourist flow (+18%): 646,380 people in 2025 compared with 548,139 people in 2024 (EMISS). However, the positive dynamics are not consistent, as a predictable decline in the number of tourists was observed in the region in 2023–2024. The increased interest of travelers in the region in 2025 may be explained by the launch of a territorial branding program a year earlier. The cultural code of the region

is based on Chuvash embroidery of the 17th–19th centuries, which is considered one of the pinnacles of folk culture, as well as on traditional crafts and national rituals (Grani 21, 2025). Local brands include the Akkond confectionery factory, the Chuvash national clothing brand "Ilem" (Sber Business, 2023), and the Kugesi souvenir brand featuring Chuvash embroidery. Youth entrepreneurship is supported, among other things, through federal competitions: in 2026, 43 young entrepreneurs from Chuvashia took part in the federal youth entrepreneurship competition "Create Ours" (MB 21, 2026), whose 100 winners from 46 regions each received RUB 1 million (Rambler/Finance, 2026). Under the national project "Youth and Children," young people aged 14 to 35 can receive support for implementing initiatives in various fields (National Projects of Russia, 2025).

The Republic of Kalmykia shows a different trend. It is a region with a less diversified economy but a strong and distinctive cultural code. Tourist flow to Kalmykia grew by 3.3% in 2025, amounting to more than 126,180 tourists (EMISS). The main tourist brands are the Central Khurul "Golden Abode of Buddha Shakyamuni," Kalmyk marbled meat, saigas, tulips, and steppe landscapes (Kalmykia Tour, 2026; NBCRS, 2025). Creative projects based on the cultural code are also developing in Kalmykia: the perfume brand Smell Terra "Kalmyk Steppe," the national clothing brand TODO Brand, and numerous brands producing national jewelry (ModanaPR, 2025). However, the institutional framework for brand support here is weaker than, for example, in Tatarstan, and youth entrepreneurship is constrained by a smaller volume of available resources.

Vologda Oblast is an example of a region where historically established brands have acquired a strong institutional form. In 2024, the tourist flow amounted to 4.1 million visitors, approximately 300 thousand more than in the previous year (TASS, 2024; Interfax-Russia, 2024). Four Vologda brands were included in the national rating of Russian tourist brands: "Veliky Ustyug, the Birthplace of Ded Moroz" (26th place), "Vologda Butter" (33rd place), "Vologda Lace" (43rd place), and "Vologda Linen" (76th place) (Krasny Sever, 2026). The project "Veliky Ustyug, the Birthplace of Ded Moroz" is an illustrative case of monetizing cultural heritage: the brand of Ded Moroz's official residence attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists every year, and billions of rubles have been invested in the territory (Sreda dlya Zhizni, 2025). Over 10 years of implementation, the project has become an important element of the economy, contributing to employment growth and stimulating the production of goods and services and the development of infrastructure (Ageeva & Zhuravleva, 2009, p. 48). Other brands include "Vologda Butter," "Vologda Lace," "Northern Niello," and "Shemogodskaya Carving" (CultInfo, 2015). Young people in Vologda Oblast can receive grants of up to RUB 1 million under Rosmolodezh programs and can also take part in the grant competitions of the "Movement of the First." For instance, in 2025, five Vologda organizations received more than RUB 5 million to hold youth events (Vologdaregion, 2025). The region also runs a regional "Grants" program to support youth initiatives (UPInfo, 2025).

Krasnodar Krai is the absolute leader in tourist flow: in 2025, the region's resorts were visited by 19.6 million people (EMISS). The cultural code of the region is associated with the Kuban Cossacks: the revival of the Kuban Cossack Host, which began in the second half of the 1980s, became the most important factor in shaping regional identity (Onufrienko, 2026, p. 373). The Ataman ethnographic complex serves as an open-air ethnographic model of Kuban Cossack culture (NBCRS, 2025). The Cossack image of tourism shapes not only the tourist attractiveness of the region but also its souvenir products and gastronomic brands (NG Kuban, 2026). Krasnodar Krai was among the TOP-5 regions by the number of projects submitted to the Rosmolodezh.Grants competitions (Rosmolodezh, 2026).

The Republic of Karelia demonstrates a unique model that combines natural and cultural heritage. According to the Unified Interdepartmental Statistical Information System, tourist flow to Karelia in 2025 amounted to 1,166,752 people (EMISS). Seven official

regional brands registered by Rospatent belong to the region: Karelian kalitki, Karelian honey, Karelian wild strawberries, Karelian marmalade, Karelian ivan-chai, Karelian pastila, and Zaonezhye embroidery (Rospatent, 2026). The Ruskeala Mountain Park is one of the most successful examples of private investment in a cultural and natural site: about RUB 300 million has been invested in the park over the past three years, and the new investment project "Ruskealskoye Zazerkalye" is designed to attract up to 200 thousand tourists per year (Government of Karelia, 2025). In total, the region hosts 59 investment projects worth RUB 15 billion (RBC Karelia, 2024). Karelia has 4 youth project offices (Karelia Kodeks, 2026), and the region was among the TOP-5 by the number of projects submitted to the Rosmolodezh.Grants competitions (Rosmolodezh, 2026). The "100 Ideas for the Development of Karelia" competition includes a special category for young innovators aged 14 to 30 (Startup Karelia, 2026).

Table 1 presents summary data for the regions obtained by comparing them across nine criteria.

Indicator	Republic of Tatarstan	Chuvash Republic	Republic of Kalmykia	Vologda Oblast	Krasnodar Krai	Republic of Karelia
Tourist flow (2025), persons	4,530,113	646,380	126,180	1,006,862	19,558,981	1,166,752
Population (2024), persons	4,011,311	1,163,415	267,179	1,118,357	5,837,620	521,403
Tourist flow per 1,000 residents, persons	1,129.33	555.59	472.27	900.3	3,350.51	2,237.72
Tourist flow dynamics (3-year average), %	+5.06	-2.66	+8.67	+8.1	-4.2	-3.99
Geographical indications/ brands in the Rospatent register, number of units	5	4	1	8	27	7
Positions in the national tourist rating of territorial brands (a region may hold several positions if it has several brands)	3rd, 18th	—	—	7th	4th, 10th, 15th, 16th, 19th, 23rd	9th
Youth grants (TOP-5 by number of applications to Rosmolodezh.Grants)	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes
UNESCO World Heritage Sites (to assess tourist attractiveness)	4	0	0	1	1	2
Institutional support for local brands (author's assessment based on the criteria described in the methodology)	strong	weak	weak	strong	strong	strong

Table 1 Summary indicators of the studied regions

Note: data on tourist flow and population size were obtained from the Unified Interdepartmental Statistical Information System (EMISS). Tourist flow per 1,000 residents was calculated by the author by dividing the tourist flow values for 2025 by the average resident population of each region, previously converted into thousands of people. The dynamics of tourist flow were calculated by the author as the arithmetic mean of the changes in tourist flow over 3 years (2022–2025).

The comparison of regional data (Figure 1) shows that territories where the cultural code is reflected in brands, tourist routes, grant projects, and entrepreneurial products obtain a more stable channel for converting cultural identity into an economic resource. Although differences in tourist flow may be explained by many factors, such as climate, transport accessibility, the level of infrastructure development, and the contribution of regional governments to territorial branding, the overall trend is quite indicative: regions with pronounced local brands based on the cultural code show higher tourist flow and more active youth participation in entrepreneurial initiatives. Regions with strong institutionalization of and support for local brands receive more tourists per 1,000 residents (from 900 to 3,351 people in 2024 in the "strong" regions versus 472 and 556 people in the "weaker" regions). However, the picture is less clear-cut in terms of tourist flow dynamics. For example, Krasnodar Krai and the Republic of Karelia show negative dynamics on average over the past 3 years, while Kalmykia shows the largest increase, of almost 9%. These data make it possible to answer research question Q1 and to conclude that regions with more pronounced institutionalization of local brands based on the cultural code are associated with a higher level of tourist flow compared with culturally similar regions with weaker brand support, whereas the hypothesis of higher growth rates of tourist flow is not confirmed.

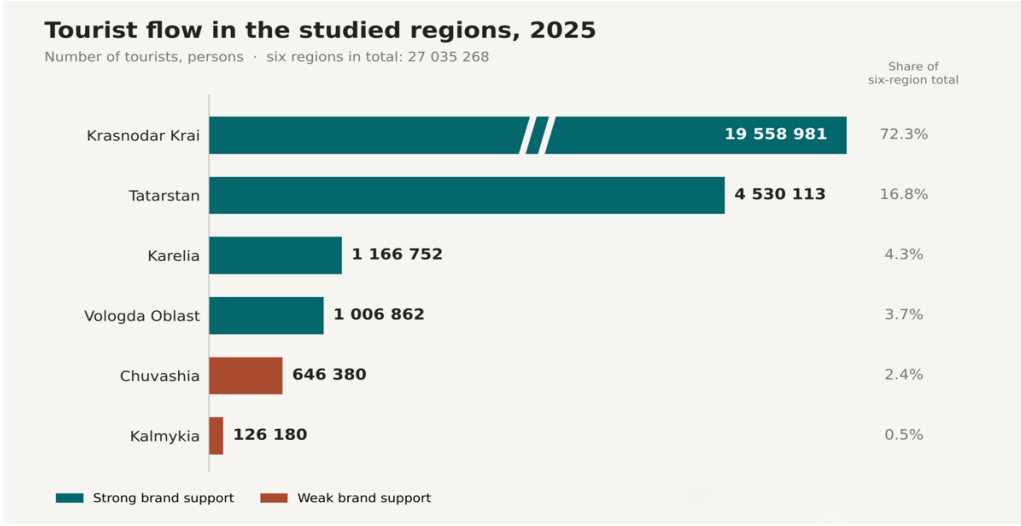


Figure 1 Tourist flow in the studied regions
Note: the infographic is based on the tourist flow data from Table 1

State support for cultural and creative initiatives in Russia is provided through several key institutions (Figure 2).

The Presidential Fund for Cultural Initiatives (PFCI), established in 2021, has held 16 grant competitions over five years, in which about 115 thousand creative teams from all 89 regions of the country took part. A total of 11,777 projects received support, and the total amount of grants exceeded RUB 49 billion. The average co-financing rate over the entire history of the competitions was 103%, and in the two most recent rounds it reached 134% and 131%, which means that the contribution of businesses, NGOs, and partners exceeded the state funds (PFCI, 2026; VZ, 2026). The PFCI has 37 project offices in 34 regions of Russia (PFCI, 2026).

The Rosmolodezh grant competition, which since 2025 has been part of the national project "Youth and Children" (implemented on the instructions of the President of the

Russian Federation in 2025–2030), provides young people aged 14 to 35 with grants to implement projects in the social, cultural, scientific, and economic spheres (Rosmolodezh, 2026). Grants are also awarded to non-profit organizations and universities (National Projects of Russia, 2025; Government of the Russian Federation, 2026). In the two seasons of 2025, more than 30 thousand applications were received, 6 thousand more than in 2024 (Rosmolodezh, 2026). In the season whose results were announced in November 2025, grants totaling about RUB 200 million were awarded to 394 projects; the maximum recommended grant amount was RUB 1 million, and the average was RUB 623 thousand (Rosmolodezh, 2025). In the first season of 2026, the maximum grant amount for individuals is also RUB 1 million (Government of the Russian Federation, 2026). The TOP-5 regions by the number of submitted projects were the Republic of Bashkortostan, the Republic of Karelia, the Republic of Tatarstan, Krasnodar Krai, and Perm Krai (Rosmolodezh, 2025; Rosmolodezh, 2026).

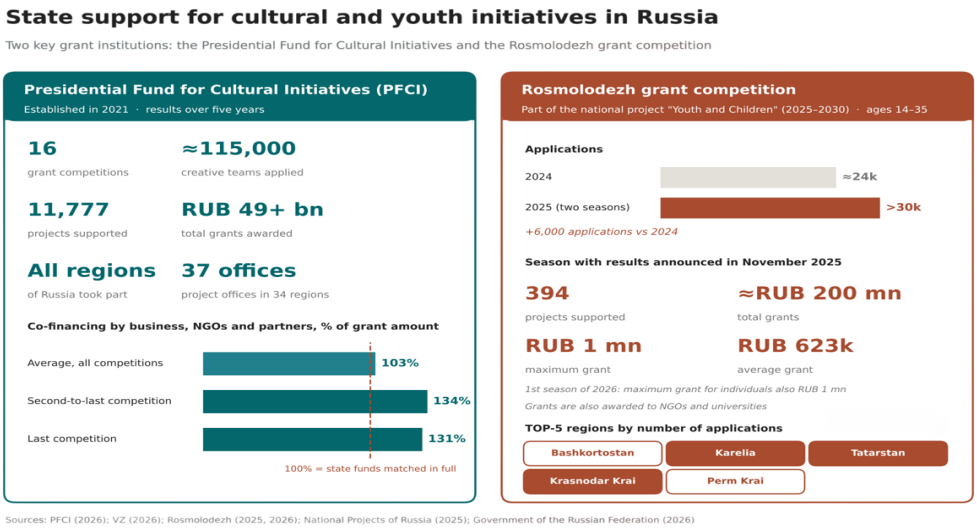


Figure 2 State support for the cultural and youth initiatives

Note: compiled by the author based on the open data described in the section on state support for cultural and creative initiatives in Russia (sources: PFCI, 2026; VZ, 2026; Rosmolodezh, 2025, 2026; National Projects of Russia, 2025; Government of the Russian Federation, 2026)

The Strategy for the Development of the Creative Economy of the Russian Federation, approved in 2026, and the Concept for the Development of Creative Industries until 2030 (Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2613-r of September 20, 2021) set the following target: increasing the contribution of the creative industries to GDP to 6% by 2030. As of 2024, the contribution of the creative economy was 4%, or RUB 7.5 trillion (SKOLKOVO, 2026). About 70 regions have included provisions on the development of creative industries in their own strategies (SKOLKOVO, 2026; Kommersant, 2025). Since February 5, 2025, state support for the creative industries has been delegated to the regions, while the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation has assumed responsibility for coordinating state policy (Kommersant, 2026). The strategies are based on an analysis of the contribution of creative sectors to gross regional product, employment, and exports, and include measures to develop regional geobrands (Kommersant, 2025).

Thus, state support acts not merely as a source of funding but as an institutional ampli-

fier: grants and strategies formally adopted at the federal and regional levels create a space within which cultural identity obtains resources and channels for conversion into economic assets.

Young people play a central role in transforming cultural identity into economic potential. According to VTsIOM, 95% of Russian teenagers believe that young people have the opportunity to realize themselves in Russia, and 91% think the same about their region. At the same time, 96% are proud of Russia and 65% feel love for it (VTsIOM, 2026). Their main life plans include doing what they love (56%), building a career (55%), and creating a strong family (46%) (VTsIOM, 2026). Although these data concern teenagers rather than all young people up to the age of 35, they indicate a potential basis for the formation of economic patriotism (Figure 3). It can be assumed that the surveyed teenagers are emotionally attached to their country and region and are oriented toward self-realization; however, these data do not allow an accurate assessment of whether they will subsequently become participants in the economic development of their regions.

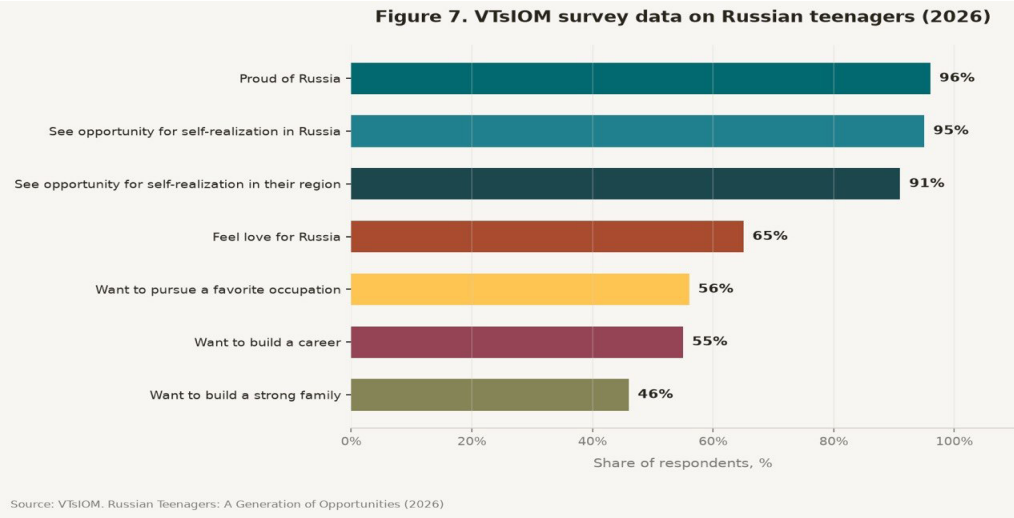


Figure 3 VTsIOM survey data on Russian teenagers, 2026 (source: VTsIOM)

However, this potential faces a serious problem: the outflow of young people from the regions. According to Rosstat, only 19 Russian regions recorded a positive net migration of people aged 16–29 in 2017–2023, while the rest are donor regions losing young people (Ledeneva, Shamrai-Kurbatova, & Stolyarova, 2023). In educational migration, 45 regions act as donors and 12 as recipients (Sitkovskiy & Dozhdikov, 2025, pp. 162–165). In terms of Hirschman's triad, this corresponds to "exit": young people leave a territory if they do not see sufficient economic and life opportunities. Participation in grant competitions and entrepreneurial projects can be regarded as a form of "voice," and the intention to stay and develop the territory as a form of "loyalty." This means that cultural heritage that has not been transformed into economic opportunities may remain an unclaimed resource, while regions lose the very demographic group capable of capitalizing on it.

In the regions under study, young people participate in economic transformation through several channels. First, they create local brands based on the cultural code: the Chuvash brand "Ilem," the Tatar designer labels Lusi and Your Yool, the Karelian brand Avoi Voi, and the Kalmyk perfume brand Smell Terra. Second, they participate in grant programs: for example, 43 young entrepreneurs from Chuvashia received RUB 1 million each for business development, young people in Vologda Oblast receive grants of up

to RUB 1 million under Rosmolodezh programs, and young Karelian innovators take part in the "100 Ideas for the Development of Karelia" competition. Third, young people develop student startups in the creative industries; in Tatarstan, for example, creative industries account for more than 20% of participants in technological entrepreneurship programs. Fourth, they take part in cultural and educational projects of the "Movement of the First," Rosmolodezh programs under the national project "Youth and Children," and other initiatives.

Based on the analysis, it is possible to identify the conditions under which youth economic patriotism is formed and transformed into economic activity (Figure 4):

1. Available financial resources: grants, subsidies, and entrepreneurship support programs. The PFCI, Rosmolodezh, grants, and regional programs create a financial base for launching projects.
2. Educational opportunities: universities, acceleration programs, project offices, and startup competitions. They provide the skills and competencies needed to create and manage brands.
3. Emotional attachment to the region: a sense of connection with one's territory, a willingness to share and convey the established cultural code, pride in one's origins, and a desire to develop the territory.

These conditions were identified by the author through a qualitative comparison of secondary data; in this study, they were neither tested by other methods nor verified statistically.

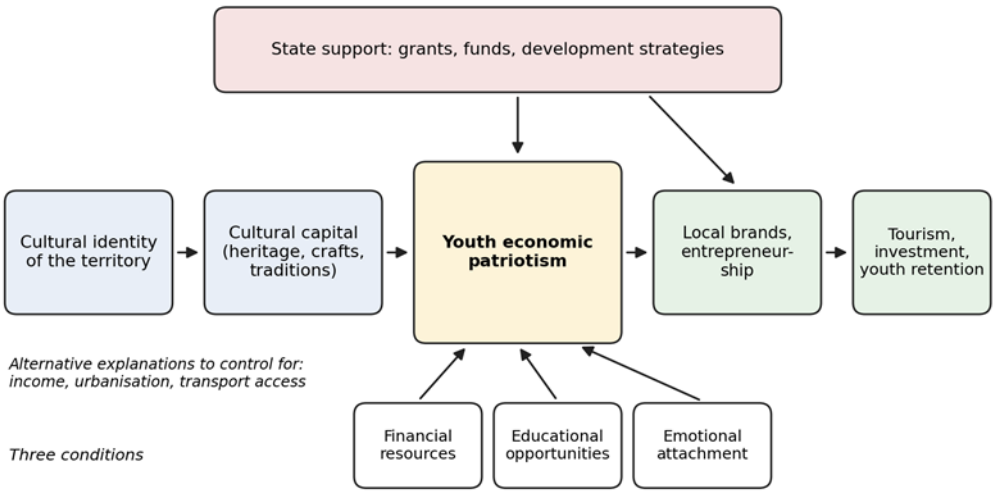


Figure 4 Conceptual model of the conversion of cultural identity into economic potential (author's scheme)

DISCUSSION

The results are consistent with Bourdieu's thesis that cultural capital can be transformed into economic capital under certain conditions (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241-258). As applied to territories, this transformation occurs through the creation of brands, the development of tourism, and support for crafts and creative industries. Throsby noted that cultural capital as an asset has a dual nature, generating both cultural and economic value (Throsby, 2003, pp. 166-171); this is illustrated by the Vologda brand "Veliky Ustyug, the Birthplace of Ded Moroz," where cultural value is converted into tourist flow, investment, and jobs.

These results are also in line with the place branding research of Kavaratzis and Ashworth, who emphasized that an effective territorial brand should rest on the identity of the place and take into account the interests of local communities rather than be reduced solely to an advertising campaign (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005, pp. 506-514). The concept of "economic patriotism" is used in this study in the broad sense proposed by Clift and Woll, namely as support for economic actors and territories perceived as "one's own" on a territorial basis (Clift & Woll, 2012, pp. 307-323). International experience with urban and regional brands shows that the sustainability of such a brand depends on the consistency between cultural identity, institutional support, and real economic opportunities.

However, the key finding of the study is that the transformation of cultural identity into capital does not happen by itself. Cultural identity becomes the economic potential of a territory only when it is turned into assets such as brands, tourist routes, and creative enterprises. Young people with established economic orientations and attachment to their region can play a significant role in this process. Patriotism, in turn, rests on three conditions: available financial resources, educational opportunities, and emotional attachment to the region.

The analysis of the regions revealed several important patterns. First, regions with a higher level of institutionalization of the cultural code (Tatarstan, Vologda Oblast, Krasnodar Krai, and the Republic of Karelia) also show a higher tourist flow, including per 1,000 residents. Tatarstan with 4.5 million tourists, Vologda Oblast with 1 million, the Republic of Karelia with 1.2 million, and Krasnodar Krai with 19.6 million tourists are significantly ahead of Kalmykia (126 thousand) and Chuvashia (646 thousand), although the cultural and natural potential of the latter is also considerable. Second, the presence of registered regional brands illustrates a link with youth entrepreneurial activity: Karelia with seven official Rospatent brands, Tatarstan with 5, and Krasnodar Krai with 27 were among the TOP-5 regions by applications to Rosmolodezh.Grants. Third, the investment attractiveness of a region is associated with the presence of recognizable brands. For example, 59 investment projects worth RUB 15 billion are being implemented in Karelia, and the Veliky Ustyug brand has attracted billions of rubles in investment.

At the same time, in the author's opinion, businesses do not always recognize the value of the cultural code. Entrepreneurs often focus exclusively on commercial returns and pay insufficient attention to consumers' cultural expectations and the identity of the territory (Roscongress, 2024). The cultural code should be understood as a comprehensive value shared by all regions, encompassing cultural, geographical, and behavioral dimensions. By designating a cultural theme for each year (for example, the Year of the Unity of the Peoples of Russia in 2026), the state creates a space in which all regions of Russia can develop within a single program. At the same time, state thematic years may also set boundaries for regional initiatives, which is one of the limitations of this measure.

Young people participate in this process through several platforms: grant competitions (up to the age of 35), the national project "Youth and Children," student startups, and youth project offices. Funding is provided at three levels: federal (PFCI, Rosmolodezh, grants), regional (grants from the heads of republics and oblasts), and local (municipal programs).

A culture of self-development among young people, including their capacity for self-education and initiative, is becoming a crucial factor in territorial development. Without young people willing to stay in the region, create brands, and develop projects based on cultural heritage, cultural capital remains an unused resource.

The study has a number of limitations: 1) it relies only on secondary data, which differ in collection methodology and coverage; 2) the sample of six regions is not representative of all constituent entities of Russia, and the grouping of regions by level of brand support is approximate; 3) the indicators used do not allow for causal analysis, since growth in tourist flow and grant activity may be explained by household income, urbanization, transport accessibility, climate, infrastructure, and the size of the region; 4) the VTsIOM data refer to teenagers aged 14–18 and cannot be directly extrapolated to all young people up to the age of 35.

CONCLUSION

The cultural identity of a territory is a potential economic resource that is actualized once it acquires an institutional form through brand registration, the development of tourist routes, and the creation of creative enterprises. The example of six Russian regions shows that the cultural code can be converted into tourist flows, investment, and entrepreneurial initiatives.

Answers to all the research questions were obtained and formulated.

It can be argued that regions with more pronounced institutionalization of local brands based on the cultural code are associated with a higher level of tourist flow compared with culturally similar regions with weaker brand support; however, the hypothesis regarding the growth rates of tourist flow was not confirmed.

The analysis suggests that youth economic patriotism is formed through a combination of three conditions: available financial resources, educational opportunities, and emotional attachment to the region. State support in the form of grants, funds, and strategies for the development of creative industries acts as an amplifier of the link between cultural identity and youth entrepreneurial activity.

State support creates an institutional framework for implementing scientific, social, sports, and entrepreneurial initiatives in the regions and, through monetary incentives and administrative support for young people, stimulates the materialization of cultural heritage and the transformation of the cultural code into finished products that often generate value added.

The mechanism for transforming cultural identity into economic assets can be represented as a chain: cultural identity, cultural capital, youth economic patriotism, brands and entrepreneurship, tourism, investment, youth retention and, as a result, growth in the economic potential of the territory. Each link in this chain requires institutional reinforcement, understood as the registration of geographical indications, grant support, and the creation of educational infrastructure.

Further research could involve a primary sociological survey of young people in the regions under consideration to verify the proposed three-condition model, as well as the construction of an econometric model that quantifies the contribution of cultural brands and grant support to GRP and employment indicators.

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