

NATIONAL BRAND – A Challenge for Romania

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Abstract

National brand is a relatively new concept. It appeared along with the economic globalization and it concerns the competition between nations in order to withdraw the attention of the investors, tourists, consumers, immigrants, media and foreign governments. In other words, a powerful, positive national brand offers a crucial competitive advantage. That is why, it is essential for the countries to know how people all over the world perceive them (seen as target public) and to know how their achievements and failures, duties and tasks, population and products are seen throughout the brand.



*Transylvanian Review
of Administrative Sciences,
21 E/2007, pp. 86-102*

1. Introductory notions concerning the national brand

Country branding represents a set of programs which differentiates one state apart from another. This process is meant to offer identity to the country, by creating a real image, positive and attractive. All in all, it is the visit card of a state. The targeted audience of the national branding campaigns is made up of tourists and business people. Inside the branding process are included social, educational, architectural, tourism programs as well as investment and environmental elements. Branding a country is a complex project, created by a group of branding companies, PR and publicity agencies all working to “redraw”, amongst other purposes, also the image of the national institutions (ministries, police, governmental agencies etc.)

The principles of branding apply equally to companies as well as to countries. Only the methods of applying it are different. Countries have to face on a daily basis the competitive powerful environment and those unknown or having a “poor” reputation are put away. On the other hand, products of strong branded countries –like Germany, are highly appreciated and wanted.

Countries with powerful brands are those that generate products known worldwide, those presented in the media as well as those that trend to be neutral. Nations with a good branded image are also the richest. But many times, these countries are not loved for their famous products, neither for their respectable political figures, nor for their contribution to culture or science. For example, for states such as Australia or Canada, relatively isolated and having a small population in comparison with the territory, it’s easier to create their own powerful and loved brand, because they don’t have political representative figures that get involved in global issues, usually the fact that generates a country’s unpopularity (USA are the best example in this case). In other words, any country that has an important part in global politics suffers because of it.

UK represents the exception in this case. It is one of the countries that are both at the top of the charts and at the same time, deeply involved in global economy and politics. England is a permanent member of the Security Council and quoted as a strong nuclear power. In spite of these, United Kingdom managed to maintain a strong and positive branded image. Assuredly that organizing the Olympic Games in 2012 will promote even more the national brand.

Very many countries are interested to know if there is something that can be done to improve one’s image or to change the world’s opinion about them. The answer is definitely affirmative. All states can create a powerful and popular brand, by promoting tourism, throughout an efficient external policy, throughout quality exports as well as through promoting the values of its population.

Creating a national brand is a difficult process and needs to develop specific policies, which lack in most of the countries. There is a totally wrong perception of the fact that a national brand can be built just throughout promotion and slogans. Just saying some things about a country is not enough. To sell a product the commercial itself it’s not enough; it has to prove the qualities mentioned in the catchphrase. If a nation wants to change its image it has to find certain elements that differentiate

it from others. Before starting the execution of the re-branding strategy, the country has to know what the world thinks about it; this is the way to know what has to be changes in creating the new image. Having this knowledge a country can build an efficient and real new image.

Creating a professional and consistent brand brings noticeable benefits in some regions. First of all, investors are drawn to popular countries because their products will be received as quality products by the consumers.

Interbrand (a professional group of brand consultancy) considers that in order to create a national brand there are certain **conditions**¹ to be fulfilled:

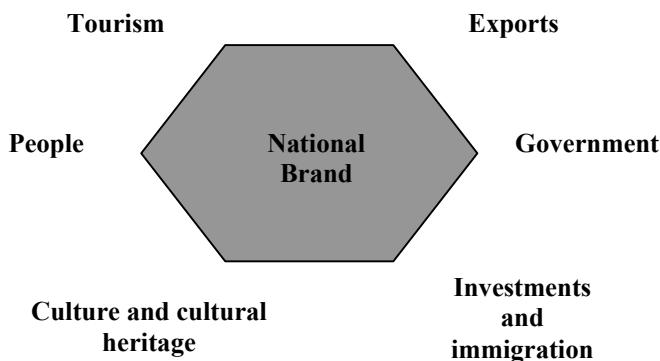
- There has to exist willingness from the government's representatives, business representatives, educational national system and media. Newspapers, televisions and radio stations will be thrilled to get involved in creating a brand because their popularity will also grow. Likewise, involvement in this type of project gives them the opportunity to express and create TV/radio shows and newspaper articles very popular with the people.
- The perception of the country both on an internal and international level has to be identified. In this stage adequate measures have to be taken. For example, when promoting a wine brand, the national image is not very important. In business, the British say it's difficult to negotiate with the French, but when it comes to wine and champagne they consume large quantities from these beverages brought from France.
- Political leaders and experts have to be consulted in order to discover the strengths and weaknesses of that country.
- Creating the strategy has to be done professionally and it must settle the way the brand is going to be promoted. It is very important to remember that the promotion must take in consideration the audience, because world wide cultures are very different and not all of them respond to the same elements.
- The strategy must also contain permanent improvement programs and post-execution analysis.
- When a project of this importance is executed it is a must that the strategy is realistic and palpable, because otherwise, the media will try to prove that the project is inconsistent and impracticable, consuming a lot of time and money.
- A structure that includes different organizations in the project must be created. It is very important that this structure does not contain too many public institutions because the other organizations will hesitate to cooperate and finding equilibrium will be difficult because the government usually tends to take over the control.

2. The Nation Brands Index

A country's brand represents a fusion of global perceptions over ones population, internal policies, culture, business environment and tourism attractions.

¹ Branding a Country, Interbrand, 2003 (www.interbrand.com)

These features of the trademark are joined up within the Nation's Brand Hexagon². A powerful brand name is the result of competency, creative ability and a country's attractiveness, from all six points of view of the Anholt hexagon.



Picture no. 1 National Brand's Hexagon

Tourism is often the most visible feature of a country's brand, because foreign tourists spend large amounts of money to visit original places. Skyscrapers, golden sands or snowy mountains represent just a small part of a country's reality, but these images are most of the times promoted aggressively, which could cause a disproportionate effect on how a population is perceived from the outside.

Export. Within this point of the hexagon, what's interesting are facets regarding the level of satisfaction that has to be correlated with the products and services offered by each country, as well the trend of consumers to search or avoid some products. Questions for representative targets allow measurement of differences between the attractions of the country's etiquette "Made in..." and the reality of the products.

Government. Within this domain most interesting is people's perception of the way that governments are analyzed and specifically, questions regarding internal and external policy of the state are asked.

Investments and immigration. This point of the hexagon concerns "business to business" side of the brand and those questioned are asked to offer information on the style of life and work in each analyzed country, as well as on the ability of economic agents to locate on the territory of the studied state.

Culture and cultural heritage. In this field questions asked regard awareness of the country's cultural inheritance and measurements of the intentions to "consume" cultural products. Even more, those questioned have to name a few types of cultural activities that they would like to find in a certain country.

Population. In order to understand how the human capital of a country is seen, questions asked are the "business to business" type (imagine that you are the manager and you have to complete an important job. We ask you to present in increasing order your preferences regarding the nationality of the employees).

² The Anholt Nation Brands Index – Q4 Report, 2005, pages 1-2

Specialist Simon Anholt³ considers that besides these six components of national branding there are other important elements that influence a brand. These are presented in the following rows:

Sport represents an important element of the national brand because sometimes people get an opinion about certain countries depending on sportsmen’s results. Sport can create “stories” that could help a brand’s birth over night, especially when it’s about competition or unknown teams to the public. But this image can fall down just as quickly if there is no continuity of the athletic activity. The Olympic Games have a great power of creating national or city brands. Countries with the highest score in the sports chapter are usually those whose sportsmen have the best results.

As examples we can talk about USA, Russia and China – countries whose image has had a lot to gain over sport. Russia, especially, has gained an image and a powerful brand due to its investments in young sportsmen. We must also add that excellence in a single sport is not enough to receive a high score in this section. Mexico, Argentine and Brazil are well known for soccer, Pakistan and India for cricket, New Zealand for rugby, but this has not helped them reach the top 10.

Education. Attracting foreign students in a country has become just as important as attracting investors.

Table no.1. Brands top regarding the athletic activity

1	USA
2	Russia
3	Germany
4	China
5	Italy
6	UK
7	Australia
8	France
9	Spain
10	Canada

Table.no.2. Brands top regarding education

1	USA
2	UK
3	Germany
4	Canada
5	Switzerland
6	France
7	Sweden
8	Japan
9	Australia
10	Holland

Science and technology. British Council took a study through which it has shown that science and technology of a country have an important part in creating its national image. Powerful countries in this area are considered modern, competitive and their citizens are seen as young and well educated. Science and technology represent an element of attractiveness for the country.

³ Simon Anholt is an independent consultant on branding problems in diplomacy, economic development, public relations, commerce, tourism and promotion of exports for more countries, regions and cities. He created 23 national brands amongst which UKGB, Island, Sweden, Germany, Tanzania and Jamaica. He is the founder of 3 major studies regarding the Index of National Brands, Index of City Brands, and Index of American States Brands.

Table no.3. Brands top concerning science and technology

1	Japan
2	USA
3	Germany
4	UK
5	China
6	France
7	Canada
8	Switzerland
9	Sweden
10	Russia

Finance show us what was the contribution of a brand to the national economy

Table no. 4. Top countries with a powerful financial brand⁴

<i>Crt. Nr</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Value of the brand (mld. USD)</i>	<i>Value of the brand/GIP 2004 (%)</i>
1.	USA	17,893	152
2.	Japan	6,205	133
3.	Germany	4,582	167
4.	UK	3,475	163
5.	France	2,922	143
6.	Italy	2,811	167
7.	Spain	1,758	169
8.	Canada	1,106	111
9.	Australia	821	133
10.	Holland	792	137
...	
32.	Poland	43	18

Anholt-GMI Nation Brands Index is the first analytic top of the national brands.

Each year are gathered different perceptions of the consumers regarding cultural, political, commercial and human products, potential investments and the requests of tourists from developed or developing countries. This fact generated in time a clear top of national brands, a sort of genuine opinion barometer.

Anholt-GMI Nation Brands Index measures the power and attractiveness of a national brand's image and offer information concerning the consumer's perception of the brand's character and personality.

The index of the brands is built on semesters. The newest published results are for 2005. These will be presented down below as example:

⁴ The Anholt Nation Brands Index – Q4 Report, 2005, page 3

Table no. 5. Top powerful branded countries⁵

	Ist Trimester 2005	II-nd Trimester 2005	IIIrd Trimester 2005	IV-th Trimester 2005
1	Sweden	Australia	UK	UK
2	UK	Canada	Germany	Switzerland
3	Italy	Switzerland	SUA	Canada
4	Germany	UK	Japan	Italy
5	USA	Sweden	Switzerland	Sweden
6	Japan	Italy	Italy	Germany
7	China	Germany	Sweden	Japan
8	India	Holland	France	France
9	South Korea	France	Canada	Australia
10	Russia	New Zealand	Australia	USA

In the first edition of Brands Index a top chart began to take shape and it was noticeable that countries which tend to take over the first positions are OECD members, having a liberal – democratic tradition and a high standard of living. These are not necessarily the most powerful economies of the world.

In the second edition the Index has shown that first five countries were Australia, Canada, Switzerland, UKGB and Sweden. Certain countries kept their position. UKGB for example, was on top in the Q3 and Q4 editions. But important changes also took place between these two trimesters in the middle section and at the bottom of the list due to new contestants. Thus, USA ended up from the 3rd place to the 10th, Germany felt from the second position to the 6th and Canada ascended from the 9th place to the 3rd.

“We must emphasize that when creating a brand its consistency is highly important”⁶. When thinking about a country, people see it as an entity. When consumers wish to visit a certain nation or to buy products from that state, then it’s important that that country has high scores in all points of the hexagon. Consistency is one of the most important features of the national brand.

Many countries and regions have an image far away from its consistence. The image of some developing countries is based only on tourism and this because tourism is the only source of income that can help the national progress. These states usually have an instable situation. If the image of a country is built just on one industry, such as tourism, then in products or exports sections that nation will receive low scores and there’s a chance that customers might perceive it in a wrong manner.

Any country which ends up in this situation is vulnerable. If by miss luck the image of the tourism suffers depreciation, the public will be disappointed and its opinion about the country will go down also (for example, in India, in 20054, a natural catastrophe took place and the image of the country fell dramatically).

It is for these reasons that a brand is powerful and consistent.

⁵ Nation Brands Index – Q4 Report, 2005, page 4

⁶ Simon Anholt-National Brand Index 2005

The Brand Index is an attempt to measure the real image of states and it doesn't reflect, because of this, the public opinion because it is known that this can change from one week to another.

An event with bad effects over a country's brand happened recently in Denmark. A local newspaper published images in which The Prophet Mohamed was made fun of. These sketches led to a change in the perception of the country's image. So, over night, Denmark became from a well seen nation to a country with a negative image at least in the states where the population was Muslim. For example, in Egypt, Denmark fell from the 15th place to 35th.

The image and reputation of countries is connected to the region they are in. Denmark's image affected:

1. Norway because most people don't see a clear difference between the two countries;
2. The Scandinavian brand;
3. The European brand.

All these aspects influence the decision of a potential tourist, investor, and consumer, to visit, invest or buy from a specific country.

3. Country brands. Models and examples for Romania

3.1. Australia brand

Australia was chosen as the first tourist destination in the world according to the last Anholt Brand Index. As the result of a survey on almost 30.000 people, it has been shown that the all time favorite



destination was Australia. A lot of those people confessed that they would choose Australia as their new home if they had to. Concerning the natural beauty of the land, Australia was placed second after New Zealand and on the 31st position regarding cultural heritage (higher than New Zealand, Canada, Estonia, Singapore and USA).

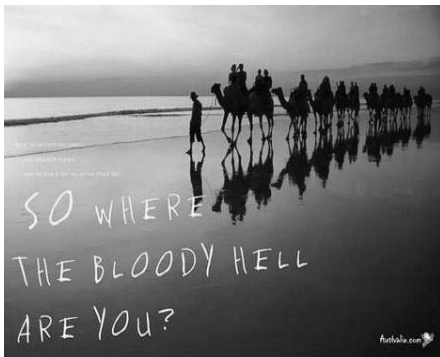
Consumers have a high opinion about Australia, even if they have never visited this country. From books, commercials or movies, the world sees Australia as a fascinating country and an ideal holiday destination. Australians are considered to be the friendliest people in the world (after Canada), having a great sense of humor, being honest, hardworking and trustworthy. Australia has a good image also thanks to its celebrities, such as: Kylie Minogue, Russell Crowe, Steve Irwin, Geoffrey Rush or Nicole Kidman.

But the country can't be satisfied just by the image of a friendly nation. Customers have to be informed about Australian values, its unique natural wealth and especially its investment opportunities. In the survey taken, the participants were asked to make out a top of the countries according to some specific criteria. Australia presented

itself as this:

- Australia has the best athletes. The rest of the world considered that this was not so true, placing it on the 11th position from 36 countries, under France, Italy, and China.
- Australia is a major university center – placed 10th from 36.
- Australia has major contributions to science, innovation and technology – placed 13th from 36.

After the consumers were interviewed on subjects, such as: culture, politics, commercial and human values, investment potential and tourism, Australia was ranked 11th in the top.



“So where the bloody hell are you?” campaign to promote tourism

Australia invites us to visit it through its new international campaign “So where the bloody hell are you?”. This promotion was launched by the Minister of Tourism and Small Entrepreneurs – Fran Bailey, who tried to point out the characteristic, personality and the Australian way of life. “This campaign is meant to increase the income from international tourism, especially in certain and rural regions.” Scott Morrison, in charge of tourism development, stated that: “We have to promote this campaign because it is unique, different, and bold and gives us the opportunity to develop business. We also have to be credible, honest and to show exactly which our tourist destination are; to focus on the advantages of our country and on the reasons for which the tourists love us”.

To create, promote and implement this campaign:

- were involved 86 work groups and 67% of the tourism agencies in Australia.
- 6.2million dollars were spent on market studies, surveys, focus groups and large investigations.
- more than 47.000 people all over the world were questioned. The research was meant to answer questions such as: What’s asked for? How should the campaign look like? And do we determine people to visit Australia?

The promotion campaign was focused more on the US and Europe and the total amount of money reached approximately 180million dollars (40 million dollars were destined to launching the promotion, the rest being distributed over the next 2 years).

The “So where the bloody hell are you”⁷ campaign was created with a lot of effort and dedication and it synthesizes the Australian values: the warmth and hospitality

⁷ The campaign has a promotion clip with 11 scenes. This short movie was broadcasted on the TV, in movie theaters, over the Internet, images were selected for newspapers and magazines. The clip was adjusted to each market where it was presented; this way the campaign was better received internationally and also locally.

which determine people to visit this country in order to live a unique experience, to feel the Australian way of life and environment. The slogan used for the campaign: “So where the bloody hell are you” was tested on more markets (in Japan, UK, USA, Germany, China, New Zealand and South Korea). Consumers were excited with the slogan because it is original, bold, new and innovative.



The main purpose of this campaign was to promote tourism, but also to create new working places. Throughout this campaign Australian exports have increased even if this country doesn't have powerful brands in the world.

All global studies show that Australia is the first destination in the tourists' preferences, but many of them also consider that this destination can be put on hold. The “So where the bloody hell are you” campaign tries to change this mentality and to determine people to actually take this holiday because this destination can't wait any longer.

3.2. Greece Brand

In Greece the main activity is tourism. The economic advance of Greece depends a lot on the summer tourist activity, tourism representing 16% from the Gross National Product.

In order to increase the number of visitors, the country initiated a campaign to strengthen its brand internationally. The promotion began in 2005 and continued over the next years.

Elements of the Greek national brand

- the name of the brand: *Wonderful Greece*
- the sign of the brand:



- the slogan of the brand: 2005-2006: Live your myth in Greece; 2007: Explore your senses
- colors of the logo for 2007: blue, red, yellow
- the main text block, content of the 2007 campaign: „Come experiment the colors of the sun, sea and sky, the beauty of nature, past and present, come enjoy life. Explore all senses in Greece”.

The channels of promoting the Greek national brand were: the press, television and Internet



publicity. The international campaign began in 2005 in 27 countries⁸ and in 2006 in 43 states.

The effect of creating and promoting the national Greek brand

The efficiency of the Greek brand had a large impact over tourism, by attracting more and more tourists⁹ – Greece becoming one of the most attractive destinations worldwide.

According to the Association of Tourism Companies of Greece (SETE), the increase of visitors was higher than that recorded in the rival Mediterranean countries, but also higher than the international one. Thus, in the neighborly states, the number of tourists has fallen: in Turkey with 10.52% in the first 5 months of 2006; in Cyprus with 2.46% and in Croatia with 0.36% - direct consequence of the lack of a powerful brand.

The tourism agencies in Greece state that the main rival for 2007 is Spain, the country in which the number of visitors has increased in the same period with 6.11%.

Gaining a powerful brand allowed Greece to develop in many other ways:

- a) economic growth with 4.3%
- b) decrease of the public deficit from 6.9% in 2004 to 2.6% in 2006
- c) development of the financial sector
- d) tourism development: over 16 million people visit Greece annually¹⁰
- e) increase of the tourists numbers between 2005 and 2006 with 6.33%
- f) enhance of investments in tourism.

The example of Greece emphasizes the idea that brands have the power to change the world, the way we see things as well as influencing in a certain manner our next holiday destination. Thus, we can say that Greece has always been aware of the importance of reputation, acting deliberately to build and develop a good name and an efficient national brand. The efficiency of its brand gave Greece the image of a “peace guide and a trustworthy business partner”.

3.3. UK Brand

United Kingdom is a powerful brand, placed two times on the first position within the Brands Index 2005 created by Simon Anholt.

National promotion campaign – Cool Britannia

⁸ Those countries were: Australia, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Denmark, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Sweden, Japan, Spain, Israel, Italy, Canada, Cyprus, Norway, Holland, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, The Czech Republic and Finland.

⁹ The number of the tourists who have visited Greece in the first half of 2006 has risen with 6.33%, related to the same period of 2005, according to the published data of the Greek Tourism Association.

¹⁰ For example, the number of American tourists during 2005 - 2006 rose with 377%.

The United Kingdom spent a lot of money, time and energy to create a national image and identity. One of the newest campaigns was “Cool Britannia”. After winning the elections of 1997, the Labor Party announced wishing to modernize Great Britain.

The new campaign wanted to replace the old country’s image (“Rule Britannia”):

- Great Britain was associated with a traditional, static, old image;
- The British were considered dull, tea drinkers playing cricket and golf.



The purpose was to “reinvent” and promote the New Britain. Re-branding represented also an economic necessity because of the mergers and takeovers many British companies had lost the national identity. Thus, its products were not selling well outside its borders – in Europe.

To create “Cool Britannia” numerous committees and discussion groups were set – in order to “think” the national identity and the strengthening of UK’s international interactions. The campaign had to settle global trends starting from fashion to food. The promotion spoke also of “industry renewal” – emphasizing the idea of letting go of old feelings and traditions; the country



needed cultural diversity, new products that would sell. A New Britain was projected, dynamic, sophisticated, a leader in creativity and innovation. The campaign defined Great Britain throughout essential values such as: integrity, creativity and innovation, freedom of speech, honesty, open minded and a rich culture.

All in all, a modern country image was promoted, an image of diversity, musical and artistically innovative, an image contradicting the most powerful clichés built over time: tea, seriousness and British snobbism.

The project unfortunately had to face the disapproval of the citizens, who considered that the promoted image kept nothing from England’s tradition and history. Under these circumstances, although great efforts and millions of dollars had been spent, the campaign was a huge failure.

The concept of “Cool Britannia” was replaced many times by “Un-cool Britannia”, “Cruel Britannia” or “Racist Britannia”. The century had closed with a sad image of the United Kingdom: public services in decline, rood soccer players, racism and violence.

In 2002, the National Authority of Tourism initiated a new campaign “UK OK” – to withdraw tourists and to differentiate from “Cool Britannia”. UK OK emphasized re-traditionalizing the national image, the fact that the United Kingdom can not exist without its old mansions, cultural heritage, castles and traditional gardens.

4. The „Branding Romania” Project

The idea of „Branding Romania” was established in 2005, and the responsibility of initiating the project for building the country brand belonged to the Agency for Governmental Strategies. The program will evolve in a few steps:

- the realization of an international auction in the purpose of choosing a company or an consortium to handle the “Branding Romania” project;
- the selection of the company that will make the audit on different stages;
- the establishment of the brands visual identity (logo, image, graphics,...). For Romania to change its image, it has to innovate in technology, education, society, tourism;
- the construction and management of some campaigns that will take place in the UE

It is estimated that the project will be finalized in 3 years and will cost approximately 2 million euros.

With all these, not even by now has the first step been finalized. So, The Agency for Governmental Strategies (AGS) organized a meeting to initiate the project called “Branding Romania”. It searched for a consultant (a branding agency) that was supposed to create a data sheet for the international bidding concerning choosing a company or consortium to handle this giant project. But in the day set for the opening for the offers, the AGS commission observed that there are no competitors. The offer request had some strange content:

- The main selection criteria were the financial offer, which represented 70% of the total points. This would have permitted any small firm to participate and win the bidding, lowering the price, disadvantaging the big companies;
- Concerning the technical criteria (30%), the agencies turnover wasn’t needed;
- The participating firms had to make the tasks notebook in just four months, a period much too short considering it was a complex international bidding.

Under these conditions, the Bradient Agency refused to make an offer, motivating the lack of professionalism shown by the AGS. Some branding agencies like Branzas and Grapefruit weren’t invited to this selection, and other big advertising agencies haven’t even heard of the existence of this action.

Proposal for creating the Romanian Brand

In my opinion, the steps Romania would have to make to have a strong country brand would be the following:

Step 1. Understanding the notion of country brand by the politicians and the people.

I consider that in the first step, the people should understand what country brand means. In Romania, this concept is new and there are few that understand what the elaboration of a country brand implies, how much it takes, its impact, its advantages and how it will help the economic development. So, the public could be reticent to a project like this, and that is undesirable. Because of this, there should be collaboration with the mass-media, to conceive a public information campaign concerning the concept of country brand.

Step 2. The constitution of work groups

To elaborate the brand strategy, workgroups should be established. These should include politicians, businessmen, NGOs and branding consultants. I think that in these workgroups should be fewer politicians because they can act to their parties' best interest and in this way, the entities credibility and sympathy will decline. Because in our country the notion is still new, we don't have branding specialists so we have to appeal to foreign consultants. For certain issues, there are teachers, journalists or people of culture that can be consulted. Before the beginning of the activity, the members should be instructed so they will have a clear brand notion.

Simon Anholt believes that is important to create a competent team that should coordinate the project. This team should include the president of Romania, the prime-minister, the minister of the foreign office, the minister of cultures, the minister of education, the minister of finances, the executive directors of the biggest Romanian companies that have activity abroad, and a important public figure (for example, a famous sportsman)

The group members should make efforts to attract as many institutions as possible in the process of country brand elaboration. This is important because institutions have an important role in a state, and most of the branding process refers to the amendment of their image, which is mostly bad.

During the second step, very important is the resource allocation. A country brand is built in a long time, and the resources required are many. In Romania, the accent does not fall on the balance between quality and price. Usually, on public bidding, the most important criteria is the price, and this doesn't always provide the best results. Building the Romania brand requires a lot of work because our country's image is very bad. Because of this, we should work with the best specialists, if we are to change anything, even if these specialists are more expensive.

After the resource allocation an action plan for building the Romania brand must be elaborated.

Step 3. Audit of the present Romanian brand.

Even if Romania doesn't currently have a brand strategy, it has an image that people formed during time. Romanians and people living abroad have certain perceptions regarding Romania from visits here, books, movies, articles or news. It's very important to know what these perceptions are before the brand strategy is built, so it will be known where to begin. I think that first of all we should know the EU countries' opinion. Then we must find out our non-EU neighbors' opinion. In this step, an essential aspect is represented by the Romanians opinion about Romania which lately is more and more degraded.

Another important aspect is given by the determination of our people's specific. How we are different as a nation and what are those qualities that define us and that must stay at the foundation of our country's brand. In my opinion, for building a country brand, it should be insisted on the Romanians hospitality, natural beauties, traditional food and old cultural traditions.

After all these research will be ready, they must be studied and evaluated. Evaluation is very important because it marks out the strong and the weak points

of our country's image. In this way, the persons responsible with the strategy can focus on strengthening the strong points and eliminating the weak points. During the evaluation, one can see what the world's perception of our country is, what it appreciates or what it doesn't appreciate and must be improved.

After the evaluation, the central idea on which the Romania brand will be based on must be established. The workgroups must identify a clear and strong concept to differentiate us from the rest of the world. This concept must be embraced by the Romanians because if they don't believe in it, then the chances that others will are very small.

After the public opinion will be evaluated and after the workgroups find that main idea to promote Romania, the results must be communicated to all institutions and made public.

Step 4. Elaboration of the brand strategy

The first step in the elaboration of the brand strategy consists in establishing Romania's strong points and representative personalities (scientists, people of culture, poets, writers etc.). The brand must be constructed around our advantages, so the evaluation results must be taken into consideration.

For Romania to change its image, must innovate in technology, education, society, culture and tourism.

For elaborating the Romania brand I consider that it must be insisted on the following aspects:

- The improvement of the Romanians image because it is very negative abroad. We all know that Romanians are seen by most Europeans as being thieves, beggars and corrupted. On the other side, there is the image of the Romanian sportsmen who always proved that they are among the best in the world, and are recognized for that;
- The promotion of Romanian aliments that are among the few in the world still natural. These represent an advantage for Romania because foreigners want them. Lately, there is a strong accent on healthy food, and I think that Romania would have international success with its products;
- The traditional Romanian village with its traditional outfit and traditions kept for centuries;
- The Romanian culture personalities: poets, sculptors, painters, world known writers;
- The hand made craftsmanship objects;
- The successful Romanian companies that entered the international market with its products (e.g. Softwin company with its BitDefender antivirus software);
- The promotion of the Romanian tourism: the Moldavian and Bucovina's monasteries, The Carpathian Mountains, The Black Sea, The Danube Delta, the Romanian castles, the mountain and resorts and spas, the promotion of Sibiu, European Cultural Capital, and other places representative for Romania, some being on the list of UNESCO world patrimony;

- The improvement of the Romanian political class, labeled as corrupted. I think that will be very hard to change this image, but not impossible. Changing the image is the politicians' responsibility. They must understand the concept of country brand and act accordingly.

Step 5. The strategy implementation

The strategy implementation must be realized through clearly established programs and objectives, on every aspect / domain it is desired to change / promote.

For the promotion of Romania, the workgroups must create a visual and verbal brand identity. After that, a clear brand communication strategy must be built and established: messages on different channels: written press, television, and internet.

In my opinion, movie ads composed of representative images for Romania should be made and broadcasted in Romania, abroad and also on the internet. The images can contain aspects of Romanian tourism, and should be placed in public places and in public transport. Also, a series of advertising materials should be made to attract potential consumers. These kind of advertising materials were created when the "Romania – always surprising" campaign was started. The advertising movie and materials were successful but unfortunately, the campaign didn't continue.

Step 6. Periodical Review of the strategy

Building and managing a brand is not a finished process, but a continuous one. A national brand is build over a long period of time, and during this time realities and society change. That is why, the branding effort will be sufficient only if its results are evaluated regularly and the strategy behind it is permanently adapted to life's facts.

Thus, certain periods of time should be settled to take market studies to find out how the public opinion about Romania has changed and what are the effects of its promotion. Depending on the results, some elements of the brand might be changed or adjusted in order to get the wanted effects.

Thus, if all conditions are respected, the brand will be a success. Interbrand considers that brands have the power to change the world throughout changing opinions about certain countries that have a very poor or negative image. They make keep a states image unharmed even in times of wars, terrorist attacks or natural calamities (they are even manipulation proofed).

Investors are dawned towards powerfully branded countries. No high technology, ultra modern highway, nor electronic gadget will determine those people to relocate their businesses or families or to re-launch their investments.

All in all a strong program of branding can generate long term value for a country.

Conclusion

The greatest advantage of a powerful brand is the rise of income. Within the business environment, for products, companies, and services - the brand has brought value and huge profit. It is the exact same situation when talking about countries too.

What are the stakes for national brand? The stake is undeniably one: money. And starting with the money all other benefits will come¹¹.

- Politics: we are well seen, we matter in the eyes of the powerful ones
- Culture: our cultural products prosper, our writers are translated and promoted, our history starts being interesting for the others
- Sport: we have resources to discover and grow our talents
- Education: our educational system, once well financed, starts to “produce” intellectual elites
- Society becomes healthier, develops and blooms.

In my opinion, there will pass a long time until Romania builds a real brand. Romanians still believe that this kind of project is a waste of money and time, because they don't understand the true meaning, importance and advantages that come along with a powerful brand. I truly believe that if a major branding campaign will start eventually, the main purpose has to be to change the perceptions of the Romanians – most of them having a bad opinion about their own country. Everyone dreams of going abroad to study, work or spend their holidays and no one trusts the state institutions or politicians. And if Romanians don't have faith in Romania, then we can't expect strangers to do that, or to be open minded about our branding campaign.

In Simon Anholt's opinion, the construction of a country brand depends first of all of the will of the government people. If this thing becomes a governmental priority, and not a marketing action of some ministry, the image of Romania could improve in two or three years, but only concerning a few important countries, establishing realistic objectives. For a higher level of change, the specialists¹² believe that it will need about 20 years.

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¹¹ Cristina Preda, Brand Academy, 5th December 2005

¹² Simon Anholt and Wally Olins (the latter is president of the consultancy firm Saafron Brand Consultants, worldwide specialist in national and firm branding).