

## NATION BRANDING: RESEARCH APPROACHES AND MODELS

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### Abstract

*In theoretical terms the paper makes an overview of the evolution of the concepts of nation brand and reputation management, as defined by contemporary researchers in the relatively young research field of nation branding – Keith Dinnie, Simon Anholt, Gyorgy Szondi, Nadya Kaneva, among others. It outlines the instrumental, political and cultural approaches to the concept and seeks to identify the stakeholders involved – governments and agencies, NGOs, businesses. The assumption is held that Dinnie’s theoretical model provides for a comprehensive conceptualization of nation branding, incorporating the discursive mechanisms of identity construction, which have direct implications for the development of a nation brand strategy and for the enhancement of identity competitiveness.*

**Key words:** nation branding, image management, reputation management, identity construction.

**JEL:** Z18, Z19

### Introduction

The object of investigation of the present paper is nation branding, a concept that has been gaining traction in the past several years due to the growing awareness among researchers and academia of the relevance of a country’s image and reputation in the global arena. The latter is an intangible asset that has an indisputable impact on a nation’s competitiveness. The scarce volume of scholarship on the topic is a significant gap in academia that should be bridged, considering that there have been a number of terms in circulation which more or less pertain to image and reputation management. This paper will seek to fill this lacuna by focusing primarily on the definitions of nation branding and on Keith Dinnie’s relatively comprehensive theoretical framework of the analysis and implementation of this strategic activity.

Is it possible to mould a country’s image and what efforts are involved in putting a country in the mental atlas or on the metaphorical map that people carry in their heads? Is it a painstaking undertaking to unearth a country’s identity? How can strategies be developed to brand places and which are the possible

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stakeholders in this admittedly long-term activity? The present investigation addresses these and similar questions. More precisely, it starts by defining nation branding while giving a detailed account of a possible theoretical model that can aid governments in their attempts to figure out how to rise in the esteem of the international community, how to allocate its resources, and how best to compose the face it presents to the world.

### **Situatedness of the study**

In the theory of international relations there is a relevant dichotomy between the modern and the post-modern world. The modern world is related to the geopolitical and strategic positioning of the states and the 'balance of powers' concept, whereas the post-modern world is related to the creation of ideas and images. Today, irrespective of whether we are talking about a nation brand using the language of marketing or of a country's international reputation using the language of diplomacy, each country is invariably associated with a specific image, which is largely a reflection of its culture, history, media, arts and politics. "Every modern nation-state has built itself around some perceived essence, some identity regarded as unique, even if it's a mixture of truth and lies, elisions and exaggerations" (Guardian, November 2017).

Nation branding is largely a synonym of image and reputation management. Nation branding is a relatively new field of scientific enquiry that emerged alongside marketing's evolution and increasing application in the various spheres of public life. National image management is not a new research field, and in fact many countries have traditionally been promoting themselves as a tourist destination. Communication and marketing techniques have been used in image management to promote sustainable development, foreign investments, exports and tourism. It was back in 1969 that Kotler and Levis developed an expanded concept of marketing, based on the assumption that marketing techniques could successfully be applied in non-economic spheres. In this context, it is deemed appropriate that Kotler and Gertner's (2004) definition of destination image be cited, namely "the sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about place. Images represent a simplification of a larger number of associations and pieces of information connected to a place. They are a product of the mind trying to process and pick out essential information from huge amounts of data about a place" (Kotler and Gertner, 2004, p. 42).

A prerequisite for successful branding is the creation of a distinctive or differentiating identity that rests on the appropriate interpretation of the nation's created image among a given target audience. There are a number of challenges involved in this process which are related to the creation of a single idea or message

that matches the reality in this country with a view to establishing its recognizability in the international environment and among different target audiences.

The theory and practice of nation branding date back to the end of the 20th century, even though its historical roots can be traced back to the mid-19 century, the age of world fairs where the countries used to present their technological discoveries, products and artistic achievements. Introduced by Simon Anholt in 1998, the concept was preceded by the terms of 'country branding', 'place marketing' and 'destination branding', which were in circulation in the early 1990s. Their distinction is based on the conceptual differentiation between nation – a group of people with common identity, history and fate that seeks independence or exists independently – and the state, which comprises the set of institutions, powers and territory that renders possible the existence of governments (Hill, 2003). The notion of country is normally connected with a geographic territory or location.

In order to fully comprehend the concept of nation branding, it is necessary to understand its origins and evolution. Fan (2010) argues that the growth and development of nation branding can be traced to four different sources. These are the concepts of country of origin, destination branding, public diplomacy, and national identity. This paper does not aim to provide detailed definitions of these concepts but to expose how nation branding is grounded in them.

### **Definitions of nation branding**

Even though the scope of research in this specific research field is yet insufficient, there have been case studies illustrating the efforts of various countries in this respect. It is my belief that the most comprehensive theoretical development of the concept has been elaborated by Keith Dinnie (Keith Dinnie, 2008).

Keith Dinnie makes a distinction between national brand and nation-brand and defines the latter as "a unique, multidimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance of all its target audiences" (Dinnie, 2008, 31). Dinnie argues nation branding is aimed at fulfilling three major objectives: to attract tourists, to stimulate inward investment and to boost exports and talent attraction, "whereby countries compete to attract higher education students and skilled workers" (Dinnie, 2008, 17). Temporal, suggests that nation branding can also increase currency stability; help restore international credibility and investor confidence; reverse international ratings downgrades; increase international political influence; stimulate stronger international partnerships and enhance nation building (by nourishing confidence, pride, harmony, ambition, national resolve; Temporal, 2002; cited in Dinnie, 2008, 17).

Fan states that "nation branding is about altering the image that outside people have about the nation; it is aligning the nation's image to reality" (Fan, 2010, p. 101). According to the researcher, every country has a unique name and images in the minds of people inside and outside of the country and therefore, every nation has a distinctive brand. A nation brand is the sum of the perceptions of a country's international stakeholders. This refers to aspects of society such as people, places, history, language, culture, celebrities, food and brands possessed by the country.

The majority of research is devoted to the branding concept as policy makers' strategic tool to create a positive image of a country in the global marketplace and accordingly to boost national competitiveness worldwide and attract the attention, respect and trust of investors, tourists, consumers, donors, immigrants, media and the governments of other nations. This more or less comprises the first identified approach to nation branding – the technical-economic one – and it will be elaborated upon in the next section of this article.

## **Approaches to nation branding**

### ***Instrumental (economic-technical) approach to nation branding***

The current stock of research grounds nation branding theory in the study the existing marketing activities in politics. It adopts the *managerial* approach to nation branding where the sought goal is to create a positive image or transform possibly negative or deeply entrenched stereotypes about a country. There is a multitude of activities involved, ranging from the creation of national logos and slogans to setting up governmental and non-governmental bodies that orchestrate long-term nation branding efforts. This approach puts forth various models of the nation brand components and factors. These models are presented as tools for measuring the value of national brands and are also intended to inform recommendations for branding activities (Dinnie, 2008).

As aforementioned, the term was coined by Simon Anholt, who was a practitioner in the field of advertising tempted by the task to find the link between flourishing corporate brands and their nations of origin and found most successful brands came from countries that were successful brands in their own right. Country of origin (COO) could be considered as "the power of an explicit or implicit Geographical indication to add appeal to products and services, to create a price premium for them, and to stimulate customer loyalty towards them" (Anholt, 2005, p. 2). Presumably Anholt saw no reason why nations, like companies, could not modify the way they were seen. Anholt et al. (2008a) believe that the way "a country is perceived makes a critical difference to the

success of its business, trade and tourism efforts, as well as its diplomatic and cultural relations with other nations" (2008a, p. 3).

Later on Anholt introduced the concept of competitive identity, as this field of study is significantly connected with national identity, politics and economics of the competitiveness, than with branding, as it is usually perceived (Anholt, 2007). He expands the notion's meaning to "a *component of national policy*, never as a 'campaign' that is separate from planning, governance or economic development" (Anholt, 2008, p. 23, emphasis in original).

Anholt is the conceptualist behind a method to evaluate how effective a nation's brand is. Among the most frequently cited models for evaluating the nation brand image is Anholt's "national brand hexagon" (Anholt-GMI Nation Brands Index 2005). A country's nation brand index is derived from the average scores for diverse criteria that cover the following dimensions: Exports, Culture and Heritage, Governance, Investment and Immigration, Tourism, and People. In the component of exports, the nation brand image is evaluated according to the COO effect. In other words, it measures the perception that others have of a country's products and services. In addition, it exposes a country's creative energy and its contribution to the areas of science and technology. Culture and heritage measures the nation's image in the areas of cultural patrimony and legacies, alongside aspects of contemporary culture such as music, films, and literature. Furthermore, along this dimension the nation's presence and excellence in the area of sports is evaluated. The dimension of governance presumably assesses the perceived competence and accountability of a nation's government, taking into account also the nation's respect for people's rights and freedoms. What is more, the nation's involvement in the international arena is evaluated through the nation's contribution to peace and security, environmental protection, and reduction of world poverty. Investment and immigration measures the "nation's power to attract talent and capital" (Anholt et al., 2008a, p. 4). This dimension incorporates individuals' willingness to study, work, invest and live within the national borders. In addition, it takes consideration of the nation's economic prosperity, equality of opportunities, and overall quality of life. It is this dimension that largely aids in the identification of the nation's economic and business climate. The dimension of tourism is evaluated in three major areas: natural beauty, historic buildings and monuments, and city life and urban attractions. This dimension further measures individuals' willingness to visit a specific country and the rating of their experience there. Lastly, the dimension of people is intended to analyse the friendliness and hospitality of the population living within the national borders. It also takes into account whether or not a visitor would feel welcome during their stay in the country. Furthermore, this dimension evaluates individuals' aspirations to making friends from a particular

nation. On the professional level, it measures the willingness to hire employees of a certain nationality and the perceptions regarding levels of competence and work ethic.

The above-described nation brand hexagon, currently used in the Anholt-GFK Nation Brand Index, is part of a worldwide investigation that evaluates and ranks the images and reputations of 50 nation brands (Anholt et al, 2008). This survey instrument records consumer opinions in 35 different countries (expanded to 50 in 2017), mainly in developed markets. The poll asks several different questions in each category, establishing subfield ratings that are then compiled into a single numerical index. According to Szondi (2010), the proposed dimensions represent the six natural channels through which countries communicate with the world and contribute to the comprehension of a nation's image.

We should conclude that this first research approach to nation branding models the components of the nation brand and the factors that impact the latter, focusing on their pragmatic value – the tools and instruments for measuring the brand's value.

Nadya Kaneva (2011) from Denver University has made an overview of the approaches to nation branding, identifying three major strands in its study. The aforementioned group is defined as the economic-technical approach, the second – the political one. Kaneva has identified the theoretical and methodological advantages of a third group of research – the cultural-communicative one, drawing the conclusion that even though nation branding as both discourse and practice has been explored mainly in the field of marketing, the concept goes far beyond propaganda or advertising techniques and PR mechanisms of influencing global public opinion. Kaneva sums up the following basic assumptions about the current state of nationhood on which the instrumental approach to nation branding rests:

The first assumption pertains to the alleged hegemony of global markets and global competition among nations. Within the Washington consensus – the set of neoliberal economic policy recommendations intended for developing countries, and Latin America in particular, embraced by the the IMF, World Bank and US Department of the Treasury – the idea was launched that developing countries needed only to hand themselves over to the market to secure economic growth. Hence nations were avid to attract foreign investment, being aware that they should mould public perceptions to ensure they are seen as stable and prosperous countries.

Related to the first assumption is the second one: national wellbeing is defined primarily in terms of securing an economic competitive advantage, and nation branding should presumably contribute to this by attracting investments, tourists, human capital, or trade.

Third, based on the previous two assumptions, this approach asserts that a parallel between nations and brands is well-justified and necessary.

The proponents of the *managerial* approach assume that the production of national images is not very different from branding products or corporations. Practitioners tend to assert the inevitability of global competition and consequently, of nation branding. However, they present limited empirical evidence of branding's effectiveness. Most of the described success stories are presented in the form of case studies, addressing the campaign efforts of particular nations (Anholt, 2006; Olins, 2002; Yan, 2003; Dinnie, 2008).

### **Political approaches to the study of nation branding**

Some argue that "the tasks in general consumer branding and national image management share much in common, but the manifestations in practice are quite different". Overall, economic studies give little attention to historicizing national identities, except to make broad statements about the need for national brands to be "rooted in the nation's history, culture and policy" (Wang, 2008, pp. 17 – 18).

Overall, political approaches tend to interpret nation branding as some form of reputation management for nations. As the literature on the topic reveals, this group encompasses academic studies from the fields of international relations (Van Ham, 2001), public relations (Kunczik, 1997; Wang, 2006; Zhang, 2007) and international communication (Gilboa, 2008; Zaharna, 2008). It further includes research made by political think-tanks and institutes (Leonard 2002; Melissen, 2005). Writings in this category focus on public diplomacy as well. Among well-known researchers in the field are Wang (2006), who identifies the areas study of public diplomacy: its intersection with mass media studies and adjacent disciplines, public diplomacy strategy and management. Gilboa (2001) in turn attempts to outline the categories of mediated diplomacy, distinguishing between public diplomacy, media diplomacy, and media-broker diplomacy (2001, p. 4). Some researchers explore the similarities and differences between the notions of public diplomacy and nation branding, as well as their potential convergence or divergence in terms of practice (Anholt, 2006; Szondi, 2008; Zaharna, 2008). There are two broad positions on this still controversial issue. According to the first one, public diplomacy and nation branding are seen as distinct but related to each other (Gilboa, 2008; Szondi, 2008). The second position views the two notions as essentially the same, suggesting a spill-over of the technical-economic approach into the political approach (Anholt, 2007; Van Ham, 2001). The first view is discussed in detail by Szondi (2008), who comes up with four models of the way nation branding and public diplomacy intersect (Ралчев, 2014, 194 – 214).

### **Cultural approaches to the study of nation branding**

This comprises the smallest body of academic research in the field of nation branding. This paper borrows a working definition, according to which nation branding "is a compendium of discourses and practices aimed at reconstituting nationhood through marketing and branding paradigms" (Kaneva, 2011). The adopted working definition definitely posits nation branding within the critical study of culture and communication. Within such a paradigm, nation branding should be problematized with regard to the perils of neoliberal globalization (Beck, 2000), the state of public spheres and civil society in a globalizing world (Calabrese, 1999; Habermas, 2001), the centrality of identities in contemporary experience (Castells, 1997; Laclau, 1994), last but not least the critical discourse studies.

Nation branding is explored in the field of media and cultural studies (Aronczyk, 2009; Baker, 2008; Iordanova, 2007; Jansen, 2008; Kaneva, 2007; Kaneva and Popescu, 2009), along with one in anthropology (Dzenovska, 2005).

Overall, these studies have not focused their interest on advancing a theory of nation branding that could possibly inform its application in practice, unlike the studies in the aforementioned economic-technical and political approaches. They are grounded in critical theories of culture, communication and society. Their research focus is the elaboration of a critique of nation branding's discourses and practices as they relate to national identity, culture, and governance. National identity is seen as a dynamic struggle and negotiation over collective and individual meanings. These struggles and negotiations involve various domestic or foreign agents. The researchers that belong to this group of studies tend to explore the implications of nation branding for the politics of identity – the ways in which "nation branding promotes a particular organization of power, knowledge and exchange in the articulation of collective identity" (Aronczyk, 2008, p. 46; cited in Kaneva, 2011).

Another central element that unites the cultural approaches to nation branding is historicity, where two key historical referents are the end of the Cold War and the subsequent rise of global neoliberalism. Jansen connects nation branding to a neoliberal agenda of global "market fundamentalism" and argues that, "if globalization brands the world and explains the new cosmological order, then nation branding mythologizes the component parts of the new order" (2008, p. 122; cited in Kaneva, 2011). Aronczyk adopts a critical approach to the nation branding discourse and argues that it is "a logical extension of a particular way that national ... identity has long been construed and communicated in time and space" (2007, p. 107; cited in Kaneva, 2011). Aronczyk (2008) further explores the discourse of nation branding by studying British-based brand consultants and the ways they talk about their field of practice.



An important research focus relates to the ways in which nation branding limits the range of possible national identity narratives and shapes them for the benefit of external (Western) audiences. Roy (2007) describes nation branding as a neocolonial discourse that positions American culture as superior to others. Iordanova (2007) suggests that the long-term impact of externally oriented performances of national identity contribute to a sense of "split identity" among the members of a national community. Looking at the online branding efforts of former Yugoslav countries, Volcic (2008) finds a tendency to reproduce stereotypical representations for the purpose of selling them back to Western audiences. In a comparative study of Romania and Bulgaria, Kaneva and Popescu (2009) discover similar discursive conventions at play in tourism-oriented branding texts. Considering the reasons for these similarities, they argue that nation branding constrains post-communist national imaginaries within logic of commodification that seeks to satisfy the desires of an external "tourist gaze." Baker (2009) focuses on Eurovision as a site for the performance of national identities and examines the types of brand narratives created by countries of the former Soviet Bloc. She also argues that these narratives veer between the reproduction of familiar stereotypes and self-exotization.

Most of the studies in this group insist on the importance of examining the political implications of nation branding. Dzenovska (2005) applies an anthropological approach to study the practices of public and private sector actors involved in the branding of Latvia. Kaneva (2007) uses Bourdieu's field theory to analyze the practices of domestic and international stakeholders in the re-branding of Bulgaria. Jansen (2008) discusses individuals and institutions active in the production of "Brand Estonia". Iordanova (2007) describes the interested actions of various parties involved in the building of a Dracula theme park in Romania. All of these examples represent efforts to historicize and contextualize the study of nation branding, move beyond analyses of branding texts alone, and look at the practices of particular agents situated in historical place and time.

In short, cultural approaches tend to call into question the presumed equivalence of global marketization and democratization, by connecting the discourse of nation branding to constructivist ideas of nationhood, and by historicizing the texts and practices of nation branding and exposing their connection to relations of social power.

### **Keith Dinnie's conceptual model**

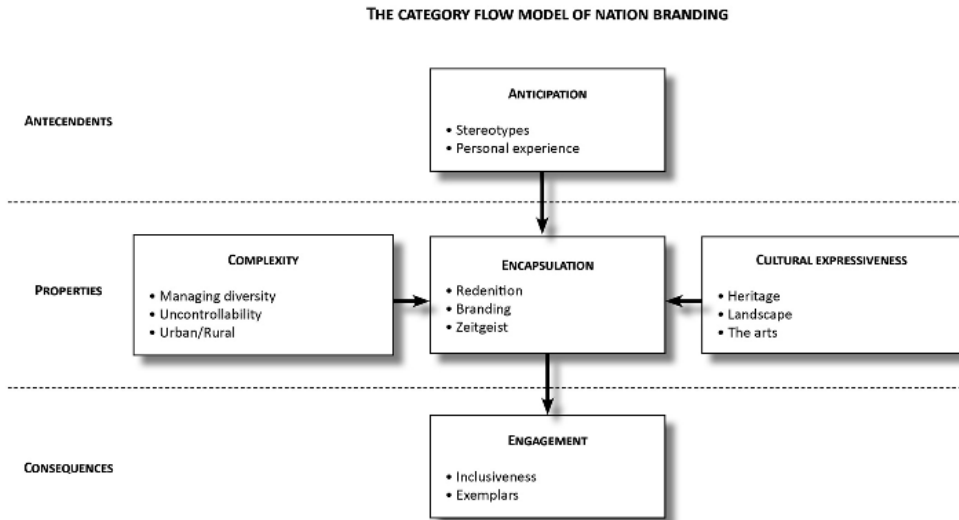
As has already been noted, Keith Dinnie (2008) is among the few researchers who offers a relatively comprehensive definition of nation-brand. In his theoretical model, the researcher has managed to combine the three approaches to nation branding. Dinnie makes a description of the possible stages in the construction

of the nation brand as an integral part of the strategy for the management of the nation's positive image.

***Stages in the construction and management of the nation brand.  
The category flow model.***

Dinnie describes the nation-brand's construction in several stages (Dinnie, 2008, p. 142). His model reveals the complex essence of the strategic management of the nation's positive reputation. In their line of reasoning, three major stages have been identified: antecedents, properties and consequences (fig. 1).

There are finer distinctions within this network of links and connections amongst nation-branding antecedents, properties and consequences. Within the nation-brand construct, complexity and cultural expressiveness require encapsulation through the development of a nation-brand strategy so that engagement is achieved, the latter being the ultimate stage in this conceptual framework for nation branding.



Source: Adapted under Keith Dinnie, 2008, p. 143

**Figure 1:** Stages in the strategic management of the nation-brand

**The first stage** encompasses an investigation into the so called anticipation. It is at this stage that the stereotypes about a nation foisted in the public mind are identified and interpreted. Hence this stage suggests that a careful interpretation and decoding of the existent perceptions and attitudes should be made among the

external target. At this preliminary stage, information is collected and summed up, including the data about the possible discrepancy between facts and reality.

At the **second stage** an analysis should be made of the factors belonging to the social and political system in their complexity and cultural expressiveness. These factors reveal the rich and multi-faceted essence of the nation-brand and the complexity of its construction.

There is a wide range of factors and variables that fall within the category of **complexity** and they all have an impact on the national image. Furthermore, they are presumably difficult to control and manage. Dinnie identifies two groups of variables:

- ✓ the features of statehood such as governance culture and the behaviour of the political elite, specific political decision making (including managing conflicts, interventions and other crises), the performance of national sports teams, among others.
- ✓ Cultural, ethnic and social diversity, including the ethnic structure of the population and the urban/rural dichotomy that exists in most countries. The urban/rural dichotomy refers to the gap that can possibly exist between urban and rural manifestations of the nation. In this regard it is crucial that the dichotomy is interpreted and managed in such a way that the urban and rural appeal and national imagery complement rather than contradict each other, which is no doubt a challenging task. Allegedly, the setting up of a nation-branding coordinating body is useful in this respect, considering that such a body could help prevent the nation's image from being dominated by traditional rural imagery, as is often promoted by national tourism organizations. The latter could have an adverse effect on positioning the nation as a desirable place for companies to invest in, given that would-be investors would rather focus their attention to modern infrastructure and cutting-edge technology.

While the first group of variables are dynamically changing, heritage, arts, folklore, language, natural scenery and landscape comprise the primordial elements of national identity.

**Cultural expressiveness** encompasses the essential components of national identity and culture such as language and history, national heritage and arts. Anholt (2006) has argued that in the attempt to achieve unique and sustainable differentiation, successful nation branding requires that cultural and artistic expression be integrated within this strategic process. It is worth noting that landscape as an element of this category is seen as a factor of a powerful emotional and symbolic value Dinnie (Dinnie, 2008).

As the above figure clearly shows, complexity and cultural expressiveness flow into the category of encapsulation. It is within this category that explicit

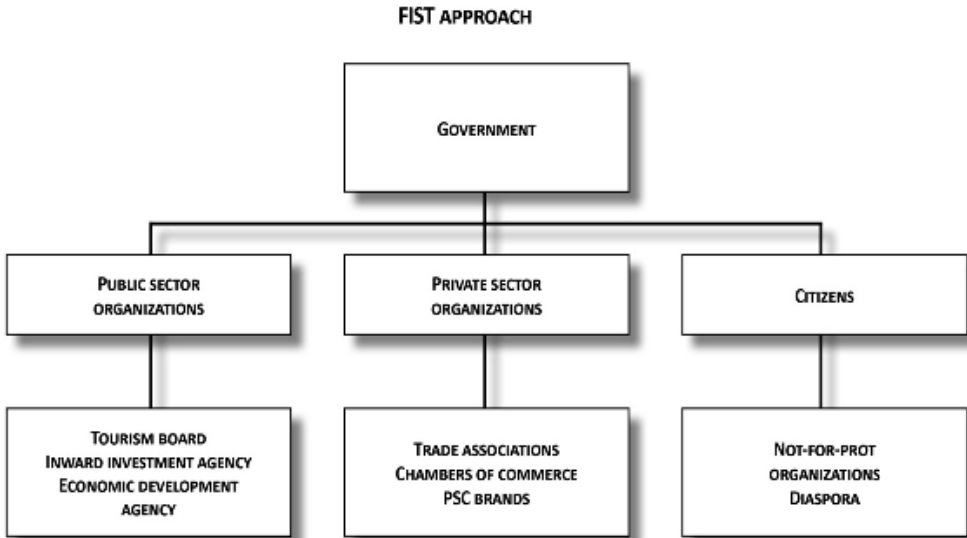
branding techniques emerge, which expose the complexity of the nation-brand construction and integrate a high degree of cultural expressiveness. Those involved in the process seek to encapsulate the essence of the nation in a multi-faceted yet coherent nation-brand. Such encapsulation entails a close interpretation and possible redefinition of the nation-brand values in harmony with the prevailing zeitgeist. Hence encapsulation demands a managerial skill set and a level of cultural awareness going far beyond those required in the establishment of a PSC (product-service-corporation) brand.

The **third stage** of the category flow model pertains to the institutionalization of nation branding, pertaining to the identification of the potentially involved institutions and structures such as government and non-governmental agencies, foundations. It is at this stage that the composition of those involved in nation brand management is optimized. Engagement is expected from a wide range of stakeholders. What should be taken into account is the degree of stakeholder inclusiveness, the existence of motivating exemplars, and a reasonable level of transparency in the development and management of the nation brand.

In the context of the category flow model, it is important to conclude that cultural and social diversity poses an important challenge to the application of branding techniques in developing a consistent message about the nation. Moreover, the diversity of organizations involved in nation-branding activities represents a considerable managerial challenge in terms of achieving effective coordination and avoiding wasteful duplication of effort. Finally, the wide range of different audiences for the nation-brand poses yet further challenges in managing diversity. Given the diversity and multifaceted nature of nations, it is necessary to encapsulate an appropriate set of brand characteristics that can be communicated in a clear and consistent way to the target audience. Without a conscious process of encapsulation, there is the danger that an incoherent babble of contradictory messages could be sent out by the nation-brand.

As was mentioned above, it is unrealistic to construct the nation brand unless the described activities are institutionalized and coordinated. Keith Dinnie further offers a model for the optimal inclusiveness of the potential institutions committed to the process, which will be discussed in the following section of this article.

*Optimizing the institutional and public engagement.  
The fully inclusive stakeholder approach (FIST) approach.*



Source: Adapted under Keith Dinnie, 2008, p. 188

**Figure 2:** Institutional management of the nation-brand

From a managerial perspective, there are several pragmatic challenges to the nation-branding concept. The extent of stakeholder participation represents one such key challenge. Further challenges relate to the coordination of nation-brand touchpoints, the need to develop a coherent nation-brand architecture and the highly politicized nature of nation branding.

The wide-ranging nature of nation branding necessitates the involvement of many parties. The principle of inclusiveness holds that all the relevant stakeholders need to be involved in the formulation and implementation of nation brand strategy and in campaign development. However, the inclusiveness concept is moderated by the characteristic set of socio-economic and political conditions prevailing within individual nations.

The fully-inclusive stakeholder (FIST) approach provides a framework indicative of the range of potential stakeholders in the nation-brand. The framework is not exhaustive, as every individual nation admittedly has its own specific range of stakeholders. Yet the framework offers a basis for analyzing the diversity of stakeholders that will need to be consulted in the development of the nation-brand.

The **government** is the only one of the nation's key actors that can realistically aspire to coordinate nation-brand activities encompassing the full range of stakeholders. The establishment of a coordinating body is essential in order to avoid fragmentation and duplication of activity by the different stakeholders.

The **coordinating body** needs to be set up by government, and also is called upon to possess political independence so that nation-brand strategy, which is a long-term undertaking, is not subject to change every time there should be a cabinet reshuffle.

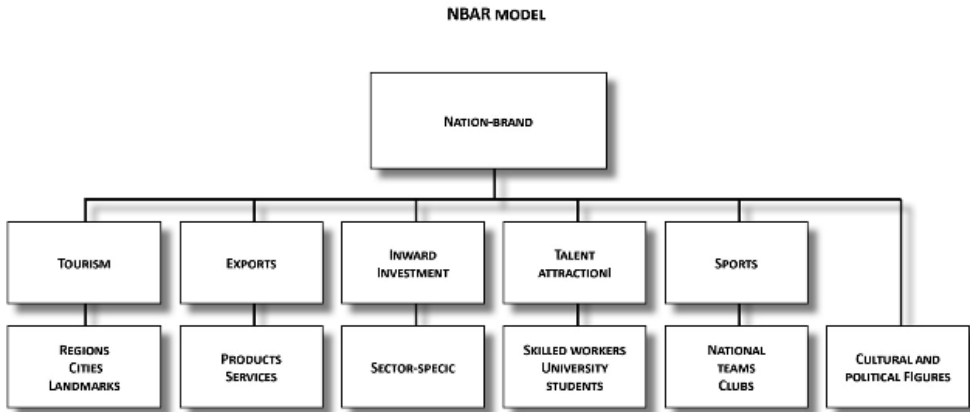
**Public sector organizations** represent a key component of the FIST approach. Tourism boards, investment agencies, economic development agencies, to mention but a few, all have their own agendas and goals, and there is increasing evidence that many nations are successfully coordinating the activities of such organizations in order to achieve important economic goals.

Public sector organizations frequently work closely with **private sector organizations** – export promotion agencies, for example inevitably have close links with at least some of the nation's key export companies.

Yet there is little evidence of countries within which the representatives of civil society are being included in overall nation-branding activity. Given that much of the funding of nation-branding activities comes from the taxpayer, governments need to give some consideration to the ways in which the nation's citizens can be included in the development of nation-brand strategy.

### *Nation brand architecture*

Based on his developed concept of nation brand architecture, Dinnie extracts the features of the communication channels of national identity – both tangible and intangible. There is a wide variety of such channels, be they cultural artefacts, the diaspora brand ambassadors, marketing communications, to mention but a few. Export plays a key role in shaping the perceptions of external consumers (fig. 3). Just as the aforementioned factor of complexity, these variables do not lend themselves easily to management.



Source: Adapted under Keith Dinnie, 2008, p. 200

**Figure 3:** Structure of the nation-brand

### ***Coordinating brand touchpoints in the activities pertinent to the branding of national identity***

Such touchpoints pertain to the activities planned with regard to the brand construction (advertising, promotion, PR, customer servicing, among other). They also are related to unplanned activities such as blogs, discussion forums on the global net, the personal behaviour of agents connected with the brand, etc. Presumably there should be a wide number of touchpoints for every brand. What is more, given the complex and multifaceted nation brands involving a broad range of stakeholders, this number should significantly rise. Brand touchpoints are highly relevant, considering that they can either add to or detract from brand equity in terms of the positive or negative perceptions taking place in the public mindset of a specific audience. It is difficult to bring under control the overall number of the brand touchpoints. However, they can possibly be managed through carrying out surveys on the basis of which the touchpoints should be identified and evaluated.

### **Conclusion**

Nation branding can be defined as the nation's strategic identification with a view to the creation of reputational capital and the promotion of the national interests. It suggests an extensive public support within a country and the involvement of a maximally wide circle of stakeholders. It is my conviction that Keith Dinnie offers stakeholders in nation branding a theoretical and conceptual

framework that could possibly guide them in their strategic attempts at calibrating a country's image or changing negative public perceptions thereof.

The overview of the various approaches to the concept reveals that nation branding is the strategic management of a nation's overall image, and not an instrument of public diplomacy, which has its own agents. In public diplomacy governments play a key role, despite the increasing importance of non-state actors. In strategic branding governments are identified as the initiators and coordinators of all activities. Hence branding is a far broader concept that is related to the overall communication policy of managing the positive international image and reputation. This policy involves the economic and social policy, whereas public diplomacy remains in the domain and the intersection between international relations and international communications. All in all, public communications management and the construction of an international image remains an integral and essential part of state governance. The appropriate communications and dialogues, the formulation of adequate messages to the other participants in the system of international relations provides the grounds for the better positioning within this system and for the enhancement of diplomatic influence.

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