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Primary Brands and Subbrands – the Secret of the Powerful Tourist Destination Brand

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Abstract

The secret of the strongest world tourist brands is very simple - they all have successful primary brands. What a primary brand means and how we can build it you can find here. These primary brands are supported by subbrands. Any tourist destination could have a brand using the innovative method for building and managing tourist brands.

Keywords: tourist brand; destination identity; brand power; primary brands, subbrands

Introduction

The pending problems of Bulgarian tourism and marketing for the past 30 years and unsuccessful attempt to create brand "Bulgaria" in 2013 urgently demanded facing the problems and solving them. Along with the failures of Bulgaria, brand "Sofia" (the capital of Bulgaria) had the same destiny. The Innovative method for structuring and managing tourist brands (Dimitrova, 2016) was the one to solve these problems and the problems of any tourist destination – even those without competitive advantages. The method is the result of building more than 30 music star brands in the show industry in Bulgaria, in combination with deep analyze of the tourist destination as “a competitive unit in the incoming tourist market” (Vodenska, Assenova, 2011) and searching for the best possible opportunity for every destination in its attempts to be competitive vire building and positioning a strong brand. So the method is the know-how of the successful practice of showbusiness implied in tourism. The method is already successfully tested by the author in building national brand Bulgaria, city brand Sofia (that could be applied as a regional also), regional brand Pirov-Chiprovtsi (a crossborder Bulgaria - Serbia region) and a small municipality unit brand – Chelopech village, Bulgaria.

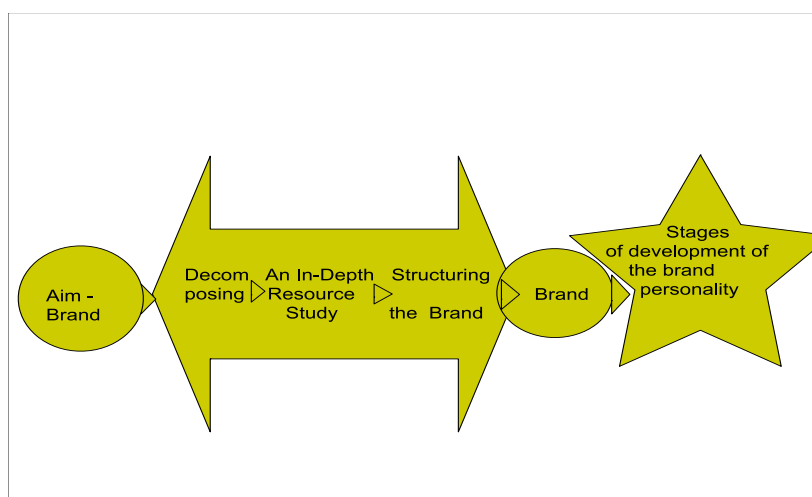


Fig.1: The Innovative method for structuring and managing tourist brands, Dimitrova, 2016, 2020.

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The innovative method for building and managing a brand (fig.1) is an algorithm of consistent application of methods, which first lead to the discovery of the identity of the destination and second - to building its reputation. The results are structuring the tourist brands and building the reputation the way we need it (of the respective tourist destination brand) via the entire brand communication. The method presents how brand identity could be achieved not by using marketing analysis of current perceptions, but using an in-depth research following steps in a formula. By telling the brand story we are developing in the customer's mind the image we desire; and the use of myths/legends could offer the contagious brand story and develop the character of a brand personality. The Innovative method is building not just the brand of any destination, but also constructing the most effective life cycle of the brand. The brand story is the positioning instrument of the brand and the continuations of the story are the stages of the development of the destination product hand in hand with the stages of "the evolution of the tourist area" (Butler, 1980).

By finding the common of all the successful brands we could draw the milestones of success and find the tools for achieving it. We also might have "the other side of the success process – the know – how in building the brands we dream of. Having in mind that the innovative method is functioning successfully in building brands of tourist destinations at different levels we could explore the common features in the character of the constructed brands using the method. Next we could compare them to those of the successful tourist brands. In this way following the results of this research we could find some more advantages (or disadvantages) of this method – is it effective in building successful brands, why is it searching for identity of the destination... But most of all we will know the secret of the most successful tourist brands.

Materials and methods

The main methods used include: empirical-theoretical methods such as scientific analysis and synthesis; deduction and induction; collection and processing of secondary information (some of it gathered in the process of developing brands by the author (Bulgaria, Sofia, Piro, Chiprovtsi, Chelopech in the period 2002-2020); comparison with the globally competitive brands; comparative analysis and secondary analysis of data, which allow for a full study of even peripheral connections and meanings; analysis of literature sources for the destination; analysis and synthesis of data from historical, ethnographic, folklore sources and books on the heritage of the region\destination; expert evaluation.

Results

There are no direct measurement instruments in measuring brand/marketing success – the number of nights spent in the destination and the number of tourists could be secondary evidence of successful brands and marketing of the destination. According to the World Economic Forum, Chart of the day: "These countries normally have the highest international tourist numbers" (December 24 .2020) "France is the world's number one destination for international tourists, the most recent figures from the UNWTO show. Almost 90 million people visited the country in 2018. Spain isn't far behind, with over 82

million visitors. The United States, China and Italy complete the top five." The most successful brands we will explore are the five following: France, Spain, United States, China and Italy.

The essence of a brand we are searching for Dimitrova presents as "identity and reputation, as implied by Anholt's (2007) definition of destination branding. Dimitrova (2017, 2020) brings out and visualizes the structure of the brand of a tourist destination as a core – identity of the destination, and an outer layer - reputation, and studies the possible innovations in these layers. This idea of the brand structure is different from a "set of associations which consumers refer to the product" (the cognitive branding theory, presented by Zhelev (2010). According to Dimitrova (2017) this set of associations is the result but not the essence of a successful brand. So in exploring successful brands we are looking for the extent this brand matches destination identity and the way its reputation is being built.

Identity is a glimpse inside us – determining who we are, how we define ourselves, what distinguishes us from the others. "National identity most entirely represents the cultural differences of larger communities, which are based on ethnic or other characteristics that unite the community." (Tsvetanova - Tsaneva, 2015) For the national brand, we are looking for a national identity in the direction of an ethnic community, from which we will derive competitive elements that will differ us as a specific community from the world. Smith (2000) identifies six attributes of the ethnic community that make it recognizable: a collective proper name; myth of common ancestors; shared historical memories; distinctive elements of general culture; attachment to the "fatherland"; a sense of solidarity of the population. "

Reputation contains the assessment of external audiences for the site / country, it is a community memory of the nation, reflects cultural, historical assessments. It is changing slowly and difficult, but with the proper brand building and the right steps in the development of the brand, we have the opportunity to turn the brand into a parallel speaker of the destination in international relations. The assessment is formed by a set of multifaceted images that our country has - through its geopolitics, geography, political life and leaders, international relations, cultural anthropology, social psychology, international law, history, sociology, trade, culture, sports.

France, the most visited destination, has a long brand history. Establishment of the brand of France is just after the revolution in France (1789-1799). One of the first republics in the world in Modern times is already a positioned national brand of France with no marketing efforts –instead of them the economic power and the political significance of France together with the first steps in history and the enormous changes revolution has caused are always in the minds of people. The first republic in modern times in Europe as a tourist destination has its brand personality Jeanne d'Arc. In time France has always been the spirit of liberty and the heritage of monarchy like aristocratic palaces and castles - the two sides of their strong national brand, that tells the real history of the place. France is one of the first tourist destinations that succeeded

in the dawn of tourism to define its identity and “great ancestors, the national language, national history and national landscape” (Thiesse, 2011). In time France gradually develops a second and third brand element – goes on telling its brand story including: aristocracy, the free journalistic spirit; gourmet food and wine, and today - love and romance. But any of these new elements can not offer a strong brand without existing the first: if the brand is only gourmet food and wine it is not competitive to the brand of Italy – the heir of Rome. Culture and history form the identity of the nation that we have to present in the primary brand. So by the end of the XIX-th century AD France was the "Country of the First Revolution" with the brand personality Jeanne d'Arc. From the very beginning of the 20th century until World War II, it was repositioned in the Land of power, might, greatness (Chukov, 2015), palaces, art and masterpieces, the Elysee Palace and the Sun King (as a collective image of the French monarchy). Brand elements are added, and they turn it into a "Country of Preserved Cultural Heritage and Traditions". Today, France is also the "Country of Love and Romance".

The United States is the promised land of unlimited opportunities, the land of freedom with the symbol - the Statue of Liberty, justice, equal human rights and successful entrepreneurs. The first brand personality of USA is the image of the poor man who built an empire of capital out of his knowledge and hard work. Second to these images are added Hollywood with the huge film industry and star names in the cinema world and Wall Street - the world of deals and risk-takers. Today USA is the bigger brother of Europe, being one of the biggest countries and economical powers. The USA brand story is still the story of the American dream and the newly told examples of that dream are parts of American identity. It has been expanded with new examples of success - the red carpet of Hollywood and the production of myths and movies, superheroes and megastars, the Hollywood lifestyle. In time the US brand is complemented by major global brands created in America – Marlboro cigarettes and free cowboy life, jeans, country music and skyscrapers.

Spain is second in the world (a step behind Italy) in the number of its sites (a total of 40) on UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List. The old monarchy is the third most important pilgrimage center in Christendom and the largest tourist base in Europe.

In the AD XIXth century Spain suffered the loss of most of its colonies but succeeded to take part in all the tourist exhibitions in the very beginning of AD XIX c. where the Spanish national identity has been illustrated and appointed. The history of Spain as a vast overseas empire was well-known, the name of Christopher Columbus who travelled the oceans and found the new lands/colonies marked the Spanish brand forever. Despite the rich and interesting history the sun is the brand personality of Spain from the very beginning of its tourist offer in the AD XIXth century - its image is the spiritualized idea of happiness, smiles, beaches, warm and passionate nights, desired vacation of guests from Central, Northern and Western Europe. This image corresponds to the product of Spain - sea vacations on the beach and under the sun. But the destination offered far more than that – beside the Sun and fun in the beach they got Flamenco music and dance,

wines, fruits and vegetables they knew about siesta, bullfights. Important fact is the close distance of Spain to its markets – being neighbours, these nations know better each other and the hidden elements of culture and history were vivid. The image has been successfully upgraded through campaigns, new elements has been added to it. Blanco-Gomez (2013) analyzes the successfully upgraded brand of the destination over the decades. According to him “in 2010 vire “I need Spain” campaign they added culture and cultural heritage with the slogan “Spain. 25 years beyond the sun” (much more than beaches and sunny weather).” Today Spain is adding wider range of products – beaches and sun, food, horses and riding, arts and literature, modern architecture, monarchy heritage and football.

China is the most powerful and fast-growing economy today but its history is much more impressive – its brand is one of the oldest empires in the world offering rich history and culture whose symbol is the Chinese dragon. This ancient civilization adds in the world digital library manuscripts, maps and books – millenia old wisdom. China has successfully established the Chinese dragon as a brand personality, telling and witnessing its long history, the story of many dynasties and about their rich, exotic and colorful culture and folklore, about the Great Wall of China and the Silk Road, offering culture and trade connections between China and Central Asia and Europe for hundreds of years. The Chinese dragon is a legendary creature in their mythology, folklore and culture — one will find it in their festivals, astrology, art, legends and idioms, but it successfully incorporates also the power of the country's economy, China's significant cultural, scientific, technical, geopolitical and military power. China is adding all these elements in time, revealing its identity and attracting guests with its specific culture heritage and lifestyle, with its historical and tourist attractions (vivid history evidence), among them is the tomb of the first Emperor Qinshuhuang - one of the 8 wonders of the world. In time China includes Mount Everest, its cuisine and traditions. All of these elements of China brand need the main first brand – “the oldest-living civilization in the world” (AHA).

In number of sites of UNESCO World Heritage List **Italy** ranks first (in the world) and it is the richest country in cultural and historical heritage. It offers very well preserved ancient heritage from the period of the Roman empire. Roman empire was one of the four mighty empires in the ancient world, covering Europe, parts of Asia and Africa, but Rome used to be the capital till the 330 AD (when emperro Constantine I The Great decided that his new Rome will be a new empirical capital – Constantinople) Since AD XIX c. the national identity of Italy is very well presented at international tourist exhibitions – Italy is the heir of Rome. This is the brand of the destination, well created, positioned and managed since the first steps of tourist traveling – Italy has always been the Roman Empire heir. In addition it is the country of opera and romance, the homeland of the Vatican city - the most important Catholic spiritual center in the world.

These five brands are among the oldest and they developed very well the national identity into a brand story associated with and told by a brand personality as an emotional image, regardless of target markets and market segments. These destinations succeeded to develop a cultural brand with its own brand personality and brand story. They reveal the

maximum resource potential vire adding subbrands following logically the developmet of the brand in stages and the life stages of the destination. We can name these pillar brands of identity “primary brands”.

In this way all these destinations succeed in telling their own brand story positioning them in the maximum possible number of markets. These subbrands develop additional competitive advantages of the nation – they offer national products (wine of Italy or France; Italian food like pizza or pasta; filming industry of Holliwood or country music; pillgrimage tours of Spain, etc.) can ~~not~~ live their own life without existing the main cultural brand, but it can never reach the success of the primary brand. Bulgaria still has no its national tourist brand – would you prefer the Bulgarian gourmet offer or pillgrimage tours to French or Italian since you don’t know Bulgaria?

“At the dawn of the XX-th century AD, the main elements in the “checklist” of identity are clearly established, so that emerging nations can quickly catch up. Concerning most of the European nations, great ancestors have been identified, the national language has been defined, national history has been written and illustrated, the national landscape has been described and painted, folklore has been museographed, national music has been composed. The rest is just a matter of consolidation and popularization: identity building has already entered the era of mass culture.” (Thiesse, 2011).

These five most successful and attractive brands represent impressive destination heritage, but most of all they have strong and well-managed tourist brands, all of them well constructed and well positioned in the dawn of tourism.

The innovative metod for building and managing a brand is an algorithm of consistent application of methods, which first lead to the discovery of the identity of the destination and second - to building its reputation. It is already tested in building brands of different levels - National brand Bulgaria, City brand Sofia, Bulgaria (could be applied as a regional also), Regional brand Pirot-Chiprovtsi (a crossborder Bulgaria - Serbia region) and a brand of the small municipality unit – Chelopech village, Bulgaria. The brands offer the identity of the destination and the strongest competitive element of identity becomes the brand, the other elements are coming next as subbrands, that will support the development of the brand like subbrands widening the brand context in the process of building reputation. This is the common of these newly constructed brands and all the five successful primary brands. They all are culture brands (derive elements of identity, ie. from the culture and history of the destination) positioning the most competitive element of the identity of the destination. What the successful and the newborn brands differ in is the time of their first steps – positioning time. The new brands have their brand stories offering the history of the main brand element as a part of the history of the destination.

These are some more advantages of this brand constructing method that any destination could use for building a successful primary brand. The innovative method shares the same idea of structuring pillar brands of identity or “primary brands”. So we already have the know-how in their building and managing vire brand stories, adding new elements of identity.

Discussion

For the first time we have the entire secret of the powerful tourist brand – we know the milestones of successful

primary brands and methodology for building them. Moilanen and Rainisto (2009) determine “a successful brand” in this way: “A brand is successful when it has been developed with a clear statement of the product’s use and its target groups in mind... Successful brands can satisfy the rational and emotional needs and expectations of the target customer.” The innovative method for building the brand (Dimitrova, 2016, 2020) regardless target groups meets the emotional needs of potential tourists by telling the brand story like a legend or the myth of the nation, but this myth is based on real history facts of the nation.

Explaining the priciples of cultural branding in the book “How brands become icons” Holt (2010) has a similar idea of the reason what makes out of brands icons – this reason is not the uniqueness and the benefits of the product, but is to be found in the social and cultural contardictions and the intuition of talented advertisers. According to Holt icons are offering an exclusive identificational value, because they face the desires and the worries of society. These trade marks-identificators that give birth to the most convincing myths are becoming icons. Concerning branding tourist destinations using the innovative method every brand is unique because it positions identity of the destination without facing expectations – identity is a message who we are, what differs us from the others and what binds us as a nation.

Van Gelder (2008) offers the key to a successful global brand – it could “develop a new category or subcategory that the brand can claim and sustain and which provides relevant value to consumers in multiple countries. Management must delineate the global brand’s mission as a shaper of the new (sub)category. This means that managers must have a clear idea of how the brand will govern the (sub)category by providing outstanding value to its customers.” The process of building reputation of the brand offers new elements of the brand of the destination developing the primary brand.

Conclusions

The Secret of the Powerful Tourist Destination Brand is in building a primary destination brand. Subbrands help the primary destination brand in its ever lasting glory in the process of building its reputation. These subbrands augmt stages of development of the primary brand.

Primary brands offer the identity of the destination. The Innovative method for building and managing tourist brands offers the know-how of building the powerful brand of every tourist destination. The strongest competitive element of identity becomes brand, the other elements are coming next as subbrands, that will support the development of the brand. Subbrands can exist without primary brands but without them they never build strong competitive brands.

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