



WWJMRD 2021; 7(2): 59-64
www.wwjmr.com
International Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal
Refereed Journal
Indexed Journal
Impact Factor SJIF 2017:
5.182 2018: 5.51, (ISI) 2020-
2021: 1.361
E-ISSN: 2454-6615

Tatyana Dimitrova
“Brands and Stories” Ltd.,
Sofia, Bulgaria.

Giving Birth to the Brand Story of a Tourist Brand – the Know How

Tatyana Dimitrova

Abstract

Brands function via brand stories and this explains the importance of creating grabbing brand stories of tourist destinations and having the know-how of writing them. The brand story is a stage of the process of building the brand of the tourist destination and the instrument to position and manage the brand. Via tourist destination brands we manage the product of the destination, the sustainable development of the destination and the speed of “the functioning tourist system”. Here you will find the predefined coordinates of the brand story of a tourist brand and the important know-how differences between a brand story of any product and a brand story of a tourist destination brand. Here you will get the know-how of creating the brand story of your tourist brand.

Keywords: brand story; tourist brand positioning; destination management; brand personality

Introduction

Branding and telling brand stories are among the most popular efforts of tourist destinations in achieving competitiveness today. The impressive brand story depends on two important pillars – the skills of writing of its author and the methodology of creating it. In Internet one can find methods, advices, help in creating a brand story, but they vary too much and it is impossible to predict which of them would help tourist destinations in creating their best brand stories, what the difference between brand story writing of any product and brand story writing of a tourist destination is and which the know how of writing the brand story of any tourist destination is.

Materials and methods

In this issue the purpose is finding the right technology of giving birth to the brand story of a tourist destination brand and even more - finding the know how that helps the brand story being “contagious” (Berger, 2013). The researches of Dimitrova (2019, 2020) will provide the steps of writing the brand story of Sofia, verified via a survey that proves its effectiveness. In order to highlight the specific features and needs of tourist destinations’ brand stories a comparison will be made between the steps of writing a brand story of a tourist destination brand (research of Dimitrova) and the steps in writing brand stories - the special research of Katy French, published at the website of the marketing company “Column Five” (dedicated on “helping brands discover and tell their best stories”), being two independent of each other parallel studies on the same topic. The comparison also will provide the important accents of the way to create a brand story.

The main methods used include: empirical-theoretical methods such as scientific analysis and synthesis; collection and processing of primary information (gathered in the process of developing tourist brands and brand stories by the author in the period 2013-2020 and primary information gathered in a survey among 293 foreign visitors of Sofia in 2019); comparative analysis and secondary analysis of data; analysis of literature sources; expert evaluation.

Correspondence:
Tatyana Dimitrova
“Brands and Stories” Ltd.,
Sofia, Bulgaria.

Results

The verified effectiveness of the brand story

In 2015 in the book “Tender talk to the mountain” Dimitrova introduces three brand stories of tourist destinations, constructed the way she explains in her researches (Dimitrova, 2016, 2019, 2020). Dimitrova (2016) introduces her brand structuring method as a “driver of the new tourist development in the world of values and brand stories, the world of brand personalities, some of which provide role models of our society.” None of the constructed brand stories is still applied in practice. Therefore Dimitrova (2019, 2020) verified the effectiveness and the “contagious” (Berger, 2013) character of the offered brand story of Sofia (the capital of Bulgaria) vire a research conducted in 2019 among 293 foreign visitors of Sofia, who belong to a wide range of nationalities (fig.1): 53% come from west European countries (Italy, Spain, England, Germany, Holland, etc.), another 13% are the respondents who come from neighbouring countries of Bulgaria (Greece, Romania, Serbia, North Macedonia, Turkey), 24% come from far away countries (Australia, India, China, New Zeland, Mexico, Columbia, etc.) and 10% - from East European countries (Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, etc.). Information obtained from the research is analyzed using quantitative analysis techniques of data SPSS (and Excel aiming better visual presentation of the results). Almost half of the requested number of guests (48%) have their main travel purpose culture-historical tourism, so they are interested to know more about history of the destination but also they have experience in other destinations that will be a good basis for comparison and assessment. 92% of the requested travel unorganised and more than half of them (fig.3) are young people (at the age between 19-34 are 63%). They have read the brand story “The Legend of ancient Serdica”, telling about the reasons emperor Constantine I the Great had chosen Serdica as the “Rome” of his heart. Their answers (fig.4) show that 83% of the respondents liked the story, 8% didn’t like the idea of presenting a destination vire a legend and a brand story and 9% didn’t like the story. This brand story got the support of 83% of the requested and “has the power to be the brand story of the future Sofia brand.” (Dimitrova, 2019, 2020). The brand story is a result and a part of the innovative method for structuring and managing tourist brands. So we have already the effective steps to follow when structuring the brand story of a tourist destination.

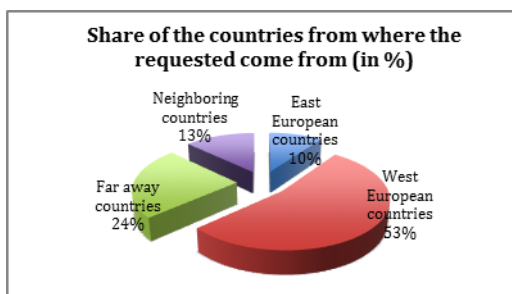


Fig. 1: Share of the countries from where the requested come from (in %).

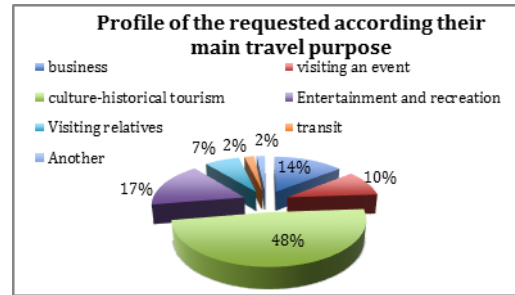


Fig. 2: Profile of the requested according to their main travel purpose.

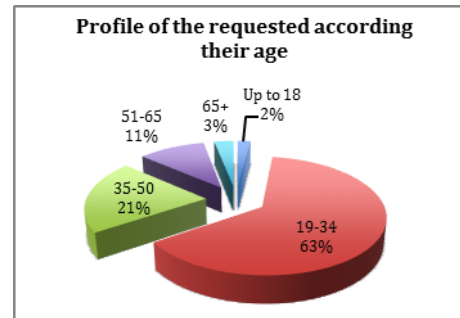


Fig. 3: Profile of the requested according to their age.

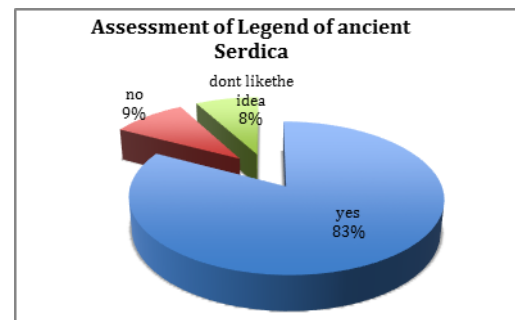


Fig. 4: Assessment of Legend of ancient Serdica.

The theory and technology of building a brand story of a tourist destination

The brand story is a stage of the process of building the brand of the tourist destination (Dimitrova, 2020) and the instrument to position the brand. Vire tourist destination brands we manage the product of the destination and the development and the speed (Dimitrova, 2017) of “the functioning tourist system as interrelated demand and supply side”(Gunn, Var, 2002). Stimulating the accelerated functioning of the tourist system depends on the rhytm we set by submitting new elements of the brand through its brand story – we can go on telling the brand story including all the brand elements – this is how we provide the presentation of “the variety of development and services – the supply side”. (Gunn,Var, 2002) In and vire the brand story we define the structure and the volume of the demand – they depend on 1) the elements of the tourist system we integrate in the product and the story; 2) the universal character and importance of the brand story theme and 3) the “catching” (Berger, 2013) way we tell the story. If we want to maintain an accelerated rhytm of the functioning tourist system – the new brand elements should be submitted every 5-6 months up to 1 year, packed in new stories that continue telling the main brand story line and add “news” to it. They remind us of the main brand story and go on telling its continuation. So the brand story is the

instrument to control the product purchase, to describe the product, to underline the competitiveness of the product and to pack the product first describing a route in the destination and second – connecting all these elements (stops of the route) in a narrative form.

The brand story offers to destination management and all the stakeholders not only the golden bridles of destination competitiveness worldwide but also an opportunity of gaining enough profit from the destination product. According to the “life cycle stage of the tourism area” (Butler, 1980) we can “help” the destination “be in fashion” preventing it from the two unacceptable stages of the life cycle of the tourism area – “stagnation” and “decline” (Butler, 1980) – we just renew or add to its brand a strong subbrand (in a continuation of the brand story) and we invest in evidence within the destination area, connected to that subbrand theme. So we manage the product development through the brand story and the brand, but also we manage the vision of the destination/tourism area. Through the brand story we can hold on the utmost number of guests and maintain the “capacity levels for many variables” (Butler, 1980) without exceeding them, and we can help deciding the environmental, social, and economic problems. Vire brand stories we can control the sustainable development of the destination, because we are programming the activities of the future tourists of the destination in the story and the route (we integrate in the story some/most of the destination resources, and we can put limits – we don’t include some of the elements/resources that are threatened) The brand can be “verified” through various products and places we point in the brand story. If a place in the destination requires a special sparing policy, we manage the product through new brand elements in the brand story and we can quickly redirect the interest to another place in the destination being an evidence of the connection brand – destination.

Vire routes in the form of brand stories (or routes implicitly following the filmed brand story) we are offering the context - the relationship between identity of the destination and its visual atmosphere, monuments and scenery, that Sharpley (Pender, Sharpley, 2005) explains as “environment relationship”.

The brand exists vire the brand story; brand stories are not after the strategies, they are instead of the strategies. Strategies of tourism development find and point types of tourism that a destination could develop in future, but brands and brand stories (following the innovative method for structuring and managing brands of tourist destinations of Dimitrova (2016)) are those that really offer the know – how of identifying and developing the product of the destination in time and manage the product. The brand story that this innovative method offers helps us send our message regardless target groups and meet the emotional needs of potential tourists.

In the brand story Dimitrova introduces the myth (in a legend or a short narration) of the nation/destination, but this myth is based on history and real facts. We include elements of fantasy only when contemporary history doesn’t evidence a moment – when primary source evidence is missing and we need to offer the most logical connection – mostly using deduction, i.e. logical conclusion in providing the integrity of the plot. Holt (2010) also finds them important, because they are “the glue” that connects the elements of history.

The text of the brand story could be told by a lyrical speaker or it could be presented by the brand personality in a monologue.

The text structure is: (better with no introduction – it is implicitly written in the thesis) 1. Short strong expression of our thesis and what it is related to the destination with; 2. Evidence that supports the thesis is gathered and told by the brand personality in a catching and logical story; 3. Conclusion with invitation that ends with the slogan - it confirms the thesis and adds some contemporary evidence (even today you may see it here/you can find it here /feel this, etc.) – where signs of destination identity are vivid in the contemporary destination. The text is emotional and impressive.

The text of the brand story has predefined coordinates.

These coordinates **depend on:**

- the resource of the destination and “destination typology: urban, seaside, alpine, rural, authentic – Third World, unique-exotic-exclusive” (Buhalis, 2000) because vire brand story we formulate and present the product now, but also we have in mind the potential product, that we will present in future continuations of the brand story and there cannot be asynchrony found between the previous and the future destination brand story

- the level of the tourist destination according to its place in the national tourist brand system (national level, regional, city/municipality) and the connection of the story we write to “the main elements in the “checklist” of identity” (Thiesse, 2011) of the national tourist brand story. These connections could be found among: “the great ancestors”, “the national language”, “the national history - written and illustrated”, “the national landscape - described and painted”, “folklore – museographed”, “national music”. (Thiesse, 2011).

- the marketing aims of the DMO organisation.

The brand stories have a syncretic character combining Tourism, History and Literature: brand stories are functioning as the expression of management of the destination product and policy and as texts that influence on people’s choice. Every text is integrated by a strong idea and message. According to Dimitrova (2020) the brand story is a “translation” from the language of tourism into the language of Literature, so that the brand story of a tourist destination is such a text, having its main idea and message the slogan of the destination (expressed in the end of the story). The main character of this brand story is the brand personality, who most strongly expresses the values of the brand and tells the world about the most competitive advantage of the tourist destination. This competitive advantage is the theme of the text. The national destination brand story embraces and unifies the brand stories of the regions, cities, municipalities. Regional brand stories could be elements of the national brand story or stories that support or widen the national one. This hierarchy of brands could have either an emphasized connection between them or implicit (dictated by history evidence or culture).

The brand strategy is a plan for the future development of the brand and brand personality in time, integrating the elements of the brand character (most competitive features of the product of the destination) in the brand story. The brand personality presents “the identifying myth” (Holt, 2010) and feed the needs of people to learn more about

themselves – it is the same what Holt (2010) appoints as one of the reasons “marks become icons” through “culture branding”, telling identifying myths and the other reason according to him – they reflect “sharp social contradictions”. Concerning tourist destinations’ brands it is inadmissible to divide people showing models of social contradictions - just the opposite – the more people we can convince in our valuable offer vire history facts, the better. Brand personalities make your brand more valuable if they are positive heroes (although Dracula is telling a bloody brand story of Romania and it is working). Tourism is a peaceful message – “sharp social contradictions” (Holt, 2010) are not applicable in sending our message. According to Jung (1993, 2016) we’d better use and wake up “the collective unconscious” in every person so we provide the widest possible distribution of our brand message through the story. So we have to base our story on “archetypes” (“constantly recurring phenomena in the subconscious of people and in the system of their myths”) like: “strong – weak; center – periphery; nice-ugly; rich-poor; clean – dirty; light – darkness; good – evil; Paradise – Hell; tidyness - chaos; woman – man” (Jung, 1993, 2016) and usually “tourist destinations are being positioned using the archetype Paradise – Hell” (Kaftandziev, 2008)

In the brand story we revive the most spectacular and inspiring part of the brand soul that explains its essence. This biggest and strongest message is sent first (in the brand story) to attract the attention and to position the brand. Each new feature of the brand (the second most important brand element of the destination then third, etc.) is introduced in continuations of the brand story, following two important conditions - artistic integrity of the brand image (there can not be asynchronous messages) and compulsory rhythm of creation of market expectations, but should not be missed the moment when (potential) tourists still keep nice and bright first impression of the brand. This moment is important to introduce a second brand element - again as part of the character of the brand personality. The signs of destination identity have to be vivid in the contemporary destination (in its product) and in the brand story, so that tourists can understand who is sending them invitation, what the offer is, what they could see and experience in this destination.

In providing the widest possible field of our destination’s message we use internet and YouTube being the universal channel of communication. Our brand story is already a short film that anyone could watch in internet and share with friends.

The brand personality

When we are branding a destination, we are presenting a brand story and we are developing a brand character - a person – metaphor. Being the “metaphorical final step of the brand production” (Zhelev, 2010), the brand personality most strongly expresses the values of the brand and its individuality. The brand personality must be a positive hero. Myths has always been the mechanism used to determine role models of people and people have always found them very instructive. By introducing the myth in the brand story we nurture and promote Good.

We choose the brand personality among the heroes, that come from that destination: great personalities, popular in the world or in the region, symbol of the history memory of the community in the destination and next (if we can not

find the needed personality) we search for a summarizing image, a person very typical for the community of the destination and responding the idea we want to present. The person has to be a positive, charismatic and already popular (at least at local level), the personality should allow developing as more themes as possible – through him/her we can tell about more competitive features of the destination. If Orpheus, “whose origin is Bulgarian” (Pophristov, 2017) is the brand personality of Bulgaria, this allows telling a longer part of the history of the country and explains the ethos of the destination – all the rituals of contemporary Bulgarians, the national dances horo and rachenitsa, the knowledge, hidden in the mystery of ethos... If we choose one of the mighty Bulgarian kings (khan Kubrat – AD VII c.; king Simeon the Great – AD IX-X c.) or even the Thracian hero and gladiator Spartacus (BC II c. - his origin is from Bulgarian lands), the themes we could articulate through these heroes are narrowing down in comparison to the personality of Orpheus. The more elements that the destination is proud of we can tell through the brand personality, the better is our choice of a brand personality.

Comparative analysis of two independent of each other parallel studies on the same topic

The different scope of themes that the brand of a destination and any other product brand have determines the first difference in their brand stories - the brand story of a destination is introducing a brand that consists of many and different components and the separate DMOs have no control over the supply – that makes easier writing the brand story of a product (of a company and there we have control over every step of the development of the brand and its communication (even the design of the package, the welcome words of the staff, the distribution of the products, etc.) But we can establish a stronger position of the brand of a tourist destination in its brand story, because we can give people more reasons to believe in it (usually the nation/the community of the destination we are branding has its monuments or places, archaeological sites that evidence the story we are telling or elements of it). The second important difference is the price - in the brand story of a destination it can not be an element of the brand (it is not a part of the identity of the destination), in the brand story of a product it could be a competitive advantage. Beside these differences the two know how concepts of telling a brand story of Dimitrova and of French mark 5 more majour differences in:

1)the way they describe the product – they both describe the product and its competitive features, but the brand story of the tourist destination does it implicitly, not so vivid through the myth and if possible in a route that covers vivid connection of contemporary destination to the brand story.
2) the narrative structure of the brand story - French (2021) recommends the “Freytag’s pyramid, where the plot of a story consists of five parts: introduction - rise – climax (narrative) – return or fall – catastrophe/resolution/revelation”. Tourist destination brand stories should have three parts as mentioned above. The two concepts share the same sequence of research and writing process – “once you have a clear idea of who you are and what you’re trying to do, when you have your pillars, then you can begin to examine the stories that will help you communicate that.” (French, 2021)

3) the theme of the story - tourist destination brand story is by all means a story about the identity of the destination (it's history, culture, ethos) and it is based on real facts, we could tell in a legend or myth, that we can evidence in the contemporary destination (rituals, fests, temples or facts from history). Concerning all companies, products or industries (French, 2021) we "tell the story of how you built your business or the story of how your product improves people's lives, who you are, what your culture is like, and what you care about; tell about the product or service you provide and its specific features; map your buyer's journey". (French, 2021)

4) coordination with the national brand story as a part of the vision, mission, and values of the future brand story - a destination's brand story is written according to the future brand's place in the national tourist brand system. And next the two concepts share the same characteristics of "a great brand story: it is meaningful; it's emotional; it's simple; it's authentic. When you share your brand story, people should know it's your story. It means letting your personality shine through". (French, 2021)

5) the start of the brand story – the product brand story "starts with a challenge or problem, because conflict creates a bit of stress or intrigue: you can show your product as the hero and provide a satisfying resolution" (French, 2021). In tourist brand stories the grabbing attention start of the story is important, but stress and intrigue are not recommended. The attention could be grabbed by an impressive famous personality address, a monologue that offers concentrated emotion and message attested in evidence.

Discussion

Bernadette Jiwa is the author of nine Amazon Bestsellers and "keynote speaker" who helps people developing their business thanks to the brand story being the "most persuasive technology", "a complete picture made up of facts, feelings, and interpretations" (Jiwa, 2014). She is the master of brand stories who points "The 20 Keys To A Brand Story": "Truth, Purpose, Vision, Values, Products & Services, Your People, Value You Deliver, Name & Tagline, Content & Copy, Design, Your Actions, Customer Experience, Price & Quality, Position & Perception, Distribution, Location, Ubiquity Or Scarcity, Community, Reputation, Reaction & Reach" (Jiwa, 2014) This is a perfect analyze of the brand story at all of every business, but the current research explores the brand story from another point of view – that of tourism and tourist destination brands.

Berger (2013) explores what makes stories in newspapers catching - they have to be "interesting and useful, sharing emotion – the social glue that should be positive, and the "wow" effect caused by "complex emotion, that often includes a sense of surprise, unexpectedness and mystery". (Berger, 2013) This research is dedicated on brand stories, but follows the recommendations of Berger.

Conclusions

The brand story of a tourist destination is the main expression of its brand – this is the language we use to position the brand, the comfortable basis that we imply in a film, in landing pages, in products like routes, in computer play games, in opera performances, in theatre performances, etc. Here you have the know how of giving birth to the

brand story of a tourist brand. This is your key to competitiveness and reaching the highest possible potential markets and customers.

References

- Berger, J. Contagious. Why Things Catch On, Simon & Schuster Inc., New York, USA, 2013, p.101
- Buhalis, D. Marketing the competitive destination of the future, Tourism Management. Special Issue: The Competitive Destination, 21(1), 2000
DOI: 10.1016/S0261-5177(99)00095-3
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263731407_Marketing_the_competitive_destination_of_the_future_-_Growth_strategies_for_accommodation_establishments_in_alpine_regions
- Butler, R. The concept of a tourism area cycle of evolution: implications for management of resources, Canadian Geographer, Vol. 24(1), pp.5-12, 1980
- Dimitrova, T. Destination Branding - the need of content and innovative way of promotion (the case of brand Bulgaria and brand Sofia), "Summer PR school 2016 г.", New Bulgarian University, 2016
- Dimitrova, T. Innovative method for building and managing brand "Bulgaria" and brand "Sofia", unpubl. Dissertation, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia, Bulgaria, 2020
- Dimitrova, T. Several Faces of Innovation in Contemporary Sofia Brand, International Scientific Conference "Contemporary Tourism - Traditions and Innovations", Sofia University, Sofia, Bulgaria, 2017
- Dimitrova, T. The image of Sofia – current state and opportunities. Quantitative analysis of a survey among foreign visitors of Sofia, Yearbook of Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Geology and Geography, book 2 – Geography, Volume 112, 2019
- Gunn, C. Var T. Tourism planning. Basics, Concepts, Cases, Taylor & Francis books, Routledge, Great Britain, 2002, 34
https://books.google.bg/books?id=6S6e44VhObMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=inauthor:%22Clare+A.+Gunn%22&hl=bg&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjQ1s_j8MPuAhXJxIsKHSgqCGQQuwUwAHoECAAQCg#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Holt, D. How brands become icons. The principles of cultural branding. BOOKMARK, Sofia, Bulgaria, 2010, 14, 21
- Jiwa, B. What Is A Brand Story?, April 18, 2014, <http://thestoryoftelling.com/what-is-a-brand-story/>
- French, K. How to Tell Your Brand Story (Plus Awesome Examples), 2021
[https://www.columnfivemedia.com/how-to-tell-a-brand-story_Last visited on 8.01.2021](https://www.columnfivemedia.com/how-to-tell-a-brand-story_Last%20visited%20on%208.01.2021)
- Jung, C. Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, Lege Artis, Sofia, Bulgaria, 2016
- Jung, C. Selected. Second book. Eurasia-Abagar, Plevan, Bulgaria, 1993, 250
- Kaftandjiev, H. Harmony in the advertisement communication, Siela Soft & Publishing, Sofia, Bulgaria, 2008, p.17
- Pender, L. Sharpley, R. The management of tourism, Sage Publications, New Delhi, India, 2005, p.268
[https://books.google.bg/books?id=dRAOMxPzaWcC&pg=PA331&lpg=PA331&dq=GUNN+C.+A.+\(1972\),+](https://books.google.bg/books?id=dRAOMxPzaWcC&pg=PA331&lpg=PA331&dq=GUNN+C.+A.+(1972),+)

Vacationscape,+Designing+Tourist+Regions,+University+of+Texas,+Austin,+Later+editions+also+included.&source=bl&ots=4wxUW8VgOW&sig=ACfU3U24W OXsr9xqQSPPLr1X4i9UyieRg&hl=bg&sa=X&ved=2 ahUKEwib4eeLksPuAhV5BWMBHc9_D2AQ6AEwE XoECACQA#v=onepage&q=GUNN%20C.%20A.%20(1972)%20Vacationscape%20Designing%20Tourist%20Regions%20University%20of%20Texas%20Austin%20Later%20editions%20also%20included.&f=false

16. Pophrstov, D. Atlantis people, Thracians, Orpheus, Jesus Christ and Bulgaria (lecture), 2017
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rDP52_CIBU&fbclid=IwAR23vRk9xhjNSG6pfRqSpPS_GKtnj8GRhnCXipRa6wYcYckxIdA2NRtYLIc&app=desktop
17. Thiesse, A. M. The Creation of National Identities. Queen Mab, Bulgaria, 2011, 8-9.
18. Zhelev, S. Positioning, University Publishing House "Economy", Sofia, 2010