
PERSONAL BRANDING VS. NATIONAL IDENTITY

Mihai Ioan Roșca¹ and Angela Madan²

^{1) 2)} *The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania*
E-mail: mihai.rosca@mk.ase.ro; E-mail: angela.madan@mk.ase.ro

Please cite this paper as:

Rosca, M.I. and Madan, A., 2020. Personal Branding vs. National Identity. In: R. Pamfilie, V. Dinu, L. Tăchiciu, D. Pleșea, C. Vasiliu eds. *6th BASIQ International Conference on New Trends in Sustainable Business and Consumption*. Messina, Italy, 4-6 June 2020. Bucharest: ASE, pp. 841-847

Abstract

In this period of globalization it is important to understand and maintain national values. National reputation is an important factor in international marketing. Mainly, personal branding is regarding with the national values, of the country of origin. A nation brand is the sum of people's perceptions of a country across the most important areas of national competence. Nation branding is influenced by the country image, reputation and positioning. It represents interest in studying personal branding and business ethics as a part of nation identity, which was not enough studied. Also, it represents interest in analysing Romania branding in a globalization era. Since the beginning, work on subliminal effects was investigated in marketing applications of the question of effects on behaviour. I set out to do an office job, for evaluation of Romanian branding in a globalization era, and if personal branding, mainly business ethics may influence nation reputation, as well as importance of rhetoric in creating person's own image. Personal and country branding are sparking interest among general public and marketers.

Keywords *personal brand, national image, rhetoric, brand value, business ethics.*

JEL Classification

M30; M31; M39

Introduction

The theme of this paper can be placed between necessities of personal branding and country image in era of globalization. It is important to determine if the positive perception of country identity will lead to a positive perception of its population, and vice versa.

The objective of the present study is to analyze the differences and similarities in business ethics in different countries and which is the role of personal brand in national identity.

The paper aims to bring a contribution in identifying the difference of national image with his main assets, mainly population, in an international market.

In the current context of globalization, the competition between countries all over the world in attracting investors, visitors, inhabitants or export markets is fiercer than ever and growing, and because of this is important to maintain a positive national reputation.

Personal brand mainly consist of same specific habits from residence country, and it is based on verbal and nonverbal communication. In an international marketing it is important to understand that people from different countries have different perception nonverbal communication and have different national habits.

National identity in a globalization era

In a globalization era, borders have disappeared and under international market conditions it is vital for all countries to improve their competitive identity and to improve their reputation. On the global market all the attention, respect and trust had countries with national reputation, as well as abundant opportunities and trust from investors, donors, consumer, tourists and others. Countries with poor reputation are marginalized (Zugic and Konatar, 2018).

“From the marketing point of view the market multiculturalism is the argument that denies the use of nations for cultural segmentation. The sustaining of a new set of international market segmentation criteria has to consider the multiculturalism phenomenon both from the point of view of the local implications and from cross-national ones” (Rusu, 2009, p.450).

Perceptions of a country are created and determinate by many things, each of them can create a better or worse country image (Candace, 2012).

“National identity, nation branding and national reputation are separate, but very interrelated concepts. Nation branding is something a nation does; national identity and national reputation are something a nation has. Public diplomacy as well as corporate communications (marketing, advertising and public relations) can play a role in nation branding and contribute to national reputation as well as to national identity” (White and Kolesnicov, 2015, p.325)

It is important to understand that national identity, as a self-perception, exists inside a nation but national reputation is outside the country and represent the perception of a nation internationally. In other words, “while national reputation is something a country has, nation branding is something a country, actively, does” (White and Kolesnicov, 2015, p.326).

The most valuable asset of a country it is its national identity – the way how it communicates to the world about the most important areas of national competence. “National identity is a complex set of elements that includes the nation’s identity: its history, culture, legal and political system, geography, and its visual elements, such as flags and buildings that are its symbols” (Zugic and Konatar, 2017)

In today’ world the nation brand and national reputation is an important concept. It is well known that a country identity may become an ‘umbrella brand’ for the population from that country. National brand can be influenced by a number of factors, such as reputation, positioning and country’s image and it is a sum of people’s perception about the country. In globalization period it is crucial for country to create and maintain a powerful and positive national identity, as a competitive advantage on international marketing.

“Nation branding includes a wide variety of activities, ranging from “cosmetic” operations, such as the creation of national logos and slogans, to efforts to institutionalize branding within state structures by creating governmental and quasi-governmental bodies that oversee long-term nation branding efforts” (Anholt, 2008).

“Nation branding and national identity have a symbiotic relationship. It is difficult to create a credible and cohesive nation brand, in the absence of a sense of national identity; positive national identity is a precursor to a positive nation brand” (White and Kolesnicov, 2015, p.324).

“The country brand image is represented by the particular type of feedback received by the nation from the outside world, concerning the credibility of the nation’s identity claims (nation brand identity). Thus the country brand image is what others perceive from what a country’s components (people and organizations) want the world to understand is most central, enduring and distinctive about their country” (Moisescu, 2011, p.272).

Difference between countries business ethics on international market

Different cultures have assigned prominence to different virtues, which are practiced by people, with respect to business, engaged in practicing ethics and are conducive to successful business activities. Industrialized countries, over the past several centuries, had several virtues which have been highly valued. (Bird, 2015)

“Over the last two decades, the globalization of business has been phenomenal, and its impact has been extensively studied in various fields of international business research including business ethics.” (Paik, et al., 2017, p.840)

The contrast of ethics between the worldwide countries is major.

It is evident that there are huge similarities and differences between ethics and values in business worldwide. More similarities can be seen between the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom because they are part of the Anglo cluster, they share cultural heritage. (Feikis, and McHugh, 2014)

Mexico culture is normative in long term orientation, conforms to hierarchies, is a society that tends to be committed to society, is very indulgent, favors competition and is very rigid in decision making process.

Canada culture is not normative in long term orientation, it is more inclusive in terms of power distance, it is individualistic, it is not indulgent, favors caring for other and it is flexible in decision making process. Canadian government ethics model includes their people.

Japan business ethics revolve around a sense of loyalty, heavy investment in workers. Japan’s business is concerned for nationalism, the group and loyalty to the business. Japan is moderately hierarchal and business decisions are made very slowly. Japan is a highly masculine society and indicate a very competitive and workaholic business trait. Traditions of gift giving may seem like bribery to western cultures.

In the **United States**, fairness, individual equality, adhering to business laws is the norm. The U.S is very high rated in individualism business is conducted freely, workers are self reliant, and promotions based on merit. United States, hierarchy is established for convenience, workers have access to leaders. „The American FCPA explicitly prohibits the bribing of foreign officials.”(Paik et al., 2017, p.852) “The U.S. is less masculine and competes on how well the business performs”, indicates caring and focus on quality of life.

United States government ethics model focus on the government itself.

Mexico business ethics differ from other country. Corruption and bribes are considered acceptable behavior, a simply monetary self-interest. Mexico is a hierarchal society. Mexico family loyalty is reflected in business. Mexico show masculine approach in business and conflicts are resolved through confrontation. (Kim, et al., n.d.)

Concerning bribery is considered acceptable behavior, while corresponding regulation and enforcement are much less strict in **South Korea**. During its rapid economic development Korean managers accept relatively weak environment-related community norms. (Paik et al., 2017, p.852)

“Historically, Slavs tend to regulate their behavior by personal judgments of what is right and wrong. For example, business people in **Russia** tend to perceive written laws as something variable, depending on the time and situation and show skillfulness and ease in manipulating state legislation (Rees and Miazhevich, 2008, p.59).

Belarusian business culture is characterized by the pervasiveness of double ethics while dealing with the state, the importance of informal networks and low work motivation. Residual soviet ideology appears to be more persistent in Belarus than in Estonia. Also, there are socio-cultural differences between Estonia and Belarus. “The significance of these differences, which include nationality and religious legacies, will almost inevitably be overlooked should the countries be placed under the general umbrella of ‘former soviet states’ when considering business ethics in these contexts”. A distinct Belarusian relativism is

apparent in attitudes towards morals and law. The levels of idealism of Belarusian and Estonian managers are more difficult to predict than levels on the dimension of relativism.

For **Estonia** business ethics are relevant values including values of work, values associated with the traditional rural way of life and the importance of land, farming, diligence and individualism. "These include egalitarianism, mutual solidarity, assistance and respect." Among "Estonians the soviet era is universally seen as a time of oppression." (Rees and Miazhevich, 2008, p.59)

"More superficial differences in culture can be found in symbols and rituals. Values are at the core of economic behavior and could help explain differences in the conduct of firms." Values are affected by the environment, by the cultural context. "Different cultures have their own acceptable and unacceptable behaviors." (Scholtens and Dam, 2007, p.280)

Candace (2012) mentioned that countries "combine the population with the image of the country of origin".

It is important to understand difference in culture in international field. As a result of globalization it is necessary to study national differences, and in particular, non-verbal communication from different countries. Non-verbal communication is the use of non-verbal symbols as: "gestures, mimics, accent, intonation, interjection and others" (Popescu, 2001)

In international business the tiniest gesture can ruin important deal. For example, is very important to know the difference in the style of handshaking. For Americans, the British, Australians, New-Zeeland's, Germans it is usually to shake hands, when they meet and leaves. In Japan physical contact is considered impolite and even an insult.

Country branding – theoretical approach

Branding a country, in today's contemporary world, it is a long term strategic move. "The four main target markets of a country branding process are: visitors, residents and employees, business and industry and export markets". (Moisescu, 2011, p.272)

"Branding a country is not the same thing as promoting tourism" (Mocanu, 2014, p.89).

"Brand and branding are major marketing pillars. Product brands and corporate brands are part of the marketing management approach of many companies. The concept of brand has evolved progressively from simple "marks" of identification and competitive differentiation to love marks that build loyalty beyond reason" (Balan, C., 2013, p.41).

"Whereas reputation management, which includes nation branding, is something a country proactively *does*, a country's image is something it *has* and exists in the perceptions of audiences" Candace L., (2012)

"Nation branding is the process of building and managing a country's identity and image distinctly to attract and satisfy the needs of internal and external stakeholders, visitors and investors". (Zugic and Konatar, 2017) "A country brand may become an umbrella brand, ingredient brand or co-brand, intended to endorse certain economic sectors of a country" (Dinnie, 2007).

The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines brand as a "name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers", that is, a combination of characteristics intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition.

Romanian country branding

In their extensive study White and Kolesnicov (2015) elaborated new methods to positively influence people around the world and to build a better national brand of Romania. They start their research from the premise that all post-communist countries need to reinforce positive stereotypes and to change their negative ones. The cases which they propose suppose to create a national brand which is based on national pride and Romania identity. "The campaigns

initiated a dialog that helped persuade Romanians to be proud of their heritage and the local brands that carry their history and tradition, thus promoting a more cohesive and modern national identity, while also creating positive social capital around the brand itself". (White and Kolesnicov, 2015, p.334)

"Romanian society is now a mix of Westernized values and Romanian traditions, and is still in the process of developing a unified national identity and a cohesive national reputation". (White and Kolesnicov, 2015, p.328)

Plaias and Cotirlea (2013) expressed their opinion about branding Romania. In their qualitative research, they proposed that at the foundation of promoting the national image of Romania, revision of the past, is a must. In their opinion, the brand of Romania is the population and its values, traditions and the most favourable is to represent Romanian culture and civilization.

Personal branding phenomena

The personal branding, at the beginning, in the late nineties of the XX century was especially applied to celebrities, politicians and leaders. After that, it became implemented by managers, scientists, higher education teachers, and others.

Building a successful personal brand strategy requires a lot of personal effort, self-knowledge and time. Formulating an effective personal brand strategy is a complex process; it is based on individual values, personal, interests and beliefs and contributes to maintaining a positive reputation. (Kucharska and Confente, 2017)

For personal branding it is important to be unique, meaningful and profitable, because of this it is important to develop it constantly. (Pringle and Field, 2011).

"Personal branding is less about self promotion and more about building confidence to administer in one's field of expertise." (Amoako and Adjaison, n.d., p. 118)

There is a strong relationship between personal branding and personal performance. People need to improve their performance by way of the development of their thinking ability and skills, and when personal branding development programs are facilitated, they can improve their level of commitment, sharing of knowledge and honors to work. Personal branding is the responsibility, first of all, of the person. (Amoako and Adjaison, n.d.)

This paper, also, examines the necessity of studding rhetoric as an important part of personal branding or not. "Rhetoric is the art of persuasion, which along with grammar and logic, is one of the three ancient arts of discourse. Rhetoric aims to study the capacities of writers or speakers needed to inform persuade, or motivate particular audiences in specific situation" (Wikipedia)

Conducting a quantitative research study of people's opinion and perception of rhetoric, if it is an important part of business ethic, we produced results which showed that 87% (from a sample of 150 people) thought that rhetoric is needed. Rhetoric is needed to take in consideration in personal branding.

"Individuals who make the effort to build their personal brands are likely to achieve greater output in individual or personal performance, workforce productivity and great career success." (Amoako and Adjaison, n.d., p.127)

Conclusions

As the global economy grows, each country's perception of ethics will change to strengthen business relations between these countries.

Companies, which intend to activate on international marketing should be well aware of the differences in business ethics in different countries and industries. (Scholtens and Dam, 2007)

On the multinational market, are felt influences of different cultures with regard to legislation, organizational codes of conduct, as and, values, self-regulation and beliefs of personal factors. Due to different business cultures there are differences in ethical policies and in codes of ethics adopted in various countries. “The home-country context influences the development of different codes of ethics, as government regulations usually vary among countries” and “the culture of a country has a strong influence on business managers’ ethical attitudes”. (Andrade, et al., 2017, p. 3)

It is notice that a person can identified, most of all, with the country of origin. At the same time, each person can improve the image of the country of origin, by improving his personal image. This may become significant as an important tool to explore the potential of population as a stimulus for economy, for creating a better national identity. It is important to mention that both decision makers and the pollution of a country "want that high incomes and prosperity to become part of the national image" (Zugic and Konatar, 2017).

Personal and national branding and the correlation between them are not been, quite so widely, researched on a scientific level. This is a wide theoretical study that needs further study. In Romania, national and personal branding has been tangentially studied, and because of this it is essentially to do more complex research in this field. The work also provides a foundation for future studies.

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