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A Conceptual Communication Model for Nation Branding in the Greek Framework. Implications for Strategic Advertising Policy

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Abstract

Countries in the globalised world opt to promote their distinct characteristics and retain their position aiming for the presentation of a unique identity based on tangible but also intangible elements. These characteristics can be associated with national identity, which incorporates place identity. This latter, may influence the strategic communication policies directed to people in order to create a place image, strengthen sentimental bonds among those who share common characteristics and create in that way, a sense of place. This is where the role of networks takes place, which need to operate and cooperate at the international, national and local level but also among the private and the public sector. The implementation of new technologies and advertising campaigns carefully planned and targeted to groups with specific psycho-social and demographic characteristics can lead to destination branding and this is a process continuously sought from the people involved in such communication procedure, residents, internal and external stakeholders, cooperations between the public and private sector but also visitors as well. It is suggested that states, irrespective of how long their history stands, need to continuously seek attention especially for their identity branding while socio-economic and geo-political issues need to be taken into consideration. A conceptual communication model is presented for place branding based on agreed constituent elements of the place among those people involved in strategic policies and taking into consideration tourists' place associations and emotional attachment in order to successfully relate the image with the place identity.

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1. Introduction

Political situations, environmental factors, international political environment, the economic and social situation of a country are significant and determine the design policies which are implemented for the promotion of a region, a state, a city. Economic, political, social and psychological parameters may contribute to the

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presentation of the identity of a place since places need to differentiate themselves from each other to assert their unique and distinctive characteristics (Pritchard and Morgan, 2001; Kavartzis and Ashworth, 2008; Kuscer, 2013; Kavoura, 2013; Kavoura and Katsoni, in press). In that way, they can be promoted to the world as tourist destinations, which can be positive for their economy with the implementation of tourism development.

Among the definitions of the place include a clustering of like industries, a geopolitical physical space or a nation-state (Kotler et al. in Rainisto, 2003: 11). Place marketing practices based on Rainisto's work (2003: 16), which includes the provision of basic services provided; attractions, communication of the features of the region, support for the society. Rainisto (2003) further argues that a vision for the place needs to be developed, with all available players and the focus should be on selected attractions of the region that are promoted in order to create the unique selling proposition (Kavoura and Katsoni, in press).

Based on the resources, the unique selling proposition is created for the selected attractions of the place -with the promotion of physical and soft or immaterial attraction factors (Kotler et al. in Rainisto, 2003: 70). In that way, the sum of characteristics that differentiate the place from other places are necessary, offering a way of life, communicating it to target groups to show its advantage (Rainisto, 2003: 74-75). "The physical and material aspects of a destination which differentiates it, called tangibles, include fortified structures, urban developments, monuments and memorials, religious buildings including churches and especially monasteries, buildings associated with production or manufacture, government or civic buildings, villages, cultural landscapes and manufactured objects in their context. The intangible qualities of a destination include such things as practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, legends, language, tradition, religion, folklore, music and dance, handicrafts, etc..." (Mitsche et al., 2013: 69). These sites and intangible qualities may be connected with the identity of a population -as is defined with the inclusion of sites, historical sites, myths- and create a sense of place (Mitsche et al., 2013: 68-69). A strategic plan needs to be implemented to create policies. Thus, advertisers, marketers and tourism policy makers may promote the perceived distinct elements of a nation, a place, a region embedded with special emphasis and symbolism, creating in that way, a positive image building which may lead to destination branding. This is where the role of networks takes place, which need to operate and cooperate at the international, national and local level but also among the private and the public sector.

This sense of place is enhanced if the tourists have a cultural familiarity with the destination while local communities can identify and relate to (Mitsche et al., 2013: 69). In other words, internal and external stakeholders, residents, the local but also the central state, the private sector but also the point of view of visitors is significant. Cultural familiarity that people may have with a place, a region or country, although significant for people's and visitors' choices, in regard to how and why people attach to a place, is understudied (Kyle, Bricker, Graefe, Wickham, 2004; Yuksel, Yulsel and Bilim, 2010: 274), not to mention the limited research in the case study of Greece that this paper focuses. Advertising and communication messages via the promotional material "can be used as a way to convey feelings to tourists ... and develop an emotional link" (Kavoura, 2013: 72). Advertising can be a shaper of identities and mediator of meanings, particularly those related to nationality and cultural knowledge (O' Donohoe, 2011). This paper aims to present a communication model for nation branding taking Greece as a case study and argues that it is in continuous search for Greece. Implications are then discussed for the implementation of this model for other countries as well.

2. The role of place identity and its relation to national identity

Place identity is associated with a sense of being a city person, a small-town person, of a country person (Hummon, 1986: 3) locating in that way, the self within a specific community which is spatially defined; at the same time, the sense of 'placelessness', the symbolic placement which is not only directly associated with a residential status (Hummon, 1986: 4; Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) is acknowledged, situating a person in the world, identifying himself/herself with others, "forging in that way, a sense of belonging and attachment", "where a sense of coherence exists between its members who feel a sense of belonging" (Hummon, 1986: 4, 6;

Hidalgo and Hernández 2001: 274; Anderson, 1991). In that way, people may identify with different forms of community, develop feelings of attachment that they “belong in that kind of community, that he/she is of this kind of person” (Hummon, 1986: 21).

Very limited research has taken place in tourism studies to examine the role of place identity and its influence on visiting a place, a region, a city, a country (Kyle et al., 2004: 125; Yuksel et al., 2010). Place identity which incorporates values, myths, traditions, way of life, festivities, traditions, is part of the national identity of a population and is interrelated with it; it is this identity that is projected to the world via the promotional material in print or electronic form (Kavoura, 2013) promoting in that way, tourism to a region, a place, a country.

A historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a common, mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties are acknowledged as being parts of the national identity of a population (Smith, 1991: 8-15, Smith, 1996: 447; Gellner, 1983: 49, 125). Identity is defined in a distinct way for each population. Heritage can be part of the national identity. Heritage is a broad area, which incorporates many aspects and meanings which may vary. Nature, prehistory, archaeological remains, buildings, religion, language, traditions, and folklore all symbolise the past and are worth retaining for future generations. These variables, which are incorporated into the heritage definition, may be distinguished as material and immaterial, tangible and intangible, physical or social forms of heritage (Thorburn, 1986; Hughes, 1987; Zeppel and Hall, 1991; Lowenthal, 1994; Nuryanti, 1996; Edwards, Llurdés and Coit, 1996). Creating a sense of place can be the unique selling proposition and a competitive weapon in the world of nations where cities, countries, regions, places aim to gain a share from the tourism market. The sense of place demonstrates the identity of a population and can generate the concern for the maintenance of a resource while there is interaction in the community (Feilden and Jokilehto, 1993: 20).

Taking Greece as a case study, the two legacies that have left their imprint in Greece even nowadays associated with its identity, are related to the Hellenic period -associated with classical antiquity- and the Byzantine period -associated with the Greek Orthodox religion- which are elements closely connected with its territory and its historical memories; thus, ancient ideals related to ancient classical Greece but also religious oriented Orthodox faith. The incompatible ideas of the Church with the Hellenic tradition on which the Greek nation was based (Kavoura, 2013), the relation of Orthodoxy to nationality can be understood as a problem according to Kitromilides (1989: 178) despite the attempts which were made to present it as a signifier of Greek national identity. That is why Greek national identity, is not clear yet nowadays. On the one hand, its Byzantine origin is understated by other European countries -see for example, the nominations of World Heritage Sites from Greece to the UNESCO World Heritage List where sites related to classical antiquity are welcome in the circles of the World Heritage Committee since Greece is acknowledged as a country of ancient heritage and Greece is associated with classical ideals and the Western civilization (Kavoura and Bitsani, 2013: 60). On the other hand, Greeks and the Greek state are at the crossroad of East and West since religion is entailed with the national identity and coincides with it and even nowadays it has not yet been defined what constitutes Greekness (Kavoura and Bitsani, 2013). This latter, though, is a drawback, which does not allow policy makers and people to have a clear idea of what needs to be promoted as constitutive elements of Greekness, which do not in fact, seem to be evident. This, though, may influence the communication policies implemented for nation branding.

3. Communication policies and the role of key people for image building and branding

3.1. Stakeholders' role

Destination stakeholders include public sector and governments, such as National Tourism Organizations, residents, tourism industry sector, destination management organization and other groups-such as the most important categories which may influence and determine the management and marketing (Goeldner and Ritchie in Konečnik, 2004). This is where networks may be initiated. The role of networks takes place, which need to

operate and cooperate at the international, national and local level but also among the private and the public sector.

The role of networks, in the form of stakeholders, public and private sectors, can be significant while they may operate and cooperate at the international, national and local level. Networks provide collective or group activities, consensus creation, trust, rather than competition with each part (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008).

“The role of National Tourist Organisations...is increasingly supported by the involvement of the private sector towards a collaborative and entrepreneurial set of values” (Wight, 2013: 135). In the specific case of Greece that this paper examines, the cooperation of public and private sectors has not yet been implemented. The Ministry of Culture (MoC) and the Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO) are among the agencies of the public sector for the implementation of communication strategies for the presentation of heritage of Greece -as part of place and national identity of Greece. Greek Law 2557/1997 “Institutions, Measures and Activities of the Cultural Development” came into force in December 1997. The creation of the Association for the Elevation and Presentation of Greek Cultural Heritage initiated in the abovementioned Law 2557/1997 initially illustrated the tendency of the MoC to give a more commercial essence to the presentation of cultural heritage, which would function under the rules of private economy. This may be successful through the production, publication and promotion of books, magazines and other print material, audio-visual, organization of conferences and congresses, all related to the presentation of cultural heritage.

Not many things have finally taken place for these 15 years and another Law has been recently initiated. More specifically, Greek Law 4070/2012, refers to the creation of an organization, which will promote Greece, -in paragraph 1 it is stated that an anonymous organisation is created entitled “Marketing Greece Anonymous Organisation of Promotion and Development of Tourism” and with the title “Marketing Greece A.E.”. Its sole Proprietors are the Association of Greek Tourist Enterprises (SETE) and the Greek Public...where the Ministry of Development, Competitiveness, Shipping, Culture and Tourism and SETE will be in charge to sign all-important decisions taken.

Greek Law 4070/2012, mentions in Article 5, that the aim of the abovementioned organisation is the development and adoption of promotion and advertising programmes of Greek tourism, internationally and nationally. In addition, the research of international and domestic tourist market, for the creation, development and adoption of a branding system for Greek tourism at national, peripheral, regional level...as well as activities related to the support of tourism.

SETE will participate with a 70% and the Greek Public will participate with 30% to the capital of the organisation. It is the first time that public and private organisations cooperate together in Greece in order to promote the Greek tourist product, allowing us to argue for the synergies created among the private and public sector. Nevertheless, networks have not been fully implemented in the case of Greece in order to create cooperations that aim to promote a unique and consistent identity destination message, which is successfully implemented as is the case for other countries. Spain is the success story where a national promotional programme at national and regional level, included the creation of synergies such as the cooperation of artistic talents in the film industry (Almodovar), the cloth designing (Dominquez), the architecture (Calatrava) together with the Spanish government (Gilmore, 2002: 282). Another typical example is Azores, Portugal; businesses that operate in the tourism industry such as hotels, tourist guides, rent car companies, trips, local restaurants are in cooperation and initiate advertising and promotional campaigns in order to attract tourists; this takes place via the traditional print media, such as leaflets (see for example, Panazorica Tours, 2013).

Thus, policy makers for the implementation of planning, communication and marketing activities for the promotion of a nation, a place, region, city or country may take into consideration how significant networks for the promotion of specific elements associated with destination attachment for a person, a population, a group are; needless to mention, the limited research that exists (Hidalgo and Hernández, 2001; Yuksel, Yuksel and Bilim, 2010: 274; Prayag and Ryan, 2012: 342), then, strategic communication policies directed to specific people in order to create a place image, to strengthen sentimental bonds among those who share common characteristics, may create a sense of place.

The role of key people in charge of the initiation of the communication policies may mobilize the presentation of specific brand elements and specific characteristics of a nation or a country or a region (Kuscer, 2013; Kavoura, 2001). Positive aspects of the place or destination are institutionalized, asserting the place's uniqueness, which may put emphasis on the historical, cultural and social values of society (Kavoura, 2001; Ooi, 2004: 112). Political situations, environmental factors, international political environment, economic and social are significant and determine the design policies which will be created for the promotion of a region, a state, a city (Konečnik, 2004).

Such institutionalization of the place destination may promote ideas about the place, which are familiar to the people and this is where policies should aim at. Communicating an idea to a group or a community is made easier when "the idea is part of the very fabric of group life... is a notion that is already passively a part of the normative structure of the group" (Fine, 1981: 95). In the case of tourism destinations, a sense of place is enhanced if the tourists have a cultural familiarity with the destination while residents of local communities can also identify and relate to it (Mitsche et al., 2013: 69). In regard to the case of Greece, the state -at the central and regional level-, and despite the fact that people nowadays live in a multicultural world -people move because of migrations, travel or employment reasons from one country to the other-, was found to promote an officially sanctioned promotional material associated with Greek identity offering ground for nationalist ideologies to take place while this material may be well used for the promotion of a brand identity willing to accept multiculturalism (Kavoura, 2007; Kavoura, 2013; Kavoura and Katsoni, in press). The policy makers and the state do not have a clear idea of what constitutes Greekness (with the interplay of religious with the national identity), thus it is even more difficult for the visitors to understand what is on offer.

The limited implementation of networks but also the fact that the public sector employs nationalist ideologies, does not allow communication policies to successfully implement the branding of Greece which we argue is in continuous search. Southern and Eastern European countries associated with religious elements are usually in search of their destination branding (Konečnik, 2004).

3.2. *Visitors' role*

Understanding how customers acquire information is important for marketing management decisions (Kavoura and Katsoni, in press). A person may attach to a place even if he/ she has never been there and visited it, thus, having formed a sense of place prior to his/ her first visit, based on stories from friends and family or mass media with exposure to advertising and marketing communications (Yuksel, Yuksel and Bilim, 2010: 275; Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009: 53). The core of a country's brand must incorporate the spirit of its people, target groups -which may be diverse groups such as students, investors, students, residents, tourists, foreign governments that a country is trying to attract (Gilmore, 2002; Gow and Bellou, 2011).

Bitsani's and Kavoura's (2013: 310) research on wine tourism and the examination of the motivations of people for attending wine festivals in the region of Veneto, Italy illustrated that the possibility of increasing knowledge about the wine product are among the factors that positively affect the intentions of potential wine tourists; this can be combined and enhanced with the tourists' personal interest in wine. In the above-mentioned research, wine interest as a way of life may be projected to the consumers and potential visitors, thus, creating an image for the specific place and associate it with visitors' feelings. Thus, the identification of people's feelings, the existence or not of a relation with a place, is significant to lead to the branding of the area. At the same time, visitors' point of view may provide feedback to the policy makers and advertisers in charge of promoting a region, a place, a country; it is thus, worthwhile to employ contemporary marketing constructs in order to be able to operationalize and measure the sense of familiarity, the sense of belonging that people may have for a place. Thus, there is necessity for segmenting tourism; this, may offer another ground on the way a region and its unique characteristics may be promoted.

Market research is significant in order to examine people's and potential visitors' choices regarding a place; this is not the case for Greece though, where limited research regarding the attitudes of visitors towards Greece

and their tourist interests exists (Kavoura 2007; Kavoura and Katsoni, in press). With the need of understanding the experiences, culture and unspoken facets of consumer behavior, tourism policy makers and marketing researchers may cover with ethnography the physical travel to the location and the culture examining the stages from awareness of the brand to actually getting into a fan club (Bulut, 2013). One should also take into consideration that the people holding the key positions in an enterprise or an organization are part of the process, they are individuals who may also ‘consume’ this brand; thus, methods of competing and running the business or the organization, perceiving the customers and their needs (Kozioł, Wojtowicz and Pyrek, 2013) but also their point of view as consumers is necessary.

4. Conclusion

The symbolic presence of monumental landscapes which include features of myths, tradition, continuity, religion and legend, as well as political and nationalistic aspects are related to the emotional ties of people to specific sites (Feilden and Jokilehto, 1993; Herbert, 1995; Kavoura and Bitsani, 2013).

Place identity may lead to the branding of a region, a place, a country. Place identity is associated with national identity and thus, strategic policies of planning, tourism, marketing and advertising need to promote the distinct characteristics of the place that is branded, while taking into consideration the way visitors attach to this place, region or country. It is the national or state regional agents’ role when we speak about a nation, to incorporate in their communication strategies the way potential visitors understand this sense of belonging and measure it. Cooperations and creation of networks between public but also private agents may allow for a more holistic approach in the nation branding. Povilanskas and Armaitiene (2010) argue that the key to tourism competitiveness for a region, a country, a place is the power actor-networks have for marketing the region (Povilanskas, R. & Armaitienė, A., 2010). It is thus, worthwhile for policy makers and marketers to reinforce networks and employ contemporary marketing constructs in order to be able to operationalize and measure the concept of the ‘sense of belonging’ which has been understudied in order to more fully understand the consumers’/ visitors point of view, also including the residents’ point of view. These emotional ties may well apply to specific ways of life (gastronomy, wine interest, myths, traditions). People in charge of initiating policies for the promotion of a region, a state, a nation, a city need to take these into consideration in order to better target people.

Greece in search of branding its distinct elements needs to clearly define which these elements are while they should be promoted as part of puzzle where its parts fill in the image of the country. Greece is not only the Acropolis. Networks, which are not yet fully implemented between the private and public sector in the Greek case, would offer another ground for branding Greece to the potential visitors under a holistic approach. Nationalist ideologies should not exist; rather, the inclusion of people with related interests and feelings should be the case. The implementation of new technologies and related programmes (Stalidis and Karapistolis, 2013; Borges-Tiago, Couto, dos Santos, Natário and Braga, 2007; Adamopoulou, 2000; Katsoni, 2011) can be useful tools that may contribute so that place identity is branded while market studies would provide the necessary feedback.

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