

Fan, ying : branding the nation: what is being branded?

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Fan, Ying : Branding the nation: What is being branded? Journal of Vacation Marketing Volume 12 Number 1. 2005 p. 4-13 Abstract: The paper by Fan explains what nation branding is. So first the difference between Nation branding and Nation brand is explained. Every Nation has a certain image with or without Nation branding. It examines the concept of nation branding, focusing especially on the question of what is being branded.

The paper tries to explain what nation branding is and tries to explain the differences between on the one hand nation branding and product branding and on the other hand nation branding and product- country image.

Furthermore it discusses paradoxical issues of nation branding and tries to give a broader context in which nation branding can be applied. But to find out how nation branding could help economic development in a country , more research is needed. It is hard to say how important the role of nation branding really is. Key Words: ation branding, country branding, country-of-origin effect, product- country image, place marketing The author: The paper is written by Ying Fan a senior lecturer at Brunel Business School, Brunel University in London. Dr Fan has held faculty positions at the universities of Lincoln, Hertfordshire and Durham. His research interests surround branding and marketing communications, and cross-cultural management issues.

Topic: Branding the nation: What is being branded? The major topic of the paper is what nation branding is and what the purpose of nation branding is.

Research question : What is being branded? Is a nation brand a separate entity, or an element in the product brand? What is the direction of the correlation between countries that have produced strong brands and those

that are strong brands themselves ? Method : The research method is a literary analysis Material and Structure of the paper: On the first page of his paper contact informations, informations on the author including a photo of Fan are given. An Abstract sums up the Keywords and gives an overview over the article.

All in all the paper of Fan is 9 pages long and is structured in the chapters: Introduction What is Nation Branding? What is being branded? Nation branding and product branding Nation brand image and product-country image Paradoxes The broader context For a further understanding Fan gives 3 Tables: Terms used in the literature ; Examples of nation branding where he gives 5 examples and explains what is being branded and a table on Comparison between nation branding and product branding . In his paper Fan makes indirect citations which are listed in the references.

Here the references are ordered by appearance in the text not alphabetically. The paper is easy to read and understand, it gives a good overview of the topic nation branding. The structure is easy to follow. The paper is anonymously refereed. Finding of the article : The author points out that there is no single definition on nation branding but gives a working definition for the paper: ' Nation branding concerns applying branding and marketing communications techniques to promote a nation's image. Nation branding can be used in different ways: using the nation's image to promote sales and exports ; place branding which is part of tourism marketing ; political marketing for example the expression " axis of evil"; Nation branding in it's true sense like Cool Britannia. The author points out that a

nation is not a product in the conventional sense . The Nation itself can hardly be changed, the benefits are purely emotional, the Image is complicated and the ownership is unclear. A nation brand is not centered on any specific product, service or cause that can be promoted directly to the customer.

But Nation branding concerns a countries whole image, covering political, economic, historical and cultural dimensions. A Nation has not one but multiple images. What image is retrieved depends on the audience , the context and the time. The author finds out that negative national image does not necessarily affect the purchase of products made by that country, by giving the example of Japan and China. The author tries to find out the direction of the correlation between countries that have produced strong brands and those that are strong brands themselves .

Nation branding must be distinctive and help the country to position itself against competitors . A difficulty is that an international audience have a different degree of knowledge of a nation and each country has different cultural values, thus decodes the message differently. Nation branding often try to communicate a single image or message to different audiences in different countries . This renders for the author the message meaningless, but to try to be all things to all people will in the opinion of the author inevitably fail .

What is the message a nation wants to send, give up a old but unique image in favor of the new image. This can fail like for example “ Cool Britannia” did.

Another difficulty in nation branding is that a national identity is very difficult to define. Furthermore in nation branding, an understanding of the customers' existing perception of the nation is very important. A certain image is made over time. Another important aspect of nation branding is the internal audience.

The author points out that Nation branding is just one part of a marketing strategy which is part of the business strategy and that often nation branding is overestimated even if it is a powerful tool. It is for example not sufficient for the country to promote its image enthusiastically to other nations if the economic basis for the nation brand is not there or the political situation is unstable. The image problem of a region or nation most often results from political and socio-economic troubles which must be solved, nation branding will not solve a country's problems but only serves as the final touch .