

COUNTRY BRANDING – YOUNG EUROPEANS CAMPAIGN, CASE OF KOSOVO

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Abstract

Country Branding as a concept is being used largely to explain a process that in fact only merely elucidates it. While researching about branding and its application in the case of “Young Europeans” campaign in Kosovo, the campaign was part of the advertising plan, the visual side of the campaign, propaganda and public relations.

Majority of the respondents said that they do not think the “Young Europeans” campaign will change the image of Kosovo. This image of Kosovo helps the entrepreneurial attitude and environment. It is important to mention that small percentage of respondents identified themselves with the campaign even though the campaign was about young people as a country asset. Further research is suggested to improve strategic nation branding that will be both technical (economic development) and cultural in its promotion.

Keywords: Nation branding, Young Europeans, Kosovo, Country image, Entrepreneurial Attitude

1. Introduction

The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of these, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors. Branding aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers. Nation branding is a field of theory and practice that aims to build, manage and measure the reputation of nations. It applies some approaches from commercial brand management practice to nations, in an effort to build, change or protect their international reputations. Brand management is an interesting part of a broader field of marketing. According to Lindemann (2003), around 70% of company's income is based on their brand's success. Subsequently, consumers do not simply want to buy any product but rather the one that has an added value.

Authors like Patrascu (2014) go one step further while suggesting that specific policies need to be created regarding national branding, similar to the ones for economic development, especially for post-communist countries. Previously, Anholt expresses his critical stance on countries that take the phrase "nation branding" and misuse the same through hiring different consulting firms that often promise impossible outcomes by claiming that a country's image can be manipulated through the use of marketing communication techniques (2013, p.6).

Overall, after reviewing the literature on "nation branding," Anholt comes up as one of the most important authors on this subject. Since 1996, he started to observe countries' reputation (cities, regions etc.), in a way that can be observed a product image of any company.

Anholt is sceptic toward the ability of a campaign, which uses marketing communication techniques to rapidly alter and manipulate the image of a country. Same author argues that there is a lack of a case study or other proves which will support such conclusion. Thus, he continues, countries are evaluated about what they do not what they say (Anholt, 2013, p.6). The present paper supports the argument given by Anholt and other authors where it is explained that there is no shortcut regarding nation branding. Developing strategies for economic growth and marketing it is far more important than just investing in a branding company and expecting big results. One country should have a coordinated action around ideas, products, and global policies, which impact the country's reputation. Furthermore, nation branding goes beyond marketing techniques applications because it uses the same only as a part of a more complex cohesive and coherent articulation of the national identity (Aronzyc, 2013, cited by Patrascu, 2014, p. 42).

2. Background

During the review of literature on national brand names, it was difficult to find scientific research in specialized marketing journals, especially for the Western Balkans region. If previous research on the subfield of marketing - national branding, especially in chronological terms, would have been the basic literature of this paper. On the other hand, the historical marketing aspect is not very developed today, despite the attempt to create a marketing history field as special. Historical scientific research in the field of Marketing derives from social sciences which also consist of literature and special norms related to the knowledge generated and presented. Although there is no single opinion where marketing researchers have agreed on who was the first scientific article in this area, it generally agrees that the first scientific journals on marketing have been published in the 30s of the last century (Wiktor and Jones, 2016). It is necessary to review literature on marketing history from the aspect of advertising campaigns and sales formats, as well as from the aspect of consumerism and especially consumer culture.

According to Witkoeski and Jones, the story of advertiser and sales campaigns is unequivocally more popular within the frames of marketing history (2016, p. 400). It can be said that today we have research centres in the field of marketing history in the United States and the United Kingdom, but very little in other countries. It is now believed that this sub-branch of marketing studies has become a separate field (Witkoeski and Jones, 2016, p. 413).

After the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, the time came to face with new socio-political challenges that had a non-efficient and backward legacy compared to the Western Europe. Most of these countries started to redefine their national identities. However, it was not easy to go over such a long period of communist rule that produced artefacts like monuments, building on which “grey” colour dominated. In Germany’s case, from Berlin’s wall there are only few leftovers for touristic purpose. On the other hand, in Hungary’s case this was rather different. In Budapest, the part of statues is still a touristic attraction because in 1991 it was decided that statues should not be destroyed even though they remind the country of a Communist past. The same were used to create an open air museum where neutral artistic expression was nurtured.

In Rumania, the “House of the People” was transformed into the parliament. However, the same is not seen as a positive or a neutral artefact similar to the Hungary’s case. In Rumania, after the fall of Communisms, people wanted everything that served a reminder of that era to be utterly destroyed. Nevertheless, the hour of parliament now is the most visited tourist attraction in Bucharest (Patrascu, p.44-45).

According to Patrascu, post-communist countries seem to be always behind other countries in regard to nation branding. Author suggests for Government of these countries to detach from superficial understanding of what nation branding is and to conceptualize what steps should be taken in order to have long-term effects and desired results (2014, P. 47).

Kosovo Nation branding campaign “Kosovo the Young Europeans” was launched in October 2009. The objective of the campaign was to put Kosovo on the map, make the country known and show it in a more positive light. As emphasized by the campaign developers, the slogan, ‘The Young Europeans’ is based on the fact that the Republic of Kosovo is both one of the youngest countries in the world and also home to the youngest population in Europe.

Here is the logo:



Image 1: The official logo

1. The green represents the green fields that can be found across Kosovo's expansive countryside;
2. The terracotta-red represents the colour of the bricks that are used for the building that is in progress across the land;
3. The blue symbolizes the sky and water and is taken from the background of Kosovo's new flag.

Another core element of the nation branding campaign is a 60-second television commercial. The TV ad shows young Kosovars bringing together yellow puzzle pieces, which are assembled together and lifted up into the air by balloons. In the end, the shape of Kosovo appears on a map of Europe. An original song, which emphasizes change, unity and love, was composed to accompany the ad. Saatchi & Saatchi realized the ad, which is a renowned international advertising company. The whole process was coordinated from a inter-ministerial committee consisted of Prime Minister's office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Ministry of Culture. This inter-ministerial body reviewed, developed and debated the campaigns details.

The main focus of Saatchi & Saatchi was the promotion of Kosovo's young population as its main resource. It was a rather unique approach where instead of products or services, Kosovo's nation branding campaign focused on its human resources as the brand.

3. Results

When we talk about quantitative methods in research, we usually think of researches using questionnaires that are deployed in a statistical data processing program and finally have the numerical form of explanation of results. Quantitative methods focus on data that can be measured, in the most accurate way possible. These research methods are used every time we want to find certain answers about a phenomenon (in our social case) about percentage, ratio, correlation, and so on.

In a slightly simpler way, quantitative research allows researchers to study more about population demographics, to measure the number of users of any service or product. Although quantitative methods are often considered by researchers as the best methods to ensure a high level of objectivity, these methods are not without its own shortcomings. Moreover, even when we learn more about different trends from the cluster of data, these methods

do not provide explanations about people's motivation for that observed behavior or attitude. To fill this gap, qualitative methods use focus groups, interviews, and questionnaires (Goertzen, 2017).

Quantitative data have some special features from which these are more distinct (adapted by Goertzen, 2017, p.12-13): - They have to do with the numerical aspect for evaluating the answers.

- Data can be measured and converted into numeric response.
- They try to be objective.
- Findings can be further analyzed using statistical analyzes such as correlation between two variables and so on.
- Present complex problems through variables.
- Results can be summarized, compared and generalized.

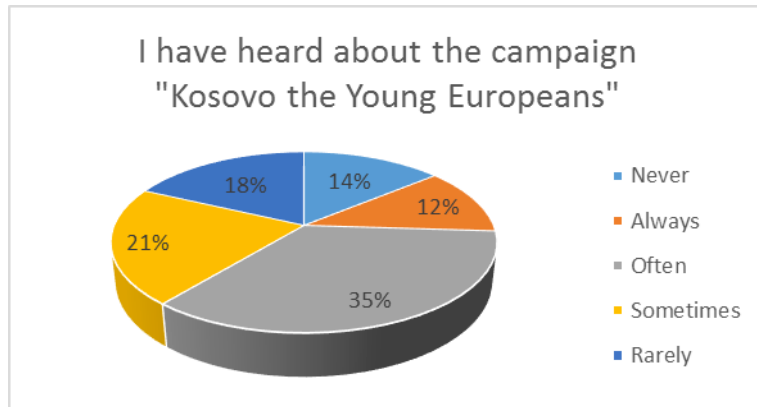
The use of questionnaires is now more standardized for social sciences. According to Heetinga, West & Beglund (2010) questionnaires are used in the field of marketing and consumer research to measure customer preferences, needs, expectations and experiences and translate these into statistical data that could be used by the market to evaluate quality, durability and product valuation.

The study used quantitative research method as a study methodology. The survey questions were designed to have a general knowledge regarding the study topic. The final five questions were chosen in order not to overwhelm the participants. The study participants were previously informed about the scope of study and they were given few hints and the video of the campaign "Kosovo the Young Europeans". No beforehand knowledge was required from the participants, besides their truthful answer.

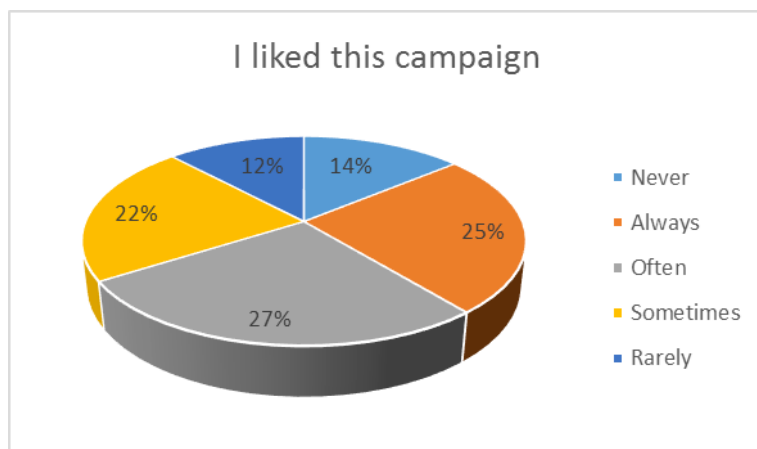
The research is conducted in Kosovo. According to the population census (2011) the total number of enumerated residents in Kosovo was 1,739,825 excluding Kosovo municipalities mentioned above which did not participate in the Census. According to the Update 2009 the total number of enumerated residents in Kosovo was 1,766,768 excluding Kosovo municipalities mentioned above which did not participate in the Census. The difference at the country level was just 1.55% more enumerated residents in Update 2009. If the KAS' findings, that were carried out during the monitoring of the 2009. Update process, would have been taken into account, when that in some areas was reported an over-enumeration by 1-2%, then the data correspond fully with each other. In statistical terms this change is admissible taking into account the time factor.

Fifty-five young Kosovans with an age range of 20-25 years of were surveyed for the purpose of this study. All participants were students in the private college in Prishtina, Kosovo. They voluntarily participated and all the answers were confidential. Five main questions are presented shortly in grafts and all questions were explained in the discussion section of this research. The five questions sounded like:

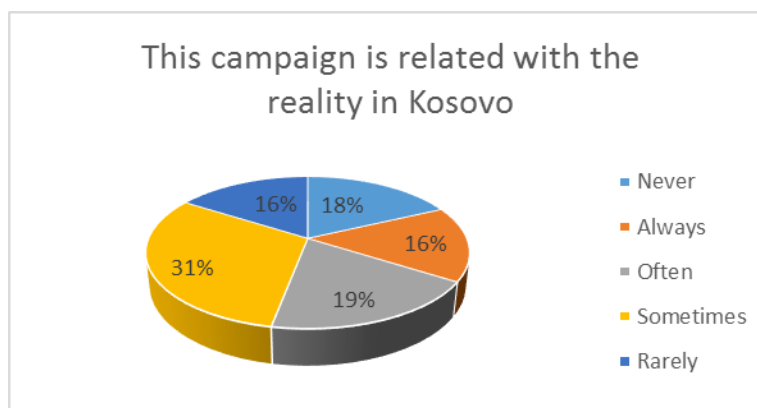
1. I have heard about the campaign "Kosovo the Young Europeans"
2. I liked this campaign
3. This campaign is related with the reality in Kosovo
4. I identify myself with this campaign, and
5. This campaign improved the entrepreneurial attitude of Kosovo



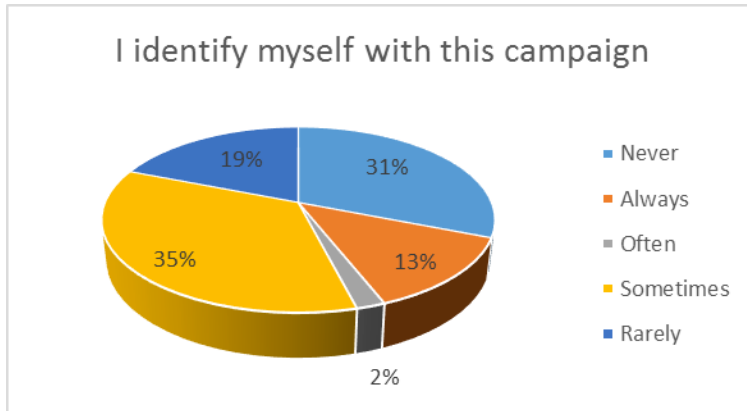
Graph1: Question one



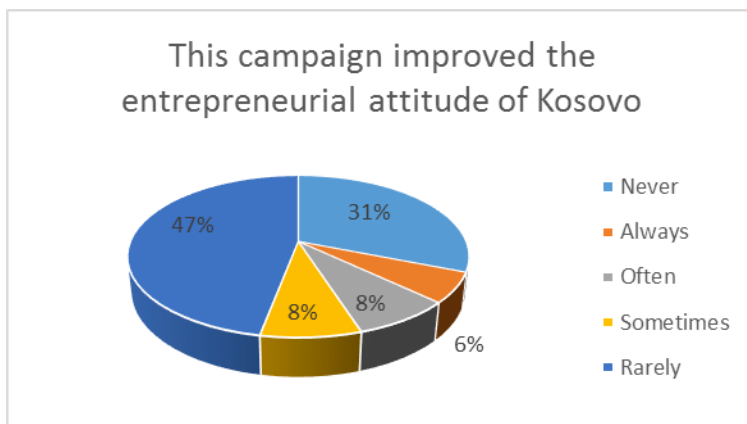
Graph 2: Question two



Graph 3: Question three



Graph 4: Question four



Graph 5: Question five

4. Discussion

From the survey we can derive few important conclusions. The first one has to do with the fact that 35% of the surveyors have often heard about the “Young Europeans” campaign while 21% of them answered by sometimes. Furthermore, this can be seen as a relative success because overall 56% of participants have at least heard about the campaign. Around 25% answered that they always liked the campaign, and 27% often. Only 14% of participants never liked the campaign. Even though this is a small number of people disliking the campaign, it is important to do further research and to ask details about what exactly they did not like.

Considering that campaigns usually amplify whatever standpoint they set to promote, it was only natural to ask the participants if they think that this campaign is related to Kosovo’s reality. Only 16% of them answered always, whereas 19% answered often and 31% answered sometimes. However, 16% answered rarely and 18% answered never. Overall 36% are leaning towards not thinking that the “Young Europeans” campaign presents Kosovo’s reality. Relying on campaigns that rarely presents one country’s real assets cannot be considered as a reliable strategy in long-term promotional country’s policy.

On the question regarding whether surveyors identified with the campaign only 13% of them answered always, and 2% often. Even though 35% of them answered sometimes, the fact that 19% and 31% answered rarely and never, it shows that the campaign did not use identifiable elements with the domestic population. The question where we asked surveyors if they think this campaign improved the entrepreneurial attitude of Kosovo, only 6% answered

always, 8% often, and 8% sometimes. It is important to mention that 47% answered rarely, and 31% answered never.

Even though further research is necessary to clarify these queries, the present survey descriptively clarifies that surveyors do not think that the campaign changed the image of Kosovo; especially the attitude of doing business, entrepreneurial attitude. When young Kosovars travel abroad, the first thing issue they face is that they're the only Balkan country that is not part of the visa liberalization agreement with the European Union. This is seen as an indicator that the country still faces some problems regarding the rule of law and other important processes such as fighting corruption and similar. All those issues discourages the young Kosovans to develop a new business, they don't feel safe in the current situation of their state Kosovo.

Similar studies are done in many countries, and the results are comparable to the one conducted in Kosovo. Different elements and components were analysed to evaluate the perception that people have on they countries or they nation branding. Authors like Brencis and Ikkala (2013) analysed the case of Latvia and the game of ice hockey to connect nation branding and sports. A small country such as Latvia that still is undergoing hardships in terms of nation branding, the development of ice hockey initiated a significant popularity, which is used for country's global promotion.

Along with ice hockey being used for nation branding, its sport fans were also part of it when according the Fasel, are the best sports fans in the world (as cited by Brencis and Ikkala 2013, p. 241).

It is a truism to relate good vine and Eifel Tower to France, or good cars with Germany and so on. Furthermore, the concept named "country of origin" was developed to enforce these truisms. Authors like Fan (2010) add to this by arguing that nation branding is a process that can alter, create, monitor and evaluate the national image. He also explains how developed countries build their reputation through centuries compared to post-Communist countries that still face tremendous issues regarding their national image. Kosovo in this regard is similar to Latvia even though two countries had been under different communistic regime, with different levels of national control over the market. While Latvia was under Russian Communist regime that had a strong control over the national markets, in Kosovo you had a mixed control over national markets with factories exporting their goods in Western Europe all the time.

Beside already mentioned examples of sports and different products, regional events also present an opportunity for promoting national image. One of the examples supporting this claim is the Eurovision song contest when Ukraine won the best song. This cultural aspect of promoting national image is proven to be important. Eurovision has its roots in 1956 when European Broadcasting Union as a way to promote European identity after the Second World War. Later, this initiative grew from several Western European Countries by including Eastern European Countries as well.

When Vera Serduchka took the Eurovision contest (2007) she did not receive positive artistic critique. On the contrary, it was acknowledged that her non-artistic performance (a true kitsch), as such, helped promote her country (Allatson 2007, p. 87, Miazhevich 2012, p. 1506). From the time when Serduchka's 2007 Eurovision song contest, there was an increase of songs and performances that did not follow any particular aesthetic genre.

Along these lines but with a more global artistic tone was considered the Madonna's concert in Montenegro. Vujaciq (2013) argues that events like Madonna's concert in Montenegro helped in country's attempt to break away from its Socialists past. Moreover, this was seen as an additional form of promoting Montenegro's image besides being a well known touristic destination. The Pop/Rock tourism had a positive impact on branding the Montenegro. These type of events were supported by both political and economic elite. Since the 2006 referendum that supported the Montenegro independence the review of country's identity, culture and language became important in order for the country to be differentiated from Serbia (Vujiciq, 2013, p. 154). While investing in

important popular events, like the one with Madonna's concert, Montenegro incorporated modern multicultural elements in promoting supranational values while making them part of the Country's image (Vujićiq 2013, p. 156).

5. Observations

While analysing different modalities of nation branding from various countries, especially the ones who are in similar size and economic development to Kosovo, we can draw applicable recommendations for nation branding of this Western Balkan country. It is important to mention that several authors who researched nation branding concluded that in this day and age there is no doubt regarding investing to develop nation branding, but rather if this is not done then what kind of consequences we might expect; and the importance of recognizing the complexity of nation branding concepts (Brencis & Ikkala 2013, Kavartzis 2009, Park 2009, Van Ham 2002).

Brencis and Ikkala (2013, p. 243), also describe how countries with several nation-branding resources are in advantage over the ones where their nation branding strategy is based only in one product or service. While in France we have brands like Eiffel tower, Champaign, and world recognized culinary experience; in Kosovo we have only one source of nation branding namely its young population. Thus one of the main recommendations of this paper supports the change of Kosovo's nation branding strategy from mono-centric to polycentric approach. This approach will ensure long-term stability in branding the nation even if one of the strategies fails to deliver results. All involved parties should be aware and ready to detect social phenomenon, which can positively impact the nation branding.

All above-mentioned ways of promoting and improving country's image while branding a nation are not used in this paper for aesthetic analysis. These examples are used to illustrate the diversity of projects that have the purpose of promoting country's image and branding the nation. Making cultural values popular or trying to modernise them, help in making one country distinct from other countries. Therefore, it is not a rare case when countries decide to use elements from folklore or history in order to promote country. (Miazhevich, 2012, Vujićiq 2013).

Nation branding is being developed as it's own of field of academic inquiry. Recently we have witnessed growth in academic research, which helps making the important distinction between nation branding and marketing, advertising and public relations. This concept brings together field of marketing communication, classic advertising, and socio-historical analysis while creating a narrative for nation branding. One of the ways for developing nation branding is the idea that the same can be directed to domestic audience as well, and as a whole should influence the redefinition of the nation in the ideological and practical aspect. For this reason, researchers from the field of communication should focus on developing a critical approach over nation branding since the way of thinking about nation as a brand, is interconnected with scientific debates which are part of cultural communication (Kaneva, 2011, p.118).

Kaneva used Bell's (1976) description of the structural model of the social capitalist order where it is suggested that capitalist contradiction can be understood through cultural, political and economic principles (p.119). Initial approach is supported by the marketing experts and by researchers alike, which see the nation branding as a strategy for being more competitive within one market. Research articles written on this topic usually are dominated by the business style of writing where case studies are used to explain the successes or failures of a nation-branding project. Rarely do they focus on the long-term effects of a nation branding campaign.

6. Conclusions

The state of Kosovo has sufficient tourist and cultural resources that can be used positively for the development of the national brand. It is recommended that:

Kosovo should develop and promote tourism and other cultural elements for the construction and development of the national brand.

Considering the cultural aspect of the branding process in the international market has been adapted from the marketing field. Authors like Cayla and Arnould (2008) argue that it is now time to move from a technical and universal approach to managing managerial problems because it is now considered an ethnocentric approach. As such, it does not fit the developments of the international and multicultural market. They envision an increase in research into branding in the international context that takes into account the cultural aspect (Cayla and Arnould, 2008, p. 86).

While taking into account the above-mentioned concepts, studying “Young Europeans” campaign appears to be more complex than one might expect. Initial analysis can support the technical-economic approach of the campaign since it has to do with hiring a professional public relations and advertising company to complete the campaign. Moreover, the campaign realised by Satchi & Satchi deemed to be un-original because of its similarities to the Vodafone commercial, which as completed by the same company. On the other hand, this campaign was initiated by the Kosovo Government and as such was used for promotion through public-diplomacy. Once again, it is important to mention the usage of Kosovo’s young population as its brand. Finally, if this campaign is analysed through the critical-cultural lens, we can conclude that as such is not efficient. Using historical landmarks in the “Young European” video is noticeable. Yet, the same views are not compatible with the campaign’s main theme that is Kosovo’s youth.

Further research is recommended to better understand or to follow up on this campaign until the young generation will benefit financially, creatively and entrepreneurially.

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