THE NATURE OF COUNTRY IMAGE

- AN EXTENDED LITERATURE REVIEW

Barbara Jenes

Junior Researcher, Ph.D. Student

Corvinus University of Budapest, Marketing and Media Institute

1093-H, Budapest, Fővám tér 8.

Tel.:+36 1 482 5254

E-mail: barbara.jenes@uni-corvinus.hu

ABSTRACT

Analysing „**country image**" is a special area of interest within the broader field of marketing, and has been a key area of discourse, constantly evolving during the 1990's. It has remained at the forefront of marketing dialogue and research is as important today as it was then.

According to Kotler et. al. (1993), "country image is the sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about places." In practice, country image can be either spontaneous (individual pre-conceived ideas) or can be directed and consequently formed (modified somehow by external factors). There are a lot of examples in everyday life and from previous studies, which continuously modify and shape internal and external country images. As a result of these examples, progression of country image theory has been evolving and developing.

The relevance of the topic is verified through the extensive work and research of Kotler, Papadopolus, Heslop, Martin, Eroglu and more recently by Anholt, who are some of the most famous researchers in this field. On the other hand, country image is not only analysed by marketing experts, but by experts in the following fields: international relations/ affairs, sociology, socio-psychology, theory of cultural differences, societal and historical development.

The most recent publications on this topic have dealt primarily with new techniques and approaches to country image, where the country image is classified as a brand equity - country branding. According to most recent research and literature, a country can be- in a similar way to classical brands- evaluated and targeted to the market. The evaluation of the country brand, however, is still unclear and leads to strong debates between researchers from both academic and non- academic fields.

In this paper, the author carries out a comprehensive literature review and evaluation of the newest approaches of the field, and attempts to explain key characteristics between theory and practice of country image and country image building.

Keywords: country image, country branding, nation branding, place branding, literature review

I. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. THE CONCEPT AND INTERPRETATION OF COUNTRY IMAGE

Image as related to countries is less frequently mentioned in literature than more widely-known image types. According to Martin and Eroglu (1993) country image is the complete set of descriptive, inferential and informational beliefs about that given country. Kotler et. al. (1993) suggest that country image is the sum of people's beliefs, ideas and impressions about a certain country. Roth and Romeo (1992) argue that country image is the overall perception of the products from a given country based on the previous perception of the country's production and its strengths and weaknesses in marketing. According to Allred et. al. (1999, p. 36.) country image is "the perception or impression that organizations and consumers have about a country. This impression or perception of a country is based on the country's economic condition, political structure, culture, conflict with other countries, labor conditions, and stand on environmental issues." As Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999, p. 525) say, country image is a sum of "mental representations of a country's people, products, culture and national symbols".

According to traditional image interpretations, country image is analogous to corporate image, which, again, has two typical approaches: i) there is a so-called spontaneous image, formed in consumers' minds, and ii) another part which can be heavily influenced by conscious communication (Sándor, 1997). Thus people's spontaneous evaluation of any given country might be shaped and controlled through an established country image concept accompanied by well-designed, targeted communication efforts.

The 'identity prism' of the country (like the concept of corporate identity) consists of physical (geography, natural sources, demography), cultural (history, culture), personal (name, flag, celebrities), relational (with governments, international organizations) and controlled (conscious formation of country image) elements, says Graby (1993).

Van Ham (2002), however, put forward the idea that the corporations of the country in question are "representatives" of the country's image/brand through their own corporate brands. Even though the power of commercial brands to convey country image is rather obvious, very few studies deal with this matter. Moreover, Dowling (1994) was the first author to recognize the reciprocal relationship between corporate images and country image.

The relationship of four relevant elements (country image, industry image, corporate image and brand image) was examined, which model was termed the 'network of images'. Each element of the model is in interaction with all the other elements. In an international research project, Papadopoulos, Heslop and Berács (1990) also evinced that country image does indeed have an influence on the image of individual corporations and products.

Country image might be considered a special type of image which covers the country's products, brands, companies and much more. Country image is formed on the basis of experience and opinions about the nation or country and on, primarily, information received through the various channels. Possible channels are politics (internal affairs and foreign policy), telecommunication, entertainment (movies) and rumor. Country image comprises many elements: national symbols, colours, clothing, typical buildings, objects, tunes, pieces of literature, specialties of the political system, customs, historical heritage and many more (Jenes, 2005).

Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002) suggested that country images might also be influenced by some other factors, like culture, media, sport, economy and the political and social environment.

The concept of country image has two common interpretations, leading to heavy debates amongst professionals. The first approach ascribes a so-called 'umbrella function' to country image, as its elements are made up of the totality of the country's specific products, brands and various organizations. According to the second approach, the country itself is a complex product, made up of a large number of elements. (Thus country image is considered a normal product image, yet with more diverse, complex and complicated characteristics.)

With regards to its direction, the country image can be internal image (self image) and external image (mirror image), similarly to the classification of product image. This kind of interpretation is hardly acceptable bearing on product. Talking of that, the internal country image means 'what citizens think about their own country', and the external country image is 'what others/foreigners think about our country'. (Jenes, 2007, p. 40.)

Country image, just like any other image, is not one-dimensional. Researchers have investigated several, often overlapping dimensions, although far less attention was given to measuring attitudes towards countries and their inhabitants than towards country of origin image.

Wang and Lamb (1983) argue, that the dimensions of a country image are the followings: foreign environmental influence, political environment, cultural environment, economic environment. Papadopoulos et. al. (1990) found the following dimensions: industrial development, affect, industrial orientation, closer ties. According to Weber and Grundhöfer (1991) the country image dimensions are the politics, appearance, culture, people and economy. Verlegh (2001) argues, that natural landscape, climate, competence, creativity, positive and negative feelings are the dimensions of a country's image.

According to Jenes, Malota and Simon's (2008) recent research study, the dimensions are the followings: tourism, economic/political situation, public safety, culture, people.

Accordig to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) consumers beliefs about products and countries may be descriptive, informative or inductive, and these beliefs are formed in different ways. Descriptive beliefs are established through experience while informative beliefs are shaped by information from external sources (e.g. media, friends). Inductive beliefs originate from the perception of a relationship between some past event and a stimulus in the present. The impact of these direct and indirect experiences, are important factors considering country image as well.

According to Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) the definitions of country image differ in their focal image object, that means country image can be i) general image of countries (i.e. country image); ii) image of countries and their products (i.e. product-country image); iii) images of products from a country (i.e. product image). The inconsistency in the definitional domains of the country image construct results confusion its conceptual specification.

A number of authors (e.g. Laroche et.al., 2005; Papadopoulos et.el., 1990; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 1994; in: Roth – Diamantopoulos, 2009) suggest that country image should comprise (1) a cognitive component, which includes consumers' beliefs about a certain country, (2) an affective component, that describes the country's emotional value to the consumer, and (3) a conative component, capturing consumers' behavioral intentions with regard to the sourcing country. This kind of conceptualization of the country image construct follows the original conceptualization of attitudes (namely the "three-component"-view of attitudes).

As an example, Berács and Malota's (2000) results are based on a Hungarian database, the country image dimensions are: cognitive evaluation, affective evaluation, knowledge about the country (experience), country links (ties).

II. CONCEPTS RELATED TO COUNTRY IMAGE
2.1. COUNTRY OF ORIGIN IMAGE

Interpreting different authors' definitions, we may recognize that some concepts tend to be mixed up. Basically, we have to differentiate three main concepts: product image (PI), country image (CI) and country of origin image (COO or COOI). These three types of image are closely related (especially from our marketing perspective) and somewhat overlapping, influencing each other both directly and indirectly.

The confusion about the concepts partly results from several authors considering country of origin image to be the same as country image. For example, Balabanis et al. (1996, p. 1398.) define country of origin as 'a marketing concept that captures consumer's differentiated attitudes towards different nations'.

In contrast to that, we consider country of origin image to be that part of a product's overall image which is based on where the product comes from. Thus country of origin image is the result of stereotypes linked to a certain product merely because it originates from a given country. Accordingly, in this context country of origin image relates to the product (service), that is: the country of origin image of a certain product.

The concept of country of origin image gained the attention of marketing experts in the early 1960s. Dichter (1962) argues that the successful marketing manager of the future has to pay attention to the basic differences and similarities among consumers in different parts of the world. According to the recent literature, the origin of a product acts as a sign of product quality (e.g. Han, 1989) and a country of origin image can explain why consumers prefer products or brands from one country in comparison to another.

In Nagashima's wording, country of origin image is 'the picture, the reputation, the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to the products of a specific country. This image is created by such variables as representative products, national characteristics, economic and political background, history and traditions' (Nagashima, 1970, p.68.). The above partly corresponds to our view as most of the factors mentioned affect the image of the country and thus, indirectly, the image of the product. Accordingly, the process can be interpreted as an image transfer. People have their attitudes towards countries and when judging the products

of a given country, their origin will largely affect the result of the evaluation. That is country image influences the country of origin image of the product, which is practically integrated into its overall image (e.g. Germans are precise, therefore German products' image resulting from their origin is that they are manufactured very carefully, which is then incorporated into the general image of a given product).

Of course, image-transfer also acts in the opposite direction, e.g. for Japan: though we do not know anyone from Japan, the positive evaluation of Japanese products may lead to the positive judgment of Japanese people (Baughn and Yaprak, 1993).

2.2. BUILDING COUNTRY IMAGE - PLACE MARKETING

Along with the concept of country image, the need for another concept, namely place marketing, arises. Even though English literature uniformly uses the term 'place marketing', the theoretical approach prevailing in certain countries does differentiate between some further interpretations (in spite of the English definition clearly referring to place marketing): country marketing, regional marketing, town/city marketing and the marketing activities of villages. Primarily, the basis for distinguishing between these concepts is the size of the geographical entity the place marketing activities of which are being considered. Different sizes, clearly, mean differing endowments, target markets, strategies and differing implementation tools, as well (Jenes, 2009).

According to Kotler-Haider-Rein (1993), place marketing includes four activities:

1. designing the right mix of communal and municipal features and services;
2. developing incentives appealing to the users, to the potential and actual consumers of their products and services;
3. transmitting, transferring the products and services of the place to the consumers in the most efficient way;
4. promoting the values and the image of the place in order for potential consumers to be fully informed about the distinguishing competitive advantages of the place.

The specialities of place marketing clearly lead to the conclusion that its range of target groups includes any 'stakeholder' who has any kind of relationship to the place or township in question.

Literature generally lists five consumer segments (based on Kotler, 1993; Papadopoulos, 1993; Papp-Váry, 2007):

1. residents,
2. local entrepreneurs,
3. investors,
4. tourists, visitors,
5. offices, parties, national and international professional and civil organizations.

Using consumer segments as target groups necessitates group-specific tools and diversified marketing activities. Which also implies, that the message that can be conveyed is different for each and every group.

According to literature, there are some concepts in this field as well that tend to be mixed up. As an example Ashworth and Voogd (1990) argue that 'the marketing of places involves coming to terms with the character and the intrinsic qualities of place products. Places are a distinctive type of product, tourism place-products are a distinctive type of place-product, therefore, tourism place marketing is a distinctive form of marketing, embracing theories about the intrinsic characteristics of multifunctionality and existence within spatial hierarchies as well as containing an enormous variety of elements which means that almost any place facility can conceivably be part of some tourism product.

2.3. PLACE BRANDING

In place branding related approaches, the expression 'place' actually refers to the physical and geopolitical location of a nation or state; a region or a state; a location with cultural or historical links; a city with a large population; a market of various given attributes; the centre, the cluster and the suppliers of an industry and the psychological characteristics of interpersonal relationships (Kotler - Hamlin - Rein - Haider, 2002).

Place branding as a concept was first employed by Kotler et. al. (1993), referring to something the stakeholders of which are cities, countries or tourist destinations and which, as a concept, also incorporates the competition for tourists, visitors and investors.

Place branding activities may also be interpreted as a complex strategic and tactical merger with cooperation from shareholder groups and the managements of communication channels,

capable of stimulating prospective customers' willingness and intention to purchase (Allen, 2007). Avraham - Kettner (2008) proposed that the *strategic approach* to place branding is connected to public relations, asserting that altering an image is a continuous, comprehensive, holistic and interactive process which requires far more than a quick and simple change of slogans or logos.

According to Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002), place branding (also known as destination branding or place promotion) is a relatively new, so-called umbrella-type of approach to country branding, regional branding and city branding.

Place branding, as seen by Anholt, is not only a kind of necessity but also a phenomenon, which has been constantly gaining ground as a result of globalization. During the process of place branding, the evaluation of the various ideas, cultures, products and services makes them altogether part of a simple, global community (Anholt, 2005).

In Kotler's opinion, the fact that nowadays people can live and work wherever they want to offers favorable opportunities to some townships, yet it might have fatal consequences for some others (Kotler, 2004).

Anholt (2007), nonetheless, seriously disputes the conceptual definition of place branding. The topic of place branding, he argues, basically deals with political backgrounds and international relations rather than marketing relationships. As he does not consider place branding to be a communication process, but rather a process during which political changes occur, in his view, 'brand' is an incorrect expression. Consequently, Anholt (2007) prefers using the concept of competitive identity instead (see below).

2.4. COUNTRY BRANDING, NATION BRANDING

The expression country marketing has already been present in literature for a couple of years. On the contrary, the 'country as a brand' approach and 'country branding' is only mentioned in a couple of works, some of them being rather confusing. Branding, however, is a much wider concept. There is a so-called spontaneous image to each country, which can be turned into a consciously shaped image to be positioned and valued in the marketplace. Anholt (1999) has pointed out that just like corporations, countries depend on their good name, reputation, or 'brand image', and their marketing communications can change the image of a place. Places acquire their images very slowly, as a result of the things their governments, businesses and people do, the things they make, and the way they do those things. This latter process is called country image building, country branding, nation branding or country

rebranding. According to Anholt (2002) country branding is a synonym for nation branding. Nation branding is a better term because it shows a clear understanding that it's the people who brand their country, who benefit from an improved national reputation, and who truly 'own' that national brand. According to Fan (2006) ''nation branding concerns applying branding and marketing communications techniques to promote a nation's image". Nation branding/country branding does not only stand for creating a new logo, slogan or brand name but rather for a comprehensive process including positioning and various communication methods. (Anholt, 2005) The objectives of country branding are primarily of economic nature. 'Selling' the country basically covers three aspects: fostering tourism, attracting tourists, fostering foreign investments and improving exports.

According to de Vincente (2004, in: Jaffe – Nebenzahl, 2006, p. 139.) ''nation branding uses marketing strategies to promote a country's image, products and attractiveness for tourism and foreign direct investment." In Han's wording (2001, in: Jaffe – Nebenzahl, 2006, p. 139.) ''nations need branding because image and reputation are becoming essential parts of of their strategic equity."

Figure 1

The Nation Brand Hexagon

Source: Anholt, 2002

A classic brand and a country brand have a lot in common, but there are important differences, too. Thus a country brand needs special management. Just like normal product brands, it does have a name, a logo and some further identifiers. Its name, however, has a special origin, and owners are hard to identify, as well. Selling a country brand is not possible, either. (Papp-Váry, 2004) Thus valuation becomes questionable, which provides the basis for

debates between researchers concerning the scientific background and the validity of country branding theories.

Table 1:

The Comparison of a Classical Brand and a Country Brand

Classical brand	A country as a brand
Clear property relations	There is no one real owner, everybody who lives there is a holder
The management is the owner's competence	The 'management' is chosen by the citizens (in democracies)
Goal: profit for the owner	Goal: the citizenry's welfare
From above leaded, top down control	From beneath, by community values, bottom-up (in democracies
The brand image consists of a few elements	The brand image consists of a vast number of elements
Consistent marketing communications through a few channels	Mostly uncoordinated communications through a large number of channels
The brand name is made-up, it can be changed	The brand name is a geographical area, it cannot be changed
The brand is temporal	The brand wants to live forever

Source: Papp-Váry, 2004, p.7.

Kotler and Gertner (2002) concluded that recently, more and more nations have realised the significance of a positive and consciously controlled country image: all but a few countries in the world manage themselves as a brand. According to Papadopoulos (2004), they do so in order to distinguish themselves from other nations, to increase tourism revenues and to improve investment and export figures.

Country branding is, in the view of Godjunsson (2005, pp. 283-298), ''when a government or a private corporation use their power to convince people that any one of them might change the image of a whole nation.'' Country branding employs the tools used in branding with the aim of positively influencing or altering a country's identity, image or people's attitude towards that country.

Country branding involves various fields and tools in order to create a strong brand as a result of the arising synergies. Such fields are sightseeing attractions, events, infrastructure, price, quality, security, beauty and the fostering of tourism using incentives both in business and in education. Tourism is an element of country branding in all parts of the world

2.5. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

According to the literature, public diplomacy means government communication aimed at foreign audiences to achieve changes in the 'hearts of minds' of the people. (Szondi, 2008) In Malone's wording (1985, p. 199.) public diplomacy is 'direct communication with foreign people , with the aim of affecting their thinking and ultimately, that of their governments.' With regards to the above mentioned approaches, there are several factors that allowed branding and marketing approaches to penetrate the sphere of international relations and public diplomacy. Van Ham's (2002, In: Szondi, 2008) seminal work on the rise of the 'brand state' has become an often-cited justification for adopting branding approaches in foreign policy ad public diplomacy. According to him the modern world of geopolitics and power is being replaced by the postmodern world of images and influences. He argued that traditional diplomacy is disappearing and identity politics is becoming the main activity of states.

Szondi (2008, p. 20.) has pointed out that 'five different views can be identified as the relationship between nation branding and public diplomacy'. According to the fifth approach, 'the concepts are exactly the same, public diplomacy and nation branding are synonyms for the same concept.' In this view both nation branding and public diplomacy cover the same activity: country promotion with the ultimate goal of creating positive images. 'Equating public diplomacy and nation branding, however, is the least beneficial model of all because it would ignore important differences and neither concept could be utilised to its full potential.'-as Szondi (2008, p. 35) says.

III. EXTENDED CONCEPTS OF THE FIELD - RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON COUNTRY IMAGE AND COUNTRY BRANDING

3.1. COMPETITIVE IDENTITY

According to Anholt (2007), most countries use six natural channels to communicate with the rest of the world. (The natural channel approach ignores what is considered the channels of classical media, like television, radio, print press and internet. This approach has its roots in the assumption that a carefully chosen logo, website or piece of graphic design alone is incapable of substantially altering a country's image in people's minds; this can only be achieved by the people and the organizations of the country changing their own behavior or maybe even their beliefs.) He argues, however, that this type of communication shall not be called branding, thus he suggests to use competitive identity instead. Competitive identity, accordingly, uses six communication channels, according to Anholt:

1. Tourism promotion: often the loudest voice in branding a nation
2. Export brands: as ambassadors of the country's image
3. Policy decisions of the country's government: foreign or domestic policy
4. The way the country solicits inward investments: for business audience
5. Cultural exchange, cultural activities and exports: cultural products can build the reputation of a nation
6. The people of the country themselves: their behavior abroad and at home

The main point of competitive identity actually is that the state generates an appropriate, clear, credible and positive idea about itself by coordinating the six communication channels adequately; thus they provide information about what the country is like, where it is heading to and how it is proceeding. This is a perfect opportunity for countries to build up or reposition their competitive national identity both internally and externally – in order to achieve long term profits related to exports, imports, the government, the cultural sector, tourism, migration and international relations.

In Anholt's (2007, pp. 26-27.) wording, the basic theory behind Competitive Identity is that when governments have a good, clear, believable and positive idea of what their country really is, what it stands for and where it's going, and manage to coordinate the actions, investments, policies and communications of all six points of the hexagon so that they prove

and reinforce this idea, then they stand a good chance of building and maintaining a competitive national identity both internally and externally – to the lasting benefit of exporters, importers, government, the culture sector, tourism, immigration, and pretty much every aspect of international relations.

Building Competitive Identity needs clearly stated and properly agreed goals. It is quite possible to set a mixture of precise, shorter-term goals (such as a certain increase in foreign direct investment or the hosting of a prestigious international event) and longer-term changes in national image, which might be decades away. Countries with a Competitive Identity should find (Anholt, 2007, pp. 28-29.):

−clearer domestic agreement on national identity and societal goals

−a climate where innovation is prized and practiced

−more effective bidding for international events

−more effective investment promotion

−more effective tourism and business travel promotion

−a healthier "country of origin effect" for exporters of goods and services

−greater profile in the international media

−simpler accession into regional and global bodies and associations

−more productive cultural relations with other countries and regions.

The Competitive Identity has three properties: 1. it attracts (consumers, tourists, talent, investors, respect, attention); 2. it transfers magnetism to other objects; and 3. it has the power to create order out of chaos .

Figure 2

The Virtuous Circle of Competitive Identity
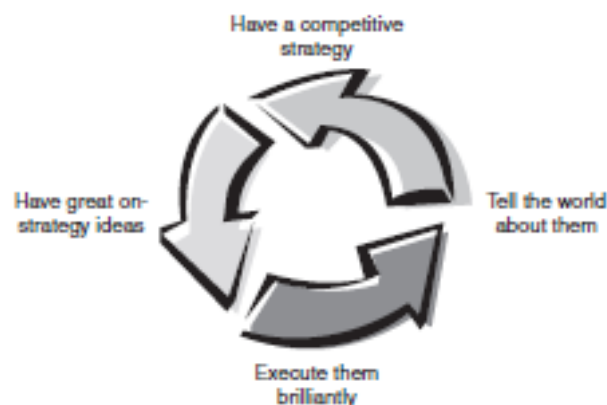
Source: Anholt, 2007

3.2.   PLACE BRAND EXPERIENCE

In practice the first step of place branding, according to Allen (2007), is the forming of people's pre-place experience, which is what visitors encounter when they arrive, followed by their current experiences (place experience) and by the memories they keep about the place (post-place-experience). Each step leads to another circular process, which is often called a dynamic circular process. According to this interpretation, *physical experience* constitutes what we call place experience. Expectations towards any township appear in two components: in memories, in the *past experience* (through one's memories and loyalty) and in *communication* (through word-of-mouth and the communication efforts of the brand itself). Leisen (2001) suggested that tourists' choice between the various destinations depends on the favorable image of the townships in question. Image acts as a transmitter of tourists' expectations to the destination, thus the images in the individuals' minds might lead to marketing success.

Figure 3

The Place Brand Experience
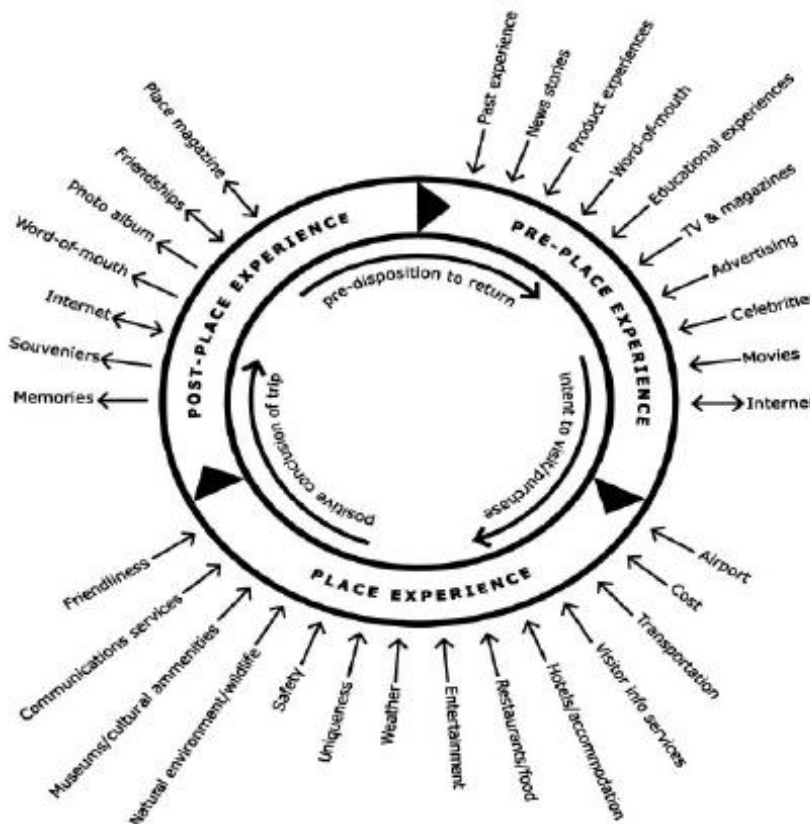
Source: Allen, 2007

3.3. PLACE BRAND IDENTITY MODEL

According to Eitel and Speiekerman's (2007, p. 1.) approach, 'Place Branding does not merely stick on new labels, but consolidates the essential characteristics of the individual identity into a brand core.' In their new Place Brand Identity Model the Place Branding process begins with in an "AS IS" state, with the realized and the verbalized self-perception. The branding process aims at self-perception on an active level; closing the gap between the verbalized self-perception and actually realized self perception. In addition, the cultural melding of the self and external perception with the verbalized self-concept makes an early check on the communication gap necessary. In Eitel and Spiekerman's (2007, p. 2.) ''view the development of a Brand Core always starts in the existing culture and in the existing self-perception, reality, self-concept and outside perception. The Brand Personality works from the inside outwards on the basis of several key issues: Who are we, what do we want to be, how do we become what we want to be, what do others believe we are and how would we like to be seen. The brand must be strategically managed in order to reach an aligned target image. The target image follows the question of how we would like to be noticed in the future from the outside and is functionally linked to the verbalized self-concept. Only once the self-concept and target image are in accordance can the identification gap be closed. The perception gap develops between an image and a target image. Each Place Branding process must be accompanied by thorough observation regarding the structure of the perceived image."

IV. CONCLUSIONS –
COUNTRY IMAGE AND RELATING THEORIES: CONCEPTUAL SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

The aim of this study was to explore potential relationships between country image and its relating concepts, which are increasingly being used in the same context. After examining the origins of these concepts, a review of definitions and conceptualizations has provided a point of departure for exploring the relationship between the mentioned areas.

According to the literature, the following main and general characteristics can be found among the country image definitions:

1. Country image is what people think about a certain country. This "thinking" - according to the definitional domains of country image in the literature - can be: i) impressions; ii) ideas, iii) stereotypes; iv) schemas; v) associations; vi) perceptions; vii) attitudes; viii) beliefs.

2. Country image - with regards to its direction - can be both internal and external image.

3. The image of a country can be either spontaneous or can be directed and consequently formed.

4. Country image is a multidimensional concept. Its general dimensions - in most of the cases - are the followings: i) economic environment; ii) cultural environment; iii) political environment; iv) geographical environment/natural endowments; v) technological development; vi) people; vii) tourism; viii) emotions/feelings.

5. According to the literature, regarding to the conceptual terms of country image, three main approaches are known in this field. Among country image definitions there are:

   - general country image definitions

   - product-country image definitions

   - country related product image (country-of-origin) definitions.

6. With regards to the most recent publications, country image can be classified as a brand equity - revealing a new theory: country branding. In this meaning, the image of a country and a country itself can be evaluated and targeted to the market.

7. There are a couple of different methods for shaping/building a country's reputation. According to the literature it can be clearly declared the main approach these processes differ by which - country branding, nation branding, place branding - is the size of the geographical entity the marketing activities of which are being considered.

The similarities and differences of the theories of country image building are the followings:

Table 2

Similarities and Differences of the Theories of Country Image Building

	SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
GOALS	in most of the cases the main aim is to promote a country and its economic, political interest and to improve the country's reputation	public diplomacy is more politicized, nation/country/place branding has more economical interest
TOOLS	mostly driven by marketing, often using management tools (logo, slogan, etc. creating)	in nation branding often used tourism promotion; competitive identity mostly has the branding nature, in public diplomacy often used cultural events and political tools
STAKEHOLDERS AND TARGET GROUPS	publics, mass/consumers, citizens, in some cases investors	in public diplomacy the most political stakeholders and foreign publics
DIRECTION	can be both internal and external	competitive identity is most likely external; public diplomacy is only external; place brand identity has most likely internal direction
TIME-FRAME	mostly on-going, continuous actions	country/nation branding has mostly ad hoc, campaign driven actions
EVALUATION	rather short and middle term	competitive identity and results of branding methods are evaluated rather long term

Source: edited by the author

V. SUMMARY AND FUTURE SCENARIOS

The topic of country image is a rather diverse one, with some sub-topics partially overlapping and complementing each other. Moreover, some methods seen in practice might not even be mentioned in theoretical papers and vice versa, practical work often lacks a solid theoretical background. Rapid development is still unquestionably evinced by the large number of related research projects and models, and coming years are also expected to witness an increased level of scientific interest in the topic. This is also supported by the fact that in today's

globalized world, more and more nations are trying to apply country branding strategies and various other tools for consciously shaping their image.

Present study strived to review recent years' relevant pieces of literature and to present the newest lines of research in the field. As some sub-topics require further scientific investigation, whereas others are just becoming outdated, it is very hard to forecast which fields might dominate coming years' scientific efforts and which might disappear or become merged with some other field. A kind of re-organization and re-shaping of some sub-topics and their relationships with each other is almost certain to take place, as is the appearance of some new theoretical approaches further broadening the interpretational framework of the topic.

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