

THE COUNTRY BRAND AND THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN BASIC CONSENSUSES

Posted on 18/09/2023 by Naider

With what values is a country, a city or a territory associated? What is its reputation? Just like the brand of a product or a company, this is something that can be analysed and worked on. Social anthropologist Simon Anholt coined the concept of "**country branding**" in the 1990s. The idea places cities and territories in **international markets in which they compete** to attract investment, talent, visitors and influence. This has individualised effects on the citizens and agents that build each place.

However, the perception that exists around a country or a locality is very complex. It is not enough to create a narrative based on a set of marketing techniques. To try to sum it up, we find, right from the start, that there is already a generalised narrative about the territory, based on its history, the identity of its people, the products with which it is associated, or the cultural artefacts about it that have prevailed. This mindshared narrative is difficult to pivot unless it is done gradually.

In that vein, it is important to note that an essential component of a country's or city's reputation is **how it is perceived to treat its inhabitants**, i.e. what is its quality of life and level of well-being, and beyond that, what is the contribution it makes to humanity as a whole. Does it serve as a model for us? Does it share interesting innovations? Does it try not to harm us in crises and difficult times? The perception will also vary in each "foreign" place based on its values and experiences.

A new brand name and its components (*name, logo, slogan*) are relatively simple to devise: **the most difficult thing is not to compromise the promise of the brand** through day-to-day actions, not to undermine the shared value proposition.

In a company, the actions of all departments and people must be aligned with a common strategy and objectives. In a country or city, this is much more complicated.

In a society with minimum democratic guarantees, plurality is celebrated and valued, and it cannot be expected that all the people and agents that make it up will necessarily act as one. In leadership and government, there is a periodic rotation, a reflection of health and dynamism.

However, **without minimum shared frameworks**, nothing can be built, including, of course, a country brand. Even coexistence is not easy. If every four to eight years priorities and strategy are changed by 180 degrees, with the aim of overturning everything that has gone before, there is little to build on.

In today's public discourse there are those who stand out because they bet on polarisation, outright denial of the political adversary, and caricaturing proposals that are not to their liking. Obvious problems are also ridiculed and denied, perhaps because it is unpalatable to think about their solutions and because it is profitable in the short term to sell comfort.

The 2030 Agenda, which aims to set minimum goals for all of humanity, and which some will criticise as being too voluntarist, has thus become a contentious issue.

If we want to be optimistic, we might think that, when it comes down to it, when it comes to exercising responsibilities, there is more rhetoric and theatre than reality. That there are mechanisms and counterweights in the institutional framework to ensure continuity in the minimum consensus and shared objectives of what we are and what we want to be. The handicap

for any common brand, however, is already there.

Sources:

[Nation branding: beyond a cosmetic symbol](#), Patricio T. Murphy for the World Intellectual Property Organization

[Tu Marca País, no es tu Logo](#), Branzai.com

Main picture: [Melbourne City Branding](#)

Article available in the [autumm issue by Naider](#)

