

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE COUNTRY BRAND FOR TOURISM: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN ROMANIA AND GREECE

Empirical
study

Keywords

Country brand
Tourism
Promise of value
Tourism brand
Destination image

JEL Classification

M31, L83

Abstract

The country brand is becoming an ever more important topic considering that, as is the case of a company, the brand is what makes the difference between the product that each country proposes to its consumers, its characteristic features, the values it relates to and the image it promotes.

The aim of the work is to outline the role that the country brand holds for tourism, analyzing the situation of two European states with high tourist potential. Moreover, throughout its summary, the work follows the extent to which, by having a strong country brand, it is possible to create a tourist brand reflecting the representative elements of the promoted country, and a clear image of the destination.

The research consists of identifying the results obtained by Romania and Greece, following the outlining of a country brand, the implications it has on the economy, and the future directions that can be taken in the development of tourism according to the most important values of each such state.

Introduction

The tourism sector and all the activities deriving from it represent an important source of revenues for a country, particularly if it has a favourable natural, cultural and historical environment and there are not necessary major investments to attract the attention of tourists over the respective destination.

At this moment of global development, where the presentation of a product frequently manages to influence the purchase, even if at the base, there are not found certain exceptional qualities of it, the companies must stress more on the product name, on its package, slogan and other items directly entering in contact with the consumer and which are the first ones that it notices.

It is the same in case of a country, whose representative items must be closely highlighted and promoted to the potential tourists, with care and respect for the individual values of each people.

Either it is about companies or countries, the brand presents a major importance, because it is the "name" that the consumers will pronounce and close to which they will associate all the experiences, either positive or negative, relating to the products and services purchased under the respective brand.

In case of a country, the brand is the name itself, but the companies associated to the national brand may concern different economic sectors, certain promoted regions, the products specific to the country, values conserved over the years, the history and the culture or event the people of the place. On the other hand, the tourism brand of a country refers to specific items, the tourism and natural attractions it has. The construction of a tourism brand must comply with the values promoted by the national brand, to be compliant with it, to support the formation of a general opinion of the tourists concerning the country visited and even to actively contribute, by the tourism attractions discovered, to the objective

knowledge of the country by the tourists visiting it.

1. Present stage of the knowledge

The national brand is a concept intensely approached during the last years in Romania too, because it has the role to promote, both for the people inside the country and especially for those outside it, an image as faithful as possible of the representative aspects of a people, of the resources it enjoys and of the manner of choosing to fructify all the economic development opportunities.

Angheluta (2011) considers that a country may be especially compared with a company than with a product, thus the country not being a primary mark, but a manager of a group of sub-marks or of independent marks belonging to the mark portfolio of that country.

Starting from this idea, it may be considered that the tourism brand is a sub-mark of a country, together with brands belonging to other economic sectors. The development of a tourism brand constitutes a priority for any country having no well-delineated image as tourism destination, and its creation consists in creating market researches after which to identify important items which must be highlighted by large amplitude promotional campaigns.

Nevertheless, Kaneva (2009) highlights that the national brand is not only a synonym for propaganda, but neither its applications are limited to the public opinion influence by publicity or public relationships. Despite of the increasing popularity of this concept, there are numerous disagreements relating to the significance and the scope of the national brand presented also by Dinnie (2008) and Fan (2009).

Considering the sets of attributions associated to a mark, respectively the relevance, uniqueness and the power, the name of a successful national brand comprises the identity provided by the elements considered in the brand creation

process, but also its international image generated by the considered attributions. In order for a country to be correctly perceived outside it, it is necessary the transmission of clear and relevant information for the foreigners, and the national brand is a way at hand and relatively easy to implement.

Anholt (2011) underlines that the need to correctly understand is crucial in this area, considering that today the world is a market, and the rapid progress of globalisation means that irrespective of what the countries try to attract (investors, help, tourists, visitors with business interests, students, major events, researchers, travelling writers and talented entrepreneurs) and of what the countries want to push outside (products, services, policies, culture and idea), these things are made with a reduction, if the country image is weak or negative and with a plus if the country image is strong and positive.

2. Research methodology

The study was made analysing the way the national brand is presented for two European countries with a high tourism potential. There were also compared the tourism promotion campaigns, recently launched by Romania and Greece. It was used the research method based on secondary sources data, more exactly the specialised magazines and publications documentation, the communications provided by the ministries responsible with the tourism of the two countries, the press, the Internet and the specialised literature.

The promotion campaigns were analysed by proposing a detailed presentation model of the steps followed by the specialists and of the results estimated following their implementation and launching for the tourism promotion of the country.

The research includes also a presentation of the impact of such a campaign for tourism, of the way it influences the tourists coming and the economic implications generated by the

success of identifying a tourism brand achieving the initial purpose: the one to make “marketable” the image of a country as tourism destination on the world’s map.

The *working hypotheses* staying at the base of the work are:

-> there is a link between the national brand and the evolution of the revenues generated by the tourism industry of a country;

-> a credible and successful tourism brand is created having as foundation a visible and correct national brand identified by means of the values, faiths, resources and people of a country;

-> between Romania and Greece, there are similarities relating to the objects concerning the tourism industry, but also the target public intended, respectively the possible tourists they address.

3. Research analysis and results

Even if the national brand represents more than a tourism brand, by positioning a country in the consumer’s mind and on the external “market” as a unique “product” and which cannot be reproduced, the last one is vital when it is wanted for the tourism to represent an engine for the economy and an important source of revenues.

By national brand, it is understood what a country wants to project externally relating to its image. The ideal situation is created when the national brand, coherent and well founded according to the most relevant features of the country, to be identical with the country image, but it happens quite rarely, because of the impossibility to manage a permanent efficient communication to potential foreign tourists or to the population of the respective country, which significantly contributes to the formation of the image transmitted internationally.

On the other hand, the tourism brand refers to the tourism image of a country, largely supported by the national potential and by the investments made for the development of certain types of

tourism (e.g. of health, of adventure, of shopping etc.).

In order for the image of the tourists wanting to visit a certain country to be a positive one, the tourism brand must be based on credible arguments, on promises which may be complied with and on the objective presentation of the country situation from the tourism point of view, without existing the tendency to hide

or deny the negative aspects, which are unavoidable and present in the majority of the countries.

At table 1, there are comparatively analysed the most recent promotion campaigns launched by the two countries analysed, according to a series of relevant criteria for the steps made while projecting such a campaign.

Table 1. Comparative analysis between Romania and Greece concerning the tourism promotion campaigns recently launched

Considered criteria	Romania Campaign	Greece Campaign
Name (promotion slogan)	Romania – “Explore the Carpathian garden”	Greece – “All time classic”
Presentation logo	See figure 1	See figure 2
Development period	From 2010 (launching) until now	From 2013 (launching) until now
Purpose	- creation of a positive image of Romania by creating and asserting the national tourism brand	- tourism industry remains a crucial element for the country economic increase; - enhancement of the tourism industry; - increase of the number of foreign tourists by a million during the launching year; - improving the image of Greece (affected by the economic crisis crossed during the recent years) and its placement again among the great powers of tourism; - the economic increase and the country prosperity.
Target public intended	- tourism brand addresses particularly the individual tourism than the mass tourism.	- the main foreign tourists intended are: the increase by 20% of the number of Great Britain tourists; the increase by 15% of the number of tourists of Germany, France and Nordic countries.
Promoted attractions	- the nature and its beauties, making a parallel between the “Carpathian garden” and the “Eden garden”.	- it is followed the highlighting of the fact that Greece does not represent only attractions relating to sea and sun, but it also provides a variety of experiences to the tourists; that is why one will highlight the development of the tourism infrastructure and of products, such as sea

		tourism and medical tourism.
Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the increase of the Romanian attractiveness abroad as a tourism destination and, indirectly, of affairs; - it is wanted a very good promotion of the tourism brand, but also the rigorous following of the campaign strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the increase of the number of tourists and of their satisfaction; - it is intended the promotion of Greece as a country which may provide to the tourists a lot of experiences and tourism services.
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the first results were estimated to appear within five years from the launching, but they are delineated by the increase of the number of tourists, mainly of those of the Western Europe countries, but also of Poland or Hungary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - considering that Germany and Great Britain represent the greatest sources of tourists (they are situated on the two first ranks) for the tourism market of Greece, it is wanted the maintenance of a large number of visitors of these two countries and the increase of the tourists of other countries during the next years.

(Source: created by the author)

It is noticed that even if the tourism promotion campaigns of the two countries have the common line of the increase of the number of tourists, they want to communicate to the potential clients totally different ideas.

The responsible who deal with the promotion campaign of Romania want to

find a tourism identity of the country, starting from its nature and favourable position around the Carpathian chain. Thus, the country is regarded as a garden which enjoys the beauty of these mountains and is expecting to be explored by the tourists thirsty of knowing new extraordinary places.



Figure 1. Campaign logo presentation for Romania

(Source: <http://www.carpathiangarden.ro/>)

On the other hand, Greece chose to use the new tourism brand both for the increase of the number of tourists and particularly for the recovery of a good reputation internationally, for the improvement of the image seriously

affected by the recent economic and social crises and for the economic increase by means of the revenues generated by tourism during the period following the campaign launching.



Figure 2. Campaign logo presentation for Greece

(Source: <http://www.visitgreece.gr/>)

The two countries are part of the European Union, and the analysis made is integrated in the context of evolution of the area of the European level tourism.

According to Eurostat (2012), EU is a major tourism destination, six of its countries being among the first ten world holiday destinations. Additionally, the tourism has the role to contribute to the occupation of the labour force, with a high potential with this purpose, at the economic increase, but also at the development of the rural, peripheral or less developed areas.

From January to August 2013, period coinciding with the period of the launching of the new tourism promotion campaign, the revenues of Greece coming from tourism increased by 13.7%, and the number of arrival of the tourists during the first eight months of 2013 registered a increase of 14.7% comparing to the similar period of 2012, exceeding the threshold of 10 million and arriving at 12.5 million. The revenues coming from the visitors outside the EU increased by 29.1% from January to August 2013, at 3.28 billion of euros, while the tourists of the 28 Member States of the EU generated revenues for Greece of 5.26 billion of euros, by 8.6% more in comparison to the similar period of 2012 (Capital Study, 2013).

In Romania, the tourism sector presents a high increasing potential, but even if it exists, a series of obstacles, such

as the weakly developed transport infrastructure and the absence of an intense promotion of the national and tourism brand slow down their fructification and the attracting of a number of tourists as large as possible.

From 2008 to 2011, the revenues generated by the tourism industry of Romania reduced by 16%, up to approximately 1.5 billion of euros. This reduction was caused by the decrease of the number of foreign tourists and of their expenditure of more than 750 million of euros to less than 600 million of euros and by the decrease of the expenditures of the autochthonous tourists by 11%, from 1.01 billion of euros to 900 million of euros. During these four years, the annual average ratio of increase of the tourism industry was negative (-5.7), (Cretu, 2012).

Even if in 2010, in Romania it was launched the tourism promotion campaign, its results were not visible until the moment of the study made by PwC Romania, but the tendency at that moment was not a favourable one.

In the same study it is mentioned that, in Romania, the tourism industry contributes with approximately 1.4% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with approximately 6 billion of euros, while the tourism industry of Greece represents 18% of the GDP, and more than a fifth of the

labour force is employed in tourism. (Bisa, 2013)

Thus, it is noticed that according to the construction modality of a tourism promotion campaign and its performance with the purpose to achieve the objectives mentioned by each representatives of tourism, it can enjoy the success within a shorter or longer time, considering the coherence of communication and the means of communication each individual country has.

The national brand constitutes, as resulting from the study results, a promise of value which, in tourism, is concretised in the places which are promoted to the possible tourists, landscapes, tourism attractions, gastronomy, history, culture and other criteria that the tourists consider when choosing a particular holiday destination. The value promised and inevitably associated to the country name (brand) must be in a certain measure compliant with the reality, and maybe even identical (but it is very difficult to make such a thing), because once disappointed, a tourist will remain with a negative impression about the respective destination, will avoid it and, even gravely, will promote it within his circle of friends and closes. The speed by which the information circulates today is another reason for not to try to promise what one cannot provide to the customer in order to avoid disappointment and formation, in time, of a negative image on destination.

Conclusions

An imagination exercise based on general culture knowledge, on lived experiences or on viewed images, may determine a person to associate to Greece, for example, the Olympic Games, the blue colour or the sea. On the other hand, the same person may associate to Romania the gymnastics, the delta and the spas. There is only a few of words and domains which may be associated with a country in a tourist's mind. In order to create a homogenous image on a country, the

common elements (positive) must be found in the national brand in order to be unitary promoted.

It is noticed from the results obtained the fact that the two countries compared are differently treating the national brand and choose to promote it and to protect it using the strong points they have, but in a different context in Romania than in Greece.

The importance that the national brand has for the tourism industry within it is, consequently, a large one, and the figures presented demonstrate that irrespective of the rapidity to notice the results of a promotion campaign using the tourism brand and, implicitly, the national one, they appear in time and may go on two directions: getting favourable results of the campaign and, consequently, it results that it was correctly built and promoted by efficient means or the getting of results unfavourable or difficult to notice and quantify, which demonstrates an error when identifying the most representative elements for that country when creating the national brand. In this last case, there may be made market researches and subsequently, it may be proceeded either to small corrections of the promotion campaign, or to the destination rebranding.

As a conclusion, Romania and Greece, as Member States of the EU, are placed in a tourism destination with a very large potential at international level, and this opportunity facilitates the attraction of the tourists of the two countries. In this context, the existence of a coherent national brand is essential for attracting tourists, especially for the fact that both Greece and Romania have natural landscapes which are unique in the world, have a special gastronomy, have hospitable people, the presence of several forms of relief, history, culture and traditions which deserve being known by more tourists all over the world.

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