Preface

THE INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH OF THE CONCEPT

Why nations? Why branding? Who gains more and in what terms? Why states seek ways to advertise themselves and how prestige affects politics? Nation branding has been examined from different perspectives, from marketing (Kvaratzis, 2005; Papadopoulos, 2004), to culture (Sophocleous, et.al., 2019) to public relations (Nicoli and Komodromos, 2015) and public diplomacy (Wang, 2006b; Gilboa, 2008; Szondi, 2008). This volume tries to answer some of those questions based on interdisciplinary approaches, that of international relations and marketing and their subfields. But how and why marketing (or branding) can intervene in the field of international relations and its subfields? This question is approached by Fan (2006) by asking his own question: “Nation branding: what is being branded?” Essentially, the answer to the conceptual dimension of nation branding should be sought in this question.

Of course, The concept of branding nation is multidimensional and is not limited to specific fields. This is also one of the main goals of this collective volume: To approach the issue of nation branding from different fields and through different case studies. The reader of this book can find specialised case studies within the collective volume. The authors come from different research fields and together contribute to the approach of the concept of nation branding through a detailed and multidimensional analysis. This is evident also from the different research interests of the editors. But this element makes this collective volume interesting and useful.

Here, we need to clarify something that might seem obvious but at the same time is crucial for our analysis: Our modern complex world operates and develops through nation-states and it is also divided into three groups: allies, foes, and neutral actors. The common element which binds these groups and at the same time defines them is the national interest among these players. Of course, there are many non-state actors who interact in international level, such as markets, firms, institutions, multinationals, civil society as well as many individuals, however, the nation-state remains the dominant actor who defines the range of involvement and influence of the mentioned players, according to its interests and its power. Nation branding is a state’s soft power where the “product” is the state itself and the “profit” is the support it gains in order to carry out its objectives. As Browning puts it (2016):

*Just as consumers might want to purchase certain branded products because of the reputation and image that the brand conveys, it is hoped that a strong national brand might similarly encourage them to buy products because of their country of origin, or it might encourage investors to unload capital in their country, or entice skilled professionals to seek employment there, or it might enhance the international status and influence of the country in question. (p. 50)*
But what exactly is soft power? According to Nye (2004), “Soft power is the ability of a country to persuade others to do what it wants without force or coercion” (Ikenberry, 2004). International relations are based on human behavior that’s why sometimes it is difficult to create behavioral patterns in order to explain the motives behind a state’s policy. Since human behavior is determined by characteristics such as competition, suspicion, fear and insecurity, international politics can certainly be interpreted by this point of view. However, anarchy, meaning the absence of a higher global authority than nation-states, rather than human nature is responsible for war and insecurity of the international system. Therefore, nation-states have developed a self-help system (Waltz, 1979) in order to maintain their power or seek ways to maximize their power in order to survive (Mearsheimer, 2001). Therefore, states use both hard or soft power in order to promote their interests and nation-branding is an instrument of soft power.

Nevertheless, international relations are the wider context in which nation branding takes place, while international economic relations are those which highlight the importance of this tool in many aspects. According to Kaneva (2011) “Nation branding programs can be directed at both domestic and international audiences, and they are often funded with public money” (p. 118). For example, lets taken into consideration foreign economic policy which aims, among others, to increase influence on other states and international economic organizations, and to allocate the resources for aid as best as possible in order to further provide development assistance. In this case, considering two great powers and donors, the US and the UK, both of them make sure that the recipient countries, apart from the aid, they will also interpret this action as a form of solidarity.

What is the result of this action? In multilateral level donor countries can gain the support of developing countries in order to promote their interests (Dreher et al. 2009; Kilby, 2011), for example US alignment defines the World Bank’s disbursements (Kilby, 2009). As Morgenthau (1962), mentioned:

*While humanitarian aid is per se nonpolitical, it can indeed perform a political function when it operates within a political context. . . . Subsistence foreign aid is akin to the humanitarian type in that it seeks to prevent the breakdown of order and the dis-integration of organized society. But it also performs the political function of maintaining the status quo, without, however, as a rule, increasing its viability. . . . It obligates by implication, the recipient toward the giver. . . . The advantage for the giver of prestige aid is threefold: He may receive a specific political advantage in return for the aid. The giver’s prestige is enhanced, as it were, by the increase of the recipient’s prestige. . . . Prestige aid comes relatively cheap.” (p. 304)*

**EXAMPLES OF CASE STUDIES**

China is another good example. Its nation-branding, apart from history, language and culture, is based on infrastructure, through the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). China’s leading role through the AIIB allows it to exercising influence according to its interests (Akcadag Alagoz, 2019; Menegazzi, 2017; Cai, 2018). In particular, among all members, the larger shareholder is China and its capital base aims to improve the prosperity within its region investing in infrastructure (AIIB, 2021). In other words, it could be said that the AIIB is already targeted to anything attached with development through infrastructure, so as China.

Turkey, on the other hand, emerges as the most generous donor, especially in humanitarian aid, focusing on Asia and Africa. Most of the scholars argue that domestic political changes in Turkey created a
new strategy towards Africa in addition to the past, where little attention had been given in that region, suggesting that today’s presence on the African continent emerged due to the new government’s strategy. Providing aid, Turkey “obtained observer status at the African Union” (Bilgic and Nascimento, 2014:1) and along with the Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit Turkey managed to be considered as a strategic partner for the African states (Korkut and Civlekoglu, 2013; Ozkan 2010; Bilgic and Nascimento, 2014). The role on nation states has not been diminished yet, especially on international economic relations. According to Maris and Sklias (2016:17) “Soeverignty and the centrality of nation-states appear to be unchallenged, although in some cases, they could be contested”. Thus, nation branding in international economic relations perhaps entails competitions and may create new challenges among traditional powers and emerging ones.

THE CHALLENGES AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In addition to the macro-analysis that focuses on specific countries, this collective volume also attempts a micro-analysis focused on various services, such as, the field of health, education, but also fields such as cultural diplomacy. According to Iwabuchi (2015):

*Although the notion of soft power has gained currency only in the last two decades, serious discussion regarding the uses of culture and media communication to enhance Japan’s image in the international arena began as early as in the 1920s and 1930s, when Japan aspired to become an imperial and colonial power equivalent to Euro-American counterparts.” (p. 420)*

Thus, the broad scope of the concept differs, as do those tools that aid in design, such as the media (Fan, 2010).

This collective volume is useful both in terms of its theoretical background and in terms of its interdisciplinary approach. The case studies have been worked with passion by the authors and they provide the knowledge required for the formation and development of future research.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into 20 chapters. A brief description of each of the chapters follows:

Chapter 1 analyses the macroeconomic indicators of United Arab Emirates and the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic (World Health Organization). Then, the authors study the two aspects of the Logistics Performance Index, the intentional and the domestic aspect, in order to understand the changes that have occurred in the last decade concerning the role of the country in world trade.

Chapter 2 establishes a discussion based on the argument that energy issues have set up a new chessboard of power on which countries improve their status, no matter whether they are energy importers or exporters.

Chapter 3 discusses Turkey’s nation branding for the 2050s and considers the vision of national leaders, the strategy for implementing the plan, and relations with stakeholders. Challenges and opportunities are identified along with a national and regional outlook. Recommendations are provided for any nation interested in structured nation branding.
Chapter 4 discusses issues on destination marketing. Specifically, the example of Greece and Turkey is used as case studies.

Chapter 5 examines the conceptual evolution of national identity and specificity creation and promotion (nation branding), combining it with theoretical background and developments in the concept of competitiveness and attractiveness and suggesting a new interpretive framework for understanding nation branding policy and strategy.

Chapter 6 aims to explore the concept of city branding and examines the extent to which this can make metropolitan cities in Greece a tourist attraction. A bibliographical search presents cities’ characteristics that create their competitive advantage in attracting target groups of tourists.

Chapter 7 analyses the phenomenon of nation branding from the point of view of the attribution of an identity to places and the consequent development of a collective imagery related to them.

Chapter 8 provides a new methodological analysis grid on the topic of the variations of identity characteristics that appear on the webpages of country brands, highlighting the theoretical perspectives, strategies and ways in which brands are built in the socio-cultural environment by their stakeholders or their legal owners and the valences of the reconstruction or adaptation of brands in the online environment, from the perspective of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 dynamics, while shaping the core components and the dynamics of the nation brand identity.

Chapter 9 presents the linkage of national branding with the assets development in critical infrastructures, distribution systems and large assets such those in transport and energy sector.

Chapter 10 discusses how consumer behavior affects branding. The discussion focuses on the study of Turkey.

Chapter 11 provides an overview of how EU countries are promoting themselves through the websites, as well as a descriptive analysis of what types of competitive arguments are being used and how they are being communicated.

Chapter 12 addresses the issue of emotional intelligence in education and how it can advance principles and values to promote a Nation.

Chapter 13 discusses how music promotes the idea of nation branding and especially how identity is strengthened through music. The issue is approached through the perspective of education.

Chapter 14 develops a strategy for scoring non-narrative, or non-descriptive film segments. Furthermore, this chapter discusses how music content, especially within filmography, is related to nation branding.

Chapter 15 observes the concept of nation’s branding as a strategic asset under the circumstance of the formation of a unique ministry of culture, Cyprus, by examining the certain condition and by recommending research and further steps.

Chapter 16 focuses on how archaeology as a science in secondary education could work as a doorway for cultural approach between the European students. Specifically, how can the archeological practices conduce to the promotion and understanding of archeological culture and heritage among students in Europe.

Chapter 17 examines how the teacher evaluation process can encourage and motivate the strengthening of the nation’s promotion. Promoting nation identity is an issue that concerns education. The educational system in Cyprus has always oscillated between related concepts and the conceptual dimension of the “nation”.

Chapter 18 analyses the relationship between the performance and the competitiveness of the public sector in Greece and the image of the country abroad, focusing on the critical importance for the Greek economy sector of investments attraction.
Chapter 19 seeks to point out the significance of the signs, either at the linguistic level or at the iconic level of analysis, in order to easily understand the main issues of a branding strategy. The case study focuses on the health services sector.

Chapter 20 discusses whether Greece can acquire National Branding in medical tourism and in the production of generic medicines. This chapter reveals that the combination medical tourism and production of generic medicines can be essential elements towards a concrete National Branding strategy.

REFERENCES


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