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# Branding National Identity

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## Abstract

The following thesis, “Branding national identity”, authored by Anamaria Georgescu and Andrei Botescu, attempts to develop a multidisciplinary perspective on a particularly new topic raised by marketing and advertising. Several theoreticians in the field discern the matter as a strategy of “fighting globalisation with its own weapons” (Simon Anholt, 2002). It promises to offer equal opportunities for global back up to countries with a low level of economic development. This is to be done by appealing and emphasizing the cultural and national specific.

This controversial set of suggestions requires to be objectively debated using various perspectives. Also, a practical extension of our debate is to consider aspects of the scrutinized theoretical constructions, in a particular example of a developing country: Romania.

We brought a new angle to the approaches of nation branding using sociological theories and concepts like “the imagined communities” of Benedict Anderson, “the interacting identities” or “global networks in the Information Age” described by Castells. We meant to examine the concept of national identity, which represents the content of such strategies. It has proven to be rather a field of disputes than an unambiguous area for the contemporary sociology. Therefore, the effort of finding a representative national brand has to be the most difficult part in pursuing nation branding strategies.

Nevertheless, the idea of brand and advertising influence, and particularly the persuasion proficiency of the national brand, has generated a large ethical debate. We developed our arguments examining illustrative visions of different authors like Naomi Klein, in *No logo*, and further related articles, which demonise the brand’s sway. We also utilized Roland Barthes’s *Mythologies*, analysing the national identity myth’s culpability, and Simon Anholt’s book *Brand new Justice: The Upside of Global Branding*, referring to the benefits of brands for underdeveloped countries in a global economy.

How to put things at work or how to start and manage a nation branding campaign is likely to find out researching past and ongoing programs. Thus, we have investigated several branding agencies specialized in the field. We offered illustrative examples in specific matters and also we developed our own discussions related to the different approaches and instruments of national identity communication.

The prospect of nation branding in a Romanian environment started to be considered by different entities a complex stimulation of an anarchic actual identity perspective. Thus, we considered to offer an analytical perspective of the opinions, programs or ideas exposed by different external or internal sources, using the theoretical and empirical insights assembled throughout the whole paper.

Several key concepts utilized in our dissertation are: national identity, globalisation, nation branding, holistic approach, comprehensive brand, creative industries, and symbolic communication.

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## Introduction

The strong interest that we share in the field of advertising and especially in the new branch of a comprehensive domain, “the nation branding”, made us chose to join our efforts in something we wish to be a discharge of our thoughts and ideas. Our similar cultural background and comparable educational formation facilitated the starting our dissertation. Nevertheless, going deeper into the process, we had to encounter the particularities of each other’s personality. Yet, we finally consider them to be fruitful and rather stimulating.

One of the reasons that started up this study consisted in the absorbing circumstances we have met once we have reached a scene of cross-cultural encounters. Here, we found out that few of the people we have met knew something edifying about Romania. Hence, as enthusiastic as we were in the beginning to assert our national origin, soon we would be clout back with unresponsiveness. The actual fact switched on the motivation for our struggle to analytically scrutinize the underlying mechanisms involved in the formation of national identity representations in the eyes of the global audience.

However, the concrete form that our ideas took may be seen throughout the paper in the most appropriate way. Our further exposition is concerned with the role of branding in the process of shaping the main images of macro-social entities, such as countries, regions or big towns. This is an actual controversial issue due to the artificial character that tries to comply to the entities involved and, also for the difficulty encountered in evaluating its effects at overall.

We have considered developing a debate on the challenges encountered by the “national identity” concept in our days. We aimed to incorporate in a larger multidisciplinary perspective of social identity, considered by the fields of Sociology and Cultural Studies, what is seen today merely just as a “branding strategy type” for Marketing, or a matter of external policy for Political Sciences.

We concerned our selves with how several countries are using sophisticated marketing techniques to brand themselves in the minds of a global audience. In what follows, we will try to uncover these covert advertising efforts and to evaluate their influence, potential, and the ethical degree they are engaging. We would also like to distinguish on which level they emphasize local existing aspects, or on an opposite pole, how the power of this actual “stereotypes” rends a special dynamic and pushes forward the society in their direction.

Used in the beginning for the economic export potential, this kind of professional propaganda has enlarged its area of applicability. Now we find many expressions in international politics, culture, entertainment and other national identity facets, helping countries to perform on global scene. In fact, this is a process that goes parallel with the globalisation. It is the new rule that sets the play of national and local actors. It is an

ideological war, where everybody strives to obtain a better definition of nationhood in its member's eyes, as much as in the others perception, in order to negotiate a better position in the world's hierarchy and history. The balance between natural means and targeted strategies, in achieving these circumstances, represents a question for this paper.

On another level, the globalisation of trade and informational exchange led to a standardization of products and services, which in terms implies an imminent danger of loosing our identities as individuals. As a counteraction, this process has generated an intense search for what could still be able to play an important role as national focal point, a powerful bond to which we can rely and base our identity on, through differentiation between the others and us. Finally, the goal of branding a nation, as envisaged by its promoters, is to discharge prejudiced or erroneous thoughts about a certain nation and, induct a new image that could lead to an appropriate understanding.

After offering a sociological and ethical perspective, we focused our efforts on theoretical and methodological matters of the nation-branding concept. Making use of the know-how shared by several experts in the field, we will try to approach a few problems that may arise in the process of assembling the strategies of nation branding and communicating adequate contents to the targeted population. How to synthesize the complexity of national specific in an adequate comprehensive brand, or how to use the most influential mediums and techniques of promotion, are controversially debated subjects, in a multidisciplinary brand-new environment brought along with the rising of a compound field of knowledge.

In the last part of the study, we will forge the frame taken from the investigation of various international examples to the particular case of Romania. We will attempt to identify several dominant accounts of Romanian's national characteristics seen from inside and outside of the borders and possible envisaged solutions by various individuals. Having as tool the theoretical construction developed in the first part, we will analytically present the efforts made by different Romanian entities in promoting a holistic Romanian brand.

The core issue of this thesis, as we have conceived it, will remain evaluating the possibility of raising national identity to the status of a brand, the mechanisms that transforms it in a sort of facade of that particular country, and the benefits as well as the downsides encountered by a nation from this type of branding strategy.

# **I National identity**

## **I.1 Origins of national identity**

### **The content of the “nation branding” strategy of communication**

Trying to initiate a debate about the widening of the branding approach over national and geographical entities comprises a difficult task of defining its abstract content: the national identity. What the new experts in marketing and advertising are now ready to stand for and promote, is still a disputed notion in the sociological milieu.

The concept of national identity relies on a thick layer of common assumptions that compels us to extract some of the primary features of this notion. According to Anthony Smith (1991), the concept of national identity embodies a historic territory or homeland, common myths and historical memories, a common or mass culture, common legal rights and duties for all members, a common economy and increased territorial mobility for its members. Hence, people who share some of these characteristics are entitled to form a national identity.

A national identity is fundamentally multi-dimensional; it can never be reduced to a single element. The formation of national identity is by nature a subjective process and submits to changes along with the progression of time. The attempt to even it out across cultural barriers or to paste past constructions of national identity over the present day structures, will fail to acknowledge the intrinsic subjective and fluid nature of national identity. An “identity” is not a thing, it is a description for ways of speaking about self and the community, your self and your community and accordingly, it does not develop in a social void but rather in relation with manifest forms of existence, “identity is a form of life”<sup>1</sup> (Michael Billig, 1995: 69).

Benedict Anderson (1991) referred to the concept of nation, in terms of “imagined community”. He argues that the nation is to be imagined as a unique entity in terms of time and space, but does “not rely upon continuous acts imagination” for its existence. For deconstructionists like Benedict Anderson, ethnicity and nationalism are essentially artificial constructs. He considers that only if the nation is imagined to have an identity its people may claim to have one. “The members of even the smallest nations will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives an image of

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<sup>1</sup> According to Serge Moscovici (1983) the study of national identity should search for the common sense assumptions and ways of talking about nationhood. He argues that having a national identity requires first to have social representations of nation, patriotism and much more beside.

their community." (Anderson, 1991: 6). It is a community, he continues, because it is "conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship"(ibid). This description is very appropriate for the context in which nation-states emerged, bringing along the creation of national histories. He argues that the recurrent model for the invention of national identities was forged by European intellectuals in the course of the 19th century during a process of mutual observation, imitation and transfer of ideas and proficiency.

Consequently, national identities were constructed upon a liberal philosophy support, appealing to symbols as "the historic monuments", and painting emblematical national landscapes. In the next phase of this construction process, a large number of dialects have been gradually replaced by the introduction of the national language. The motivation for a struggle in favour of the "nation" was based on a general tendency to overcome the absolutism of feudal system, to fight for freedom and modern capitalist system<sup>1</sup>. The idea that society is capable through democratic means to rule by itself and to realize its desires was to be institutionalised in the nation-state.

The necessity for historical knowledge continues to be placed in a framework of identities and roots and this seems to be based on a paradigm of continuity. Cultural historical knowledge is considered to be the main support to resist the process of fragmentation and disruption in the present. It is still the main thing in which people are searching for shelters in defining themselves as identities.

Nations often do not have a single history, but they are competing tales to be told. Walter Benjamin (quoted by Smith, 1991: 64) claims that "the voice of nation" is fiction, and "history is always a tale of victors celebrating triumphs". If we are to imagine ourselves as "unique", we need a name to do so<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest Gellner(1983) adds a social angle to the multitude of other perspectives, from which national identity is considered. He tends to see nationalism as a consequence of deeper social mechanisms such as modern communications, modern industry in capitalist development. He argues that the new industrial economies involving a more flexible and compatible labour force, demand in turn for complex renewed skills and social development that are surpassing family standards, relationship bonds and skills. That could only be provided by a public education system. This requires vast resources and standardization, integrated by rather, a single language and within a centralized political, economic and educational system.

<sup>2</sup> Tajfel's (1982) social identity theory emphasized, that "we" must categorize ourselves with a distinctive label, thus "we" are "Romanian" or "Swedish". The category not only classifies us in our uniqueness, demarcating us from others, but it is to be stated as a national label, in a sort of universal code for naming of details. Social identity is essentially a categorization framework made out of sets of comparisons, with the purpose to contrast and emphasize distinctive characteristics among groups. The process implies an active progression. People keenly set themselves to form "in-groups" by differentiating from others, as an active choice. By doing this, the new-formed group consolidates itself and emphasizes the kinship aspect among its members. Also this provides them with a sense of belonging within this community. A fundamental aspect of this theory is the variable character of identity. The motives determining people to identify with social groups are based on various factors (race, class, gender, ethnicity). These are becoming predominantly relevant, at some point in time and for different reasons, according to the social context. For this basis, when a particular group identity obtains prominence, in a

We have exemplified how identity is placed on a paradigm of continuity, in one of our previous studies, focused on the relation between Swedish people and one of their earliest minority: the Saami. Accordingly, the Swedes consider as their ancestors and the indigenous people of their land, the Vikings. The Saami presence is often ignored or undermined in local history, politics, and culture.

The Vikings, who lived in Europe thousands of years ago, were most likely different from the Swedish people today; they had a presumably different perception of right and wrong, of life and death, and human values, than their Swedish descendents. So were the Saami. We might consider the Swedish people had the choice of alleging their ancestors and their own image of historical identity, which they embody and that lives further through them.

We sought to elucidate the reason behind the Swedish choice of expressing their uniqueness and identity through the image of the Vikings. One of the possible explanations we have reached is that people are experiencing, at some extent, an understanding of their identity formation as a long historical process with an evolving route and a transient essence throughout generations. Hence, it cannot be possible or “normal” that our ancestors should be found among us, living in the present, in modernity, consequently the Saami must be a minority with false claims<sup>1</sup>. Another assumption why this occurs can be the deep rooted conception of history and culture in our modern way of thinking, that we tend to assume historical culture must have a coherent linear narrative, like the developing of a plot, evolving every time and becoming at some point in the present, what we are today. It is a relation to the past in terms of continuity.

An interrelated pathway of understanding the concept of national identity is considerably approaching Roland Barthes’s concept of myths. For Barthes, "myth" is not a fictitious tale. Rather it is the perpetual upholding of mass-culture upon the world. Barthes (1957) is questioning what can be found beyond the images that we are shown, how this affects us ideologically, and whether or not we can brake down myths to disclose what lays underneath them. Barthes’s discourse explains how, what we acknowledge as being natural, is in fact an illusive reality constructed in order to disguise the real structures obtaining power in

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particular circumstance, the behaviours of any member within the group will tend to be determined and channelled by the norms and goal of the group.

<sup>1</sup> A common biased assumption about the Saami is related to the way in which people tend to think about them and in general about historical indigenous communities, that they are retrograde, living in some kind of a past traditional ruling and refusing any contact or experience with the modern world. The paradox that appears in such a consideration is that, on one side Saami that live within their communities are regarded as stuck in the past, as on the other side, the ones integrated in the society are regarded as traitors of their culture and ways of living. Thus in either way, a negative judgement is passed upon them.

society. He discloses how often nations have empowered mythical representations of national characteristics in order to sustain economic or political interests. According to this consideration, Barthes might be identified in our opinion as one of the first theoreticians and critics of nation branding. From this perspective, what we consider today as a new area of marketing theory has been utilised for a long time through covert alternatives. Nevertheless, using scientific support, the enterprise of promoting national identity narratives becomes more accentuated and more effective.

## **I.2. Dissolution of the modern epoch**

Nowadays, the mythical edifice of national identity described by Anderson or Barthes starts to be challenged by the emerging of other multiple complex structures and phenomena. Consequently, the idea of national identity, which represents the content of the branding nation strategy, has to be rigorously interrogated.

Significant scholars in sociology and related fields argue that national identity is an adjunct of the nation state, and that both belong to a fast disappearing world of modernity<sup>1</sup>. The translation from one era to another claims important consequences. Subsequently, it overlooks the national identity and the national consciousness, highlighting that the boundaries and the homeland are surmounted.

In illustrating these perspectives, we will seek to assess how different aspects of collective identity are influenced by the new world developments. Accordingly, the national

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<sup>1</sup>Most of these theories are taking into consideration the postmodernist approach. The concept of postmodernity may hardly be contained in one definition. As a philosophical approach it has its roots on the works of precursors like Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger and it has been established in the second half of the XX-st, century, around 1980, through the papers of Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault (although he avoided and even rejected the term of postmodernity he referred to all the attributes that are embodied in the concept), Jean Baudrillard or Fredric Jameson.

In respect to architecture, Charles Jenks (quoted by David Harvey, 1989) dates exactly the figurative end of modernism and the translation to postmodernism as to be the year 1972, when one of the buildings symbolising the modern living was dynamited. Charles Jenks marks the translation to the postmodern era to be set exactly at 3.32 p.m. on July 1972, when the Pruitt – Igoe housing development in St. Louis (a prize winning version of Le Corbusier's "machine for a modern living") was dynamited as an uninhabitable environment for the low-income people it housed (David Harvey, 1989: 114).

Using deconstructivism as its methodology, the postmodernism does a critique of the rationalist and universal fundamentals of the modernism, proclaiming "the end of the meta-narratives"(the lost of the ideologies which were leading the past), the collapse of knowledge hierarchies (re-evaluation of the specific and general, opposed to universal and particular, the migration from logo-centricity to icon-centricity (influenced by the new technologies of information and communication.). Terry Eagleton explains postmodernism as "cosmopolitan, a hybrid space", different from the space of the universalism which is unitary (T. Eagleton, 2000: 77). Universalism is associated with national cultural values while "cosmopolitan culture transgress national boundaries as surely as do money and trans-national corporations" (ibid: 78).

dimension of identity is confronted by other macro-entities and phenomena, like globalisation, cultural trends or economic rank division. Hence, how the representations of national identity are transformed today remains to be seen after we will expose some of the most influential standpoints describing “*The Global Age*”.

From the postcolonial theory perspective, many saw modernity as the cultural property of the West, based on what Edward Said characterized as oriental-occidental dualism with its negative connotations, the oriental being “the bad other”. “Reason” and its legitimised values have been the instruments, which allowed, often through violence and destruction, the condemning of the Other as being savage, un-civilized, inhuman, contributing to the colonization process. Western’s meta-narratives have imposed over the world the whole occidental history and culture<sup>1</sup> instead of the local multiple ones. A radical approach of Miyoshi and Harootunian (1993) suggests that the signifier “modern” should be redefined as a specific term characteristic only to the Western civilization<sup>2</sup>.

Martin Albrow urges us to abandon the axial principle of modernity in favour of “globality”<sup>3</sup>, meaning “an overall change in the basis of action and social organization” (quoted by J. Tomlinson, 1999: 45). He talks about challenges to the nation-state as: global destructiveness of the new weaponry, inter-linked communication systems<sup>4</sup>, international

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of culture is used by us in our paper related to “all the aspects of social life from the perspective of the many linguistic, symbolic, affective, and embodied norms and practices, which give meaning to life” (Bordieu quoted by Dave Lewis, 1998: 213). These cultural forms are articulated through social action “the unconscious habits, desires, meanings gestures, and so on that people grow into and bring to their interactions” (ibid). As Geertz (quoted by Dave Lewis, 1998) argues these forms find expression in various symbolic systems comprised of such elements as art, religion, ideology, science law, morality, and common sense.

<sup>2</sup> The relativity of truth that emerged from postmodernism is saluted by the neo-colonialists, and this concept is used very often in the “third world” struggles. Uma Narayan (2002), a “Third World” feminist movement leader, talks about the history and its culture as a human construction, and therefore liable to challenges. The current pluralism and diversity is therefore a new era, opposed to modernity.

Arguing the actual situation, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri saw the globalisation as a return to an earlier stage of history, where the new internationalism and cosmopolitanism are controlled by American power and are acting similarly to an *Empire* structure. Hardt and Negri argue that: “The tendential realization of the world market should destroy any notion that today a country or region could isolate or de-link itself from the global networks of power in order to re-create the conditions of the past and develop as the dominant capitalist countries once did”. (M.Hardt and A. Negri, 2000: 188)

<sup>3</sup> According to Fukuyama (1992) we assist now at “the end of the history”. Nations are dissolving into regions as a historical process of becoming one global entity. The end of communism gave Fukuyama the opportunity to proclaim the final victory of American capitalism all over the globe. As Fukuyama, A. Giddens is another sustainer of the “late modernity” approach with its now globally developed institutions: capitalism, political control of the nation-state and military power. He is talking about their inherently expansive characteristics, but as Martin Albrow suggest globalisation has a chaotic advance and is hard to depict its followings.

<sup>4</sup> The shifting in the social organization of time and space, that has generated a complex connectivity of the post-modern age, is a subject that is extensively covered by John Tomlinson. This involves “the integration of individual and collective actions into the way that institutions actually work.” (J.Tomlinson, 1999: 24) It implies “the overcoming of distance through the every day routine integration into daily local life of all the locality-penetrating experiences of cultural difference provided through education, employment, consumer culture and globalising mass media” (ibid: 43). He tries to solve the conflict between the modernity and globalisation

environmental issues. Consequently, he describes globalism as a general orientation towards human rights, green and women's movements. These entities often share the slogan "think globally act locally", thus transcending the nation-state. Albrow is sustained by Alain Turain, who argues for recognizing global movements<sup>1</sup>, as basic categories for contemporary sociological analysis.

The core delineation between modernity and the "global age" depicted by Albrow is the lawlessness in the globalisation route. If in the past times of modernity, the principles of Enlightenment, as humanism, progress and control over nature, were leading, now, nation-state has lost the control over its individuals, capital and environmental issues. "Globalisation undermines the assumption that the nation-state can provide the dominant frame of meaning for the life of the citizens, that advancing rationality means advancing control over nature, that Western rationality is inherently superior"(Albrow 1996: 106).

The state's role is not merely thrown away by Albrow. He argues that, the Governments have to adapt to the actual times by sponsoring researches focused on understanding the new social reality categories. Nation-state could be a form of developing an identity, but in his view, there are nations that have not reached the modern "nation-statehood" as Scotland, Catalonia, and Quebec. Those nations have been exhibiting a strong cultural identity, which is considered "national character". However, he estimates a gradual development of the global state, which would comprise the nation states as "modest subsidiaries". The national culture is not foreseen to disappear but to develop independently of the state hegemony.

The global state is endorsed also by Jurgen Habermas. "The question of whether politics can and should "catch up" with global markets requires that we keep in mind the balance between the opening and the closure of socially integrated forms of life" (Habermas, 2001: 62) The state borders are in our days incapable to regulate the capital and information flows. The growing interdependence of a world society challenges the territorial dimension of the state. The consequences of people's actions are not anymore limited within their country's

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promoting a vision of "benign universalism" in the culture of now-days. This means that we are still able to identify a set of underlying assumptions shared by all human beings, without getting in conflict with cultural particularities that may lead to "consensual values to be constructed in the sense of commonality" (ibid: 68). The best example for this is what Roland Robertson names "glocalisation", a growing tendency for endorsement of the legal rights and cultural identities of indigenous people, which tend to be synchronized in political movements at global level.

<sup>1</sup> Martin Albrow describes globalist movements as follows:" They derive their strength from the freely given commitment and a surplus energy of ordinary people worldwide. They have no significant stock of capital in the form of equipment or money. What they have is human or, more precisely, cultural, capital." (Martin Albrow 1996: 67)

borders. Hence, there is a growing need for alliances and international networks. This takes the form of international organizations, which are performing “a governance beyond the nation state”.

As did Albrow, Habermas also considers the role of non-governmental international organizations and other social entities, which gained influence in the global decisional process. Habermas disagrees with “the exclusivist project of realizing national particularity”. He advances an inclusive meaning of the democratic process developed by the nation state, which is capable to handle the diversification of life forms encompassed without frictions. Opposing homogenizing processes, he gives a large credit to the civic society, which is capable through “discursively structured processes of opinion and will formation to make a reasonable political understanding, possible even among the strangers” (Habermas, 2001: 73). He is aware though, that the necessary and legitimate focus of the state to preserve multicultural diversity, often shake civic solidarity.

Many societies experience increased ethnocentric reactions against foreigners, races and religions or marginalized groups. Those are often motivated by a lack of understanding of redistribution policies. Forces of separation, as the Northern League in Italy militate for the independence of the prosperous north from the rest the country. Furthermore, the perception of unequal developed areas as North and South, West and East largely covered by media exacerbating the flows of migration, generates further frictions. This requires a new form of solidarity, described by Habermas through the concept of “constitutional patriotism”. A virtual failure of this process would generate a collective collapse into subcultures, which in turn, will end up closing within them.

Additionally, homogenizing forces challenging the national identity get nearer to the globalisation experience. Hence, the standardization of the mass culture shaped by mass consumption, mass communication, mass tourism and the growing need of using the same language “English”, “levels out even the strongest national differences, and weakens evens the strongest local traditions”(ibid). We would argue that these forces often facilitate an unequal “homogeneity”, sort to speak. Some of the countries are, both producers and consumers of cultural meanings and consequently of superior embedded commodities, and others are just admirers of the American and Western values, hence just consumers. Even utilizing English language as a communication vehicle, empower the native speakers to perform more “adequate” than others. A Chinese or an Arabian coming from a totally different cultural system has fewer chances and should invest considerable much more effort

to assimilate the cultural meanings and to be able to manufacture global adequate cultural or material artefacts, although this is not entirely impossible.

Habermas concentrates on the constructive impulses and the multitude of the innovative responses generated by globalisation in local contexts. As a reaction to the homogenizing forces, “new constellations” create “a new multiplicity of hybridised forms”. (Habermas, 2000: 75). These are materialized in subcultures and lifestyles facilitated by intercultural contacts and multiethnic connections. One consequence is the emergence of “cosmopolitan identities”. Here, the “new collective forms of life and new individual life projects” will strengthen the lost civil solidarity artificially constructed on republicanism and nationalism. Accordingly, we may speak of punks, rockers, and rappers as a more legitimate and consistent collective identity rather than Romanians, French or Italians.

Another illustrating example, which challenges the modernist approach of the nation-state, is the emergence of the fourth world populations. The concept of “Fourth World population” is explained by Manuel and Posluns (1974: 273): “Those so-called 'Aboriginal peoples' that have special non-technical, non-modern exploitative relations to the land in which they still live and are 'disenfranchised' by the States within which they live.”

The notions of “progress”, “development” and “modernization” have generated a hierarchy of States delineated as the “Three Worlds” based on contrasts of ideology and material, military or technological development. The indigenous nations were not included on this scale. As an alternative, they are “people and political movements in the same moment of space and time” (Brough, 1989:5, quoted in [www.cwis.org](http://www.cwis.org)).

Manuel Castells distinguishes the disintegration of the Second World (the stately universe of communist experiment), incapable in his vision, to compete in the *Information Age* because of their orientation to power maximizing instead of profit maximizing (as the western capitalist countries). Hence, the failure of the communist project has been empowered by the lack of identity legitimacy conferred by power related ideology of the state. Unable to convert their technological discoveries into the market and to “optimise the mixture and use of factors of production on the basis of knowledge and information” (Castells, 2000: 8) they have lost the social support and collapsed in the attempt of reaching an intended welfare society. They failed to integrate themselves into the global networks that characterize the “Information age”. While in the global economy most of the jobs and economic activities are still national or regional, those are integrated through “electronically enacted networks of exchange capital, commodities and information” (Castells, 2000: 348). The Third world

category has been also losing its relevancy as the nations comprised in it have now diverse degrees of geopolitical and economic development.

Related to the Fourth World, Castells embraces a more comprehensive meaning of the notion related with the social exclusion phenomenon generated by the global competition for power and resources. The new world has turned out multiple “black holes of social exclusion throughout the planet” (Castells, 2000: 168). This is a parallel structure affecting large categories of population. It involves as much exceedingly poor countries from Africa, Latin America and Asia, but also is present everywhere in the developed ones. “It is formed of American inner-city ghettos, Spanish enclaves of mass youth unemployment, French banlieus warehousing North Africans, it is populated by millions of homeless, incarcerated, prostituted, criminalized, brutalized, stigmatised, sick and illiterate persons” (Castells, 2000: 168). We are taking into consideration that this is not a new occurrence, but as he points out, the breakdown of the welfare state in different parts of the world and the aggressive competitively informational capitalism has visibly deepened the dimension of this incidence.

Nevertheless, it is important to observe how these fourth worlds’ countries become self-reflexive and seek to organize as a collective identity. Naomi Klein (“The Unknown Icon”, March 3, 2001, [www.nologo.org](http://www.nologo.org)) quotes “subcomandante” Marcos, the leader of the Zapatistas, a world-wide popular anti-discrimination and anti-globalisation movement emerged from Chiapas’ indigenous rights militant faction in Mexico, (a movement, which is amply described by Castells also): “Marcos is gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, an Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Ysidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, a Mayan Indian in the streets of San Cristobal, a Jew in Germany, a Gypsy in Poland, a Mohawk in Quebec, a pacifist in Bosnia, a single woman on the Metro at 10pm, a peasant without land, a gang member in the slums, an unemployed worker, an unhappy student and, of course, a Zapatista in the mountains.” Their actions are seen as a new kind of war, “netwar”, in which the participants use technology (the movement has a strong internet based structure), as much as organization, doctrine and strategy networks in order to overcome the enemy by number and diversity. The goal of this movement is to minimize the role of the state, and to build autonomous areas although they are not interested in overthrowing the idea of state. Marcos believes in non-hierarchical autonomous decision making communities based on democracy, justice and self-determination as alternatives to a centralized system.

### **I.3. The future of national identity**

The arguments mentioned above about the post-modern space and the global encounters, imply a reconsideration of the role of the nation-state and the essence of national identity. New collective identities and power structures are presumably ready to take their places.

In the case of centralized power in nation-state's structure, we are compelled to notice that this is constantly diminishing its area of influence. However, we will argue that one of the foundation' features of the nation-state, the national identity, wins new forms, meanings and values, rather than disappearing along with the nation-state's structure decline. It is probably misleading to think that the national identity is completely eradicated by the new global and borderless socio-politico-cultural space.

In our times, the importance is placed on consumption; the consumer is expected to buy a variety of products. Consequently, boundaries are constantly traversed. Having this as a background, it reveals that the patterns of consumption are no more strictly national. The consumers can no longer imagine themselves as part just of one national community. This seems to be a fair argument for some critics, to stamp out the national element from the global scene. We will argue that while nowadays the global trans-national economy and culture are constantly developing they still have strong roots of national provenance. The global culture is carrying within it national legacies. Hence, the national and the global constantly intertwine.

Indeed globalisation brought along uncertainty in terms of identity and the feeling of belonging. The balance between the identities, given by the present global-local and the older authentic identities, is unequal. The result is composed of what seems to be mixed and quite contradictory responses. Some identities are blending successfully, in some degree, the newer aspects brought by globalisation with the older foundation of their identity. Other ones seem to be threatened by the new and become reclusive or even more they discard it.

On one side the globalisation process has generated new cosmopolitan identities, it encourages the translation of cultures and is a source of new anti-racist topics. On another side, we witness a totally opposed reaction in many parts of the world: cultural and religious fundamentalism, neo-nationalism and increasing ethnification of the political discourses. Coming along in this chain reaction is the proliferation of myths of origins and authenticity. The past is being increasingly used as a foundation, an anchor in defining and delimitating identities.

Reflecting with nostalgia about the past and returning to it in search of a feeling of confirmation or as an attempt to restore identities is not just a result of the globalisation process or postmodernity. It was encountered throughout any important process of quick changes, urban expansion alongside with the discarding of the rural and countryside during the last two centuries. It embodies what Bryan Turner (1990) has called “a pervasive nostalgia for past times”.

The actual anticipated world should embrace a harmonious integration of nations and the rising of a new sense of global identity and responsibility and, not growing a memory less culture. Any attempt to create such a culture will only accentuate the plurality of identities and people’s common memories will stand out more obvious and powerful. Hence, the chances of transcending the nations are slim. The powerful trans-national impact of the new economic, political and cultural forces and the global interdependencies they create are not strong enough. The new established cosmopolitanism does not imply the decline of national identity, nor the rise of regional culture areas will diminish the grip of national identities. People have a multiple collective identifications, and globalisation has definitely set a bunch of new and strong perspectives, in this sense, which seems rather normal, in a world of multiple ties and identities.

What makes national identity so strong and persistent in front of all these pressures? One of national identity’s functions is to provide a certain fulfilling answer to personal identification. Identification with a “nation” is a way to ensure a measure of personal immortality through association with the nations enduring history, through a feeling of community, and destiny along with the restoring of a collective faith. Embracing a glorious past, gives a positive meaning and a sense of solemnity to the one sharing it. Thus, the richer is the history the stronger would be the national claim. Another character that confers strength to national identity is the actual recognition of the ideal of fraternity, which emphasizes close relationships between the family, the ethnic community and the nation members<sup>1</sup>. This rather psychological line of arguing drawn on by Anthony Smith (1991) represents a level of debate that remains to be the subject for other dissertations. Alternatively, we will remain on a sociological macro-social perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> “Transcending oblivion through posterity; the restoration of collective dignity through an appeal to a golden age; the realization of fraternity through symbols, rites and ceremonies, which bind the living to the dead and fallen of the community: these are the underlying functions of national identity and nationalism in the modern world, and the basic reasons why the latter have proved so durable, protean and resilient through all vicissitudes”. (Anthony D. Smith, 1991: 53)

Castells also identifies a resistant core of national identity, “primary identity”. This is more powerful than the other ones we can develop or that are forged on us by the global. Is an identity that shapes those other identities within us, “that is self-sustaining across time and space” (Castells, 7: 1997). Smith (1991) referred to a similar aspect, when he affirmed that the national identity could not be surpassed by any other new identity that the global tries to impose in the actual context. As a counterargument of Smiths submission of the common past as the main and the strongest attribute of national identity, Castells comes to reposition the process of constructing identity from the perspective of how is constructed, from what, by whom and for what purpose. Castells is questioning what is the essence of identity and in answering that, he follows the same path as Smith and comes to the answer that the identities are made out using resources from history, geography, collective memory, power structures and religious beliefs. But he does not conclude here the elucidation of the identity matter. He goes further and adjoins that all these ingredients are rendered a whole only by the rearrangement of the individuals and society. That confers them significance in accordance with the social context and cultural background of their space and time outline. He strongly asserts: “no identity can be an essence, and no identity has, per se, progressive or regressive value outside its historical context.” (Castells, 8: 1997)

The processes of constructing different types of identities and their outcomes are subject for the social context, which is followed by the historical one. Castells proposes several delimitations among different types of identities that can arise in the society nowadays. He identifies three types of identities, which are as follows: legitimising identity, resistance identity and project identity.

The “legitimising identity” is related to a source of authority. Is represented by the governing structures and institutions that are imposing their authority and supremacy over the society. It is the kind of identity inoculated from above, the kind of story of the winners, described also by Walter Benjamin. “Resistance identity” is build up by the opposition against these dominant forces that are trying to stamp over a whole, a unique and homogeneous tag of identity. Through “resistance identity” it could be explained the existence of anti-globalisation movements and the attraction of recurring to identities based on ethnification, in a world where the dissolution of borders among nations is envisioned. “Project identity” emerges basically from “the resistance identity” but its outcome has a stronger grip on the society. It produces a faction that redefines the prevailing social configuration, and by doing that it repositions its constituents on the map of the society. The “project identity” constructs individuals in a collective social meaning. That ensures each subject an entire apprehension of

their existence in the world, a “collective social actor through which individuals reach holistic meaning in their experience.” (Castells, 1997: 10).

The future of national identity lays in the dynamic struggle of these identities. For a clear understanding we have to consider a relevant example:

The case of European Union has raised a lot of debates and most of them are involving identity matters. Commentators of the site, among which Castells himself, argue that throughout the history, European identity was especially build up against “the Other”. Today, Europe assembles its identity in order to become a challenger for the United States, and consequently for the global supremacy. Such statements are emerging a lot of question marks towards the actual happening of a European Union based on a common identity. Here we may identify a complex encounter of legitimised and resistance identities.

The scene on which the European union takes form is shaped by incongruity due to factors such as the globalisation process, each nation’s strong identity and the crisis of nation-state. Contrary to its premises, the participation to the Union makes the concerns about national ascendancy to surface. Each nation discovers itself as having a deficiency of consideration from the common leadership configuration.

The process of integrating the countries into the union started from premises that were not consistently fulfilled (such as free trade, flexibility of labor market and increasing social equality). Alternatively, much of the population started to assert their nations against their states, which were sustaining the union. As Ole Waever (2002) was stating, the issue of the integration in the European Union is not a “raison d’etat” but rather a “raison de nation”. It would only be successfully accomplished if the nations will acquire a sense of security towards the pressures that they perceive as coming along with this process of integration and also until they will feel even a sense of enrichment from the contact and experiences with other identities. As long as a nation believes that it could only continue to exist within its own sovereign and independent state and that its culture cannot continue to survive if the country is integrated among other ones without losing its genuine essence, then an endearing integration has slim chances to be achieved. And the problem grows deeper in multinational countries as Spain, United Kingdom or Belgium.

Thus, for a European unification to hold, it needs to build a European identity, which is at least problematic if not awfully hard to reach. Such an identity<sup>1</sup> might be created as

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<sup>1</sup> The project of a European identity is constantly embraced by almost 80% of the Romanian population according to repeated opinion pools. Therefore is interesting to have a discussion about the dynamics of the European phenomena.

complementary to the national one. For that to be accomplished it might be employed what Castells distinguished as a “project identity”. That is, to utilise an outline of social standards and organizational goals that intends to “appeal to a majority of citizens without excluding anyone, in principle”(Castells, 1998: 365). An identity project should not be a utopian enumeration of ideas, but a viable strategy of imposing alternatives to develop the economic, social and governance systems. Accordingly, the global or regional identity has to find a way to comprise in a holistic manner the specific of national, cultural, racial or micro-regional in order to become durable. For our topic, this argument demonstrates that national identity will continue to play an important role, even if it has to be integrated in a macro-identity.

One of the ways to raise conscientiousness of a European identity is induced through propaganda. In the “network society” of today, promoting an idea seems relatively easy enough when all the channels are ready and available for a majority of people. The propagation of the overcoming European identity is on its course, having at hand all the necessary tools. The most usual of those is the media. On this level we may easily observe that on national newspapers, European news are taking the place of local ones. These emphasize not only a sense of acknowledgement but also a feeling of empathy and internalisation of the experience.

Television stations such as “Euro-News” are presenting a set of reports destined to a European audience and a series of special productions with the explicit goal of increasing among the citizens of Europe a stronger feeling of common identity. Nevertheless, they start from the assumption that such a feeling exists and the grounds of such programs are just to wake up the energy that stays underneath of it.

One of these programs is actually called “Europeans” and reveals some of the economic, social or politic situations that some of the European countries are encountering. Sometimes, the circumstances are presented in contrast with similar ones in other European countries, suggesting ways to overcome them through successful strategies that worked for “other Europeans” (or in this matter, it is better to say “for the same Europeans”, that being the case they are trying to plead). This is just one of the circumstances of highlighting a European identity, bringing closeness among European countries and a sense of sharing issues, and to a larger extent, of belonging to a similar state of affairs.

Although various politic and economic interests are presumably invested in the endorsement of European integration, this kind of programs have also an outcome that contains an answer to our debate. The member states’ nationals may observe now in which degree they are different from one another, how to improve their life strategies transcending

national experience and which are the areas where belonging to a nation could offer them increased opportunities for success. Hence, the holistic integration comprises an opening of the identity system without losing its specific, as long as the specific represents a potential in the common scene.

The nation is also empowered by the use of global commodities and trends, which affects its unique cultural characteristics. “The globalisation of culture is not the same as its homogenisation, but globalisation involves the use of a variety of instruments of homogenisation (armaments, advertising techniques, language hegemonies, clothing styles and the like), which are absorbed into local political and cultural economies, only to be repatriated as heterogeneous dialogues of national sovereignty, free enterprise, fundamentalism, etc” (Appadurai, 126: 1996).

“Trans-national” does not succeed to transcend national identity. Phenomena like interdependence, compression of time and space distances and de-territorialisation that are encompassed in the globalisation process, do not have the power of overcoming national identities. The global identity can only forge its self over the national one but it cannot replace it. Pervasive and complex, national identity remains a powerful global force. Paradoxically, globalisation fosters a growing sense of national identity as a response to external pressures.

#### **I.4. Nation Branding as identity construction**

One of the new forms of defining and emphasizing the national identity is to encompass some of the great historical, cultural or technological achievements into a set of representative symbols capable to communicate a positive national image in the dynamic global arena. Apparently, being a revitalization of the myth's generating mechanisms of modernity, described by Benedict Anderson and Roland Barthes in the first part of this chapter, the concept of branding a nation appeals to methodical scientific routines. This theory has an extended tradition in the economic field. Strong global companies and other economic organizations have exercised the branding principle for a long time aiming to confer substance to the commodities and the consumerist trends. Regardless of their controversial economic finality, these strategies have demonstrated their effectiveness in catching the attention of the masses, which upholds them as convenient means of social communication.

The concept of a nation becoming a brand, although is quite new<sup>1</sup>, has succeeded in gaining endorsement. It is impressive how the necessity to be differentiated from other nations and promoted internationally could break through the global sites and obtain acceptance, while it would have been more plausible for that to had happen in the modern era.

One reason could be the commoditised character of globalisation. In this climate a good nation brand can greatly assist the objectives of all nations: increased trade, investment and tourism, greater international standing amongst leaders, influencers and decision makers.

The new constructed representation of national identity is not anymore in an open conflict with the global course. Mainly, the economy is emphasized by the link of commodities with symbolic cultural aspects. The national companies are privileged but also the trans-nationals ones are taking their benefits through a diversification of products.

The flatness of mass production has generated rejection. One of the tools used to overcome the boredom of the consumerist practice is to appeal on tradition and national particularities. If first, global players where keen to erase the national boundaries, seen as constrains to development, now they have to exploit their potential of selling. For example McDonalds often borrows recipes from national cuisines and adapt them to their offer, for the sake of diversity. Though, this is often, a second hand identity, an artificial fashioned one, made just in order to sustain the industry.

From this angle of consumerist attributed national identity not everybody gets constructive national values even if is possible to obtain financial affluence. The Italians and the French are emphasized with the gift of elegance and style; the Germans are trustworthy, punctual and with technical abilities. In contrast, the Mexicans are perceived in many cases as lazy, drinking tequila all day long, same as Russians are related to vodka and vodka brands, to which they provide national names.

In advertising, using the association of goods with cultural characteristics generates often the cheapening of the last. This is why British law bans commercials with direct references to royalty. These aspects demand coordinated efforts made by the state through different channels and with long term objectives in order to reframe the negative associations made naturally or sometimes intentionally by the market forces, media or other entities.

Michael E. Porter (1990), referring to Sweden, offers a good example of how the cultural advantages of a nation have emphasized its economy. He argues, that for Swedes, a

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<sup>1</sup> “Historically, serious economic planning around nation branding is now at least 10 years old with the New Zealand government being one of the practice leaders in this field since early 1990s . And before that both Singapore and Japan over decades represented much more consistent brand leadership than most global companies exhibited.” (“Nation Branding”, [www.disinfopedia.org](http://www.disinfopedia.org))

high level of concern about safety, environmental quality and public welfare, have been deeply embedded in the Swedish laws and the mentality of Swedish managers and trade unions. Thus, the Swedish industry has been able to develop strong brands related to those values and their international recognition. If Sweden was the first country that had imposed the mandatory use of a three-point safety belt for drivers, Volvo was the first car in the world with these belts as standard equipment. Consequently, Volvo is positioned on the market as a very safe car. Those espoused values have been generated a large demand for environmental friendly related products or for public welfare accessories. Sweden's democratic advance has been constituted as an anticipatory demand for a further global tendency to welfare, environment and safety products.

Such a burst of consumerism, informational overload, exporting commodities, services and political ideas are assisted and facilitated by the emotional resonance of a country's image. By emphasizing outside and inside of their borders, cultural "stereotypes", nations hope to attract capital flows and also to empower national pride. In view of that, governments should be concerned with researching, gathering and highlighting of most of the constructive characteristics developed by different forces of a society, trying to create a "labelling effect" with strong projection consequences as much for the members of the respective society as for their partners of informational interaction.

This represents moreover a new challenge for the underdeveloped states, which have to find a way to overcome, in relatively short time, the gap that separates them from the Western World. The process might start by trying to reframe the various aspects of negative perception projected outside, as one of the participants to a forum of discussions observes, referring to the "country made" side effect often met in underdeveloped countries:

Theresa Houston, Scotland: Consumers' attitudes towards the home-country image and home-country products often vary much more (from very negative to very positive) than their attitude towards the image and products from selected foreign countries. Typically, residents from less developed countries often believe that locally made goods are inferior. It is essential that national strategy-makers pay as much attention at home as abroad to the national image – not least if the perception of in-country products being inferior is wrong. (<http://www.intracen.org/Brainstorming> - Projecting Value: Is there a Case for National Branding? Prepared by Morton Scholer, ITC)

In addition, frequently the concern of the state for preserving a good international image has positive consequences. The recent case of Libya and Iran, which understood that it is counterproductive to isolate from the global public opinion and relinquished their nuclear programs, is a good proof that we are facing interesting new experiences.

Spanking new entities as the "global public opinion", international political and economic networks have the power to determine economic flows to act as arbiters of world's

social, military and political balance. Similarly, the brand identities constructed to sustain the trans-national companies coerce them to spend a part of their revenue in social projects, in order to preserve a humanistic image. The public opinion has the power to penalize them economically when the press reveals allegations of “bad manners”. Although preserving the image is not similar with preserving the moral status and might be done by manipulative means, we have to notice a tendency of social responsibility developed by the public entities.

Moreover, different civic society’s entities, often organized, as described before, in global movements, may play actively as a moral authority sustaining and rejecting certain perceived policies or behaviours, through the mechanism of selective consume.<sup>1</sup>

In Sweden, citizens have demonstrated in front of the Travel Companies in order to convince people not to choose Turkey for their holiday destination, as a reaction to its policy regarding Kurdish minority. It is interesting also to mention how the American public opinion boycotted the French wines’ consume in order to protest against the divergent French governmental policy towards the United States’ direction. Another occurrence observed by us in Sweden is that the local food products are endorsed through selective acquiring in order to sustain the national economy.

The consequences of these kinds of proceedings are now taken in consideration by the different power structures. The construction and upholding of a nation-brand reside in a concerted systematic effort to act and communicate in a responsible and effective manner, on the national and international level. According to this argument, the global encounters compel more and more nations to investigate and re-emphasize their identity, and not to dissolve in similar landscapes.

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<sup>1</sup>For example companies like Nike have been forced to improve their approach to employment in response to consumer outrage over “sweatshop” labour. N. Klein (2001: 73) underlines how people from Bronx, New York (the main symbolic target of the Nike advertising) were demonstrating against this brand, when they find out about the difference between the average wage of 2\$ per day paid by Nike in the undeveloped countries and the average 100-200\$ requested for a pair of sport shoes. The protest led to a mass dumping of their old Nike trainers outside New York's Nike Town. She gave the example of a 13-year boy whose words were “Nike, we made you. We can break you” (ibid).

## **II The role and the opportunity for branding nations**

The range of opinions and theories we have covered up till now, concerning the concept of national identity in our times, raise one important question. Is it ethical and adequate for the national specific to be developed as a wide-ranging brand? The choice for a concerted strategy that might promote a nation's core identity features is by large a challenging and controversial issue.

The debate that often occurs this issue is whether a country is capable through natural means to sustain its national representation or it might have to utilise professional help to emphasize its specific. Also we will deliberate about the ethical status of a possible distance between the projected image and the supposedly genuine characteristics by which it is usually constructed.

### **II.1. Natural means or professional intervention**

Every country has a kind of cultural trademark. Its members have outcropped some common behaviours, living style, temperament and aspirations. In the meantime, external observers have also figured out a couple of common assumptions in relation to certain aspects of that country. The positive or negative character of the external perception often reflects back to that specific country by economic or cultural feedback, empowering or diminishing the internal image.

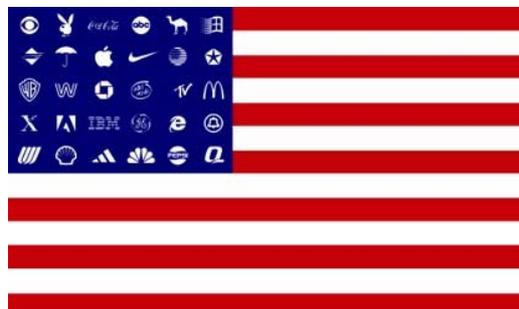
As we saw in the previous chapter, the traditional or challenging power structures tend to reproduce themselves by all means in the society and to generate self-confirming, empowering reactions. Throughout the history, with no special exertion, some of these countries have established themselves through the world as strong civilization generators. This is not the case for each nation as some cultures are more hermetic and, therefore, consistently left out from the spotlight. Moreover, shifting cultural trends and economic interests are shaping one's interest towards the Other.

Several nations have inflicted their own specific narratives upon the world without special concerted efforts from the state. Needless to say, not each member of the society has contributed on a similar level to this process. On the contrary, relatively independent centres of power have connected their characteristics or products with certain aspects of national identity, or have imposed a specific set of values over the nation.

“Nations have brands whether you like it or not so what do you want to achieve? Advertising a country? To improve it's image. This is not branding. To me branding comes from everyone involved in the country/company/organization. It is bottom up not top down and is consequently

very difficult to influence. People are talking about the America brand being it's ideals. This is hogwash (the brand bit not the ideals!) America's brand is every American I meet, every American film I see. How America acts on the world stage. I think branding a country is actually dangerous because to do so you have to start thinking about influencing the way that it's people interact with the outside world - that sounds really messy to me. For example are you telling me that the output of Hollywood should reflect the American brand? What happens if some individuals have a different idea of what they want to represent. Is this far fetched? I don't think so. Most people around the world see America through it's films and TV output.” (Paul Hanson IT consultant – London, in [www.fastcompany.com](http://www.fastcompany.com) “Is the practice of nation branding important?”)

If we think of U.S.A.’s construction of identity, the central sources of representations are seen by our subject quoted above, as located in Hollywood and American media entertainment industry. Here it is difficult to assume a strategy that controls and manipulate those environments. Another source is the industrial development, which have endorsed on the international arena numerous independent brands.



A suggestion for the American flag proposed in the article “American Flag or Corporate War Logo?”([www.sdimec.org](http://www.sdimec.org))

The representation’s occurrences mentioned above have proven possible despite the external official policy of the United States, which came often with a negative impact. For quite a long time this policy managed to attract a lot of rejection from large external sources of audience. Gerry Khermouch and Diane Brady pointed out a illustrative example in their article “Brands in an Age of Anti-Americanism”: "Yemeni students were out burning the American flag, chanting 'kill the Americans' in early March, notes Jack Valenti, CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America. "As soon as the theatres opened at 7 p.m., bingo, they were all in there." (“The Business-Week Magazine”, August 4, 2003). Here the idea of independent brands that might sustain a positive national external representation is sharply presented.

However, we should not forget, that the American model might fit a small number of global powers. They have succeeded for long a time to be major actors on the capitalist order and in the worldwide opinion. Yet, we would like to consider in our dissertation the opportunity for all nations to be worldwide known through their achievements, culture and other significant national characteristics. Accordingly, we have to face thousands of new, almost unknown identities, with vague global history, trying to be a

magnet for a bit of our attention. At the individual level this is beyond one's psychological capacity of discrimination as long as he/she is not assisted to associate special significations.

This is one of the reasons that made us see the nation as a competitor in a global informational war. The option is whether to base this war on your inherited faculties of development, as individual leading figures, cultural complexity and independent brands, or to articulate all these dimensions in a comprehensive mega-brand that will be developing along with the country's matchlessness. Some of the countries may consider appropriate to take no action and just wait to be discovered by the others, but there is a chance that this is not going to happen. One of the reasons against a natural breakthrough consists in the changing moods of the international direction of expansion and the interest trends promoted by those.

Recently, we have witnessed an affluence of nation advertisements on the Euro-news media channel for Arabian countries like Qatar, promoting tourism and United Arab Emirates emphasizing its mega commercial city Dubai. It is possible that these countries started to consider that after their oil reserves will be depleted they might face an economic crisis due to a one-dimensional character of their image.

The process of promoting a nation is not a new manoeuvre of the country's management structure. The presence of embassies, the Foreign ministers and the presence of an external political agenda are just a few examples of how states are making strong P.R. (public relations) efforts to negotiate a better position in the world. These are frequently assembled relating to special categories of interests as: business people, politicians, etc. But, the strategic use of branding programs is meant to target at the mass level, for the simple reason that the masses are the ones choosing politicians and buying products. Peter van Ham, Senior Research Fellow at the Netherlands Institute of International Relations "Clingendael" and the author of *European Integration and the Postmodern Condition*, shares his political visions:

“The traditional diplomacy of yesteryear is disappearing. To do their jobs well in the future, politicians will have to train themselves in brand asset management. Their tasks will include finding a brand niche for their state, engaging in competitive marketing, assuring customer satisfaction, and most of all, creating brand loyalty. Brand states will compete not only among themselves but also with superbrands such as the EU, CNN, Microsoft, and the Roman Catholic Church (boasting the oldest and most recognized logo in the world, the crucifix). In this crowded arena, states that lack relevant brand equity will not survive. The state, in short, will have become the State”. (“The Rise of the Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation”, 2001)

Politicians, actors, companies, all these entities have an image and they are continually trying to shape and improve it. This is also the case for nations. Either they like it or not, they render a version of their identity to the global audience which may be favourable, unfavourable or

somewhere in the middle, and which will strongly affect their interactions with the others. The competition provoked by the emergence of the capitalist principle to a global scale made obvious that the wealth and prosperity of the nations is coming from their own capacity to confer a cultural “added value” to their branded goods and services.

Each country has to bring its contribution to the global corpus of global knowledge. Marketing it is one of the most efficient (still not the more insightful) ways to realize that. The hermetic character of certain civilisations amplifies the danger of isolation and marginalisation. Hence marketing may find keys to unlock such cultural barriers.

This also represents a process of competing with their own weapons for the “Global South”, a new name for the countries outside the Western civilizations. The western world is projecting its own “brand culture” all over the planet, realizing a global cultural colonisation. Many postmodernist authors (as Edward Said) have deconstructed the concept of cultural superiority of the West. We will argue that, nowadays, the strength of the Western nations consists in knowing how to communicate.

## **II.2. How brands rule the economy**

For a long period of time developed countries have been using branding’s tools in order to exacerbate a demand based on a “country of origin effect” (Simon Anholt, 2002). Simon Anholt is regarded as one of the world’s leading specialists in the theory and practice of creating brand strategies for countries, cities and regions.

“Anholt benefits from a high international profile as a public speaker, author, and contributor to many branding and marketing publications, public sector and academic journals. He is a member of the UK Government’s Public Diplomacy Executive Committee and has advised several countries on branding issues including Croatia, Scotland, New Zealand, Latvia, Germany, the Czech Republic and Slovenia. He also works with bodies and organisations worldwide, such as the British Tourist Authority, the World Travel and Tourism Council, the World Bank, the United Nations, and the World technology Network. He is the author of the best-selling marketing book ‘Another One Bites The Grass’. He recently edited the Special Issue of the Journal of Brand Management on the subject of ‘Nation as Brand’, and his new book on the role of branding for developing countries, ‘Brand New Justice’, was published in 2002. Simon is a member of the European Cultural Parliament.” (www.placebrands.net)

Controlled acts of foreign policy or cultural production have promoted those nations, in the top of the consumer’s choices. Now, the poor countries might make use of this experience, as Anholt explains in his suggestive entitled book *Brand new justice: The upside of global Branding*, “to graduate from being mere suppliers of low-margin unbranded commodities to brand owners and branded destinations in their own right” (Simon Anholt, 2002: 16). The underlying power of post-industrial capitalism and its polarization lays in an understanding of

the cultural dimension that has to be conferred to the commodities in order to be demanded by consumers. Today technological innovation or the plain concepts of quality (as durability, usability) are sometimes secondary for large categories of products. Instead, fashion for example emphasizes them and helps the consumer to choose and to repeat the consumerist act sooner than he/she really would need to do that. This is a consequence of the production explosion and the need for its absorption. The deficiency in connecting with a brand or a negative association with it makes the commodity to be ignored. In this way, the underdeveloped countries are restraining considerably their possibilities to act efficiently on the global market.

Concerned with technology, infrastructure and legislation aspects, those nations are transformed in cheap labour sites and consumer markets. Following Anholt's argument we have to observe that the branding industry shapes a polarized world order. Developed companies are producing branded commodities helped by cheap labour force from rather underdeveloped countries, and then sell an important part back to those same people for high added value, taking back the little revenue that they made. These goods are enhanced with western cultural values, as for example "Nike" represents a symbol of United States, regardless of the country of fabrication, which is often Malaysia, Bulgaria, Romania, or China.

### **II.3. Distance between myth and reality**

In his book *Promotional Culture*, Andrew Wernik (1991) warns us that the symbolic construction of reality cannot be a neutral process where the promotional process simply "delivers back to people the culture and values that are their own". We get an altered image that typifies diversity and, deliberately get rid of what is confliction or stirs gloominess. The advertisers are building semiological systems out of "the bits and pieces of prevailing culture"(idem).

The myths are never innocent. Roland Barthes's analysis ("Wine and Milk"; in *Mythologies*, 1957) of wine quality and regular consumption myth, one of the French identity characteristics empowered by many leading politicians figures throughout the history, calls attention to legitimacy matters. Wine is considered by the French as a "totem-drink", like milk for the Dutch or tea for the British. Through wine, French intend a "spinning out of the pleasure" through the genuine act of drinking and not to the experience of getting drunk as

other cultures. “Drunkenness” comes sometimes as a consequence and not as an intention. This is emphasized in literature, proverbs and conversations. “ Drinking is a national technique which serves to qualify the French-man, to demonstrate at once his performance his control and his sociability” (Barthes, 1957: 59). Another aspect is the emphasis on understanding the brands: “...society calls anyone who does not believe in wine by names such as sick, disabled or depraved: it does not comprehend him” (ibid). Wine is also used together with the various sorts of cheese for ornamenting the ceremonials of French daily life.

The leaders of France have always had the duty to empower this image inside and outside the country. A mistake made by a French president, M. Coty, allowing him to be photographed with a bottle of beer, was strongly criticized by the entire society, “...it was as intolerable as having a bachelor king. Wine is here a part of the reason of state.” (ibid: 60). Although the prominence of wine might be considered a positive endeavour, wine being a fine substance, this is undoubtedly correlated with the capitalist colonial enterprise. Hence, wine is also a product of expropriation. The private distillers, settled in Algeria, imposed wine on the Muslims in their very land where the consumption of alcohol is also prohibited and where at the same time they are experiencing severe deficiencies in food supplies.

The brand itself tends to develop an artificial order, where the foremost effects are that the quality is quantified. As Barthes illustrates, a theatre play is good when the ticket is expensive or, as we may conclude from his presentation of “French wine myth”, you have to generously pay a large amount of money for an old “Bordeaux” wine bottle to emphasize your elevation. The ideological process by which, the capitalist system tends to transform “products of history into essential types”, (ibid: 155) is for the sake of entertainment and commodities selling. Therefore, the morality of the myth is obscure and its consistency is ambiguous, it represents “the very humanity of those who, having nothing, have borrowed it” (ibid: 157).

In the article “The Rise of the Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation”, Peter van Ham (2004) mentions:

“Look at the covers of the brochures in any travel agency and you will see the various ways in which countries present themselves on the world's mental map. Singapore has a smiling, beautiful face offering us tasty appetizers on an airplane, whereas Ireland is a windy, green island full of freckled, red-haired children. But do these images depict real places, existing geographical sites one can visit? Or do the advertisements simply use cultural stereotypes to sell a product?”

But yet, we still need a cultural collective identity as much as we need a representation of consistency about ourselves. The state as a protector of the nation might be required to understand and empower useful and constructive tendencies in a certain society although

often, this is an economic related project. The desire for the wealth of its people is not a vicious endeavour for the state as long as these efforts are not affecting other values. Economic security for its citizens represents one of the few missions left for a state challenged by identity affiliation conflicts. However, how these incentives are received and grasped by the internal and external audience represents a cultural occurrence.

The entity that promotes itself assembles an image for others according with the competitive imaging requests of the market. Irving Goffman (1959) is speaking of the self-staging or promotional self oriented character of the subject in our times. This is also true for a nation. There is a permanent need for reinventing itself in an attractive way in order to draw consideration. Therefore, an important concern for authenticity should be considered relating to the distance between the projection and its roots.

People choosing to work in the field of nation branding are often accused of “social engineering”, the “rewriting of history” (Simon Anholt, 2002). In fact, nation’s members, often see the intervention of marketing in a sacred area like the nation-state, as an intrusion. The concept of branding nations has been gone from rags to riches, from hated to embraced, seen as a tool in helping people or as a manipulative apparatus drowned by capitalistic prospective. In supporting its benign role, Anholt explains that branding it is a way of bringing up to surface values and it should be looked upon regardless of its economic discourse.

#### **II.4. Adding subjectivity and objectivity to the mix**

Scholars in this new field of nation branding like Wallie Olins<sup>1</sup>, Erich Joachimsthaler<sup>2</sup>, Jennifer L. Aaker<sup>3</sup> advise us not to construct the national image on lies or distortions. Aaker gives the example of Charlotte Beers, the former chief executive of the advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather, who has served for a year and a half as President’s Bush under-secretary of state for public diplomacy. Her mission was to sell America to the Middle East. Aaker explains her failure in achieving this aim by an inconsistency in the real understanding capabilities of U.S.A. in front of the Arabic culture that has caused an

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<sup>1</sup> Wallie Olins, one of the most famous authors in the field of nation branding, is the founder of Wolff Olins company which is known for its contribution to several nation branding campaigns as the U.S.A., Portugal, Germany and Great Britain.

<sup>2</sup>Erich Joachimsthaler (chief executive of Vivaldi Partners, a four-year-old agency that specializes in branding)

<sup>3</sup>Jennifer L. Aaker (associate professor of marketing at Stanford’s Graduate School of Business) quoted by Jim Rendon, “When Nations Need a Little Marketing”, New York Times, November 23, 2003.

unfavourable USA image in an area in which is almost impossible to change just through marketing efforts.

Naomi Klein, who is also analysing this case, indicates the problem was not with the brand, but with its product as: “U.S. unilateralist in the face of international laws, widening wealth disparities, crackdowns on immigrants and human rights violations” (“The Spectacular Failure of Brand USA” by Naomi Klein, LA Times, March 11, 2002) in opposition with largely known American brand identity values as “claims to democracy, liberty and equal opportunity” (ibid). She criticized the approach of this issue as a communication problem instead of a real content related one.

If to some extent this is an honest advice, as we have shown before the process of promotion cannot reflect the plain reality, but an altered image. As we saw in the regular commodities’ advertising, we consider it is possible for a national campaign to construct images based on myths. If for example Romania would assemble, let us say, its tourism campaign on Dracula’s myth, a lot of visitors are going to be satisfied just with some artificial superficial stories. Surely, these fantasies have to possess, at least, a solid infrastructure made to sustain them. This is the entertaining role of promotion, which might also create the value that it tries to sell. No one but the children expects to discover the “truth” about Tom and Jerry when they go to Disneyland.

But of course, this is not entirely sustainable when we refer to a campaign targeted to promote business facilities or such. Here, people expect of a modern legislation, honesty, stability, and a good viability of democratic institutions. Any attempt to present different versions of truth regarding this specific set of concerns goes to discredit the nation involved.

In this course of ideas, we are fully aware of the consequences of a highly expensive campaign for a country lacking in fundamentally democratic institutions and basic facilities as communication networks, accessible roads and so on. Instead of spending for the amelioration of these conditions, investing the public money in gigantic commissions requested by western marketing “experts”, might be a suffocating action without consistent results, as an expert commentator seems to realize and explain on one of the forums that we have examined:

“One problem is the amount of money required to promote a 'national brand' -- for example, we understand that promoting Colombia as a country for high-quality coffee costs US\$ 35 million a year. For us, anything that costs more than US\$ 3 million is a lot, and probably for many other developing countries, too.” (Ricardo Estrada, Executive President, CORPEI, Ecuador, “Brainstorming - Projecting Value: Is there a Case for National Branding?” Prepared by Morton Scholer, ITC), [www.intracen.org](http://www.intracen.org)



(from [www.juanvaldez.com](http://www.juanvaldez.com))

A solid point of departure is considered often constructive. However, after that has been established, the creative team might be using a little degree of freedom. As Fiona Gilmore (2004) was pleading for, the valuable ingredient of a branding campaign for a nation is actually the amplification of something that is to be found already within that culture, and not a fabrication. The effort to reposition a country might be anchored in some national features and the process might not imply erasing anything out of them. Nevertheless, the intensification of a particular characteristic may diminish some of the stereotypical perception about a certain nation, being false or real.

### **III The concept and the methodological aspects of nation branding strategy**

#### **III.1. The targets**

A largely used definition of national branding is “the way a country or a nation is perceived by the audience”(“Nation branding”, [www.disinfopedia.org](http://www.disinfopedia.org)). We can add that this particular audience is formed by two categories. The foreigners represent often the side that receives the most efforts, while the other one is composed by the nation’s own people. As a strict marketing strategy, building a nation brand has to take into account its costumers, setting its target, and it should search not only for international recognition, but as well, a consistency that would involve appreciation on a national scale. Thus, an important amount of influence might be placed equally on all the segments involved in this process: the participants, the emitters and the consumers.

As we have shown in the previous chapter, the concept of national identity is not static; it evolves and takes pretty much into consideration a social, economic and political particular context. Therefore, in order for a nation to become a successful brand it is recommendable to fit the actual context in which it arises. The people represents an important element in the process of propagating a certain image of national identity, throughout their achievements, their experiences and exchanges among themselves and with people from other parts of the world. Also, presumably they are the beneficiaries on the long term of those programs.

“Marius Ursache It is a huge responsibility. A nation's branding is not only design and advertising. It's not only imagery. It's a program where every member of the nation is involved, more or less. Responsibilities start with the government's conduit, and it is the government who should have the initiative. And the brand should be created both as image and as other means of perception—such as tone of voice— and this is why a design agency is not enough. You also need consulting in PR and political sciences as well as input from various areas, such as public opinion, internal and international press, political analysts, and so on.” ([www.wirereality<sup>1</sup>.com](http://www.wirereality1.com))

In a successful scenario every country would be entitled to gain international recognition. In the final phase of the branding process their national identity would be globally acknowledged. This course of action is meant to have a feedback effect, providing a particular nation will benefit from interacting internationally, as well as in terms of developing its own set of beliefs about its national identity. (This might be the case for nations like Italy related with style, Switzerland with precision, or the USA with status and prestige through global leadership.)

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<sup>1</sup> Wirereality is an international discussion group on branding identity. It is a Romanian initiative of a logo-design company named “Grapefruit-design”. The participants are experts, professionals or students in advertising and branding related domains. The virtual lively debates are taking place on an on-line forum. Also the group has a weekly web-publication “Weekly-Wire” containing illustrating articles concerning branding identity issues. Marius Ursache is one of the founding members of this on-line community and is actively involved in the ongoing debates and published materials. We were able to become members, and gained the permission to participate and monitor the discussions.

Another tip for a successful campaign is a systematic reminder of the brand to both the people from the launching nation as well as to the international consumers. If it has no consistency, a nation-brand could either fail or become just a passing trend, as its powerful influence will be diminished by time or by other more influential nations coming around on the same market place.

An additional very important aspect is that the branding strategy usually requires finding a number of supporters in order to thrive. It cannot start from scratch without a backup team, a small army of believers and followers. Next step would be trying to enlarge as much as possible the rows of supporters.

### **III.2. Positioning**

In economy, the role of the brand is to position and differentiate a product or a company on the market relating to the slightly similar ones. In the context of globalisation and growing economy, this is crucial. Consumers are assaulted by thousands of products and the brands are acting as orientation guides and emotional connectors in the choosing process. Consequently, we may argue that due to globalisation, the national identity is challenged. More and more we observe the dissolution of the local into the global, or the national into continental (ex: the new European identity).

As Giddens (1991) argues, time and space are shrinking their boundaries. Additionally, the amelioration of economic opportunities and the “monopolization” of media production provide almost similar inputs to a new generation who is often assembling its identity on other coordinates than national inheritance. These circumstances facilitate average areas inhabited by countries that offer similar opportunities. From this perspective, the differentiation role of the brand is an advantageous tool, which could help people focus their attention on certain directions and also make them aware of the exclusiveness of their choice.

If, lets say Romania would like to prop up its opportunity for investments in IT, due to a cheap and qualified labour, then it has to acknowledge that most of its the neighbouring countries (Bulgaria, Ukraine, Hungary and Moldavia) have also similar offers. One should try to find a particular special feature, which makes this country a better choice

among the others. A possible efficient strategy is to connect the country's image with one or several of its prominent members<sup>1</sup>.

Savas Kyriacou and Thomas Cromwell give an extreme example in their work *The Concepts and Benefits of Nation Branding* (2004). One distinction between Ivory Coast and Columbia consists in their different approach of branding their main export product. If the Ivory Coast is producing 40% of the global coffee beans, Columbia, with less production resources has managed to impose itself in the mind of the consumers as the symbol of coffee. Accordingly, due to advertising efforts, using a successful logo (The image of Juan Valdez and the slogan "since 1981") Columbia has taken the premium market of the coffee, obtaining high prices for less quantity, while Ivory Coast is associated with low quality and cheap production.

### **III.3. The complexity of the national specific**

An important specific characteristic of the national brand is given by its complexity and diverse deregulated character. From this point of view N. Klein is pessimistic regarding the possibility for a nation to be projected as a brand: "The task is not only futile but also dangerous: brand consistency and true human diversity are antithetical, one seeks similarity, the other celebrates difference, one fears all unscripted messages, the other embraces debate and dissent." ("Naomi Responds to the Economist Cover" by N. Klein, Sept. 7/2001). John Kaye sustains Klein's opinion:

"To use the concept of brand in relation to the nation, implying one over-arching bundle of values and associations aimed at potential consumers is to stretch the concept too far. Sure, people have an image of other nations/states, but I feel the relationship is much more complex than the traditional (or even modern) brand management theories are set up to deal with. There are too many audiences and too many interrelations to manage in the same way as a business brand, even over long periods of time. The 'tourist' brand concept, of say, beefeaters and thatched cottages for England, has very limited use and is completely irrelevant at the inter-country relations level." (John Kaye Consultant - England in [www.fastcompany.com](http://www.fastcompany.com) "Is the practice of nation branding important?")

Klein sees nation branding as an attempt of the power and authority structures to emulate in the society. She explains how the world was confined to a hegemonic corporatist system, based on the "brandification" of the values, and how it has imposed a homogenized global discipline "... a fascist state where we all salute the logo and have little opportunity for

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<sup>1</sup> In this particular case the fact that a Romanian antivirus software was bought recently by Microsoft for twenty millions dollars in order to become, the official protection program for Windows might be used to sustain a slogan as "Romanians.... Beautiful Minds!"

criticism because our newspapers, television stations, Internet servers, streets and retail spaces are all controlled by multinational corporate interests" ("Naomi Responds to the Economist Cover" by N. Klein, Sept. 7, 2001). She accuses the corporate culture of surrogating brand for substance (decent jobs and conditions). Nevertheless, she is not denying the power of consumer's reflexivity materialized in political activism. "I am too optimistic to take such a view: if human beings really are compliant brand drones, why are they taking to the streets in the hundreds of thousands, from Seattle to Genoa?" (ibid).

In a debate following the book *No Logo*, ("The Spectacular Failure of Brand USA" by Naomi Klein, March 11, 2002, LA Times) Klein explains the threats of the national branded identity through the dissemination of an exclusivist vision pertaining to a divergent corpus of identities. Wallie Olins, a person implicated in an attempt of improving U.S.A.'s image, found very hard to synthesize common characteristic values for such a complex and diverse population as various researches furnished contradictory responses. This argument offered Klein the opportunity to assign the promotion of strong non-conflictive identities to dictatorial regimes, as the communist or the Nazis one. Olins mentions that even on an individual level it is difficult to unravel a clear idea about a country's identity: "people don't have a single clear idea about what the country stands for, but rather have dozens if not hundreds of ideas that are mixed up in people's heads in a most extraordinary way. So you will often find people both admiring and abusing America, even in the same sentence."(ibid). We will argue that these efforts, if properly valorised, might be meant to stimulate and not homogenize.

In accordance with this line of arguing we will give a very well known example: the choice of a logo and slogan for one of the most famous American cities: "I love New York". According to Kate Stohr (2003), the initial purpose of the "I love NY" slogan and logo was to reinforce tourism in New York State, after the financial crisis of 70's<sup>1</sup>.

After the September 11 events, Milton Glaser (the author of the logo) enhanced its vision and proposed: "I love NY more than ever" having a subtly blackened area in the bottom left-hand corner of the heart. This idea did not received endorsement from the New York state officials, as the former motto had still a strong grip on people's consciousness.

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<sup>1</sup> "Crime was rampant and, then as now, the city's coffers were empty. Businesses (and their employees) were leaving the city in droves. Fear permeated perceptions of the city, and tourism was suffering." ..... "Launched in 1977, the "I love NY" design became one of the most recognizable logos of any city in the world. The campaign was so successful it was plastered on everything from coffee mugs, to buttons, to bumper stickers. John Lennon and other boldfaced names have all been famously photographed wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the slogan, and the state still sells official "I Love NY" merchandise today". (Kate Stohr, "I Sell New York", Gotham-gazette, March 17, 2003)



(from [www.popartuk.com](http://www.popartuk.com))



(from [www.ultrasparky.org](http://www.ultrasparky.org))

This motto has been helping a lot in the economic recovery of this city in a moment of crisis. As we could imagine, this constitutes ingenious cultural identity stimulation, inspiring confidence, empathy, pride harmony or collective ambition to overcome the hard times. The incentive was meant to stimulate cultural identification efforts without imposing models. It is imposing and homogenizing, if you will think that there are people whom really dislike New York. However this is a positive approach, meant to find solution to a contradictory American icon.

Wallie Olins considers that one-dimensional images are damaging for the nation. Subsequently, he recommends the construction of multidimensional, diverse national brands. Participating in a project for the reconstruction of German identity, he proposes the mixed concept of diversity and unity in the same time:

“Diversity and Unity works on many levels. For example, it captures the essence of European integration, which does not seek to remove national and local differences but rather to respect them while creating favourable conditions for development everywhere ....Germany is undeniably diverse. Many traditions, dialects and ideas of German-ness coexist. Yet Germany is also recognizably one nation. Historically, building the nation was a struggle to impose unity on diversity. We suggest that new Germany can become the standard-bearer for a different logic, a logic of inclusion.” (DEbate Project; <http://www.wolff-olins.com/news2002.htm>)<sup>1</sup>

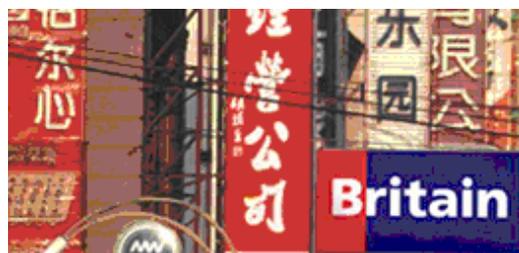
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<sup>1</sup> Wolff Olins is recognised as the one of most influential nation branding agency. It is founded by Wallie Olins. Wolff Olins is the creator and initiator of the DEbate Project, which began in 1998. The DEbate Project (DE stands for Deutschland Europa) aims to make people in Germany aware of the issues raised above, and to encourage them to get involved. The Manifesto is designed to provide an impetus and basis for carrying the DEbate into broad segments of the public and to bring about concrete actions. To this end, the DEbate uses the preliminary work of branding strategists Wolff Olins, which in 1998 began to focus on Germany as a global brand.



Promoting a new national flag and a logo for Germany. Blue represents the European belonging, replacing Black, a colour with Nazi connotations ([www.wolff-olins.com](http://www.wolff-olins.com))

This kind of approach was sustained by Wallie's promotion agency after a relatively failure with another campaign for Britain. Fiona Gilmore (2004) describes how this program, "Cool Britannia", failed to enfold the desired population<sup>1</sup>. The strategy did not take into consideration that at least half of the British population is not so keen on avant-garde like the slogan proposed. Moreover, most of the companies willing to do business here are actually counting to find traditional based features such as respect, reputation and trustworthiness. The brand was simply not inclusive enough and amplified only one facet of Britain. According to Gilmore's theory, it is constructive to amplify one particular aspect in order to sway attitudes, but this aspect should not fail to be presented in its wider framework.



Sample from *Cool Britannia* campaign emphasizing cultural diversity

Brands are the vehicles through which consumers find out first information about a country's identity. Naomi Klein considers brands as the closest thing to an international language: "Most of the world's six billion people could identify the McDonald's sign, or the Coca-Cola symbol—we are united by what we are being sold." ("Hand-to-brand Combat" by Katharine Viner, *The Guardian*, September 23, 2000).

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<sup>1</sup> "Cool Britannia", emerged some years ago, following a British Council's research it revealed that people outside UK have an image of this nation as strongly related to the past and pretty aged in what concerns thinking and life approaches. In order to overcome this image a branding promotion was launched. "Cool Britannia" was made to portray the new national identity proliferating to the people and businesses located here that they too could gain this coolness just by association.

An outcome of those “brand-informed” images is that they tend to create stereotypes. This often creates difficulties for “non-typical” commodities to be demanded. If Germany is associated with successful engineering products, it is very difficult for fashion related commodities to impose themselves on the market. For example, a company like Hugo Boss tries to conceal its national origin in order to compete with other brands, such the Italian ones, which have the advantageous national identity links with fashion and style. Hence, the proliferation of thousands of unknown trademarks of shoes, for example, just by choosing a name with Italian resonance.

However, standardization might be seen from different angles. For instance the specialization of regions and nations in a limited amount of directions sustained and protected through special programs by state governments. Hence, in a global economy this particular “professionalization” of world areas encloses a beneficial effect for perception and positioning parameters in the eyes of global audience. Additionally, the self-developing of dedicated regions, in a way of a chain effect generator, facilitates accessibility, shared experience and more (for example “Silicon Valley” for IT industry).

For the cultural identity dimension, the occurrence of homogeneous stereotypes pleads for a diversity of concerns in constructing national representations. Not only the brands might be regarded as the key channel of communication. Direct experience could be encouraged also, by tourism, cultural manifestations. These features need a support from the state in order to be internationally acknowledged. As well, foreign policy decisions may possibly be converged in a strategy. The capacity of a country to communicate its values is often empowered by its members’ level of openness. Therefore, one of the general recommendations made in a strategy of national promoting is to sustain the international character of education. The unrelenting study of foreign languages in schools is an example of such long-term measures. However, we have to keep in mind that we are taking part in a global economy and culture. Consequently, it is presumably efficient to identify those directions in which one may easily obtain performance and try to emphasize them.

The collapse in understanding the prospect of a national branding process is sometimes connected with deficiencies in grasping the complex structure of the sub-identities involved. Chris Macrae, one of the participants in an Internet discussion points out:

“Failure to understand the opportunities of nation brand architecture begins with a blindness to all the sub-identities and constituencies whose livelihoods should constantly have a people's voice: involving urgent human needs as well as the cultural heritage of where people are coming from and where they aspire to go”. (“People forgotten by branding”, [www.egroups.com/group/needsmarketing](http://www.egroups.com/group/needsmarketing))

Moreover, it is important to take into consideration the active and reflexive role of the audience. The concept of “articulation” (Storey, 2001:106) is used in the neo-gramscian hegemony theory by Stuart Hall to explain the ideological struggle between the generators of meaning and the ones that decipher it. The second ones are playing an active role. The meanings are not guaranteed but are rather articulated in different forms. Cultural texts and practices are “multiaccentual”, “that is, they can be spoken with different accents by people in different discourses and social contexts for different politics.” (ibid: 106). Although the neo-gramscians do not deny the manipulating intensions of the advertising industry, they promote the idea of a popular culture made out of an repertoire of commodities, which can be “empowering to subordinate and resistant to dominant understanding of the world” (ibid: 108). In our special matter, the state is suppose to have the mission to stimulate national culture and civilization as much as to be able to produce what Karl Marx (ibid: 109) calls “exchange value”. How people understand to produce this value and moreover, how the consumers are using it (“producing in use”) is a very diverse activity, and it might often turn against the interest of the state.

The challenge implied in such a nationwide enterprise is to unite within diversity, to restore national pride and team spirit in a common purpose to achieve prosperity and performance. If a country’s citizens would find out that their civic and cultural attainments are recognized throughout the world, this might be challenging for constructing a productive cultural environment.

#### **III.4. The Holistic approach**

Consequently to the managerial decision, followed by the marketer’s tools and strategies, the process of branding a nation comes to encounter and dismiss prejudiced or erroneous thoughts about a certain nation, and launch a new image that could lead to an appropriate understanding. To fulfil these premises the process of brand building should be a holistic one. The promotion strategy targets a diverse range of collective and individual identities and it is desirable to encompass as much as possible. One successful example of branding a nation is Malaysia which under a short slogan succeeded to shelter information that could fill a book, although not disclosing much of it: “Malaysia truly Asia!”

A holistic approach is much needed not only for tourism which can most of the time exploit one side that is likely to be attractive to most potential tourists, but especially for

families relocating in new territories. A family represents by its own, a place where diversity meets with different needs and interests and it would be more likely for it to relocate to a place where a holistic approach to life is portrayed. A country where all the potential members could find something to be attracted to is usually preferred. For example city nightlife for youngsters, developed healthcare for the elderly people, business or wage opportunities for middle age persons and women rights development. These are just some of the various possible requests. Of course, even in the example quoted before, regarding Malaysia, there is a lot left unsaid, too. Seamus Phan (2002) was arguing that this fact has also its own meaning, leaving people to fill them up according to their individuality and transforming the every day life of every day people into “amazing resort-filled lives”.

The representative character of such a brand might be obtained by a sustained dialog between government, decision makers, business, cultural and civil community, leaders, N.G.O.'s and individuals of the population. They will help to define the cultural, social, economic, political, geographical and linguistic context of the country. Also outside sources, as visitors, investors, foreign consumers and many others are called to participate in this debate in order to comment upon the reliability of the ideas selected.

This dialog is meant to stimulate, to brainstorm the participants and to create an articulation between various interests and not just to exercise seeking the lowest common denominator. A participant in one of the on-line forums mentions:

“A nation’s integrity (respect in the rest of the world) will likely be determined by this sub-branding choice. Some vital constituencies to sub-brand could be: The young generation so they have a voice in where they want their country’s future as well as its history to go. In developing countries, every group of people who has a life-critical human value demand (clean water, gender equality etc). By owning an activist sub-brand they can network their issue in full transparency & award it as an ‘oscar’ certification to companies and other famous identities that truly improve their life . (Social example: could symbolically twin itself with some of world’s poorest sub-brands instead of rich cities)” (Chris Macrae, brand typologist – London, in [www.fastcompany.com](http://www.fastcompany.com) “Is the practice of nation branding important?”)

What we can extract from Macrae’s statement is the possibility of identifying the forces described in the previous chapter making use of the theoretical frame offered by Castells. Subsequently, from this dialog we have to become aware of what is perceived as legitimised structures, the resistant tendencies, and most of all, the collective project identities capable to develop new social meanings and to reconfigure the map of the regarded society.

In this matter the “DEbate Project” for Germany has been materialized in a set of workshops around several major questions. The results were used in order to give answers to a conceptual frame named “brand matrix” which is the empirical base of a brand construction:

1. *Positioning*: The core question was: "What does Germany, as a brand, stand for?" for example, with regard to products, services, and international relations.
2. *Presence*: The question focused on uniquely German symbols, as well as on uniquely German values and attitudes.
3. *Capability*: Core questions were "What are the special strengths of Germany as a brand?" and "What are the services that Germany, as a brand, can offer in the context of international competition?"
4. *Culture*: This discussion focused on the question of what it means to be German today. (DEbate Project; <http://www.wolff-olins.com/news2002.htm>)

The outputs of these workshops were used to generate answers to the following questions:

- “What is the future of Germany, the brand?
- What should Germany signify, in Europe and elsewhere in the world?
- What identity and which values should Germany, the brand, embody?
- Which modern image is suitable for Germany's future development?” (ibid)

### III.5. General levels of communication

Regarding the levels on which a nation might communicate its branding intentions, we were able to scrutinize a theoretical frame exposed on one of the leading nation branding company's web site, "Placebrands", a company founded by Simon Anholt<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly, for the most part, nations communicate through "six channels". These channels are represented in a hexagon, symbolizing the attempt of aligning communication through them for the purpose of projecting a "clear and powerful long strategic vision".

#### *Tourism*

Is the most overt form of branding a nation and usually is the one that is indulged with the biggest capital and marketing investments. Still, the image it can offer is rather unilateral. In order to be a successful flagging of a nation it must be linked to all of the other channels of communication.

#### *Export brands*

A national brand that is largely known at an international level, which is distinctive and attractive, is one of the richest assets a country can have and give to export. A powerful, distinctive, broad-based and appealing national brand is the most valuable feature of a state: think what 'Made in Japan' does for electronics, or 'Made in Italy' for fashion. Exporting brands is one of the most powerful ways of constructing and maintaining a national image.

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<sup>1</sup> "I was getting bored with spending my life making already rich companies a little bit richer," quoted by Jim Rendon 2003 are the words of Simon Anholt when he decided to open its own agency branding Placebrands. Its goal: "to help countries develop themselves as brands, with a carefully managed international identity, as recognizable as any consumer product. He has worked with Germany, Britain and New Zealand, in addition to Croatia and Slovenia, and is now in negotiations with Mongolia." Jim Rendon 2003, "When Nations Need a Little Marketing", New York Times, November 23, 2003

### *Foreign and domestic policy*

The social and political leaders and the part they assume in the foreign and internal policies. This dimension may be regarded with care to the strategic imperatives of the brand. It plays an important role in the image that is perceived and judged by other nations. Policies are suggested to be in an amiable connection with the other channels of communication.

### *People*

The people represent one of the channels of communication that can translate some of the complex characteristics and contradictory aspects of a country to the world. We are referring here at the people as ordinary citizens, not just the obvious propagandistic channels like the media or the politicians. People who could become ambassadors of their country and who can induce positive changes for their nation.

### *Investment and immigration*

Countries of intense development stay testimony of how they attract, integrate, and invest in talent and facilitate business ventures, which were a recurrent cause for their growth. A nation brand can have the power to create positive responses and attract forces to precarious sites.

### *Culture and heritage*

Governments might not treat growth as only an economic issue. This approach would only run the risk of developing a two-dimensional brand image, significant only for investors, and other similar concerns. Culture and heritage are means to provide a third dimension, giving to the nation the sense of sumptuousness, distinction, confidence and respect abroad, and quality of life at home.

As we understood from the neo-gramscian analysis, the messages communicated through these channels are multi-accentual, containing different accents and levels of interpretation. For example, tourism may be used very well to communicate positive understandings regarding foreign and domestic policies of a state. Croatia, a client of “Placebrands” is developing an articulate image of tourist natural paradise. The experts chose this image in order to overcome the country’s usual association with an old Nazi regime or with the uncertainty generated by the recent Serbo-Croatian war.

Another case pointed out in a forum debate, revealed that tourism might show a better understanding of a country’s capability to produce qualitative commodities, although this is affected by existent branded perceptions.

Giovanna Ceglie, UNIDO:”You need also to differentiate between branding to encourage tourism and branding to encourage production or investment. And when you achieve a brand, you may not be the only benefit. In at least one West African country, you can visit major shoe markets and find all the shoes 'made in Italy', but of course they are all made locally.

Serafin N. Juliano, Director, Bureau of Export Trade Promotion, Department of Trade and Industry, Philippines: 'Made in Italy' is also an issue for us. One major hotel in Las Vegas obtained 70% of its marble from the Philippines and 30% from Italy, but it is promoted as being built with Italian marble." ("Brainstorming - Projecting Value: Is there a Case for National Branding?" Prepared by Morton Scholer, ITC )

### **III.6. Brands and Commercial culture**

The principle enounced by Raymond Williams that “culture is ordinary”, requires from us to reassert the cultural area to all the “questions of significance matters, that every human being routinely addresses in their every day practices and experiences.” (Tomlinson, 1999: 19). “The economic” affects us in our every day life and, people generate in contact with it specific meanings which can be different of any intention. The economic, the cultural and the politic are intertwined areas.

The brands are loaded with symbolic representations, but most of them have an instrumental economic<sup>1</sup> end. Still, we often identify “narratives of how life may be lived, references to shared notions of identity, appeals to self image, pictures of “ideal” human relations, versions of human fulfilment, happiness and so on.” (ibid). Jean-Marie Dru, a branding wonder kid, anthropomorphizes brands in his book “Disruption”: "Apple expresses liberty regained; Pepsi, youthfulness; Oil of Olay, timeless beauty; Saturn, the American competitive spirit; and AT&T, the promises of the future." (“Branding”, Adbuster Magazine 1988). For Dru, brands acquire complex personalities, which are truly communicating through opinions and attitudes. At the semiotic level the relationship between the sign and the object is seen upturned; the sign absorbs now more reality than its object.

Many big corporations support cultural manifestations hoping that people would attach a sort of edifying label to their image. They would like to be perceived as civilized, philanthropic, and with concern for community’s needs. The public relation department is in charge with applying this philosophy. In this way, Pepsi-Cola has refreshed consumer’s appetite with its unchanged product for a period of over fifty years. Through each concert sponsored or through each artist staring in Pepsi’s commercials, people realize how cool is to consume this drink. The technological revolution did not affect this company because it built

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<sup>1</sup> Baudrillard (1981) analyzed the economic oriented character of the promotion. He illustrated “the union of sign and commodity” describing how culture has been taken over by economy. The domain of expressive communication has been immersed in the larger function of marketing. The new stage of capitalism, require a focusing on mass marketing rather than to technical improvement. The material necessity for new commodities isn’t the aim of business anymore but the “symbolic consumption” the acquisition of products due to their enhanced cultural value.

its product's image on cultural representation associations. As Naomi Klein (2000) remarked, the main purpose of advertising today has shifted from selling a product to "selling dreams through brands". Ultimately, selling training gear for Nike has become secondary to improving and boosting up people's lives through sport, as well as IBM does not sell computers anymore but keys to many situations and problems.

Also the brands, as economic entities, empowered and represented through advertising and design, are part of our visual culture. We identified a cultural movement, "Society for the Conservation of Urban Visual Heritage", having a web site project, [www.loslogos.org](http://www.loslogos.org), which main concern is preserving the visual legacy of the national and specific brand representations in different metropolitan areas of the world by assembling together, in the virtual space, relevant pictures of the world cities.

"Loslogos.org wants to protect, or at least conserve the graphic appearance of the world's cities. Through globalisation, large international companies are changing the face of streets all over the world, with the omnipresence of their brands. A lot of unique and characteristic local type and logo-artwork has to make room for marketing strategies and corporate design of the global players. Sooner or later, we lose the unique spirit that inherits each city. Loslogos.org wants to collect local logo and type design before they disappear and put them together in a virtual city. Help us, by taking pictures of logos and typefaces of your own city and places you visit". ([www.loslogos.org](http://www.loslogos.org))

Culture is not always an unbeneficial enterprise by itself. Often concerts, books, exhibitions, movies, theatre plays, football games gain their own revenue. However, the collateral benefits generated by cultural manifestations for the nation has to be taken in consideration by the state and adequately sustained.

### **III.7. Using cultural specific in nation branding**

The brands have inherited, nowadays, the function of cultural transmitters. Simon Anholt illustrates the example of Switzerland, which for the younger generations of foreigners is often associated with Swatch or Swiss Army (branded products) than to Wilhelm Tell or other historical figures. He sees this also as a way of cultural exchange on a global scale: "Adding culture and heritage to the mix is simply one way to ensure that all conversations between countries do not descend into mere advertising, and that there is still cultural exchange on a global scale, intelligent dialogue, sharing of insights and learning" (Simon Anholt, 2002: 49).

Promoting a representation of national culture is not a direct instrument for economic prosperity. If brands may give confidence to the consumers, culture is performing a

covert role. When people grasp a deep understanding of the cultural values and achievements of a country, they tend to become attached to it, diminishing their defence mechanisms oriented against advertising and the vainness of commodities. The presence of a third party is accepted and needed by the consumer. General ads regarding tourism, documentaries about “ways of life”, articles in magazines, movies or hints on television programs, are more liable to convince. Considering that global tourism produced a flat representation of attractive places, “sandy beaches and good wheatear”, we have to think how important it is for a tourist to search for cultural value in its decision to visit a country.

The rising of “Boolywood”, an Indian alternative to the American movie industry centre “Hollywood”, that is capable to sustain national movie productions might create an amplified magnetism for travelling around this fascinating country and facilitate a cultural dialog and understanding. For example, the cultural dialogue can be foreseen from an article found in “Entertainment News India”:

“Cinema India : Bollywood: Sanjay Suri signs film with 'Sex and the City' star  
The latest to join the look-West gang is the affable and grossly underrated Sanjay Suri who stars in a full-length English film - with a smattering of Hindi, of course - with "Sex and the City" actor Jason Lewis.” (“Entertainment News India”, Mumbai, May 14, 2004, [www.bollywoodworld.com](http://www.bollywoodworld.com))

Thus, culture ensures the inimitable character of a product or destination. This is impossible to obtain through the classic marketing procedures.

Also, we consider that the supremacy of technology is not one’s monopoly. Every day the market is challenged by new discoveries. The fashion changes rapidly. Nevertheless, the national culture could be regarded as a slow moving process, which might give stability in a positioning process. Some of the developed nations understood these potential and have developed international institutions of promoting culture. The French institute, the German “Goethe Institute” or the British Council are illustrative examples, although they are often perceived as highly elitist cultural promoters failing to reach large audiences<sup>1</sup>.

The human dimension offered by Japanese philosophy, German classical music, Italian opera or American jazz and pop, helps consumers to defend their reluctance to an avalanche of commodities coming towards them and to maintain their attachment although,

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<sup>1</sup> This is one of the reasons why “British Council”, for example, is involved in a process of reframing itself with the support of experts. From Wolff-Olins web site, the company involved in this process, we acknowledge how the new brand sounds like: “It creates opportunities which have the potential to enhance the life chances and experience of the people it reaches.” In practice the vision continues to enable the Council to focus and streamline its activity in ways that make it far easier to demonstrate its usefulness to the U K, which should help to secure its long term future as the primary arm of British cultural diplomacy overseas.”

those products are easy to replicate. An actual dare for the nations is to find ways to recurrently re-emphasize their inheritance along with recent developments. In order to do so, they can refresh the cultural legacy of the past and adapt it at the present realities of multiculturalism and diversity<sup>1</sup>

National cultural identity is used also as a hint for assigning personality characteristics. Simon Anholt (2002: 112) mentions, “Sport is associated to strength, courage, physical prowess, agility, determination, team spirit, honour, fair play. Pop music equates to street credibility, flexibility, creativity, imagination, a sense of fun.” Also, a potential for a successful nation brand lays in a more concerted focus on people who achieved exceptional results, for instance, “long-distance runners from Kenya, gymnasts from Romania, musicians from Cuba or past explorers from Scotland”(F. Gilmore, 2002: 78).

The promotion of national culture sustains the cultural output by stimulating a demand for new cultural products and, also by ensuring prosperity often necessary for its non-commercial forms. Still, this is an arguable idea, knowing that culture may survive and develop outside the economic circle.

### **III.8. Significant mediums and techniques of national identity communication**

#### *III.8.a. The creative industries*

A special component of actual culture having an important role in shaping the national image is represented by the so-called “creative industries”. Those are represented by advertising, graphic design, music video-clips, television, radio, web-design and have emerged from economic activities. The quality of such domains is perceived by a large category of public. In fact, they have nowadays a bigger impact than the classical forms of culture like theatre, symphonic music or other forms that are genuinely connected with modernity and the designated architectural edifices that they were institutionalised in.

We will try to describe their impact, content and capacity to contribute in the process of representation about one’s self and the Other. After we elaborated on the content of

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<sup>1</sup> The England example is illustrative: England is confronting itself with a caught in the past of its image. People tend to associate England with its reach history and its long monarchical traditions. Hence, it is very important for the industry to shift the spotlight from traditions to technological superiority of its actual time. As a consequence they are investing a lot in alternative movie and music industry hoping to become bright in the world’s perception. But as we will comment further on this case, these attempts are meant to fail when they try to totally exclude the influence of their cultural legacy. Embracing the new doesn’t mean a totally shift of society but a continuum developing process founded of what past has had as positive influences.

national identity, we consider necessary to describe the main general pathways through which, in our opinion, a country could focus its communication strategies.

### III.8.b. *Mass Media*

The globalisation process has transformed the media into a powerful tool of propaganda. The institutions of the culture-ideology of consumerism, as expressed through the trans-national mass media, are the “primary agents in the cultural-ideological sphere” (Leslie Sklair, 2002). From documentaries, entertainment shows or movies, we often shape our image about the unknown Others. Therefore, we are contaminated of subjectivity. Nevertheless, instead of recognizing our unawareness, we accept to construct images based on what we receive from mediated sources. Baudrillard investigates these occurrences through the concept of simulation, “the generation by models of a real without origins of reality: a hyperreal”. (Baudrillard quoted by Storey, 2001: 152). Hence, the perception of reality is blended together with imaginary elements. As John Fiske described: “the post-modern media no longer provides secondary representations of reality; they affect and produce the reality that they mediate” (Fiske quoted by Storey, 2001: 154). Baudrillard gives the example of “Rambo character” that typifies what large parts of the American public thinks about Vietnam. The audience is emotionally empathizing with the hero due to the artistic qualities of the movie and consequently, they are adopting the character’s ready-made discourse.

As we have argued before, the mass entertainment, fashioned by media production centres (such as Hollywood for movies, CNN, Euronews, etc for news and documentaries, MTV, VH1 for music video clips) can have such an impact on the global audience, which depending on their quality and success is possible to sustain and empower positive nation identity representations even in the absence of a convergence with political strategy. Nevertheless, domains like movie production or multicultural media channels generally require to be sustained not only by national policies, but also by large regional and multinational entities as the European Union for example, due of the huge expenses implied.

Music video-clips are always a good example of a how a country’s cultural trends may became rapidly internationally known with a minimal investment. Another one is the production of small attractive focused documentaries on topics that they intend to make more noticeable.

### III.8.c. *Advertising*

Advertising is regarded as one of media's most proficient instruments of propaganda. It represents the channel through which capitalism has spread the consumerist phenomenon generating artificial needs just for the purpose of economic proficiency. These without any look upon its victims for whom, the permanent acquisition of useless commodities has become addictive.

In his book *Captains of Consciousness*, Stuart Ewen, (reviewed by Andrew Wernik, 1991: 24) analyses the advertising conservative ideological function of maintaining the American capitalism. Therefore, starting with the industrial boom in 1910-1920, there has been a necessity to transform the family from a "centre of production" to a "centre of consumption". Moreover, "the commercial requirements of cultural adaptation" and "the political requirements of social control" joined to confer a strategic character for advertising not just in the "management of consumer demands, but also in the management of consciousness". In this way, ads have the ideological function to secure loyalty to the system they serve. The arguments that such a process is deliberately conceived are hard to unravel. But the economic finality of selling products determines through its interaction with people's values, expectations and norms, a reinterpretation of those following the industrial needs.

In the fast moving environment of today, ads have to deliver concentrated informational messages and emotional appeals in a short time, since the audience often has not have the time to follow developed expositions. We described how advertising is the main instrument utilised in creating the powerful brand structures. It is a common happening today to see how countries are active actors on the commercial space, although it is a quite expensive demand.

### III.8.d. *Visual symbolic communication by Web and graphic logo designing*

As we debated in the beginning of the first chapter, there are theoreticians in sociology (for example Barthes or Anderson) whom argue for the imagined character of national communities. Following this path, an important amount of national identity representations is based upon made up symbols that exist in our every-day life, shared within a community and perceived as authentic.

A significant role in preserving a sense of identity is played by the national public institutions of a country. These structures have an increased power of representing the

local specific while private companies tend to emerge on global configurations. Their main missions in society structure form an important and complex issue related with the political doctrinal configuration of the respective country. Alternatively, we would like to concentrate more on how they manage to construct their visual representations, which in our opinion have a strong contribution to the foundation of national feeling for some countries.

## Graphic logo designing

Apparently taken as a minor matter, the use of logo and design in carrying the essence of nation's characteristics seems to belong more to faraway history than to our times. The theoreticians of "nation branding" are arguing for a revision of this manner of communication by adapting this institution's looks to what they represent today according to the historical changes encountered by the public state, society and cultural trends. While preserving the history in these visual representations, the actualisation endeavour helps to make out of them important sources of rich encapsulated national imagery, history, crafts tradition, fine arts and uniqueness. We were able to spot an advertising company<sup>1</sup> involved in an attempt to redesign the appearance for a large number of Danish national institutions.

"The search for national identity is about expressing identities visually and letting the pictures tell the story of a number of public Danish institutions. (the institutions that are allowed to use the crown of the Danish King in their logo). The crown used to signal the King's unrestricted power and, later, understated public administrations, but now signals a dialogue-seeking, democratic state. The crown has also become a symbol of Danish identity in a time of internationalisation and rootlessness." ("Kontrapunkt", <http://www.kontrapunkt.dk>)

This Danish design company produced a number of new designs for the state and its public institutions, among which new distinguishing crowns that embodied in an unitary pattern historical aspects alongside with contemporary ones. This attempt is considered a successful effort in rendering to the state certain openness, as well as authority.

The role of the logo has to be seen as a starting point for a large debate about what is specific for a nation. In a dialogue with one of the new experts authors in the identity-branding field, Peji Bennett, we acknowledged the difficulty encountered by certain nations in obtaining a consensus about what is adequate to be represented at such level:

"A logo would be powerful if it represented a country's clear and compelling vision for its role in the world. But how many countries have a clear and compelling vision and therefore the logo has little to represent. I think discovering why this is missing is the biggest question." (Correspondence with Bennett Peji, founder of Bennet Design, a famous brand identity venture)

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<sup>1</sup> Kontrapunkt: <http://www.kontrapunkt.dk>

If in the case of Denmark, the monarchy represents a symbol of consensus and its transformation goes with a relative congruent dynamic,<sup>1</sup> for other countries affected by multiple shifts and challenge of the society and political directions, as Romania, such a endeavour becomes a complex encounter. This is why our interviewee considered opportune to underline the actions that are implied behind the process of designing a logo:

“The role of the logo in national identity is usually very limited because the logo itself is not as important as the process of discovery, consensus building and strategic positioning one should go through in order to design the logo.” (Correspondence with Bennett Peji)

In this way the logo differentiates itself from a post card or an art painting, trying to capture as much quintessence and personification as it is possible with the tools of social research.

We have to conclude that the logo is an important vehicle for symbolic communication, and, as Bennett remarks, at a national level is implied in a consensual process, being reminiscent for the “desirable experiences” of one’s history. It has to be taken into consideration when one attempts to generate a liable nation branding strategy. The logo may have consequences in exposing national pride, preserving cultural inheritance and uniqueness and also in a national negotiation process of identifying consensual contents. On the economic side, it is an efficient tool of market positioning persistently used by corporations and other public entities. It stimulates recognizing, associating collective and individual behaviours.

#### The Internet as interactive media and web designing

A special position in media communication is taken by the Internet phenomenon. Castells argues that the new society today is based on a network structure in which communication systems are integrated in both a comprehensive and inclusive way, until it marginalizes and even prevails over other modes of cultural expression. The computer network, through which groups around the world are capable of interacting globally, represents one aspect of this network society. It seems that through Internet common people can create coordinated global action groups, so it plays a role similar to the one that, at the beginning of the industrialization era, the printed media and journalists had played.

Castells goes further to argue that, from such a networking perspective over society today, there is no communication that is not electronic. Information constitutes the

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<sup>1</sup> With a exception of a 20 years period (1970-1990) described in Kontrapunkt as the second generation of Danish state’s visual appearance. The crown was considered old-fashioned and undemocratic. The typeface Helvetica became the norm. This minimalist style, considered timeless at the time, has since proven to be, in fact, very typical of its time.”(www.kontrapunkt.dk)

main element of this social organisation and the reason why the stream of communicational messages among levels of this network represents the basic frame of our social structure. Accordingly, these networks are not only producers but also distributors of cultural commodities. He concludes his plead for the sociology of the cyberspace with a suggestion that extends its area of repercussions over the entire world: "As long as you want to live in society, at this time and in this place, you will have to deal with the network society. Because we live in the Internet Galaxy." (Castells, 2001: 117)

An exceptional assignment in shaping the virtual space of the Internet is completed by people belonging to a brand new field: web design. They have to build up on the cyberspace what architects developed in the real world. What nations, public and private companies, profit and non-profit organizations, as well as individuals, are challenged today to achieve, is to create and project an Internet identity. This often takes the form of a web site where people try to expose aspects of their personality and try to relate with others. Offering this in a provoking, attractive and facile manner is an assurance that the informational content of such identity may reach more of its targets. Web designing represents today more than a branch of advertising, is a cultural language, a new mean of communication for a new milieu.

Consequently, one's nation symbols require to be frequently embedded on this free communication space as the overheads involved are inexpensive and the audience is numerous and diverse. The public institutions, the country's achievements in sport, culture, science, might find here a suitable place for a detailed presentation. While using logos we have to synthesize the content, in the web location we have the possibility to develop the aspects that we want to promote.

### III.8.e. *The impact of media and creative industries in national identity representation*

More or less self-reflexive, we live in a world inundated by mass-media communication. We spend an important part of our lives interacting with these informational flows. Jean Baudrillard (1983) is urging that the economic has affected our deepest personality structures and we are living now in a world of hyperrealism shaped by media advertising and other communication technologies, which are part of our everyday life and privacy. Baudrillard wants to suggest that people can no longer tell the difference between fiction and reality. As an example they have images and opinions of other nations shaped by

travel commercial ads. We have to remark the emphasis that this actual global means of communication and supports of transmitting culture (as Internet, mass media, advertising, design and telecommunication) are taking today<sup>1</sup>. As one leading official of Sri Lanka points out:

Geoffrey Tillikeratne, Director General, Sri Lanka Export Development Board:

“In 1966 Sri Lanka was able to use sport to 're-brand' itself by hosting a major world sporting event (the World Cup in cricket) after years of misperception and stereotyping as a result of the guerrilla warfare in the country. Potential tourists in previous years had the impression that anywhere they went there was likely to be violence. It bore no relation to reality. People could see that we were able to organize this event peacefully. Tourism bounced back.” (“Brainstorming - Projecting Value: Is there a Case for National Branding?” Prepared by Morton Scholer, ITC)

The representational construction of the national identity is deeply embedded in these new outlets, and state's leadership has to take into consideration its potential. As we tried to illustrate, the media, with its classical or recent interactive forms, turned out to be one of the main spaces of global informational and cultural dialog. Advertising, as a communicational technique, seems to fit very well these mediums and moreover, it can infiltrate other ways of transmitting its contents. For example, in popular movies we easily may identify certain brands of cars, watches etc; public figures wearing certain marques of clothes or make public positive remarks about special products. The public space appears to be a medium surrounded by manipulative tendencies. Referring to the national level, we may spot a covert interest in propagating certain representations of national specific through media channels. But we would also look to portray a self-reflexive tendency of some of the people who are not willing to act as they are told to anymore. John Hartley (2003) sustains that people tend to develop a critical perspective, as much as media itself starts to empower the receiver with enhanced emitter opportunities, as we saw in the case of the Internet.

The entities in charge with projecting a national branding program have to be totally aware in our opinion, of the specific and developments of these prolific mediums and techniques of global communication as a starting point in their mission. The intension is not to control or manipulate the audience, but to be present and to offer choices to them in a facile and dynamic manner.

This was actually possible due to the influential media that today functions like a complex sound speakers system, which enlarge and makes sure that the message is send across. Nation branding has become, in this way, a repercussion of global economy. Building

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<sup>1</sup> Featherstone, mentioned by Nixon in his book “Advertising cultures”, is concerned to reflect the role played by what Pierre Bourdieu called “new cultural intermediaries” as “the shapers of the tastes and the inculcators of new consumerist dispositions among the wider population.” (Nixon, 2003: 30) The advertisers are part of these intermediaries along with journalists and the producers of cultural programs on television.

an image or a brand for a country takes advantage of the means of marketing in the way that the final goal is to induce and stimulate an acquiring choice. Also, a correlative purpose of it is to put aside certain stereotypes or misleading information that is floating around and might damage the sense of national identity in that particular circumstance.

#### **IV. Highlights of the Romanian case**

In the previous chapters we have exposed and debated how the strategy of nation branding is to be understood in an overall context, what are its benefits, conceptual

dimensions and channels of expansion. We would like now to develop several arguments rigorously related to the Romanian scenery. Thus, we will offer a few illustrative highlights valuable for a better comprehension of Romania's reality and representation of identity.

#### **IV.1. Identity roots**

First of all, we have to agree that Anderson's theory, of imagined communities as repercussions of the chain of socio-political changes in the 19 century (with events such the French revolution), seems to explain very well, in our opinion, much of the content of what has been considered until today Romanian national identity. Romanian authors who have debated on the national feeling and unity desire have exposed their thesis around this period marked also by a revolution, similar to the French one, in 1848. The image propagated through these events has been constantly preserved and empowered even in the period of the communist regime, which had a strong nationalist hold.

Today, several Romanian theoreticians started to consider alternative stories and question the myths that were taken for granted for such a long time. However, this is an ongoing process. Several people still use the nationalist discourse, not as much in opposition to the globalisation forces, as against presumed territorial disputes with equivalent claims from our neighbouring countries. As an extension of these uncertainties, encounters with traditional minorities, as for example the Hungarian one, might, sometime, spawn in a range of conflicts. This situation is generated by what Brian Turner described as a "pervasive nostalgia for past times" and a lack of understanding of the plurality and the complexity of the identities. Nevertheless, at overall, these reminiscences are constantly loosing their popularity since Romania was able to play a role of stabilization in the Balkans area, in the recent past period, when it was almost surrounded by the ethnical, religious and territorial disputes generated by the dissolving of the ex Yugoslavia.

From a Romanian perspective, the postmodern paradigm is seen by Iordan Chimet as "an intellectual tool" meant to overcome the national complexes. Through it, Romanians may end up accepting them as they are: "as forged by a historical constellation of determinations; that one can equally assume the archaic-folkloric stratum, the medieval-Christian one, and also the recent modern-postmodern one: become aware of all strata and try to make them (all) really communicate, try to make a synthesis out of them" (I. Chimet, 1996: 145). The word "synthesis" illustrates very well this case of intertwining multiculturalism and various historical dynamics determining that shaped national identity throughout the history.

## **IV.2. Recent developments**

Using the theoretical and methodological frame developed in the first chapters we might facilitate the research of the Romanian case of national identity, the way it has been reformulated and placed in the actual social context of nowadays.

The basic structure of building identity, from Castells's perspective, is very well illustrated in the actual situation of Romania whilst overstepping the totalitarian dominance. Whereas forces of legitimised identity were daunting standard identities for the people, the movement that aroused in December 1989 against the coercion, was the outcome of the underlying resisting identities that individuals were sharing in a sort of underground communities. As Castells also argues, this resisting identity is the most important type of identity building in society. It creates "forms of collective resistance against otherwise unbearable oppression" and in addition, if strong enough, it can lead to the construction of a project identity. It happened in the case of the Romanian resistance. Forces conveyed their energy into a larger project, of not just putting aside the communist system, but changing completely the social, political and economic constitution. Today, the ideals have changed and maybe it is the course of history to have a cyclic way of building identities, the legitimised powers generate certain identities, the resisting forces will always arise and sometimes transform themselves into projects that may or may not reach their goals. And then start all over again.

The '89 revolution pushed Romania out of its shell and forced its population into a profound identity crisis. Large parts of the population had to bear the lack of national consensus and long political disputes, which accentuated their poverty and shorten their range of expectations. Besides, the international environment helped hardly any positive influence since it has suffered itself several strong financial and political crisis. Also, the number of countries requesting assistance from their wealthy neighbours was too large as to repeat the circumstances of Portugal, Greece or Spain in their attempts to reach a European level of development.

Thus, comparing with similar competitors, Romania had been constantly losing ground on its economic growth and political reforms. It is very difficult to estimate whether it was the internal leadership, the international context or the policies imposed by financial global institutions, like the I.M.F. (International Monetary Fund), that escorted the country to such a position. Following these developments one certain characteristic of Romania today is the disparity between few freshly rich people and many underprivileged others, urban and rural areas, historical counties, flexible individuals who can manage to adapt to the new environment and the losers of this process which are often the intellectuals.

The emerging of the concept of “fourth world”, in an enlarged meaning, the way Castells and Marcos articulated it, is a plain reality for this times. Accordingly, in Romania, the “street children” phenomenon began to take an unprecedented altitude. More and more children thrown away by their parents, people rundown by the lack of elementary life conditions or personal misfortunes choose to live in an underground world of the capital city Bucharest. As time goes, they grow up and form families in this sub-human environment diminishing the chance for the society to recover them. Also, this attracts sexual tourism, due to Internet and organized crime networks. The international media felt a special attraction to repeatedly present these happenings to the world, using often its power of generalization to the entire country and its members.

The Romanian gypsy population represents another fourth world community. They are facing tough adaptation difficulties to a world with significantly different values. Thus, most of them live in the past, governed by tribal laws and social organization. A debate in the recent international press was focused on a case of premature marriage between two thirteen years old gypsy minors. Outside the country, the illegal gypsy emigrants frequently obtained unfavorable critiques from the public opinion because of a deviant and delinquent behaviour, strongly contrasting the collective humanist shared values of the European civilization. It is pretty much a challenge that the Romanian government and society has to cope with this minority without crossing their self-determination privileges but with regard to human rights issues. Long-term programs of education and cultural dialog already started, but the outcome is expected on the long term. The core strategy pursued is to prepare charismatic leaders, amongst the gypsy population, capable to serve as row models and to wake up and adequate their values to the nowadays realities by promoting self-reflexivity and civic movements.

On a different level of society lays another social anomaly, “the world of corruption”. Many of the leadership figures have lost their sense of collective identity and moral values, motivated by the difficulty of obtaining through honest means a satisfactory standard of living comparable with the western model. What has left from the public institutions and the state apparatus are constantly eroded by greed and bribery.

If we are to take into consideration other tendencies identified by Albrow in the *Global Age* we have to observe that Romania is still, to some extent, sharing the same behaviours. The civic society made up by different militant organizations is still a secondary aspect in the daily life of regular citizens. If for the women’s rights and emancipation we may notice a process of developing which had begun even in the socialist regime, other issues like

environment, the globalisation threats and world order are considered luxurious concerns for most part of the people challenged by the strive for surviving in an unfavorable milieu.

As an opposite example, stands the attitude of Romanians towards the “street dogs”, a bizarre race of citadel’s semi-domestic animals. Living almost in the same condition as our society, they are accepted and loved by most of the people. This seems to be very tough to understand for a western society obsessed by the idea of hygiene control.

Returned from a movie shooting session in Romania, the Hollywood star Nicole Kidman considered to comment the journey at the “Jay Leno Show” in the following tone: “I’ve just got back from Romania where I was so afraid to go out on the street since there were packs of wild dogs everywhere”. The street dogs, and not wild dogs, are a problem that confronts Romania for many years. The solution of eradicating them rapidly was rejected by the civic society for highly humanistic reasons. Pressuring public demonstrations conducted at local level forced many cities to renounce to their eradication programs through euthanasia. Nonetheless, they are now sterilized and hopefully will disappear by natural death. Anyway, generally they are harmless creatures. The fact that one’s opinion leader unintended comment has the power to influence a country’s image representation has to be deeply reflected and valued in the future.

On the cultural dimension, people were inundated by the access to knowledge, of various sources, as information became the easiest outcome to get. As a result, the popular culture pick up the pace and is constantly gaining grounds comparing to the western analogous. The competition in mass media gave birth to an affluent setting. Theatre and music also are two solid grounds, although they are still missing the financial support. Some of the sceptics criticize this development as a horizontal course since, in their opinion “the culture of resistance” has had a more accentuated elitist character. This culture had been developed in the ex-regime, and sustained in atypical creative ways the civic and moral spirit of the nation.

Sorin Alexandrescu (2000), a Romanian author, argues that the Romanian culture has to open itself more on its borders. In South East Europe, for example, the interferential culture has to be developed as a way of preserving and in the same way breaking with tradition. Moreover, this might help establishing the broken links between the East and West. These intercultural areas had been cruelly incongruent, due to the World wars and the Iron curtain. Now, comparative studies focused on the representation and identity of the Other have the mission to overcome the accumulated distance.

After almost fifteen years from the ‘89s events, Romania is still searching for its role in the world. Nonetheless, a few directions might be foreseen, as the willing to be a part

of European Union and identity as well as its convenience with United States seen not as a conjectural manoeuvre but as a fifty years old rooted myth of the American saviour. However, Romanians haven't manage to figure out clearly what makes them special in the world and what are the principles they want to stand for as an independent nation and not as a satellite in the shadow of some global power structures.

### **IV.3. "Made in Romania"**

The idea of a Romanian comprehensive brand has been taken into consideration recently. However, it represents a difficult task. First of all, as we have shown in our description, the present context seems to float in anarchy and disorientation. One of the Romanian participants to an on-line forum raises questions about the content of what we would like to promote:

"I still think we should work some more on the product (you know, pave some roads, clean the air, stop giving bribes) before we can start advertising."( Posted by Butnar, Bogdana on 17 Nov 2003, Wirereality)

As we argued before, the equilibrium and development of the society remains a primary task. The involvement in a branding program might become a magnet for all the resources available, knowing how expensive this could be.

Although marketing and advertising are western rooted sciences, nations might rely on local intellectual resources. Romania's context demonstrates that this is possible. If in the beginning the monopoly of advertising was kept by trans-national companies, we observed in the last 5-8 years the emergency of several independent Romanian enterprises, which in our opinion, are acting better on the market with more flexible, adapted to national specific and creative products. In our search for adequate theoretical considerations we have noticed the existence of Romanian experts even in the specific field of nation branding"(the up mentioned example of Marius Ursache).

Sorin Alexandrescu, remarks: "...through a multidisciplinary approach, through multiplication of the perspectives from which the image of Romanians is constructed by the western people and by confronting this with our own self-representations, I think we will be able to get closer to a "real image" that can shape self perception allowing a uninhibited discussion with the Other, and why not, a rediscovery of our self."(Sorin Alexandrescu, 2000: 159)

We constantly described in our paper how several scholars sustained the benefits of nation branding strategy in empowering and focusing the national positive characteristics.

The independent opinion shapers often exaggerate the natural reflections of the Romanian image in a negative direction. Leaving this at their mood is not always a solution.

Another acknowledgeable issue is that apart from the negative social aspects presented by the global media documentaries, the foreigners know almost nothing about the regular Romanians, the ones that compose the silent majority of the population. Our experience in asking foreigners about perceived Romanian particularities has been often met with a totally lack of any knowledge about such. Others simply pointed out the need for such a branding program:

“I wonder whether, for exports at least, the fact we foreigners don't know much about post-1989 Romania would be an advantage? You could create your own perceptions. Speaking for me, other than cars like the Olcit or the Dacia, my main awareness of your country has been through this list - and I see an amazing wealth of talent that could be changing the negative perceptions.” (Jack Yan posted 14 nov 2003 –“wirereality”)

The young generation has already developed and flourished in most of the Romanian large cities and this constitutes an encouraging aspect. As Jack Yan observed, there is a large amount of potential and talent coming from people educated to take part in a globalised market. This potential is generated by their will to overcome their status and by the local presence of several outsized national and foreign companies' offices, capable to absorb and develop these forces. Subsequently, there are a growing number of intellectuals benefiting from various foreign scholarships ready to invest their talent in their homeland. One of the main channels of communication for these people is the cyberspace. This is the space were Jack Yan first found out about the Romanian potential. As Castells advises us, if a nation wants to be recognized, it has to be a part of the network society and mainly of the Internet Galaxy.

The concept of “Made in Romania”, which is the basic slogan of a strong national brand, has for this country various negative connotations. One of our Romanian interviewees mentions:

“We love everything which is not Romanian because "Made in Romania", as a sort of brand has suffered from the communist era and the memories people have left of it. Today to be Made in Romania is actually a point of shame and I was surprised to read an editorial by a famous Romanian journalist who berated a program called Made in Romania (which I thought was a great program trying to promote home grown brands) saying that everything bearing that trademark had to be crap. “(Gabi, posted 13 nov 2003;“wirereality”)

She debates further on the example of ex-DDR fashion program, which is an elite type of advertising trying to inflict the understanding that “evil was not in the symbols of an era (colours, clothes, flags) but in the people who ruled in that era” (ibid) The outcome of such sort of strategy in Romania is tough to be seen as a success since still, “Romania, as a brand nation, is a sort of reject brand” (ibid).

The current reality in Romania is typified by the fact that a growing number of Romanian producers do not recognize their products are made in Romania. More over, they prefer European or international connotations to their businesses. The label put on the product seems to matter more than the actual quality of the product. Furthermore, the tag sticking out of the product and revealing an inscription like “Made in Italy” (but it can easily be any other European country) confers automatically a quality, immediately recognized, which overpasses that of the similar Romanian product. This may diminish a healthy economic identity. Romania is facing now a serious problem since the country is not associated with any particular product, which could be made with excellence inside the Romanian borders. Valentin Ionescu, the president of the association for promoting Romanian products and services and the coordinator of the program “Made in Romania”, affirms:

“If the Swiss have their watches, the French, the wines, Italians are known for making pasta and pizza and the Bulgarians for pickled cucumbers, the Romanians cannot distinguish themselves through a product, and if we do not appreciate ourselves, nor we can convince the others”. (Quote from the newspaper “Cotidianul”, March the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2004)

The solution envisaged by Ionescu is to first try to impose certain products on the internal market and afterwards on the external one. In that way, building trust in national products will start up our economy and train it for the external competition. Otherwise Romania will remain an “economic cosmopolite” country. (ibid).

We explained this mechanism in the second chapter using fruitful insights from Simon Anholt’s book, *Brand new Justice: The Upside of Global Branding*, and we elucidated how the underdeveloped countries are doomed to remain unqualified labour and low-wage suppliers for the countries capable to support their brands in economy.

#### **IV.4. The struggle for a holistic Romanian Brand**

The economy needs also a focusing of such a brand on limited areas. In Romania, the endeavour for economic diversity was very much emphasized in the dictatorial regime. As we may read from an I.M.F. (International Monetary Fund) analyse regarding Romania commented in a national newspaper, “Adevarul”:

“Romania had the worst starting conditions in Eastern Europe. In 1989, the Romanian economy had, not only, the biggest state sector, but also the most inefficient. It couldn’t have been any other way, if we consider that, contrary to the other communist regimes in the region, the Romanian one had been applied word for word the war economy doctrine, through which the Soviet Union forced the satellite countries to produce everything, regardless the costs and quality, since the cold war between socialism and capitalism could anytime become a hot one”. (Adevarul, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mars, 2004).

The Romanian government and many national and international associations started elaborating strategies and campaigns of creating and promoting Romanian brands on the global market. According to Camelia Bulat ([www.ciperomania.org](http://www.ciperomania.org)), the coordinator of one of the campaigns regarding the revitalization of the communicational and IT. sector, the purpose of such tactics is to unify the forces of branding in this domain with the ones from other sectors and create a general branding strategy: “It is obvious that people do not have yet a positive perception about Romania, but this can be changed if we work together to tell the world about us, in a way that we could create a favourable image”. She sees this course of action on creating and promoting Romanian brands, as a common effort of the government and the private sector. Consequently, through the unification of all the factors involved in the process, will result a partnership that would enhance the capacity for Romania to generate a global brand for its products and services<sup>1</sup>.

We have portrayed in a previous chapter a methodological approach used by Simon Anholt in identifying several crucial levels of communicating national identity. Those are: Tourism, Export Brands, Foreign and Domestic policy, People of the country, Investment and Immigration and Culture and Heritage. In applying them to the particular case of Romania, we have already deliberated on the dimension of Export Brands and The people of the country. Consequently, in the sphere of *tourism*, the starting point of such a crusade might be to provide information to business associations and travel agencies in the perspective of creating a national brand. Conferences and symposiums have taken place debating this matter and considering the process of elaborating a national brand for tourism and the practical methods that the government and the business associations could use together in a similar way to the ones employed in other countries.

Nevertheless, fresh news comes from the Romanian Government. “Adevarul”, a national newspaper, relates from an official interview, that a program of twenty-five million dollars is meant to promote this country as an “eco-tourism” destination for Europeans. Accordingly a professional ad video-clip is going to be shown on Euronews, CNN, Eurosport and MTV. The up mentioned official declared:

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<sup>1</sup> The communicational and informational technologies sector has been already taking initiatives concerning the branding activities, through the national associations and the ministry of foreign affairs. Still, the vice-president of the Association for technological and informational communication, Eugen Preotu ([www.ciperomania.org](http://www.ciperomania.org)), maintains that the work in this sector creates a brand that should be united with other similar efforts and that those can not be considered separate, otherwise it would generate only confusion on the market, but still in his acceptance, the technology of information represents the common link among all the branding labours, since it constitutes the gateway to the global economy.

”We acknowledged that we do not have an identity, an image. Eco-tourism is very fashionable in Europe people want to return to nature, and Romania is a country of eco-tourism. We are strained to make Romania a fashionable country” (“Eco-tourism – the new tourist image of Romania into the world”, “Adevarul”, March, 10, 2004)

Together with the promotion of natural beauty, *cultural* insights may represent a very powerful tool in positioning the country on a plain worldwide tourist offer. In the case of Romania we have to notice the popularity of the Dracula myth on the global space and its predictable branding potential.

An important piece in the construction of a national brand is made out of the traditional stories, from ancient times, one of the main means through which the history of a culture is preserved and perpetuated. Those represent powerful values for the country brand, embodied in myths and legends that are to be kept alive and always remembered. Although Dracula myth is a fictional story projected by an English novelist to a Romanian region, it has been generating large disputes over its commercial capital.



The controversial Dracula entertainment Park project  
([www.mtromania.ro](http://www.mtromania.ro))

A cultural phenomenon as “Dracula’s myth” might be explained in relation with two kinds of developments. One is purely entertainment, in its industrial commercial approach (as for example Disneyland). The fear of death and what is beyond is converted in a childish, but not only, amusement narrative.

Another dimension in which might be decoded, is the connection with global cultural movements. If we try to analyse what is the element of attraction related with the vampires’ subject, we might force a comparison with the movie “Interview with a Vampire”. Here, vampires are symbolically associated with a counter-culture banished from the civilization course, as an anarchic and alternative community. Accordingly, the portrayal of a Dracula’s myth consumer is to be seen also among the rock, punk or hippie so called “marginal cultural movements”. This interpretation does not empowers the fabrication of an artificial myth, but on the contrary, sustains that Romanians are giving their contribution to the world culture at the very present moment, because this culture is at this particular point in an assembling process. Moreover, a very successful festival of rock and contemporary theatre is already annually held in Sighisoara, one of Dracula’s presumed residences.

Without any reasonable circumstances, Dracula's myth seems to repeatedly discharge a lot of fixation around the world. We understood from a daily magazine, ("Evenimentul", march 11, 2004) that recently the Italian press has associated a double suicide case of two Romanian emigrants with the name of Dracula; the married couple coming from Bistrita, a town in the proximity of the place where Bram Stoker situates the plot of his novel.

In *the foreign and domestic policy* Romanians are learning their way of democracy after a long brake imposed by the ex totalitarian regime. However, there is still much to achieve. Today, too often, the political leadership structures are shaken by corruption scandals. The new generation of intellectuals and professionals is expected to take over the leadership. The internal policy has to cope with a lot of minorities and human rights issues, poverty and social protection. Due to the globalised media, all the political mistakes are immediately accessible to the worldwide opinion. These are the case of the street children, gypsies' minority problems, the standard of living and so on.

Regarding the foreign policy we freshly identified a call for convergence made by the Romania's actual president of the state:

"Iliescu made an appeal to all the political forces involved in the electoral campaign 'not to endanger the important strategic objective of Romania, joining the European Union'

'...we are all on board of the same boat and we must join our efforts to sustain this major political goal...'

'I have noticed at the European Commission, some messages coming from our country, an anti-lobby from the part of certain internal factors. This I do not understand.'

The President mentioned also the fact that for the last fourteen years, regardless the internal power fight, joining the E.U was the consensual goal uniting all the political forces in Romania."

("Because we are all 'on the same boat' - President Iliescu asks certain political forces not to sustain a negative political lobby against the E.U.", Adevarul", 15 May, 2004)

It is difficult to appreciate if the negative statements of Romanian politicians in referring to their own country are totally justified or if is necessary to plead for a more reserved attitude. A unilateral approach is rather characteristic to a dictatorial regime.

The *investment and immigration* topics are very complex. Firstly, they are subjects of legislation, and adequate promotion of a welcoming environment. Secondly, it is the performance factor that needs to be considered. If Romanians are going to be well prepared and educated, investment could presumably be expected in front line domains. This also requires the encouragement of local initiatives like the IT. Romanian company that was capable to sell competitive antivirus software to Microsoft. Otherwise, the investors might use Romania as a cheap labour site as long as the labour force is not too demanding. This is important also in the attraction of foreign skilled immigrants. In the fields where Romania

achieved performances, as for example in sports, it managed to attract several foreigners from the neighbouring countries. However due to the special economic situation that characterize Romania now the focus is on the emigration of the national potential. What is a common occurrence today is that many gifted people are searching for a better future abroad. How to keep Romanians home, or how to make them return is also a political and legislative strategy. There are coherent and sometimes less coherent ongoing programs that preoccupies Romanian leadership today. Though, all these issues are just premises for a better occurrence. As we have argued before there is a micro-social level, where family for instance, which is a complex structure might find many aspects to choose or to reject Romania as residence country. The cultural milieu, the human rights developments, tourist image and so on are often regarded before such a decision is made.

At overall, the brand of a country's national identity is suggested to be holistic, capable to comprise bits of history, present and people's diverse aspirations. How to obtain this brand, has to be a very complex endeavour. First of all we offered a theoretical frame in the first chapter concerned with the identification of different active, collective and polarized forces in society. Having this in mind, we have developed a description of different strategies proposed and experimented in several countries (see DEbatte project and Cool Britannia campaign) meant to identify and harmonize as much as it is possible the national potential.

We have also observed how, in the mentioned examples, the channels and dimensions of national identity are used to stimulate and uncover other ones. Tourism facilitates other divisions of economy and vice versa.

And we should not forget the long term measures as investing in human potential, education, with a focus on learning foreign languages, human rights, welfare and environmental issues for the mission of ensuring permanent high opportunities for Romanian citizens.

The endeavour of conceiving a recognized identity brand all over the world is to be sustained by the common exertion of each individual, a cohesive alliance of forces. The purposeful studies on Romanian identity and professional research programs, collecting various internal and external opinions, are to be regarded in the first phase of any branding identity attempt.

We do not want to offer solutions to such a complex problem, which involves a large participation and sustained efforts. Alternatively, we scrutinized the theoretical frames of people aware of the dynamics of national identity phenomenon and methodological approaches used by professionals in other countries' examples of nation branding campaigns.

We utilized some of those insights, to highlight controversial aspects of Romanian identity. Other facets remain to be approached in future research materials.

For some well-established and recognized states most of the job has been already done and consequently the responsibility of maintaining the flag up can fall under the jurisdiction of a smaller and less inclusive team. As starting up a business, launching a country on the global display can unravel a stream of tough challenges, which may only be surpassed through determination and perseverance.

## **V. Final Thoughts**

Our contribution aimed to offer a multidisciplinary approach and an affluent exploitation of different perspectives. We sought to extend a rather economic and political concern, as nation branding strategy, to its sociological connotations of identity development in a global perspective. Therefore, we have offered varied outlooks: from specialized literature of marketing, sociology, cultural studies, economy, political sciences or social psychology to mass media contents, militant civic organization's manifests, remarks of professionals implied in elaborating nation branding strategies and others from a diverse panel of society constituents.

As we acknowledged from the arguments presented, the national identity is strongly challenged by the rearrangements forced over the nation-state structure through occurrences like the shrinking of time and space, commodification, economic disparities and other globalisation characteristics. The alternative of the nation, re-emphasized through branding strategies, has as much economic as political intentions.

From these complex viewpoints, another critical issue for our study emerged. Consequently, many of our individuals' mentioned viewpoints were concerned with ethical aspects of the nation branding, its content and promotion apparatus. Seen from the marketing field as a procedure of increasing the positive perceptions about a country's specific, it proven to be a pretty intricate problem. Accordingly, it is difficult to delineate matters like: what is national specific, what are the deep rooted values of a nation and what is a superficial content, or if the new "creative industries" are indeed adequate to help in shaping national identity representations. We have opened several discussions related to the reasonableness of the nation-branding prospect.

Here, it is important to mention the debate around the consistency of the nation branding's promise. Accordingly, its sustainers are pleading for its role in ameliorating the disparities between poor and rich countries, overstepping the actual tendencies of the globalisation. Hence, sustaining the upraising of economic and cultural brands in underdeveloped countries would help them to "graduate from being mere suppliers of low-margin unbranded commodities to brand owners and branded destinations in their own right"

(Simon Anholt, 2002: 16). We would like to consider also the graduation from being cheap labour sites for Western companies to complex post-industrial economies<sup>1</sup>.

In addition, this dissertation might also include a political account. We have explored one category of envisaged approaches meant to conquer the economic discrepancy brought by globalisation between poor and developed countries. We would like to invite our readers to continue the path of this paper searching for alternative solutions to overcome the actual world economic disparities<sup>2</sup>. Our approach covers also the cultural dimension of national identity, illustrating that economic and cultural are intertwined areas.

A subsequent crucial aspect was to offer consistent theoretical explications of the several important dimensions and aspects met up in a desirable nation branding strategy. We sustained these features with empirical examples of past, presumable and ongoing programs experimented by different nations. From these suggestions we presumed to figure out how to identify most of the entities and elements that are capable to offer content to the programs, how to make a synthesis out of them, which are the targets, channels and mediums of communication and how is this content usually represented in accessible packages.

Marketing gained a feasible double role by enlarging its area of applicability to nation identity promoting. One is to ensure economic distribution of prosperity by enhancing national characteristics to the commodity's brands. Additionally it has to empower and communicate the cultural contribution of complex and diverse national identity structure on the global milieu. But as we discovered, this is not a straightforward issue. Various authors

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<sup>1</sup> As we may assume, the actual tendency is to transmute all the production facilities to the margins of the West, as post-industrial capitalism should be based on services. This phenomena might represent a new form of exploitation, where nations, which are not able to generate enhanced culturally products, are doomed to be used as low qualified workers sites with undersized wages working for the big companies to obtain competitive prices on the western market. If for them the goods are to remain expensive comparing to their wages, for the others cheap products means more for their money, in fact more than they can produce, which in economic terms indicates that those money value are artificially over appreciated through the exploitation of the others. Some of these countries started to acknowledge these kinds of tactics and make efforts to articulate strategies capable to enhance national image through professional means.

<sup>2</sup> We are aware that the participants of the "World Social Forum" are constantly proposing many provocative ideas, challenging the actual power structures' ideas, in the endeavor of diminishing the disequilibria generated by the anarchical performance of globalisation. For example ATTAC—(Association pour la Taxe Tobin pour l'Aide aux Citoyens) is a large global nongovernmental organization that persistently promotes an interesting taxation approach: "James Tobin, David Felix, Rodney Schmidt, Paul Bernd Spahn and others have examined the possibility of levying a charge on international monetary transactions as a means to reduce exchange rate volatility and promote international economic stability. In addition, considering that annual currency trading is 10 times the global GNP, the revenue generating potential of a tax is tremendous. A modest 0.25 percent tax would generate over \$300 billion per year (the total UN annual budget is about \$10 billion) for peace and sustainable development." (Global policy forum, [www.globalpolicy.org](http://www.globalpolicy.org)). This is an example of one of the future possible developments of our thesis.

developed contradictory perspectives from different angles of interpretation. If for marketing national identity character is a rather simple content to get, for sociology this is a field of dynamic transformations which, hardly might be comprised in a brand.

In the last part of the paper we have concluded highlighting some of the identity issues encountered by Romania in the last two decades. Scrutinizing the opportunity of a brand for a country like Romania, we noticed how its natural image, mostly perceived through mass media, is badly affected outside and inside the country. Aspects of these projections are presumably plain realities. However much of the negative media content exposed outside the country is still not fitting the actual context.

Some of the mass media biases often affect nations that are condemned to live outside the areas shared by the principal actors on this market (the Western World). For these marginal worlds, due to their reduced trans-national mobility (generated by financial constraints) the main “reality” that is coming from outside is shaped by worldwide media channels. Often, we encounter different types of content in global media. One is the “entertainment” with its ledge and actors located some where in the western world. Another one is made from the news and specialized documentaries, showing another kind of entertainment: the securing feeling that most of the terrible things are happening far away from home, at the margins of the history.

For example, someone wanting to make a documentary about homeless people could easily choose a place like Romania, most likely because there are plenty of them there. And later, on TV, Romanians could find out, that the only appealing aspects about their community and their country that worth to be shoot in a documentary, are connected with their misery. In this way, a kind of hyperreality, a polarized copy of the world is perpetuated. Some communities are educated to contemplate their wretchedness and others to see the brighter side of them. A recent article comes to underline our argument: Having the head-line: “On the CNN, Romania seen again as the heaven of paedophiles”) the editorial exposes the following highlights:

“On Europe’s Day, CNN considers to place Romania, once more, amongst the main countries which deliver children to western paedophiles. The reportage, made last summer, started presenting several street children from the Romanian capital city, in different situations.” (taken from “Adevarul”, 10 May, 2004)

Barthes (1957) clarified this occurrence as the human tendency to explain the unknown “other” through exoticism; what we don’t grasp entirely is to be explained by exaggerating strange characteristics. Another brilliant exploration of this theory is exposed by Peter van

Ham in the article "*The Rise of the Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation*" (2004). He mentions:

"For Voltaire and Diderot, eastern Europe was a space dominated by poverty, gloom, and backwardness. In 1945, the British historian Hugh Seton-Watson observed that the peoples of Eastern Europe "have unpronounceable names and live in plains and forests, on mountains and by rivers which might be in another world." The Cold War deepened this European divide. Today, the conflicts in Chechnya and Kosovo certainly do not help make the East more reputable. For example, although Bulgarians and Albanians see themselves as living in south-eastern Europe, most people in the West refer to that region as simply "the Balkans," a name that immediately evokes ethnic conflict, crime, and instability."

From this perspective, our paper will hopefully manage to suggest further debates of the complex representation mechanisms that shape a polarized world order by constantly emphasizing western (white, male) cultural values.

Carrying out aspects that we have already exposed in previous chapters, we also tried to picture some perspectives and timorous steps made by different structures of Romanian society in attempting to build its country's image as a comprehensive structure outside and inside its borders.

Our aim was to scrutinize the actual perspectives on the topic of nation branding. The effort of defining and empowering what represents national specific is regarded as a crucial policy of a nation, challenged more and more by globalisation trends. We intended our paper to be useful for entities with interests in this subject, offering arguments and theoretical debates around the issue, practical examples and useful references.

We hope that we have opened a provocative debate offering a multidisciplinary space of discussions over a controversial topic. Also we are totally aware that we have not covered its entire area of discussion. Nevertheless, our intention was to open a gate for the field of sociological research, which in this matter might offer valuable experience.

## Appendix

### Methodological notes

Throughout our endeavour to cover several dimensions of our particular topic, we came across a relative deficiency of relevant data. One of the causes of these circumstances is that the theoretical perspectives and the methodology of “nation branding” are insufficiently presented in the published literature on the market, since we are looking on a quite new field of research. Our information was often to be found through examining several nations’ experiences of being involved in recent branding programs. Another controversial issue that arose during our project, concerned an ethical discussion about the opportunity of national identity branding, its possible benefits and also its side effects. Consequently, we have tried to find various perspectives, even beyond the marketing field. Furthermore, our research focused on finding out which are the facets of national identity today and which of those are suitable to be branded. A special focal point of our inquiry was to disclose these contents related to the Romanian context.

Many of these necessary data were to be found in “the Internet galaxy”. We explained some of the sociological characteristics of Cyberspace in the third chapter using insightful considerations from Castells’s “Sociology of cyberspace”. Here, we would like to add a few remarks.

In the way Castells (2001) sees the Internet, it forms a community shaped by a couple of key elements. People believe they belong and they are members to this particular community. It involves meaningful social interaction despite the lack of physical contact and there is a confidence in shared, common values. As well, people are actually dedicating time to each other, as opposed to the “other” social community which has fasten up its steps so much that it restricts most human interactions. He also develops a new notion: ”network individualism”<sup>1</sup>, referring to individuals constructing their networks on and off line, based on values, shared concerns and arrangements.

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<sup>1</sup> “So we are in a world of individuals. And the Internet actually is very good for that, because rather than creating virtual communities that practically don't exist, what exists is networks of individuals which provides the basis for increasing, not decreasing, our sociability, but our sociability as individuals. On the other hand, people who don't feel strong as individuals build trenches of resistance, and they close the communities (For instance, religious fundamentalists or extreme nationalism). So we have individuals and communities, and in between, the civil society and the state -- they don't vanish, but they are dramatically weakened. And the civil

We carried out observations on free discussions engaged over the Internet by people. We considered this scene to be one of the most unrestricted discussions settings available. Here are taking place thousands of debates around almost all the possible issues. Furthermore, this site offered us the possibility to observe the so-called on line forums, where people from around the globe can discuss about designated topics. Assisted by search engines like Yahoo and Google, using key words like nation branding, national identity, etc, we were able to enter those places, observe them, and ask about relevant matters to our study. A list of the investigated forums is available on the references' section.

As we have discovered, the forums related to our topic are Internet communities made out of people attracted to the subject or to other expanded notions of branding and marketing, which was the basic ground that started this kind of debates. Some of the participants to these forums are really experts in the field, others are postgraduate scholars hoping to obtain their academic degrees researching this phenomenon from various perspectives such as: Marketing, Economy, Sociology, Political Sciences or Multicultural studies, etc. We were able to obtain here many different perspectives on our above-mentioned issues.

Although we were analysing a written behaviour, it was not a usual one. Moreover, the regular written behaviour has an elaborated form and it is less interactive. In our case, though, it is closer to the natural spoken language<sup>1</sup> because it contains dialogues and consequently, less elaboration<sup>2</sup>, since we are talking about a real debate, often in real time (implying concomitance), and moreover it is open for intervention to anybody who has an Internet connection. This facilitates in our opinion an increased degree of relevance of the data collected.

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society and the state were, in fact, the institutions that emerged as forms of social organizations in the industrial age.” (Manuel Castells Interview: Conversations with History, 2001.)

<sup>1</sup> We may find here uncensored thoughts, language and opinions, and we can also find expressing of feelings and non-verbal communication. This environment is characterized by the absence of face-to-face contact. Also, the utilization of nicknames, for instance, makes easier the possibility of identity change. This facilitates in our opinion an open environment where we could have free access to what Goffman (1982) refers to as “backstage behaviors and attitudes”, due to a lack of responsibility and the absence of natural normative restrictions generated by this kind of interactions. Also Goffman defines the concept of face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (quoted by Alasuutari, 1995: 110). Related to “the face” in the day to day interaction he is talking about “face threatening acts” as criticism, ridicule, challenges, irreverence, orders, requests, which tend to jeopardize the actors’ face because it pressures them to act in certain ways. On the on-line forums these acts do not appear to have the same intensity since, someone who feels threaten may change quickly his exposed identity (changing the nick-name). The very proof of the “orality” of this language is that it has generated signs for communicating nonverbally. We know now that :))) means laughing or the opposite feeling is (((. Furthermore we are talking now about a second generation of nonverbal Internet signs, which are “emoticons” like ☺.

Thus, our methodological apparatus was the on-line observation and the on-line participant observation for a three months period. We tried to be as unobtrusive as it was possible. Many of the issues we witnessed were already there, our effort being just to scrutinize and record relevant debates that the subjects of our observation have started up. For other aspects we had to ask for a reaction. We have done that without asserting guidelines of the expected answers. Nevertheless, we aimed to use hints of an active approach of the qualitative research, elucidated by James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, encouraging our interviewees to “explore incompletely articulated aspects of their experience” (De Vault, 1990, quoted by James A. Holstein, and Jaber F. Gubrium, 1995: 17), inviting them to “develop topics relevant to their own experience” (ibid). Occasionally, we had to become members of the online community observed (in the Wirereality on-line forum; see footnote page 31), which turned to be an insightful experience. Holstein and Gubrium also mention the importance of the relation between the researcher and its subjects. Accordingly, the subjects of the qualitative research, and in this case of the participant observation, not only offer substantive thoughts, feelings and behaviours pertinent to the topic under consideration but constantly test out who they are, in relation with the investigator. Hence in this case we ensured a similar position with our subjects, sharing the same area of interests and belonging to the same virtual community. Nevertheless, from ethical considerations we have not hidden our investigating intentions.

The area of our on-line forums investigation vary depending of their reputation and importance placed to the topic. Some of them contain a restricted range of relevant debates. The most prolific has been again Wirereality, which delivers a weekly publication that starts (according to our estimation) around five subjects of debate (mostly related to brand identity) in a day, which are endlessly continued by the forum members.

We utilized the content obtained, first making ourselves acquainted with the issues raised by our subjects in relation with national identity and most frequently to national branded identity. Here is important to mention that they usually offered web links containing appropriate materials for sustaining their point.

Secondly, we have assembled together multidisciplinary theoretical frames; empirical examples and reflections of the interviewees in a topic-wise manner, constructing in the same time the theoretical edifice of the paper. Some of the perspectives collected were from the experts on the branding identity area. Other ones are comments of the governmental officials evaluating this prospect from a national perspective. Nevertheless, some also come from people that become recently aware of the theme and having diverse backgrounds. However, as

Alasuutari (1995: 57) advises us we considered our “interviewees as mainly speaking for themselves” and not necessarily in the name of a community. We tried to emphasize that by using relevant quotations all around the content of the present dissertation.

Alternatively to the on-line forums and chats there is an abundant flux of fresh literature published on Internet made out of essays, articles, on-line publications, or recorded interviews on the topic. A very rich setting for our research consisted in the web sites of some few advertising companies involved in nation branding activities. Here, we found out precious methodological insights about how such a campaign is projected and conducted, illustrated with empirical examples. All of them are mentioned in the references section.

This is one of the main consistencies of our paper, managing to synthesize and, hopefully, offer tools for entities that might be interested in researching the area of nation branding.

Another methodological approach used in our dissertation is content analysis. We have searched mass-media: magazines’ articles, documentaries, news, ads and any other types of programs where we could identify remarks related to the Romanian image, the identity and national image, in general, as well as focused promoting efforts.

Evaluating the representativeness of the data acquired in this particular way, we became aware of the mediated character of these contents. Mass-media apparatus, by means of redaction of the material presented, falls under this bias constantly. But we also deliberated in our dissertation on the immense potential that media holds over shaping national identity representations. Also, the part of media covered by us is just a small fraction of the global or national mass media environment. Roe, mentioned by Alasuutari (1999), suggests the concept of “map”, which is a qualitative alternative to the quantitative statistical sample. In this view, the level of generality, which a researcher employs, has to be appropriate to the problem at hand.

A special interest played the Romanian newspapers and magazines, (most of them in their on-line version), for their constant role in shaping the self-representation of Romanian identity. We mentioned a list of those along with the considered articles in the references list. Also the European News Channel, “Euronews”, for its concern in identifying various insights of national and European identity and also for its broadcast of nation branding ads in its advertising content. Some of these sources (a number of Romanian newspapers mentioned in references and the Euro-news TV channel) became the focus of our attention for a period of over three months. Other ones caught our attention after using the Internet searching engines, utilizing representative key words, or even came across them

accidentally (for example, by following foreign TV. Entertainment shows, like “Jay Leno Show”). After we gathered our material we tried to analyse the foremost tendencies observed. But we also sought to consider the unconventional perspectives for their constructive potential in offering solutions and identifying deficiencies.

Our thoughts and knowledge about the Romanian topic were greatly improved through informal discussions. We have used a pretty diverse panel of individuals in the endeavour of grasping insights related to the Romanian identity and its perceived representations. We have been in dialog with six persons coming from different countries<sup>1</sup>: We asked them to portray their pieces of representations about Romania, or to launch in relevant argumentations related to our subject. We have also elucidated several theoretical aspects of nation branding by taking in consideration useful opinion insights. Most of the times, we built up these debates in informal contexts facilitating “the candid expression of opinions and sentiments” (James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, 1995: 11). We concentrated in challenging our interviewees to become “researchers in their own right, consulting repertoires of experience and orientations, linking fragments into patterns, and offering “theoretically” coherent descriptions, accounts, and explanations”<sup>2</sup> (ibid: 29). We are aware of the low validity threats notified also by Gantz, in relation to the qualitative survey: “interactive, more conversational encounters with respondents are superior to surveys in eliciting respondents authentic, contextualised opinions, attitudes and meanings” (Gantz quoted in Alasuutari, 1999: 42). However, we have found an affluence and deepness of topic-relevant comments on one of the on-line forums (Wirereality). Hence, soon after, we started to acknowledge that we utilized most of the views, offered by our previously mentioned interviewees, just for secondary consultative purposes. This might be considered as a limitation of our paper. We constantly chose to scrutinize “expert” people’s opinions or, at least aware of the theme in discussion. We regarded the national identity, and moreover, branding national identity as abstract areas that requires profound reflection.

We made the effort to topic-wise synthesize these perspectives in categories as: external and internal perception, deficits and advantages of the national identity panorama and, other suggestions.

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<sup>1</sup> Two Romanians (one being student in Political Sciences and another employed of an advertising company, one Swedish person (recently returned after a four years linguistics research project in Romania) and two Romanian emigrants in Sweden (one of them has left the home country fifteen years ago, and one of them just one year ago) and one from United States (expert in branding and nation branding, in which case we kept an e-mail based correspondence).

<sup>2</sup> “Far from merely reporting a chronicle of what is already present, the respondent actively composes meaning by way of situated, assisted inquiry”. (James A. Holstein, and Jaber F. Gubrium, 1995: 29)

The information that we've gathered from these different sources and using various qualitative methods should enable us to understand better the topic and the outcomes of our discussions. Though we are not offering generalizations, our conclusions and interpretations must be regarded as hypothesis. We are aware that our results may be characterizing individuals or limited communities but it is also possible to identify more general problems if we succeeded to approach the most appropriate generality level of the problem at hand. Just in correlation with other researches and analyses of the phenomena, we may include our results in theoretical models of the reality investigated and hopefully generate new ones.

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