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# Strategic Brand Management: Master Papers

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The series is a result of co-creation between students and teachers in the course Strategic Brand Management (BUSN21 – 7.5 University Credit Points; 8 weeks 50% study time), part of the master program International Marketing and Brand Management at Lund School of Economics and Management, Sweden. The published papers represent the result of the intellectual work of students under supervision of the heads of course. The content of the papers is to be read as student reports albeit the journal format. The papers are free to download and should be cited following international conventions.

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# Nation Branding after a crisis – Greece and Ireland in comparison

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research paper is to compare the Nation Branding strategies of Greece and Ireland after the financial crisis. What this study seeks to understand is whether a Nation Branding strategy can be a useful tool to overcome a crisis.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This paper employed a qualitative research approach, including a literature review and in-depth interviews. To analyse our raw data, the method of content analysis was employed.

**Findings:** A Nation's Brand strategy can be of significant importance to speed up the process of overcoming a reputational crisis. In order to be able to implement the nation brand strategy successfully in a country, strong commitment to the same is necessary. Furthermore, the first step to a successful brand strategy is to crystallise the nation's identity.

**Research limitations/implications:** Time restrictions, the low number of interviews and the manner the interviews were conducted are the major limitations of this research. The main theoretical implication is that this paper contributes to the knowledge in the field of Nation Branding, especially in terms of comparing strategies of a Southern and Northern European country.

**Originality/value:** This paper offers important insights into the topic of Nation Branding, comparing two countries after a crisis as there has been a gap in the literature within this field.

Keywords: Nation Brand, Nation Branding, Greece, Ireland, crisis, Nation Branding strategy

**Paper Type:** Research Paper

## Introduction

People's perception of a country in their minds portrays the concept of Nation Brand. Every nation has such brand image, regardless of whether it has or has not a Nation Branding

strategy. Moreover, each country has faced changes over time and thereby reinvented itself implicitly, due to political systems, leaders or influences by other countries (Olins, 2002, p. 242f.). In consequence, they experienced changes in their perceived Brand image.

However, implementing a Nation Branding strategy can intentionally strengthen, sharpen and influence the Nation Brand image (Fan, 2006) and consequently, shape people's perception of a country. Nevertheless, the need for a proper understanding of Nation Branding is crucial to actively utilise these concepts (Anholt, 2013, p. 8).

Even though Nation branding is not a revolutionary topic in academia (Olins, 2002; Mariutti & Tench, 2016), but rather has always taken place long before Simon Anholt introduced the notion "Nation Brand" in 1996 (Anholt, 2013), researchers have not paid particular attention to it before then. Accordingly, some scientist state Nation Branding as a relatively new area of research (Fan, 2006).

Nowadays governments, academics, marketers and researchers amongst others have broadly discussed Nation Branding focusing on a variety of views. However, very few papers look into Nation Branding as a tool to overcome a crisis (Avraham, 2009; Schmitt, 2014) or as a needful instrument after a crisis. Moreover, we could not find a single paper comparing two countries' Nation Branding strategies during or after a critical situation.

The purpose of this conceptual paper, based on a comprehensive Literature review and expert interviews, is to compare the Nation Branding strategies of Greece and Ireland after the financial crisis<sup>1</sup>. We assume that Nation Branding is a useful tool to overcome a (reputational) crisis and we will bring proof to our hypothesis by examining the cases of Greece and Ireland.

This research paper is divided into five main sections. In the beginning, we will examine previous studies related to Nation Branding in general and Greek and Irish studies specifically. Afterwards, we will continue with a brief description of the methodology used in this research paper. The third section provides an analysis of the empirical results, gathered through interviews. In the fourth part of the paper, we proceed with a discussion of empirical results in comparison with previous studies, analysed within the scope of the literature review. As a final point, we terminate with a conclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> The entire world's financial system was almost brought down in 2008 after Lehman Brothers collapsed. While most Northern Europe dealt fairly well with the crisis, countries like Iceland, Ireland and the Southern European State struggled seriously (n.a., 2013).

## **Nation Branding in Literature**

### ***Terminology Nation Branding***

We will begin our literature review by defining and highlighting different aspects of Nation Branding, judging their relevance, addressing Nation Branding in crisis situations and concluding with an outline of Ireland's and Greece's National Branding experiences and processes in the past. First of all, a short excursus to clarify the terminology of Nation Branding is requisite. A nation is defined as a large body of people being unified by common descent, history, culture, or language with a conscious link to a specific territory or state (Dictionary.com, LLC., 2016; Oxford University Press, 2016).

Anholt (2013) identifies at least three different functions of a brand: designed identity, culture of the organisation or reputation. "Branding" is seen as the building process of the brand, regardless which role it holds.

Although there is a common agreement in theory that Nation Branding is very important nowadays (Anholt, 2004, 2013; Bisa, 2013; Dinnie, 2016a; Gudjonsson, 2005), there is no generally valid definition of Nation Branding in literature (Fan, 2006). This evokes a lot of confusion caused by diverse interpretations of the term Nation Brand (Fan, 2010) and the affecting components of Nation Branding. We

found four main elements of Nation Branding, where literature is particularly disagreeing.

*Elements of a Nation Brand.* While the majority of authors include people, tourism and export as part of a Nation Brand (Anholt cited in Szarek, 2006; GfK SE, 2015; GfK. Growth from Knowledge, 2016; Dinnie, 2016b; Fan, 2010), further factors vary. Anholt's Nation Brand Hexagon (Anholt cited in Szarek, 2006; GfK. Growth from Knowledge, 2016), Ahn and Hsin-Ching (2013) and Cotirlea (2013) add cultural heritage, Gudjonsson (2005) mentions geography, whereas others include politics (Bisa, 2013; Dinnie, 2016a; Gudjonsson, 2005; Kaneva, 2011; Kavoura, 2014).

*The role of key people.* The scope of Nation Branding also depends on the role of key people being responsible for a country's branding (Bisa, 2013; Fanning, 2011; Gudjonsson, 2005; Kavoura, 2014). While Ahn and Hsin-Ching (2013) concretely state that an

*"active public sector involvement indeed translates into greater national brand value and reputation",*

Olins (2002, p. 243), however, believes that countries can brand and rebrand each other. Anholt (cited in Szarek, 2006) and Clancy (2011) emphasise that Nation Branding is built by the history of the country itself and its people rather than by strategic concepts of political leaders. Therefore, Fan's (2010) suggestion for a successful change of a nation's image implies to first change the nations' behaviour, afterwards communicate about the changes - as an image does not change automatically (Anholt cited in Szarek, 2006; Fan, 2010).

*Reasons and aims.* Researchers believe that Nation Branding aims to build (Anholt cited in Szarek, 2006; Fan, 2010; Gudjonsson, 2005), restore (Avraham, 2009; Bisa, 2013; Gould, 2011) or improve (Bisa, 2013; Schmitt, 2014) a country's image abroad, to boost international reputation (Anholt cited in Szarek, 2006; Ahn & Hsin-Ching, 2013; Anholt, 2013; Fan, 2010; Gudjonsson, 2005) in order to protect national businesses and brands (Gudjonsson, 2005), but also to compete successfully on a global stage (Anholt cited in Szarek, 2006; Anholt, 2013; Kotler and Gertner (2002) cited in Dinnie, 2016, p.6; Gudjonsson, 2005), restore credibility after a crisis (Avraham, 2009; Bisa, 2013; Gould, 2011) and to create a competitive advantage (Dinnie, 2016a; Gudjonsson, 2005; Kavoura, 2014). The

biggest challenge at this moment is to communicate a single image or message to different audiences in different countries (Fan, 2010) and to balance the physical reality with people's mindset (Gudjonsson, 2005).

In order to facilitate the discussion in this article, we will work with the following definition of Nation Branding:

*“Nation branding concerns applying branding and marketing communications techniques to promote a nation's image.”* (Fan, 2006, p. 6).

### ***Nation Branding in crisis situations***

Considering Nation Branding as a supportive tool to overcome the crisis, those responsible should evaluate the circumstances.

*Context.* Literature shows that the reasons for a crisis can be diverse. Economic struggles, a natural disaster and political decisions, are as much of relevance (Avraham, 2009), as the responsible authority for Nation Branding and subsequently require distinguished actions (Fanning, 2011; Bisa, 2013).

*Additional multipliers.* Existing academic and practitioner literature mentions several

additional elements, which may accompany and complicate a crisis: Financial pressure (Harrison-Walker, 2011), counterproductive mass media (Bisa, 2013; Kotler & Gertner, 2004, p. 51f.) and it is not rare to see that a nation's crisis comes along with a reputational crisis (Fanning, 2011, p. 27).

*Possible actions.* As a result, nations may discover a demand for rebranding their perception, and despite these difficult circumstances, marketers are able to draw on possibilities to manage Nation Branding during a crisis (Avraham, 2009). Morgan and Pritchard (2004, p. 64), for example, remark that an overall consistency of the brand's core value is essential to successfully shift the brand perception, whereas Fan (2010), suggests to firstly change people's brand image. Anholt (cited in Szarek, 2006) mentions a similar key aspect. According to him, people's behaviour only can implement and measure change. Furthermore, world events with large media coverage can function as a useful platform to redefine a country's Nation Brand Perception (Kapetangiannis, 2016; Schmitt, 2014), whether a country faces a crisis or not. Northern Ireland, for instance, presented its Nation at the famous Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington DC (Gould, 2011), China (2008) and Greece (2004) used the Olympic Games to improve their Nation

Brand Perception (Kapetangiannis, 2016; Schmitt, 2014).

*“A place brand is like the proverbial supertanker, which takes five miles to slow down and ten miles to change course.”*  
(Anholt, 2004, p. 34).

This quote expresses that changing a country's image is rarely achieved easily or quickly. Brand perception usually evolves over several centuries, shaped by various influencing factors, mentioned before.

For our research, it is important to shortly describe the Nation Branding history and the critical situation in Greece and Ireland. This is relevant in order to understand why these nation branding processes have developed so differently.

### ***Greece's Nation Branding***

Unlike Morgan and Pritchard (2004, p. 64) advocate, Greece could neither keep a consistent brand image, nor a consistent communication strategy in the past (Kavoura, 2014; Kapetangiannis, 2016). A possible explanation might be that Greece's historical roots of identity are particularly varied. The Hellenic period - associated with classical antiquity - and the Byzantine period -

associated with the Greek Orthodox religion - are elements closely connected to the territory and history of Greece and therefore play an important part of the identity (Kavoura, 2014). However, they stand rather opposite to each other and seem difficult to combine in one clear image (Kavoura, 2014).

Greece has been a member of the EU since 2000, which provides them with a comfortable branding platform. However, as Cotîrlea (2013) explains by mentioning the example of Romania “being a member of the EU does not make you a brand”, Greece rather experienced the opposite by getting a lot of pressure and negative finger-pointing from EU members during the start of the financial crisis.

When Greece's economy collapsed in 2008/09, and political unrest resulted in public violence, the bad publicity established a rather negative image of Greece as a Nation Brand.

*“The country had lost confidence in itself. The crisis brought to the fore its weaknesses and failures, as well as its dark aspects. That is another way of saying that the image and good brand name of a country are predominantly shaped*

*and built at home.”*  
(Kapetangiannis, 2016, p. 52)

Even though Greece hosted the Olympic Games in 2004, using the enormous worldwide media network to potentiate their positive reputation, the negative press during the crisis overweighed this image (Kapetangiannis, 2016).

The necessity of a rebranding became more than obvious, but ever since the country has been struggling to rebuild their nation's image and perception. Besides, unfortunate campaigns like the “Beyond words” promotion (Harrison-Walker, 2011), and the influence of the mass media (Avraham, 2009; Bisa, 2013) set up even more hurdles by not letting go of the “Greek case” (Kapetangiannis, 2016, p. 51).

Greece's Nation Branding strategies, also the current “Up Greek Tourism” (Tsikizas, 2013), have always been focused on tourism. However, as discussed previously and researchers agree, a strong Nation Brand image comprises various factors. Anholt (2013) demonstrates this using Italy as an example. This country scores best in the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index in terms of tourism and second in cultural aspects, but due to the poor rankings in



governance and business, the overall place in the Index is only seven (GfK SE, 2015).

### ***Ireland's Nation Branding***

Ireland is said to be one of the pioneers of Nation Branding (Patterson, 2011). Consequently, their Nation Branding history differs a lot from Greece's.

In the 1970s/80s, Ireland started its "Young European" campaign to attract global companies to invest in Ireland, finding well-educated employees (Clancy, 2011). These early Nation Branding campaigns presented a relatively different image of Ireland, focusing on nature and traditional communities (Clancy, 2011; Patterson, 2011). Besides the major social and economic transformation (Clancy, 2011) happening in Ireland, the government continued to invest into the brand building process (Clancy, 2011; Morgan & Pritchard, 2004, p. 73). Ireland's branding has always been guided by government agencies (Fanning, 2011), which have followed a multi-channelled and multi-levelled (Patterson, 2011, p. 31ff.) approach. According to Patterson (2011), tourists able to experience the brand Ireland on three different levels:

- Generic Ireland: Stereotypes, which consider Ireland as a homogeneous entity

- Regional Ireland: particular dimension of Irish heritage addressing natives and tourists
- Ireland-Plus: targets tourists that carry a special affection towards the country. Generic Ireland values remain as the core, but are not adverted in Marketing

St. Patrick's Day represents one of the best examples of Ireland's extremely successful self-promotion abroad, by "exporting" a national day (Dinnie, 2016b; Patterson, 2011; Pelan, 2012). But literature also mentions the brand integration and promotion of Irish artists, writers, musicians and filmmakers.

*"The story of Irish national identity understood as a tourist asset, on the one hand, is comprised of the manifold and protean journalistic, fictional and literary representations that depict the Irish as ethnically distinct."*  
(Patterson, 2011, p. 28).

Nowadays four different state agencies (Tourism Ireland Brand, FDI Ireland Brand, Food Ireland Brand, Culture Ireland) are working on the Nation Branding of Ireland, promoting a holistic brand structure of Ireland to reach a broad range of different people (Fanning, 2011). Nonetheless, Tourism

remains one of the most vital sectors of Irish economy (Clancy, 2011) and therefore, an essential part of Ireland's Nation Branding strategy.

## **Methodology**

This research project intends to identify key concepts in nation branding after a crisis, in terms of rationale, basic components and strategies. The research field of Nation Branding requires an in-depth understanding of branding activities in each country. Therefore, we employed a qualitative approach. The use of a quantitative approach is not obliging since we compare the strategies of two nations, rather than the perception of Nation Branding.

As we conceived that having gathered personalised, in-depth views from experts within this field is one of the key success factors, interviews were determined as the major research method. More specifically, we conducted four short-focused, structured interviews with experts within the field of nation branding. The interviewees come from the public, private and academic area. In Ireland, we got in touch with a marketing and brand manager of Tourism Ireland - Marketing the island of Ireland overseas and a marketing professor and researcher at the University of Liverpool. On the Greek side

we interviewed a communications and brand manager from Secretariat General of Information and Communication a Greek public authority. The second person is a Creative Director and Copywriter at Colibri, which is an agency specialised in branding and design. Due to limitations in time, most of the interviews were conducted in written manner, having an e-mail series of correspondence. Another effect of the limited research time is the small number of respondents.

The first step towards data collection was to develop a list of relevant questions and then have several rounds of communication with the interviewees. Primary data through structured interviews were gathered both in an oral and written manner. In order to analyse our raw data, the method of content analysis was employed. The process followed when analysing interviews via content analysis is: noticing key concepts as a first step, collecting examples of these concepts as the second step, analysing these concepts in order to find the commonalities and differences between the respondents as the last step. Specifically, the deductive (top-down) approach was employed in order to reach our empirical results. Following this approach, key concepts were first derived from existing theory. Then, relevant observations were collected from the primary data and

interpreted in a meaningful manner, which allowed us to confirm or reject the existing theory on a case by case basis.

## **Empirical results**

This study attempts to explore the key elements in nation branding after a country has gone through a crisis. For this reason, two case countries have been selected, namely Greece and Ireland. Both of these countries were majorly affected by the financial crisis in 2008. The basic points explored include the importance of nation branding, the components of nation branding, the target audience of nation branding, the strategy of nation branding in times of crisis, the question if the nation branding strategy changes in times of crisis as well as its strengths and weaknesses.

### ***Importance of nation branding***

All interviewees identified three aspects of branding a nation as the most important: tourism, exports and investments. However, one interviewee from Greece was able to also identify the (possibly) most critical element in a nation branding process, which is defining a nation's identity. Putting it into the words of Colibri's Creative Director:

*"Greece should have a branding nation process to define its identity,"*

referring to the 200-year anniversary of Greece's revolution in 1821 and liberation from the Ottoman Empire and its existence as an independent state, taking place in 2021.

### ***Components of nation branding***

While we observed that there is a common sense between Greece and Ireland why nation branding is an important asset for a country, the nation branding components being included in their strategy widely vary between the two countries.

On the one hand, Ireland adopts a long list of elements to promote Brand Ireland. One of the fundamental components is tourism, which intends to promote the traditional Celtic heritage. However, the country has already carried its efforts far beyond the tourism sector, also considering factors as its culture assets (e.g. traditional festivals, national holidays etc.), its modern history during the two last centuries, its artistic side (e.g. literature, music and movies), its landscape sceneries and natural beauty.

Last but not least, all interviewees identified the government's flexible policies as one of the key elements of Nation Branding. Flexible policies are important in order to attract investments from multinational companies. An example of an advantageous settlement within this context is the favourable tax

agreement between the international company Apple and the Irish government.

On the other hand, Greece surprisingly struggles with only one of the most essential aspects of Nation Branding, namely tourism. As the agencies' brand manager clearly stated his concerns:

*"I don't think there is any nation branding effort in Greece yet".*

Greece manages several different tourism campaigns. While "Greece all time classic" is the only campaign ran by the Greek government and specifically the ministry of tourism, "Discover Greece" and "Upgreek tourism" are initiated by the private sector. Nevertheless, there is no Nation Branding Campaign existing originated from the Greek authorities.

Through its tourism campaigns, the country attempts to connect its glorious past to its strongest industry sector, but not to its nation. Some of the most important components that should be included in a future nation branding strategy for the country are its modern history, the traditional diet, Greek natural beauty, the higher education system, real estate and investment initiatives.

### ***Target audience of nation branding***

Both case countries focus their branding efforts on primarily approaching two target groups: tourists and multinational corporations. Ireland also wants to increase emphasis on influencers (e.g. vloggers) and the movie sector, following the classic "Star Wars" film and the famous "Game of Thrones" series, both of which have been filmed in North Ireland. On the other side, Greece also focuses its efforts on eliminating the problem of "brain drain", which describes the phenomenon of the country's younger and most qualified generation leaving Greece in order to seek employment opportunities in financially stronger countries. One of the interviewee's opinion is that another target group should focus on attracting people who want to come and live in Greece for a longer period, such as students, who wish to complete their postgraduate studies in an international environment, and pensioners from northern countries, who wish to spend their retirement years in a Mediterranean country.

### ***Nation branding strategy in times of crisis***

A common view amongst all interviewees was that a crisis cannot be defined by a fixed time period. This means, on the one hand, that a crisis always evolves over time and on the other hand that it is also a process to recover from it afterwards. Consequently, changing a

nation's branding strategy during a crisis is not considered as a relevant issue neither by Greece nor Ireland. As one of the brand managers of Tourism Ireland commented:

*"The country's brand strategy has not changed during the crisis."*

However, experts from both Greece and Ireland believe that nation branding could be a vehicle to help drive a country out of a crisis.

According to the collected data, each country has implemented an initiative towards a nation branding strategy that is worth mentioning and clearly states the different levels these two countries face. While Ireland already works on the practical realisation, Greece starts to define responsibilities. The Irish have created a homecoming festival in 2013, where Irish people contacted their friends and family living abroad and invited them to come home. Based on the Irish authorities, this festival was very successful. Greece, on the other hand, has initiated the National Communications Policy Council, comprised by the prime minister himself and seven other ministries. The Council's responsibilities include the planning of the national strategic communication policy, the management of the crisis communication situation, as well as the creation of a positive

image of the country both on the national and international level.

### ***Strengths of the nation branding strategies***

The high-quality touristic product is the first, most important and overlapping strength mentioned by both case countries. Other than that, Greece and Ireland consider diverse elements as strengths of their nation branding strategies. Putting Ireland under the microscope, it highly values its alcoholic drink brands, for example, "Guinness" or "Baileys", as well as the Irish pubs established abroad as carriers of the Irish way of living. Moreover, the country counts as strengths its outstanding cultural imagination, its business-oriented government, as well as its sound higher education system.

Greece, on the other hand, perceives the strengths of its nation branding strategy quite differently. Some of the most valued elements of the country include the culture, the Greek heritage, the natural landscapes, the human capital, its geopolitical location and the Greek gastronomy.

### ***Weaknesses of the nation branding strategies***

When examining the perceived weaknesses from each of the case countries' perspective, we recognised a similar pattern in strengths and weaknesses; the two countries share one

common point as the major strength or weakness, while the entire remaining way of thinking varies significantly between them. The major obstacle both countries accredit as the most significant weaknesses are the financial difficulties they face as well as the threat of falling into a recession once more.

Taking Ireland into consideration, one of the challenges the country needs to face is the separation within the island with Northern Ireland being part of the United Kingdom. Therefore, the Brand Ireland is additionally influenced by the British Nation Brand. Another problem the country has to overcome and unexpectedly perceives as a weakness is the collapse of prices in the Irish property market. One explanation of judging the last point as a weakness could be the fear that Brand Ireland also collapses along with the real estate market, or that this slump in the property market is a reflection of the nation's crisis.

Greece perceives its weaknesses from a different point of view. The country seems to be aware that it still lacks a lot of basic elements, such as: developing its vision and goals, having a strategic planning, achieving efficient collaboration between different national bodies and regaining trust on an international level. Another significant weakness the country needs to solve is its

negative image produced through media. Greece is generally perceived as a problematic and risky country because of the national demonstrations connected to the financial crisis as well as the police incidents connected to the refugee crisis. The country needs to overcome its negative aspects and communicate its positive side in the news, such as the growing entrepreneurship initiatives that have taken place during the last years. Last but not least, it was mentioned by a Greek brand manager that "the country lies between the orient and the west". This cross-cultural civilisation creates an identity issue for Greece, which needs to work on the conception of a mixed culture.

Analysing our raw data led us to the preliminary conclusion that even though Greece and Ireland share similarities, significant differences were identified in their nation branding strategies.

## **Discussion**

To elucidate the difference of Nation Branding between Greece and Ireland after the financial crisis, we performed four in-depth interviews with experts in various positions. Previous researchers have used different concepts to identify main elements of Nation Branding.

As mentioned in the literature review there is a common agreement that Nation Branding is very important for forming a positive Nation Brand image successfully. A strong nation is not only valuable to position the country's perception favourable against others, but also to strengthen the identity of natives and to attract foreigners. Moreover, researchers are aligned that people, tourism and exports are part of a Nation Brand (Anholt cited in Szarek, 2006; GfK SE, 2015; GfK. Growth from Knowledge, 2016; Dinnie, 2016b; Fan, 2010). The empirical findings also show that people and tourism are significant parts of a nation's brand. However, instead of exports, Ireland mentioned foreign direct investments as a critical component in their nation brand.

A prior study states that a Nation Brand should derive from the culture rather than superficial advertising or campaigns (Dinnie, 2016b). Including culture as an important aspect of the Nation Brand is something that Ireland has managed to implement in the form of traditional festivals such as the St. Patrick's Day. Moreover, another proof for Ireland's Nation Brand deriving from the culture is the value of Irish pubs established abroad as carriers of the Irish way of living. Greece, on the other hand, has lacked to integrate the culture into their Nation Brand but seems rather to focus on advertising campaigns, which is confirmed by one of the interviewees. Additionally, we can conclude

that both Greece and Ireland are aware of the importance of culture to be integrated into the Nation Brand, which is in alignment with Dinnie's (2016b) statement that Nation Brands should derive from its culture.

Researchers believe that nation branding aims to boost international reputation (Anholt cited in Szarek, 2006; Ahn & Hsin-Ching, 2013; Anholt, 2013; Fan, 2010; Gudjonsson, 2005), to improve a country's image abroad (Bisa, 2013; Schmitt, 2014) but also to compete successfully on a global stage (Anholt cited in Szarek, 2006; Anholt, 2013; Kotler and Gertner (2002) cited in Dinnie, 2016, p.6; Gudjonsson, 2005). These factors are verified by all Greek and Irish interviewees, where the main aim of their nation branding is to attract tourists and multinational corporations. Furthermore, Avraham (2009), Bisa (2013) and Gould (2011) stated that Nation Branding could restore credibility after a crisis, something that is confirmed through our empirical data, where Greek as well as Irish experts considered Nation Branding a helpful instrument to drive a country out of a crisis.

Anholt (cited in Szarek, 2006) and Clancy (Representing Ireland: Tourism, branding and national identity in Ireland, 2011) highlight that Nation Branding is built by the country itself and its people rather than by strategic concepts of political leaders. An example of

this is the Ireland's effort to create the Homecoming Festival. In contrary, Greece focuses a lot more on a strategic approach meaning that Nation Branding strategy is implemented by governmental authorities

According to Kavoura (2014) and Kapetangiannis (2016), Greece could neither keep a consistent brand image, nor a consistent communication strategy in the past. This statement is confirmed by the empirical data that Greece needs to define its national identity as a first step. However, a possible explanation for the difficulties creating the nation's identity might be that Greece has been through a tumultuous past with many foreign influences resulting in several cultural changes. Each period of time characterised the country in a different way, which might lead to an unclear identity nowadays. This confusion of the historical roots of identity is confirmed by Kapetangiannis, (2016). Morgan and Pritchard (Meeting the Destination Branding Challenge, 2004, S. 64), remark that an overall consistency of the brand's core value is essential to shift the brand perception successfully. Since our empirical data shows that Greece lacks in this area, it might explain why the country still has issues with its reputation years after the crisis, in contrary to Ireland, which managed to overcome the reputational crisis much quicker. Furthermore, the cross-cultural

differences in Greece create an identity issue, which also can explain the difficulties of a coherent Nation Brand identity.

According to Fanning (2011), it is a common observation that a nation crisis comes along with reputational crisis. This statement seems to reflect the reality, for example when Greece's economy collapsed in 2008/09 and at the same time political unrest occurred resulting public violence, the bad publicity and media established a rather negative image of Greece. Seen from a Nation Brand perspective this financial and political crisis resulted additionally in a reputational crisis. This view is also reflected in our empirical data where one weakness of the country's Nation Branding strategy is the production of a negative image of the country through media. One way of overcoming the reputational crisis is to use world events with large media coverage, which can function as a useful platform to redefine a country's Nation Brand Perception (Kapetangiannis, 2016; Schmitt, 2014).

After analysing the different Nation Branding strategies of Greece and Ireland and comparing existing literature with primarily gathered data, after all, we can draw a result on our research question. Since we assumed Nation Branding as a useful strategic tool to overcome a crisis, we cannot endorse a



universal answer to this. A Nation Branding strategy can be useful to overcome a reputational crisis quicker, which we observed in the case of Ireland. However, Greece was not able to profit of a Nation Branding strategy during the crisis. Several reasons caused these differences. Ireland could fall back on a long history in Nation Branding, had an existing branding campaign, experiences and government supported authorities being responsible for Nation Branding in Ireland. Consequently, they could continue or even strengthen their approach abroad.

Greece, in comparison, has not had a clear national identity neither in the past nor nowadays. Accordingly, a Greek Nation Branding strategy is inexistent likewise. Moreover, Greece struggled for longer with the negative implications of the financial crisis, mainly due to additionally occurring domestic issues, like police incidents or the refugee crisis. Furthermore, the Greek government did not commit as much to the country's Nation Branding, as the Irish did.

Summing up, we could identify that a Nation Branding strategy can be a useful tool to overcome a country's bad reputation caused by a crisis if the nation has established a strategy previously. Implementing a Nation Branding strategy during a major crisis, which is no longer only of financial or reputational

manner, might make feel people disconnected from their roots and values, and might cause confusion, as the nation's identity could be unclear during that period. So to say, this tool is very much depending on the history of Nation Branding in each country.

We can see similarities in the empirical data between Greece and Ireland, such as the importance of culture to be integrated into the nation branding strategy and attracting tourism, however, they differ in some parts. Ireland has a prolonged past with Nation Branding, reaching all the way back to 1970s/1980s. This historical past within Nation Branding can explain the coherent nation identity based on the history and culture of Ireland, such as the alcoholic drinks, Irish pubs and St. Patrick's Day which are all promoted internationally. Greece, on the other hand, has a historical past, which was influenced by different cultures, which can explain the confusion about the nation identity. However, Greece has an understanding of Nation Branding and has strategic goals about how to promote the country but have not yet figured out the way to implement it

## **Conclusion**

There has been a lot of research in the field of nation branding, where researchers and other stakeholders have generally discussed Nation

Branding on a variety of views. However, there has neither been enough research in the field of Nation Branding related to overcoming a crisis nor comparing two countries during and after a crisis. This article aims to prove the following hypothesis: Nation Branding is a useful tool to overcome a (reputational) crisis.

We have controlled our hypothesis by examining the cases of Ireland and Greece. To be able to prove the hypothesis a qualitative research method was chosen to conduct the interviews. The interviews from four experts within the field of nation branding became the foundation for the empirical analysis.

We managed to identify a range of determinants of Nation Branding in both Greece and Ireland. In alignment with previous studies, we found that nation brand identity and culture are essential components of a nation's brand strategy. In addition, we also found out that a nation brand strategy is crucial to increase the international reputation in order to compete globally against other countries, to attract tourism and foreign direct investments. Furthermore, we can conclude that mass media plays an important role in Nation Branding. For instance, by engaging at world events with large media coverage, those can function as a useful platform for countries

to represent themselves. Conscious Nation Brand placement gives the opportunity to influence a country's Nation Brand perception in the audience.

The research has also shown that the commitment of nations to their nation branding is significant to be successful in improving the nation's image and reputation. On account of this, obviously, Nation Branding can be helpful when managing reputational difficulties.

Returning to the hypothesis/ research question posed at the beginning of this section, it is now possible to state that a nation branding strategy can be of significant use to overcome a reputational crisis quicker, which we observed in our findings. However, for a nation branding strategy to be useful, nations need to be dedicated to the Nations Branding strategy.

### **Limitations, Research Implications and Future Research**

This research paper has several theoretical and managerial implications. Certain limitations of the study are to be explained. Recommendations on how future research can be elaborated are also suggested in the following part.

This study contributes to Nation Branding research in a variety of ways. It is the first research conducted comparing two countries, specifically a southern European country (Greece) and a northern European country (Ireland) regarding their nation branding strategy. Moreover, it is the first paper that examines the motivation, elements and strategy of branding a nation before and after a financial crisis.

This research has several managerial implications for the case of Greece. More in detail, this paper recommends that the country should consider several new aspects when planning its nation branding strategy. An example towards this direction is the importance of defining the nation's identity in order to successfully build the Brand Greece.

Acquiring our primary data through interviews has proved to be highly beneficial, but comes with limitations too. For instance, despite the interview questions being communicated to experts in key positions, only a limited amount of the originally intended results was captured. This is due to two reasons: First, this study was a short-oriented time research, not allowing to provide the interviewees a long period of time to actively participate in the answering process. As a result, we were able to realise

four interviews, three of which were handed in in a written manner, one was held via Skype. Consequently, this had an impact on the amount of acquired results.

Future research can be initiated by analysing each case country both internally and externally in terms of nation branding. Moreover, a different set of case countries can be put under examination. Last but not least, the interconnection of a nation brand and a product brand can be of particular interest in future studies.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1- Interview Guidelines**

#### Introduction

We are a group of three Master students at Lund University School of Economics and Management. Our research is focused on nation branding, comparing Greece and Ireland after the financial crisis. The following interview contains questions about the rationale, components and strategy of nation branding before and after the crisis. The interview will last approximately for half an hour.

First of all we would like to point that all the information gathered in this interview will be handled highly confidential. The statements made in this interview will be presented anonymously in the final report and nobody will be able to trace them back. (At this stage, we would like to ask for your permission to record the interview.

Would you like to clarify anything up until now?

#### Questions

1. Why is nation branding important?
2. Which components does country's nation branding strategy include?
3. Whom do you target with the country's branding strategy?
4. How did you manage the nation branding during the crisis?
5. How did you manage the nation branding after the crisis?
6. If the country's branding strategy had changed, what were the reasons?
7. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the country's branding strategy?

End of the interview

#### Conclusion

Is there anything else you would like to add? Do you have any questions left?

You can always get in touch with us in our personal e-mail addresses (XXX) or phone numbers (XXX). Thank you very much for your valuable time.