The Potential For ‘Younger Nations’


If Spain has been able to achieve this much despite its negative history, think what ‘younger’ countries which have attained their independence in the last 40 years and which are still heavily in a nation building mode can hope to achieve. Young nations are in a unique position to brand themselves because they are at an early stage of development and may not have acquired any negative perceptions or associations (perhaps because the country is not yet prominent on the world stage), or at least these perceptions have not had time to embed themselves. Smaller, younger countries may have smaller populations, and are leaner, meaner, and easier to manage. They have citizens who feel a greater loyalty and drive to serve their country and potentially to realize its brand.

In this respect, it may be useful to think of some of these smaller countries almost as large multinationals. It has been said that 46 of the largest 100 economies of the world today are companies, not countries. Conversely, we can think of the running of countries as being no different from the running of a large company and therefore apply brand thinking to countries. The potential for these countries to gain a niche position in the global arena is there for the taking.

Finally, every country needs to remember that many nations are in the process of branding themselves. A nation that does not engage in proactive branding runs the risk of being positioned anyway by its competitors to the competitors’ advantage—making it even more difficult for that nation to control its economic destiny.
Branding as Re-imaging National Identity


The experience of the former Yugoslav states provides an intriguing and diverse, exemplification of:

- attempts at national branding to respond to new political and economic circumstances;
- the close interrelationship between national identity and tourism branding;
- the close interrelationship between economic and political reimaging requirements, especially in relation to foreign investment (including the tourism industry and related services) and the country’s role in the common European home.

Part of the escape strategy from the past and its images has been to diversify away from mass coastal tourism and to emphasize the uniqueness of cultural and natural resources. This has entailed an implicit shift in geographical emphasis to promote countries’ interiors. Rural and nature tourism have been in the forefront of this thrust, with professional marketing undertaken by local and central government, NGOs and private sectors. Tourism literature has become notably niche-oriented, and many rural areas are being reimaged in the promotion of traditional, ‘idyllic’ portrayals of timeless sustainability.

‘Heritage’ occupies a more ambivalent branding role. In a region with a diversity of cultures and histories, and where the past is often drawn on to justify the present, ‘heritage’ tourism offers the irony of employing the past as an element of restructuring for the future, particularly for newly independent states drawing on their pre-communist roots. ‘Heritage’ is far from being a value-free concept: economic power and politics influence what is preserved and how it is interpreted. Promotion of secular rural and urban heritage as an integral element of cultural history was characteristic of the communist period. Under the communists, however, such heritage was employed to overcome or subdue ethnic rivalries and as a means to inculcate a unified sense of Yugoslav identity and pride.

Tourism branding has tended to be intertwined with national identity in a number of cases in the former Yugoslavia, not least because tat a destination level, with its core objective of producing a consistent, focused communication strategy, branding confronts at least three major constraints:

- a lack of adequate finance to support appropriate marketing campaigns (a common trait) has been exacerbated by limited experience of global markets and a lack of appropriate expertise: pre 1989 mass markets were drawn from a relatively small number of West European countries.
- In a post-conflict context where rapid reconstruction and re-imaging is sought, tourism destination marketers may be pressured to return short-term results when long-term investment is required to build a consistent brand; such a dilemma may be reflected in message inconsistency;
- While centralized, relatively authoritarian regimes can impose some control and coherence over the component parts of a destination image, it is more difficult within market economies to develop a coherent brand for destinations, which are composed of a myriad of products and environments.

Further, ‘Yugoslavia’s negative experience in the early 1990s was in stark contrast to that of other central and East European countries. First, in Central and East Europe, the immediate post-communist period of 1989-1992 stimulated new and relatively distinct images of countries and regions as suddenly being open, inviting and embarking on a process of substantial transformation. By contrast, in the formerly relatively open Yugoslavia, conflict and shifts towards totalitarianism in Serbia and Croatia acted as a strong repellent for the whole of the former federal republic, even though, for example, Slovenia was embroiled in conflict for less than a week.