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Country Branding: Qualitatively New Shifts in Country Image Communication

Santrauka. *Nors šalies įvaizdžio politikos formavimas kai kurių mokslininkų yra stipriai kritikuojamas, jis įgyja didžiulę svarbą pasaulyje vystant ekonomiką, politiką bei šalių kultūrą. Šalies įženklavimo fenomenas, kilęs XX a. pabaigoje Europoje, straipsnyje yra pristatomas naujoje perspektyvoje, lyginant jį su kitomis šalies įvaizdžio politikos strategijomis, t.y. Sovietų Sąjungos ir JAV tradicijomis. Siekiama atskleisti specifinius Lietuvos įženklavimo strategijos bruožus.*

Keywords: *country image communication, country branding, identity politics, public diplomacy, propaganda.*

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: *šalies įvaizdžio politika, šalies įženklinimas, identiteto politika, viešojo diplomatija, propaganda.*

1. Introduction

In 2005, after the rejection of the European constitution in several European countries, the EU institutions started rethinking the European identity. The country image communication practices directed both towards the EU citizens and towards the outside world as well, nowadays are understood as an effective instrument for strengthening the sense of 'European-ness' and creating common values. For instance, in 2006 the European Commission invited Simon Anholt, a prominent British brand consultant, to chair a panel of branding experts on European identity. This was called "the biggest branding challenge in the world after USA and Nigeria" (Bounds 2006).

Rationally managed country's (region's or city's) image communication nowadays is

often treated as a panacea to strengthen the common identity, to develop tourism, and to increase product exports or to attract investment. Many developed and even underdeveloped countries and regions worldwide are trying to apply its tools and theories, seeking a miracle.

In the 21st century, country image communication is called country (nation or place) branding, and there are a lot of discussions regarding it. Its theory and practice is gradually taking shape presently, concentrating around the journal of *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* (published since 2004), but the misunderstandings of the notion are quite common.

Moreover, the term of public diplomacy exists and is used at the same time, having

longer history and longer period of research. Thus, there is obvious lack of comparative approach towards different paradigms of country image communication, as very often these paradigms and terms are treated synonymously or, if they are distinguished, the differences are not conceptualized.

Therefore, this paper aims to discuss the issue from a comparative perspective. The main objects of comparison will be the newest approach of country image communication, that of country branding, and the older ones, public diplomacy being the most important among them.

This paper is divided into two parts. In the first part, we will present a short historical perspective of country image communication from the Second World War, showing the conditions and the environment, which inspired the emergence of a country branding approach. Here a new approach towards country branding is proposed, showing it as the Europe-based approach, as opposed to other approaches, based in authoritarian countries and the USA Public diplomacy as well.

In the second part, the major shifts of country image communication in the last decade of the 20th century and the peculiarities of the present country branding are discussed, viewing them in the context of the changing world order after the end of the Cold War.

2. Historical Perspective of Country Image Communication

The notion of the European approach has not been applied and used widely in the strategies of the country image communication yet. Therefore, there is a natural question

if such conception exists at all. We will try to define this notion and to prove its existence using the historical perspective of the country image communication.

Obviously, country image communication has existed since the times immemorial, as it has been a tool to strengthen the country's soft power, which always worked synchronically with the hard power. Walter R. Roberts (2006) points out a case of Homer age Greek soldiers, "carving messages in stone in an attempt to persuade enemy fighters to abandon resistance". Before the Second World War there were many cases inspired by nationalistic tendencies, when countries tried to search for their identities and to communicate their culture and values worldwide. These media based campaigns sought to change the public opinion and to reach a positive effect. It is worth mentioning that among several interesting examples was Lithuanian diaspora's efforts in the US to affect American public opinion and to reach the official recognition of Lithuanian independence (Fainaitė 1996). The new nation countries, which appeared at the beginning of the 20th century, researched their distinctive national features and peculiarities, constructing their identities, what resulted in creating the national flags and symbols. These nation building processes revived again after the decolonization in Asia and Africa, when the new independent countries emerged in the world.

However, we would prefer to confine ourselves mainly to the period of the second half of the 20th century, as the practices of country image communication of this period directly influenced the present situation and

the emergence of the country branding approach.

This new period was firstly inspired by totalitarian regimes, – those of Nazi and Soviet, – in the 1930's. As W.R. Roberts (2006) notes, these regimes acted very innovatively before and during the WWII, originally starting radio broadcasts in foreign countries and in languages other than their own. Germany institutionalised its propaganda in 1933, establishing the Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, as well as the Soviet Union established the main tool for foreign propaganda, the Soviet Information Bureau (*Совинформбюро*) in 1941, which was a predecessor of the present *RIA Novosti*.

Although Nazis propaganda practices ended immediately after the WWII, the Soviet propaganda continued its existence and influence through the Cold War till the early 1990's. It is widely known as *agit-prop* in the Western world. Soviet practices were applied effectively both for creating Soviet ideology inside the Eastern Block and for exporting tendentious information about the Soviet miracle for the Western world.

3. Public Diplomacy

In spite of the fact that those very effective and powerful country image communication practices of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany are not in force any more, they are important for understanding the emergence of the second type of the practices, called *public diplomacy*. Public diplomacy emerged on the other side of the barricades, in the Western world, as a counter-measure both to Nazis and Soviet propagandas.

The first steps for the public diplomacy took part in the last years before the outbreak of the WWII. When the Nazi information expansion became too dangerous in Europe and in Latin America, Great Britain and the USA decided to use similar techniques for the counter-attack. They launched broadcasting abroad and established several institutions for this information warfare (Roberts 2006). British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), British Council and American Voice are some of the remains from these times of the Second World War.

As Roberts (Ibid) states, the new shift in the history of country image communication and diplomacy was not the practice itself. The most amazing thing was that these practices, usually confined to wartime, continued after the end of the war. One of the reasons could be that actually the war did not end in 1945 but lasted in the form of the Cold War till 1990. Therefore, the enemy changed, but the psychological warfare did not lose its importance.

Moreover, only after the end of the Second World War the public diplomacy took its shape. The term itself (in its modern connotation) was officially coined in 1965 by Edmund Gullion, though it was used before him as well. As E. Guillion confessed by himself, this term was proposed as the euphemism of the older term “propaganda”, as the latter already had too many negative connotations in these times (Cull 2006).

After 1945, it was the USA, a super-state, who created and led the theories and practices of public diplomacy. Then it became a psychological contra-warfare, fighting with

the USSR's *agit-prop*. The main goal of public diplomacy was to promote the USA, to create its powerful image and thus to oppose the communistic world.

Practically, public diplomacy has primary connections with public relations techniques and theories, using a wide range of terms and concepts of it. However, it can be treated as a superior level of the public relations, as it is run not by private companies but by the government, and it is understood as an important part of State's foreign policy and diplomacy. Thus, it must be institutionalized and managed by the Government. In the USA it was done in 1953, when the US Information Agency (USIA) was established. It managed a vast number of centres abroad (USIS – US Information Services) for promoting American lifestyle, culture and the country itself (Risen 2005).

As both H. N. Tuch (1990) and Christopher Ross (2002; 3) point out, public diplomacy operates in two ways. The first is communication policy, seeking to send country's messages effectively, i.e. "to articulate U.S. policy clearly and forthrightly and to make a sustained effort to develop support for that policy" (Ross 2002; 4). In this field some of the important tools and techniques are working with different types of media as well as personal communication, printed copies and internet communication. Therefore, the positive work of press attaché, press releases, articles in newspapers, TV programs are the main ways to promote the country within public diplomacy frames.

Besides, the second way is cultural diplomacy, seeking to promote cultural under-

standing through various events, cultural and educational exchange programs, public-private partnerships, etc. Thus, cultural events (exhibitions, concerts, culture days, etc.), diplomatic events (receptions, presentations, etc.), business fairs and all other types of events are beloved by public diplomats.

The practices of the USA-conceptualized public diplomacy were disseminated worldwide (initially in the capitalistic world only), taking important part in countries' foreign policies. Many economically strong countries established cultural centers abroad, managed by such institutions as British Council, *Alliance française*, *Goethe-Institut*, *Instituto Cervantes*, *Instituto Camões* or Japan Foundation. They targeted their activities towards language and culture promotion, as well as tourism, business and export promotion.

In 1990's, it seemed that public diplomacy would disappear, what had happened with the Soviet *agit-prop* before. The strict budget cuts, the elimination of its print publications, the restrictions of cultural diplomacy naturally led to the liquidation of USIA in 1999 (Cultural diplomacy 2005; 4-5). However, the new enemy very clearly articulated after September 11 - the terrorism – emerged, revitalising the importance of public diplomacy and inspiring new discussions regarding its impact. There even were ideas that September 11 and recent anti-Americanism occurred due to weakening of the US public diplomacy. Thus, nowadays public diplomacy is gaining its importance again but, as it will be seen later in this paper, changing its nature and dealing with new challenges.

4. Country Branding as European Approach

What we are witnessing from the late 1990's up to date is the emergence of a new set of practices in the field of country image communication. This new trend is qualitatively different from both authoritarian propagandas and public diplomacy and is called *country branding* (or, in a broader sense, *place branding*).

In this historical perspective of the emergence of country branding, Nicolas Papadopoulos (2004) highlights some independent research that was carried out during the last 40 years in the capitalistic countries, especially in Europe and the USA. All this research was based on marketing and had a very pragmatic aim – to reach economic success by selling the products, attracting tourists and FDI.

Research and activities related to PCI (product country image) have the longest history. In 1980's governments and companies started systematic campaigns to compete against imports and to protect national production. Later, in the 1990's these activities shifted to more aggressive practices, aimed at promoting exports. TDI (tourism destination image) also gained great importance during the last decades, seeking to attract the tourists and to sell tourism services as products. More recently, the practices of attracting FDI (foreign direct investments) as well as attracting skilled labour were developed by business companies and governments (Papadopoulos 2004; 38-40).

Therefore, the preconditions for country branding paradigm appeared already du-

ring the Cold War, but in the late 1990's and early 2000's there was a big shift in the field of country image communication. It was observed in several aspects.

Firstly, as Papadopoulos (Ibid; 41-42) notes, country name related marketing became more aggressive in this period. This change was accelerated by the emerging of new markets in Central and Eastern Europe, the new challenges for tourism in the context of strengthening terrorism, the competition in agriculture, etc.

Secondly, in this period the different research of FDI, TDI, PDI etc., implemented separately before, was merged together into one paradigm. The majority of the authors understood that this research is closely related with each other. One of the signals of this shift was an article *Nation-Brands of the Twenty-First Century* of a young researcher Simon Anholt (1998), published in 1998, which enforced discussions. Later, in 2002, S. Anholt proposed a concept of branding hexagon, where he distinguished 6 main factors, influencing country image (Figure 1). This consequently led towards the concepts of umbrella image, the methods of evaluating country's brand image and the systematic image strategies, implemented by the government.

Michalis Kavaratzis (2004) also emphasizes the importance of the changes in marketing theory and the emergence of the notion of corporate branding, which in the later half of the 1990's "seized the imagination of scholars and managers alike and its rise has been inexorable" (Kavaratzis 2004; 64).

As a result of the changes mentioned above, a notion of country branding com-

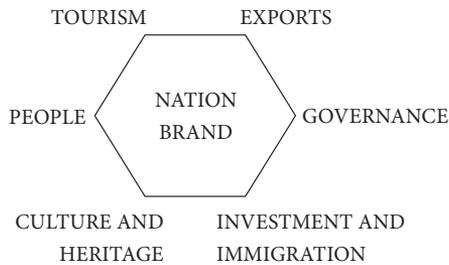


Figure 1: Branding hexagon by Simon Anholt

pletely took its shape in very early 2000's. At the time when the US reduced its public diplomacy practices and reinvented them again after September 11, mainly European researchers conceptualized a new paradigm of country image communication. Although influenced much by the previous American research, this new movement geographically took place in the EU countries. Thus it can be called a European approach as opposed to the American public diplomacy and the Soviet propaganda paradigms.

5. Major Shifts of Country Image Communication in Country Branding

Country branding took its shape in Europe as a qualitatively new approach towards country image communication, different from these of the Soviet propaganda and American public diplomacy. Several important shifts can be distinguished at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.

Therefore, we will discuss three major shifts that shaped the notion of country branding and made it distinctive from the previous theories and practices. Here we

would like to emphasize the influence of marketing theory, the switch towards the notion of image as a difference, and the importance of primary communication.

6. Influence of Marketing Theory

Obviously, country branding inherited a big portion of its theory and tools from the public diplomacy. For instance, Great Britain used public diplomacy techniques during the Cold War, and they naturally grew into the country branding. Even now, many authors do not distinguish public diplomacy from country branding very clearly, often using the two terms synonymously.

But when reading the research on country branding, it becomes clear that country branding has a much broader meaning and goes far beyond the conventional notion of public diplomacy, as it includes all public diplomacy tools but supplements them with marketing theory and tools. To simplify, the formula of country branding communication activities could be the public diplomacy plus marketing.

This formula becomes clear when speaking about the sectors of country branding, applied by different countries for country promotion. As several researchers (for example Jorge De Vicente 2004) construct their information, country image communication is usually divided into four main sectors of activities. These sectors are namely: public diplomacy, tourism promotion, exports promotion and attracting FDI (Figure 2). If referring to historical perspective once more, these four sectors trace back to the pre-1990 marketing research and activities in capitalistic

countries, indicated by Nicolas Papadopoulos (2004): CDI, TDI, and FDI, adding American public diplomacy to them.

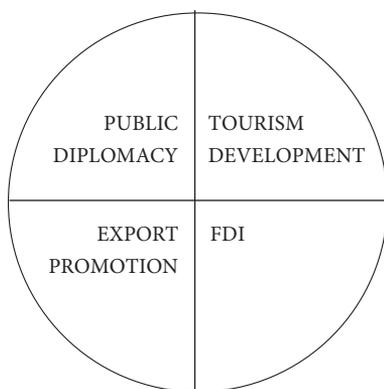


Figure 2: Country image communication sectors

For instance, in the case of Lithuania, its country image communication is divided into 3 sectors, as two sectors, – those of export promotion and attracting FDI, – are merged into one, which institutionally has been managed by the Ministry of Economy, and particularly by the Lithuanian Economic Development Agency since 1997. There are two institutions in Lithuania dealing with TDI sector: the State Tourism Department and Lithuanian Tourism Fund. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and especially Lithuanian Institute (*LI – Lietuvos institutas*), established in 2002, are dealing with the public diplomacy.

Therefore, it becomes clear that in the country branding approach, the public diplomacy activities run by diplomatic missions and cultural institutes, where mainly public relations tools are used, are only a part of the whole huge country image communication mechanism. Besides, marketing tools

are used for image communication in all four sectors. Such pragmatic terms as positioning, segmentation or targeting are applied for branding countries. Research of the target audience, research of public opinion, as well as the research of the place itself takes an important part, inspired by the notions above. Here direct advertising is used as a basic tool, thus creating TV or radio commercials, posters and web pages, printing pamphlets and brochures, initiating promotion campaigns are very important.

To achieve a strong emotional impact, marketers are especially interested in creating audio-visual symbols of the place. Very often the creation of a logo, catchphrase or slogan is stated as the main goal of country branding. Each of the four sectors inside the country is usually treated as separate, it is managed by separate institutions, also different logos, catchphrases and slogans are used for them.

Different sectors settled up to 1990's very naturally in inter-independently. But later it was understood that there is a need to manage them rationally and structurally. Simon Anholt states: "Since most of these bodies, official and unofficial, national and regional, political and commercial, are usually working in isolation, they send out conflicting and even contradictory messages about the country. As a result, no consistent picture of the country emerges, and its overall reputation stands still or moves backwards" (Anholt 2007; 2-3).

The solution could be a state-managed, centralized image communication, which could create the overall (umbrella) image. It does not mean that separate sectors and institutions of image communication would

disappear. It means management in which all the sectors are centrally controlled by one upper institution and one general strategy. Different sectors, even having different goals, cannot work in different directions but must sing in unison. Only in this case the image of the country can be supported and strengthened effectively.

Minor places inside the place (i.e. regions inside the country, towns inside the regions and districts inside the towns, etc.) must also consider the main image strategy and the core idea. But it does not mean destroying the diversity. On the contrary, it means creating the *unity in diversity*, the slogan which is so beloved by various countries nowadays: the EU (*in Varietate Concordia*), Indonesia (*Bhinneka tunggal ika*), South Africa (*!ke e: /xarra //ke*), the USA (*E pluribus unum*) and several other countries use this phrase as their motto but, of course, each of them applies different practices to achieve the goal.

The umbrella image has been managed in many countries recently. Some of them were very keen to create their new umbrella logos, which tend to replace the national flags of the 20th century. For example, South Africa merged the variety of existing logos to one that with slogan - "Alive with possibility", which has quite a strong impact (de Vicente, 2004). On the contrary, the new logo of Italy, created in 2007, is not so welcomed by Italians (Italy became a brand with a new logo and slogan in 2007).

7. Notion of Image as Difference

Therefore, country branding practices can be described as a popular mix of the prac-

tices of public diplomacy and marketing, with a big influence from the both sides. In this dimension, the emergence of country branding was not a sharp shift but rather a slow evolution, naturally emerging from different research and theories.

An absolutely different situation appears when talking about the nature and aims of country branding and comparing them to the 20th century country image communication. Both Soviet propaganda and American public diplomacy had quite much in common. Both of them were used as psychological warfare or contra-measures in information war. Both of them aimed to create an illusion or image of the power of the super state, competing in economical strength, military capability, even in the space exploration.

By contrast to the *image as power*, country branding is creating the *image as difference*. To attract tourists or sell products, it is not so important for the country to be very powerful. It simply must be attractive and/or somehow different from others. Japanese are going to visit Toraja villages in Borneo not because Torajas are strong economically. We are buying Cashmere wool products not because Kashmir is politically powerful nowadays. Interestingly, in the new context, the previously powerful countries are losing their strength in the field of tourism and exports, because they are too big, heterogeneous and hardly described in a clear set of symbols. Meanwhile, small countries gain the opportunity to use their cultural symbols very successfully.

This shift can be explained by the overall impact of globalization and the complex correlation of globalization and iden-

tity nowadays, researched by many authors. Manuel Castells (2004) emphasises the importance of the identities at the end of the 20th and in the 21st centuries. In this context, supporting the diversity and multiculturalism of the world is a natural trend of this period.

Interestingly, a link can be observed between the country branding in the 21st century and the nationalism-influenced country image communication at the beginning of the 20th century, mentioned in the first part of this paper. Although they are using quite different techniques, the emphasis on the national peculiarities and the search for difference are their common features.

Therefore, we are witnessing the birth of the new logos and catchphrases of the countries in this century, as there was a birth of many national flags and anthems at the beginning of the previous one. Subsequently, nowadays the threat of the new wave of nationalism is discussed, and the issue of Euro-nationalism also takes part in these discussions. Still, the new nationalism is generally a cultural but not an ethnic one, and Kosaku Yoshino treats it as a positive phenomenon and as a natural trend in the age of globalization (Yoshino 1992; 1).

One more reason of the shift towards the notion of *image as difference* could be explained by the fact that the end of the Cold War eliminated the importance of the psychological warfare. Nowadays, countries are branded in a peaceful context, where economic factors play the major role. Moreover, the shift of the world from the bipolar system towards uni-multipolar, according to Samuel P. Huntington (1996), allowed the

emergence of cultural regions and regional powers.

Finally, returning to the notion of the European approach, we would like to emphasize that the country branding is especially European in its nature. It is not accidental that the country branding emerged namely in Europe. This region has always protected its variety and regional differences. Thus, the concept of the image as difference is very close to European values and the way of thinking.

8. Importance of Primary Communication

The third shift we would like to discuss in this paper is the emergence of the notion of primary communication in the field of country image communication.

Country branding is quite often understood as a straight application of marketing theory to the countries, i.e. understanding the countries, cities and nations as products, sold for tourists, importers or investors. Many governments, applying country branding practices worldwide, usually emphasize this point of view, thinking that, as S. Anholt ironically states, “if only they could raise a Nike-sized marketing budget, then their country could have a Nike-sized brand within months” (Anholt 2007; 22).

Hlynur Gudjonsson (2005) calls this approach absolutistic and opposes it to the royalistic one, which neglects any possibility of rational management of country image and states that a country “carries specific dignity unlike marketed products” (Olins 2002; 241).

Just between these two antipodal approaches a moderate view exists and is usually

preferred to by many country branders, Simon Anholt being among them. To simplify, this view diminishes the power of communicational and promotional practices, beloved by absolutists, and raises a question of correlation between the information and the reality.

Michaelis Kavaratzis (2004) proposes a notion of primary communication. Citing Thomas Graham and applying the concept of outer city and inner city, M. Kavaratzis emphasises the influence of the latter. The image of the inner city settles in the person's mind by the immediate communication with the object and is affected by multilayered information, influenced by the world of senses: views, tastes, smells, movement, sounds, etc. Therefore, taking this factor into account, it is clear that there is a need to change the country itself (the reality) in order to affect its image.

Primary communication is opposed to the secondary communication, the traditional understanding of communication practices used for promotion and information and discussed above. Moreover, the importance of the primary communication can be opposed to the traditional notions of public diplomacy and agitprop, thus highlighting one more peculiarity of modern country branding.

As both the public diplomacy and soviet *agit-prop* used propaganda as one of the major tools, the discrepancy between information and reality was always one of the problematic features the country image communication faced throughout the 20th century.

But propaganda was successful during the Second World War and the Cold War, when information warfare took part between

two sides of barricades crossing the iron curtains. The emphasis on the primary communication in the 1990's became very strong, because the information flows became too open due to the strengthening globalization, developing tourism and other reasons. It became too difficult to hide the reality.

There are many cases showing that. For instance, Israel and the USA launched re-branding campaigns several years ago (Risen 2005). Israel tried to spin its image during the war with Lebanon, and the USA initiated a big pro-American campaign towards the Islamic world. As these two cases showed, secondary communication-based campaigns failed regardless the vast amounts of money and efforts. They were powerless to change the public opinion (Puleikytė 2007). Russia is also trying to communicate its democratization illusion outside, but this information barely looks trustworthy and does not convince at all (Vaitiekūnaitė 2006).

Secondary communication *per se*, – be it a part of soviet propaganda, public diplomacy or marketing-supported country branding, – is not effective any more. Thus, the advice of country branding gurus for these cases could be one: end the war and keep peace but do not try to look peaceful while fighting. According to J. Kahn, “The transformation of a country's image can only come after the country is transformed. Throwing millions at public relations firms, hiring marketing consultants, creating snappy slogans or cool logos is basically a monumental waste of time, money and energy” (Berkowitz 2007; 1).

Moreover, secondary communication, contradicting reality, can often have an op-

posite effect, as a famous saying among marketing specialists notices: if you want to spoil a bad product, advertise it. Country promotion (i.e. secondary communication) without changing reality (i.e. primary communication) can spoil the country's image: "A lot of very poor countries—Uganda and Nigeria, for instance—are spending millions on TV campaigns. <...> It will simply reinforce the idea that these places are corrupt because they are spending so much on what amounts to propaganda while their people are starving" (Kahn 2006; 1) - S. Anholt argues.

Primary communication management or, as it is usually called, "living with brand" is a new trend in the country image communication field. Everybody understands there are many factors having impact on the primary communication. H. Gudjonsson (2005) groups these factors to four main groups: economics, politics, people (culture), and geography (nature). Thus, to coordinate its image, the country must coordinate these factors in a proper way. The changing image of the country means changing its politics, changing its economics, changing its culture and even changing its nature.

Therefore, we are witnessing several important changes due to this trend. Firstly, country image communication expands beyond marketing and communication practices, striving to control the reality through cultural, heritage, economical and the majority of other policies. Even the brave ideas of establishing the Ministry of Image have been proposed recently (Weiner, 2006). H. Gudjonsson argues: "Nation branding occurs when a government or a private company uses its

power to persuade whoever has the ability to change a nation's image. <...> Nation branding is a supporting programme to increase a nation's prosperity by adding to the value of its brands" (Gudjonsson 2005; 285).

Definitely, the state must end the war, achieve democracy, improve economy, protect heritage or develop infrastructure not only for improving the country's image. But image management could be one of the stimuli, – and quite a strong one, – to encourage that.

The country image communication nowadays is oriented not only towards foreign countries anymore but also towards local people, who are living in the country. It does not mean only information campaigns and TV channels about how beautiful or how good the country is. It means changing the reality and creating more beautiful, more democratic, more peaceful space for people.

9. Conclusions

Country branding is a new approach in the field of country image communication. It emerged in the last decade of the 20th century and is the leading force at the beginning of the 21st century, stimulating many countries of the world, including the European Union, to apply its practices and theories.

Country branding was inspired by different research in Western European countries during the Cold War and gradually took its shape in Europe, thus it can be called European approach, as opposed to other important country image communication approaches of the 20th century, i.e. the American public diplomacy and the Soviet propaganda.

Although country branding inherited much from public diplomacy and it makes a big part of country branding's techniques, there are many important differences between them, and major important shifts after the end of the Cold War make country branding qualitatively a new approach.

Firstly, country branding is based not on public relations theory but on marketing, and especially on comparative branding theories. Thus, positioning, segmentation, targeting and other pragmatic promotional techniques are extremely popular and are being used in a mix of public relations techniques.

Secondly, the majority of country branding specialists, especially those of the

moderate view, emphasise the importance of primary communication and the need of changing reality that was almost disclaimed and ignored by the propaganda-based American and Soviet approaches during the Cold War. Thus the country image communication expands beyond conventional conceptions of communication and is oriented towards the local people, seeking to make the country better and more beautiful.

Thirdly, country image communication is changing its nature, putting stress on the image as difference, as opposed to the image as power of previous approaches. This can cause a new wave of nationalisms, an issue widely discussed by researchers.

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ABSTRACT

In spite of the fact that the rational country image communication is severely criticised by some scholars, it is gaining a big importance worldwide. It is applied for strengthening identities and developing economy, politics, and culture of the countries. In this paper, the phenomena of country branding, emerged at the end of the 20th century in Europe, is discussed in the new perspective, comparing it to other approaches of the country image communication, i.e. the traditions of the USSR and of the USA, trying to find its distinctive features.

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