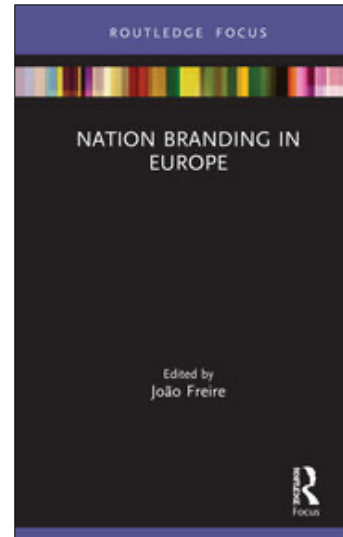


João Freire (Ed.), **Nation Branding in Europe**, Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2022, 110 pp., \$59.95 (hardback), \$19.50 (eBook).

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Nation Branding in Europe, edited by João Freire, is a new book in the *Routledge Focus on Nation Branding* series, edited by Keith Dinnie, that provides theories, concepts, and practices of brand strategies applied to various countries throughout the world. Scientists and practitioners from a dozen European countries contributed to this book. Twelve chapters, focused on 12 European cases, constitute an interesting collective work, showing the diversity of nation branding strategies. The editor explains that the criteria for selecting countries were size and diversity. The six largest European countries (Germany, France, the UK, Italy, Spain, and Russia), three medium-sized (Poland, Sweden, and The Netherlands), and three small countries (Portugal, Ireland, and Estonia) were selected to also represent different European regions and specificities.



The purpose of the book is “to understand how various European countries are developing their nation brand strategy” (p. 1). The conclusion is that only a few countries developed cohesive, successful branding strategies. Other countries regard nation branding as a political tool. It means that such a strategy is based on the ruling party’s vision of the country. Changing power means changing vision and changing strategy. According to Freire, “A less effective approach to nation branding is where countries develop several advertising campaigns that they consider to be a nation-branding strategy” (p. 2). The case studies analyzed in this book reveal three concepts: brand architecture, governance model, and research-based strategy. Each case, described by a different author, is specific, because each European country (despite contemporary unifying trends within the European Union) is specific, considering different political, historic, social, geographical, and economic backgrounds.

The first case is Germany (in chapter 2 by Anna Schwan), a country charged with a history of Nazism and the Holocaust, but also with a strong brand—“Made in Germany.” Schwan focuses on communicating modern Germany as an innovative country, including an innovative business location. The city of Hamburg is of particular importance in this regard. Foreign cultural policy and the Goethe-Institut also seem to be important. Culture is one of the strong assets of France, as explained in the next chapter by Christophe Alaux, which ranks “as the second-best European country for investors, second only to Germany” (p. 12). Alaux recommends, among other strategies, that France also focus on innovation in its nation branding. On the other hand, local branding is strong in this country and is also linked to national branding. The UK, another country described by Malcolm Allan, adopted a new strategy after Brexit, called “Global Britain.” Earlier, in 2012, the “Great Campaign” was established to “inspire the world to think and feel differently about the United Kingdom now and in the future, demonstrating that it is the best nation to visit, to invest in, trade with and study

in” (p. 22). According to Allan, the “Scotland Is Now” initiative most closely resembles the “Great Campaign” as the proper nation brand strategy.

The next two chapters cover two southern European countries: Italy and Spain. Cecilia Pasquinelli explains that there are different sub-brands of Italy. The EXPO 2015 in Milan was the starting point of the campaign, “Italy the Extraordinary Commonplace,” which was aimed at evoking associations with innovation, science, and engineering, among others, and therefore going beyond Italian stereotypes. The worldwide campaign “Italian wine—Taste the Passion” (beginning in 2018) shows the traditional Italian way of life. Pasquinelli also writes about the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on the tourism industry in the context of the country’s brand. Gildo Seisdedos recalls that Spain was also a “very successful touristic brand as all pre-COVID indicators clearly show” (p. 42). Both Italy and Spain are still perceived as attractive tourist destinations, but not as economic powers. Another problem in Spain is that “not all regions have the same aspirations regarding brand governance” (p. 43). The Catalan problem is particularly important because the nationalist government of this autonomous community (“comunidad autónoma” in Spanish) is doing everything possible to separate itself from the central government and Spain as a state, both politically and in terms of image (e.g., it was the first regional government to forbid bullfights, and, in 2017, an illegal referendum was held on the secession of Catalonia from Spain).

For Russia, however, other problems (although there are regional separatisms there, as well), including economic and political sanctions, seem to be more important. Kirill Rozhkov emphasizes that Russians defeated fascism and, therefore, his value proposition for the Russian brand is: “a way of life and ideology that are incompatible with those of fascism” (p. 46). Other values proposed by Rozhkov for the Russian brand include the city of Saint-Petersburg, Moscow as a “Third Rome,” a mysterious Russian soul, Russia as a fair world power, and as a birthplace of talents.

In chapters 8–10, the brand strategies of three middle-sized countries are analyzed. The strategy of Sweden, according to Marcus Andersson, rests on four pillars. The last pillar is four core values: innovative, open, authentic, and caring. The strategy of the Polish brand has recently also been based on four core values: innovative (like Sweden), inspiring, open (again like Sweden), and friendly. Authors Magdalena Florek and Jarosław Górski state:

The identity of brand Poland evolved from the original one ranging from eastern traditions to western aspirations to brand identity with emphasis placed on the affinity with the European cultural heritage as well as accomplishments in the economy and culture. (p. 70)

Robert Govers and Simon Anholt, who coined the term “nation brand,” focus on the strategy of The Netherlands in chapter 10. They describe institutional strategies to summarize: “The idea of a strategic ‘Holland brand’ initiative has probably been contaminated yet again and might take another 15 years for it to resurface on the government’s agenda” (p. 77).

The last three chapters are devoted to three small countries that have achieved success in various fields, such as foreign direct investment (Ireland), tourism (Portugal), or economy and technology (Estonia, one of the “Baltic tigers,” p. 1). Mark Henry shows, however, that the Irish brand is not only representative of

foreign direct investment (FDI), but also of other branding initiatives, such as "Tourism Brand Ireland" and "Food Brand Ireland." The chapter about Portugal, written by Freire, focuses on tourism, but the author also writes about the Agência para o Investimento e Comércio Externo de Portugal (AICEP), a governmental organization dedicated to attracting investments and supporting the internationalization of Portuguese companies. Finally, he states: "The branding effort would have required a central structure with the full support of the central government as well as the main opposition parties" (p. 96).

In many cases, the opposition does not support the government's strategy, but in the case of Estonia, it seems that the national brand strategy called "Central Idea" is widely accepted by Estonian society, including politicians, because it effectively contributes to building a positive image of this postcommunist country. This "Central Idea" consists of five elements: investment, exports, tourism, prominence, and talents. José Filipe Torres mentions in the last chapter of the book that Estonia became the first e-State and in "searching for 'Estonia' on various search engines, everything that appears is a reflection of its *Central Idea*" (p. 100). In a chart showing global Internet searches for Estonia, the growing interest in this small country is significant. The e-Estonia's digital society is not, however, the sole pillar of the national brand. The creators of the brand also try to evoke associations such as "independent minds" and "clean environment."

This 110-page book is heterogeneous, just like Europe itself, and the authors of the chapters use different methods in their analyses. There is, of course, a common "central idea," that is, a national brand strategy. Each chapter presents a new perspective because of a new subject (country) of analysis; therefore, this book gives a broad look at the problem and is recommended to any expert or beginner in this field from any country in the world. Other recent books also include analyses of the branding strategies of countries from Europe and other continents (e.g., Croatia, Slovenia, Japan, South Korea, Canada, Chile, Botswana, New Zealand, United Arab Emirates, and the United States, of course). In most cases, however, these are problem analyses in various contexts (e.g., the history and evolution of nation branding [Viktorin, Gienow-Hecht, Estner, & Will, 2020], marketing of national identities [Aronczyk, 2013], country-of-origin effect [Dinnie, 2016], and social psychology and national stereotypes [Ingenhoff, White, Buhmann, & Kiouisi, 2019]), with references to various countries. In this book, however, a given country is the next chapter of the book. This is a new approach in the literature on the subject.

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