

The Role of Marketing in Creating and Sustaining Poland's National Brand

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ABSTRACT

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National branding, which is used by strategic marketing for a country's identity, has become a strategic tool for a country's competitiveness. Nevertheless, only a few countries in Europe have developed and implemented branding strategies. Poland belongs to such countries that are only formulating and developing branding strategies. Accordingly, there is a need to formulate recommendations for the development of the national brand using modern marketing technologies and tools. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to clarify the directions of the development of the national brand and branding, as well as to develop directions for the use of modern marketing tools for the development of the national brand. In conducting the research, the author used general scientific and special methods: analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, systematisation and grouping, and a systematic approach. In the process of developing the research topic, it was proved that national branding increases exports, stimulates foreign investment and tourism. For Poland, it is important to introduce a comprehensive national branding system, which will allow to obtain positive results in various spheres of public life.

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Introduction

The modern competitiveness of a country largely depends on how well its national brand has been developed. The development of a national brand creates more favourable conditions for international business, tourism, and investment. At the same time, building a national brand is a challenging task, as it is influenced by many factors and requires the use of various marketing tools to promote it.

The task of developing Poland's national brand is particularly relevant in the context of large-scale transformations in the economic development system of European countries. The potential for expanding Poland's cooperation with the countries of the European region depends to a large

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extent on how successfully the national brand is developed. The national brand is a relatively new concept, which was formed based on elements of marketing theory and political science.

In essence, a national brand is an effective way to implement a development strategy for a territory (region), which allows to align the goals and interests of different groups (households, businesses, the state). For the state, the brand is a competitive advantage and a tool for realising socio-cultural potential, innovation, and effective communication (Stahl et al., 2020; Tanveer et al., 2021).

The need to construct and promote a single collective state, under which the products of Polish producers will be promoted, is due to the need to address the goals of strategic development, namely the expediency of attracting consumers' attention to the goods and services of the country of origin, developing and strengthening the associative link between the image of regional products and specific territories;

the need for support from both intergovernmental and national and regional authorities to promote and strengthen the positions of these companies in the domestic and foreign markets.

It is also important to note that the marketing methodology for evaluating brands of individual countries proposed by the founder of the country branding theory Anholt (2007) could be applied to territorial branding according to the selected parameters:

- export brands (through the image of products and services produced in Poland);
- management (through the formation of public opinion on the quality of Polish goods and services through the media);
- culture and social heritage (through the level of global perception of the regional historical and cultural heritage and assessment of the level of modern culture);
- people (through the reputation of the region's population for tourism and the level of interest in visiting the region and the attractiveness of its tourist areas);
- investment and migration (through the degree of attractiveness of the region for living, working, and studying, as well as the investment climate).

The territorial image cannot be built from anything; to achieve the effect, a synthesis of brand management and public diplomacy is required, accompanied by the active development of trade, investment, tourism, and exports (Cong et al., 2021; Dey et al., 2020; Lima et al., 2020). Support for the country's leading national brands, their public and professional recognition is an important intergovernmental task, the solution of which depends on the joint efforts of various Polish authorities. The essence of a regional brand is understood as an effective tool of modern marketing, which makes it possible to form a positive image and increase the recognition of both territories and types of products and services that the country produces on its territory (Murzyn-Kupisz & Hołuj, 2021; Kong et al., 2021; Dumitriu et al., 2019).

Thus, the brand can become a significant tool of the Polish market protectionism policy. The Polish brand can be used in the most promising areas requiring development, which are also important for the promotion of the Polish space in general: advertising of goods and services produced in the country; branding of Polish tourist destinations and places, regional tourist clusters, local tourist products; innovative business, development of digital technologies.

Literature review

The topic of national branding has gained particular popularity and started to spread globally since the beginning of the 21st century. It is a comprehensive marketing activity that is closely

intertwined with political and economic interests, social and cultural characteristics of the country, which allows to identify the values of the country's brand, as well as to measure, build, and manage the country's image component.

In the context of globalisation and integration of world economic systems, along with the strengthening of political and economic positions of countries, the formation and promotion of a country's national brand, its positive image, rating, and status as a determining factor of its position on the world stage is of particular importance (Arora & Sanni, 2019).

This issue is particularly relevant for developing countries, although developed countries pay no less attention to it to maintain and improve their global ranking and political influence.

Although many foreign and domestic research papers have been published on this topic, the theoretical foundations of national branding are still being formed, and the basic terminology is ambiguously defined. The concepts of “national branding” and “country (territorial) branding”, the terms “country brand”, “country image”, “country reputation” and “national brand” are often used synonymously, and their interpretations remain somewhat variable (Lucato et al., 2019; Prathapan et al., 2018; Steinhoff & Palmatier, 2021).

It should be emphasised that the “national branding image” reflects the implementation of national branding, while the “country image” refers to the general perception of the country, regardless of whether efforts are made to build a national brand. Also, “national identity”, which defines the national characteristics of a country's citizens, is not synonymous with the identity of a national brand. Therefore, it is worth considering in more detail the conceptual foundations of the national brand and its components, and to provide a single definition of this term based on political, geographical, economic, and other approaches.

The term “national brand” was introduced into scientific circulation in 1998 by the English branding scholar Anholt (2010), the founder and publisher of two global studies in the field of territorial branding: The Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index and the Anholt-GfK Roper City Brands Index, which cover more than 30,000 people worldwide. In defining a nation brand, Anholt (2010) highlighted its ability to create product value through the “Made in Country X” label and stressed that value is formed through positive associations with the country of production: a country, evoking certain strong associations among consumers, endows goods produced in its territory with them.

At the end of the 20th century, it became clear that due to the benefits of globalisation and the development of international economic relations between states, the expansion of international trade, and the growth of foreign investment, as well as other circumstances, many goods produced in one country could be manufactured in other countries around the world. With the emergence of labels such as “Assembled in Country X”, “Designed by Country X”, “Made for Country X” and others, when the final product was subject to assembly and packaging in different countries, the wording “Made in Country X” ceased to reflect reality and create additional value. In addition, according to branding expert Wally Olins (Hassan & Mahrous, 2019; Jamwal et al., 2021; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2021), the boundaries between the state and politics, on the one hand, and companies and the economy, on the other, are gradually blurring; the relationship between companies and countries is becoming more and more similar. In this context, the national brand can be used to develop the economy and diplomacy, and business and politics need to be integrated to achieve the same goals.

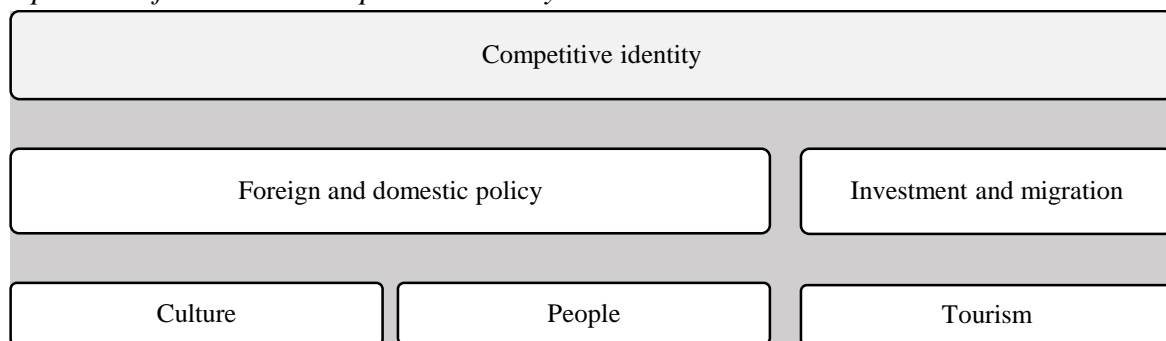
The concept of “Made in Country X” has been widely criticised by academics, so Anholt (2007) reformulated it as “competitive identity” and built a model for improving the country's competitiveness using technologies and tools of public diplomacy and brand management. Anholt (2007) became the main developer of a comprehensive, diversified approach to branding territories, as opposed to a specialised one focused on a single aspect (e.g. trade or tourism).

Anholt's (2007) new definition of the term “national brand” is as follows: “The sum of people's perceptions of a country within six areas of government activity, such as exports, government, tourism, investment and immigration, culture and heritage, and population”.

The concept of competitive identity is presented in the form of a hexagon (Cambier & Poncin, 2020), which is formed based on the six elements of the modern territory brand mentioned above.

Figure 1.

Components of the state's competitive identity



Source: Compiled by the author based on (Akter & Sultana, 2020; Aleksieienko et al., 2020; Jaas, 2022; Kowalska, 2020; Pawełoszek et al., 2022; Saura et al., 2021)

Anholt approaches the issue of national branding from the perspective of the territory of countries, according to which the image of the territory is not subject to artificial construction, does not appear “out of nowhere” (Anholt, 2010) but is determined by the six groups of parameters mentioned above. He noted that branding of the state (territories) is a systematic process of coordinating the actions, behaviour, investments, innovations, and communications of the state (territory) to implement a competitive identity.

All the advantages and disadvantages of countries are reflected in one of these areas in one way or another, and to strengthen the national brand, a systematic approach is needed to improve the performance of each criterion: tourism; increasing exports of quality products and services; government policy (domestic and foreign); reputation of the population; cultural heritage, traditions; creating a favourable investment climate and a skilled workforce (Hrynchyshyn, 2021).

At the same time, Anholt (2010) draws a parallel between the concepts of “country brand” and “country reputation”, pointing out that the more positive the image of a state, the more business investments it has, the more active tourism is developing, etc. Thus, Anholt's definition reflects the perception of the country by stakeholders in the six areas considered and characterises the image that has already been formed in people's minds.

In general, the concept of place marketing can refer to a city, region, country, or tourist destination and their competition for tourists, investors, residents, etc. Place marketing is based on a strategic approach to public relations, which implies that image change is a continuous,

holistic, systematic, coordinated, and large-scale process that requires much more than a quick change or implementation of a logo or slogan.

Territory marketing is largely aimed at shaping the image of the territory, the associations associated with a particular place, and acting as an attractive force for potential consumers. The marketing approach to the territory means creating conditions that would increase the attractiveness of the territory as an investment object and as a living environment.

Method

The study is aimed at analysing the perspective directions of development of the national brand of Poland. The analysis of scientific literature is aimed at systematising approaches to determining the optimal directions for creating and developing the national brand, and the generalisation of the experience presented in the scientific literature allows formulating practical recommendations for the step-by-step implementation of actions to develop and support the national brand of Poland.

The research was based on the scientific works of leading domestic and foreign scholars, in particular, the literature of the last 5 years was analysed to provide an up-to-date view of the issues under development, and the classic scientific works of scholars of the early 21st century were also considered.

In the process of developing the topic, attention was paid to defining the essence of national branding and the specifics of its development.

Data analysis and results

Poland today is a country that occupies a transit position between the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, but at the same time has a completely integral political and economic structure. At the same time, its geographical location and rich cultural heritage are important for the country, which allows it to promote the concept of a powerful European country as a business card of Poland. For example, in 2022, Poland became one of the 10 European countries with the largest amount of foreign investment. In terms of financial stability and quality of venture capital, the country was ranked 6th in the list of countries worth investing in (Pawłowski et al., 2022).

In support of the above arguments in favour of Poland's strong economic position, it is advisable to provide statistical data on the country's economic situation - Table 1.

Of course, the country has problems, it has also suffered as a result of the pandemic and the huge influx of refugees from Ukraine, but in terms of economic indicators, refugees are becoming a driving force and stimulating economic development in Poland.

In 2020, Poland entered the top 30 countries in the global Nation Brands ranking compiled by the British consulting company Brand Finance. Analysts estimated its national brand at \$650 billion, although it was developed in 2001. Poland was ranked 23rd in the top, ahead of Belgium and Norway.

Given its considerable economic potential, the country has the prerequisites for active development of the national brand.

Table 1.*Main economic characteristics of Poland in 2021*

Indicator	Meaning
GDP volume	688 USD billion.
Annual GDP growth rate	+0.6 %
The GDP growth rate over 5 years	+2.2 %
GDP per capita	16705 USD
Inflation rate during the year	8.2 %
Interest rate	5.75 %
Unemployment rate	5 %
Salary	7006 PLN/month 1644.292 USD/month
Trade balance	1068 EUR million 1.133 billion USD
Current balance sheet	566 EUR million 0.6 billion USD
International currency reserves	180,006 USD million 180.006 billion
Public debt	1271360 million. PLN 298.399 billion

Source: Compiled by the author based on Pawełoszczek et al. (2022)

For Poland, it is proposed to use the concept of “4D Branding”, which involves using the products and talents of the state as the object of image, rather than the country and its people.

According to the theory of “four-dimensional branding”, a successful brand is built on four main pillars: rational, emotional, spiritual, and social, and is a systemic value in people's minds.

The model of enhancing the country's competitiveness using technologies and tools of public diplomacy and brand management, based on the concept of “competitive identity”, served to develop the basic principles of national branding in parallel in two fields of knowledge - politics, and marketing. Table 2 provides a comparative table of approaches to this concept from both the public diplomacy and national branding perspectives.

Table 2.*Comparative characteristics of public diplomacy (“soft power”) and national branding*

Component	Public diplomacy (“soft power”)	National branding
Objective	Promoting political interests	Promotion of economic interests (mostly)
Terms.	The interests are different and are determined by the current political situation	Consensus is reached among stakeholders (all interested parties and participants in the process)
Focus.	Aims to develop international relations and intercultural communications	It is aimed at attracting foreign investment, tourism, increasing exports of domestic goods and services, attracting skilled labour, etc.
Types of marketing	Classic media marketing and image marketing	Marketing aimed at shaping and developing the idea of the attractiveness of the national brand and the country's positive reputation

Source: Compiled by the author based on (Bala & Verma, 2018; Grewal et al., 2020; Levchenko et al., 2022)

From Table 2, it cannot be said that only one of the directions of forming a positive image of the country and creating a Polish brand should be chosen, but they should be combined with each other, and, accordingly, different marketing tools should be used for this purpose.

This approach is combined with the formation of a state development strategy and strategic planning. In fact, strategic planning and the marketing approach are two complementary tools

that allow countries to survive and thrive in a changing environment. Unstable economic conditions and sectoral restructuring force countries to look for new ways to attract capital to their territories.

In order to promote branding, it is crucial to create a unified brand narrative and to coordinate messaging across different communication channels. Involving stakeholders in the brand development process will foster a sense of ownership and ensure consistency in communicating Poland's identity and values.

One of the key elements of building a national brand is the creation of a tourism image. The logo of the Polish tourism brand was developed by the Polish Tourist Board (POT) back in 2001 (Figure 2). Its conceptual design consists of red stylised letters, and the symbols in the form of a green tree, a dark blue mountain top, and waves refer to the living Polish nature. Until now, the logo has been used exclusively to promote Polish tourism on the domestic and foreign markets.

Figure 2.

Logo of the Polish tourism brand



The logo shown in Fig. 2 logo attracts attention with its bright colours, emphasises the colours of the national flag (white and red), and draws attention to the presence of mountains, sea, forests, and rich nature in the country.

Accordingly, it is not very correct to talk about the creation of a national brand today. It is more correct to focus on the marketing aspects of the development of the already established national brand of Poland. It is the marketing development of the national brand that is an important task for every country, as it affects its perception in the world, economic development, and international relations. As for Poland, Table 3 provides a number of recommendations for the development of its national brand using modern marketing tools.

Table 3.*Recommendations for the development of the Polish national brand using modern marketing tools*

A component of the national brand	Description.	Marketing tools to promote the national brand component
Cultural capital	Support and promotion of Polish culture, art, language, and traditions as key elements of national identity. Developing and spreading global interest in Polish literature, cinema, music, and other art forms.	Brand logo and slogan. Use of the logo and slogan in all marketing materials and information resources.
Innovation and technology	Continuing to invest in research and innovation so that Poland is associated with advanced technologies and high-quality products. Supporting start-ups and developing technology clusters to promote the country's image as an innovation centre	Marketing campaigns. Organising large-scale marketing campaigns aimed at raising awareness of Poland, its culture, innovations, and natural beauty. Use of various media platforms, including social media, television, radio, and print.
Tourism	Attracting the attention of international tourists by advertising and marketing tourist attractions, including historical monuments, nature reserves, and cultural events. Creating attractive tourist packages for different categories of tourists aimed at exploring Poland's cultural heritage and natural treasures	
Business support	Ensuring a favourable business environment and supporting the export activities of Polish companies. Development of strategic partnerships and trade agreements to support economic growth and mutually beneficial relations	Digital marketing. Search engine optimisation (SEO) of websites to ensure high visibility in search results. Active presence in social media to engage with an international audience and promote active communication.
Social responsibility	Developing the image of Poland as a socially responsible country through the introduction of sustainable development and environmentally friendly technologies. Promotion of Polish companies that are distinguished by high standards of social responsibility	Sponsorship and partnerships. Entering into strategic partnerships and sponsoring events that reflect Polish culture, traditions, and innovation. Cooperation with international organisations and events to increase the country's visibility.
International communities	Active participation in international forums, organisations, and initiatives to increase Poland's visibility and influence in the world. Strengthening diplomatic ties and cooperation with other countries to promote international cooperation.	Export promotion. Encourage the participation of Polish companies in international exhibitions and fairs to promote quality goods and services. Creating support for exporters to expand global exports and increase recognition of Polish brands.

Source: Compiled by the author based on (Li et al., 2021; Petrescu & Krishen, 2020; Shahid & Qureshi, 2022)

Creating a country brand can have different objectives. For countries such as Poland, the issue of branding is not so much about creating a brand as it is about maintaining and protecting it as a valuable asset and a key element of maintaining its competitive advantage. The Instytut

Marki Polskiej is in charge of its development, but the use of the marketing tools listed in Table 3 will help improve Poland's position on the international stage and increase the awareness of the national brand.

Conclusion

Place branding is a strategy for increasing the competitiveness of cities, oblasts, regions, geographical areas, and countries in order to conquer foreign markets, attract investors, tourists, new residents, and skilled migrants. Place branding is aimed at overcoming the shortage of tangible and intangible resources in the region and is based on the idea of communicating the uniqueness of the territory to the general public. Territorial branding is the latest development in marketing science, which involves the use of marketing tools to promote the entire brand of a state.

In the process of developing the research topic, it was found that Poland today already has its own brand, which, however, needs to be actively developed and further promoted in the international arena. The following tools should be used for such promotion:

- developing cultural capital and promoting it through various marketing channels. the main goal is to ensure maximum brand awareness;
- stimulating innovation and technological activity, which can be achieved through the use of innovative marketing tools and the involvement of investment-active stakeholders;
- development of tourism using social media and digital marketing;
- promoting business development and social responsibility by entering into strategic partnerships and sponsoring events that reflect polish culture, traditions, and innovation;
- participation in international communities, which will create the preconditions for the use of various marketing tools, not in the domestic market, but in the international economic and cultural space.

The direction of further research in the context of national branding development is to create a system for applying digital marketing tools and artificial intelligence to develop Poland's strategic position in the international arena.

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