

# THE ROLE OF VISUAL AND VERBAL IDENTITY IN COUNTRY BRANDING: COUNTRY NAMES, SLOGANS AND LOGOS

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## **SUMMARY**

*Creating a visual and verbal identity is a small but important part of building the country's brand. It includes a logo, a slogan, all the basic elements of the marketing communication and choosing the best brand name as well. This article shows some recent examples for country name changes and categorize country slogans and logos into groups.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION TO COUNTRY BRANDING**

Today, the world is one market. The rapid advance of globalization means that every country must compete with every other for its share of the world's consumers, tourists, investors, students, entrepreneurs, international sporting and cultural events, and for the attention and respect of the international media, or other governments, and the people of other countries (1). First, we need to make a clear distinction between brands and branding (2):

- A brand is a product or service or organization, considered in combination with its name, its identity and its reputation.
- Branding is the process of designing, planning and communicating the name and the identity, in order to build or manage the reputation.

Country branding combines visual communication and marketing techniques to promote a country. As in the branding of commercial goods and services, specific rules govern the positioning of the brand, the way its reputation is built, how customer preferences are addressed and loyalty is achieved, and how the brand is managed (3).

Country branding helps ensure that whenever there is an opportunity for a country to express itself, the key messages and tone of voice come across with strength and consistency. One part of it is creating a consistent visual and verbal identity. However reducing a country's identity to a name, logo and slogan is a big mistake. According to Anholt (1) creating competitive identity for a country is 80 per cent innovation, 15 per cent coordination and 5 per cent communication. Still, this 5 per cent is very important and the article discusses this question.

## 2. BRAND NAME CHANGES, COUNTRY NAME CHANGES

The name of the country is the brand name itself. Some countries are lucky and happy with their names, but Hungary for instance is always made fun of when foreigners say "You're from Hungary. Are you hungry?" Similar happens to Poland when someone hears Holland. Country names have changed mostly because of historical decisions: Ceylon became Sri Lanka, the Dutch East Indies became Indonesia, and after the fall of the Soviet Union several states and brands were born.

Certainly, it might be affirmed that these names were born under special conditions. Therefore, I cite some examples in the following when expressly marketing aspects lead the name change. For instance in Guatemala, where at one time the Maya empire's centre was, the alteration of one letter is planned. Thus, the country's new name may be Guatemaya which would refer to a greater extent to their history and might be more attractive for the tourists.

But we need not go so far, or rather not in geographical sense. Since its secession from Yugoslavia, Macedonia has been compelled to use the unpleasant-sounding „Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" designation, or what is worse, the abbreviation „FYROM". The rationale behind their decision is the Greek government's declaration which indicates that Macedonia as a geographical area is much bigger than the Macedonian state. The insistence of the Greeks might sound displeasing but it can be understood from the marketing aspect: they do not want people to combine the heritage of Alexander the Great with the Macedonian state and to visit it instead of Greece as a tourist destination.

At one time, Estonia tried to avoid its English name as far as it was possible and endeavoured to use the German „Estland". The rationale for this was that – as the surveys indicated – the former name recalled the tragedy of a ferryboat of the same name. The ferry sank in 1994 when 852 people were killed, among them Finns, Swedes, Russians, Germans and English. Later on, a new name has emerged: „E-stonia", referring to the country's progression in information technology.

The case of the Czech Republic deserves also attention, where many people lambast the English designation. Czechs are not enthusiastic about "Czech Republic" since tourists go generally not to the „Spanish Kingdom" or the „Commonwealth of Australia" for the summer holidays, but they use their short names. Therefore, one part of the academicians and members of the government suggested the name „Czechia" instead of the „Czech Republic". However, this is very similar to the English name of another "country", namely „Chechnya" – and the parallelism is not very fortunate. Then again, another part of the Czechs would like to have the former designation Bohemia or/and Moravia.

Great Britain also decided to change her brand name for promotional reasons. The "great" was not a very lovable word in the former colonies, because it showed some sort of superiority, so in the tourism marketing communication "Britain" is the used brand name (4,5).

### 3. CATEGORIZATION OF COUNTRY SLOGANS

Almost every country has a slogan that contains the outmost important information. Centuries ago, these slogans were used for geographical and political statements of the countries. Canada for instance came up with “A mari usque ad mare”, which means from sea to sea. French revolutionists used “Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité” in 1789. (6) Creating a tagline or slogan for a country is always very difficult if experts want to come up with something unique about the land and not make up a slogan that could be fitted to a dozen other countries (such as “The land of contrasts” or “Discover ...”). My colleague, Balázs Gyémánt and I have found that country slogans can be categorized into the following groups (table 1):

#### 1. Categorization of country slogans

Geographical position and features	Andorra – The Pyrenean Country Nigeria – the heart of Africa
Weather	Ethiopia – 13 months of sunshine Spain. Everything Under the Sun
Nature	Montenegro – wild beauty Uruguay Natural. Switzerland – get natural
Water	Nicaragua – a water paradise
Royalty	Brunei – the Kingdom of unexpected treasures The Ancient Kingdom of Tonga
Treasures	Bhutan – Land of the thunder dragon Cambodia – a world of treasures
Culture	Republic of Macedonia – Cradle of culture, land of nature Visit Kosovo – history in the making
Food	Costa Rica – No artificial ingredients India – We add spice to your life
Discovery	Canada – keep exploring Kenya – experience a different safari every day
People	Aruba – One happy island Hungary – Talent for Entertaining
Joy	Bermuda – feel the love Enjoy England Hungary – A love for life Albania – A new mediterranean love
Escape	Norway – a pure escape
Personal message	Israel – No one belongs here more than you Romania – Come as a tourist, leave as a friend Smile! You are in Spain!
Self-expression	Austria – At last! Argentina – Más de una razón
Vibration	Estonia – positively transforming Korea sparkling Poland – creative tension
Superego	100% Pure New Zealand Croatia – Mediteranean as it once was

According to the experts a good country slogan should not be a political propaganda statement. It should address both locals and visitors, investors and people who buy products from that country. However, as table 2 shows, since it's impossible to meet everybody's needs, slogans are usually created to attract tourists.

#### 4. CATEGORIZATION OF COUNTRY LOGOS

Joan Miro created a logo for Spain representing the sun and culture. This became one of the most recognized logos in the tourism industry. Since, a logo is truly a visual element, it constitutes as one of the most important parts of the country's visual identity: it helps to make a distinction between the brands and it gives information to the consumer. Table 2 shows that country logos usually have the country name included and some other graphics that range from something abstract, the flag, water, sun, scenery, flowers, animals, something special and the heart. We've found that the most popular elements are flowers and animals that are unique in that country. The heart symbolizes hospitality and a positive message but it's not really distinctive in itself. (5) The logos can be found on the author's web page: [www.papp-vary.hu/orszagmarkazas](http://www.papp-vary.hu/orszagmarkazas)

##### 2. Categorization of country logos

Abstract	Andorra, The Bahamas, Brasil, Chile, Finland, Germany, Guatamala, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Malta, Moldova, Panama, Réunion, The Seychelles Islands, Slovenia, Uruguay
Nature – Water	Argentina, Aruba, Ecuador, Greece, The British Virgin Islands (waves)
Nature – Sun	Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Maldives, Spain (the Miro sun), Trinidad & Tobago, Zambia, Oman
Nature – Landscape	Bosnia Hercegovina, Chile (mountain), Dominica, Gibraltar, Iceland, Lebanon, Namibia (desert), Nepal (mountain – Mount Everest), Norway, Pakistan, Polska, Romania, San Marino (mountains), Tanzania (mountain, seacoast, animals), Zimbabwe (waterfall)
Nature – Animal	Australia (kangaroo), Barbados (fish), Belize (tucan bird), Botswana (zebra), Cayman Islands (turtle), China (horse), North Cyprus (turtle) Hong Kong (dragon), Indonesia (bird), Papua New Guinea (bird), Peru (bird), Guyane (tucan bird), Honduras (butterfly, turtle, fish), Sloakia (butterfly), Suriname (butterfly), Tasmania
Nature - Plant	Albania (poppy), Antigua & Barbuda (palm tree), Armenia (flower), Bulgaria (rose), Canada (maple leaf), Costa Rica (flower), England (rose), Holland (tulipe), Ireland (trefoil), Malaysia (flower), Montenegro (branch), New Zealand (fern), Paraguay (flower) Scotland (bur), Slovenia (flower), Sri Lanka (flower in hand), St. Kitts (national flower, the Poinciana), Tahiti (Tiare flower), Turkey (flower)

Flag	Austria (stamp), Cuba, Czech Republic, East-Timor, France, Great-Britain, Indonesia, Kenya, Monaco, Niger, Portugal, South Africa, Switzerland, Sweden
Heart	Bosnia & Hercegovina, Colombia, Denmark, Dubai, Hungary, Malawi, Serbia, Slovenia
Country name	Croatia, India, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, Qatar, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turks&Caicos
Unique characteristic	Abu Dhabi, Belgium (atomium), Bermuda (shorts), France (woman), Haiti (transporter woman), Jordan (motive), Latvia (dancing, singing people), Liechtenstein (crown), Macau (building), Mongolia (iurta), Morocco (building), Nicaragua (building), Puerto Rico (building), Solomon Islands (statues), Vanuatu (statue), Vietnam (miracle lamp), Wales (dragon)

## 5. CONCLUSION

It is of crucial importance that both residents and foreigners like and can connect to these verbal and visual elements. On the other hand even the most brilliant logo and slogan is powerless if it is not backed up by a comprehensive branding system. One should never forget that country branding is the process whereby a country actively seeks to create a unique and competitive identity for itself, with the aim of positioning the country internally and internationally as a good destination for trade, tourism and investments. Creating a slogan and logo is only a small but important part of this process.

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