

## **POST-COMMUNIST COUNTRY BRANDING: THE CASE OF POLAND**

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### **Abstract**

**Keywords** – Country branding, Emerging markets, Branding strategy, Poland.

**Purpose** – The purpose of this article is to address the challenges of creating a coherent country branding strategy for Poland, a large emerging market in Central Europe that has emerged two decades ago from communist rule, and now is actively competing in the world market. The article offers a historical perspective of country branding in the region and it describes the efforts used in creating a Polish country brand. It also discusses the challenges encountered in creating a positive Polish country image and it concludes with recommendations to marketing academics and managers regarding strategies that can be used to create a unified, coherent brand in the emerging market of Poland.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This conceptual paper evaluates strategies for developing country image for Poland, and offers suggestions for creating a unified country brand. It examines strategies for country-brand building in Poland and in Central and Eastern European countries and offers insights into possibilities for brand development given internal and external market specifics.

**Findings** – The study found that Polish government bodies, industry groups, and businesses have adopted aggressive programs to develop a positive country image, and to create a country brand. However, the strategies used do not appear to be coordinated, resulting in a substantial duplication of efforts and failing to create a coherent country-branding strategy.

**Originality/value** – This paper offers a balanced perspective on country-brand development efforts in Poland, and it uses insights from successful branding strategies of countries with emerging markets to identify a coherent strategy for Polish country-brand building.

## **INTRODUCTION**

There is a large body of research on product/service country of origin and brand equity, respectively; however, literature combining these two streams of research is only now beginning to gain ground (Zeugner-Ross, Diamantopoulos, and Montesinos, 2008), despite the fact that researchers and practitioners alike need to understand the sources of the equity of their country brands in an international context so that they can manage them effectively (Pappu, Quester, and Cooksey, 2006).

In Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), country branding as a coherent and coordinated strategy is only in its infancy, despite the extensive and coordinated efforts at country promotion by the former communist governments. However, economic development challenges in the CEE – as elsewhere in the world – have gone beyond public policy, as the new economic order has transformed economic development into a market challenge as well; as such, these countries must be equally apt at managing and controlling their branding in order to attract tourists, factories, companies, talent, and to find markets for their exports – in effect, they must adopt strategic marketing management tools and conscious country branding (Kotler and Gertner, 2002) in order to effectively compete for investors, tourists, and consumers.

This article addresses the challenges of creating a coherent country branding strategy for Poland, a large emerging market in Central Europe that has emerged two decades ago from communist rule, and now is actively competing in the world market. The next section offers insights into what might constitute successful country branding, and the section following offers a historical perspective of country branding in Central and Eastern Europe. Subsequently, the article describes the efforts used in creating a Polish country brand, followed by a discussion of the challenges encountered in the process of creating a positive country image. Finally, conclusions and recommendations are offered to marketing academics and managers about strategies that can be used to create a unified, coherent brand in the emerging market of Poland.

### **Importance of Country Branding**

Marketers and consumers alike make use of country associations: marketers use country associations to differentiate their brands and consumers use country associations to reduce perceived risk and assess the social acceptability of their purchases (Papadopoulos and Heslop 2002). If properly conceived and managed, country branding can create positive

perceptions of a country, its economic and political climate, and of its tourist attractions, it can fuel its outbound and inbound investment, it can change the country's reputation, and reinforce feelings of pride for its citizens.

However, to date, research has revealed little useful information on strategies for creating successful country branding. Much like a product's brand name, a country brand has a multifaceted dimensionality, carrying factual and affective information. Unlike product branding, country branding is performed in an even more volatile environment, with many uncontrollable influences, where a coordination among different parties involved in country branding is often impossible. And, as in product branding, competition is fierce: investors are courted by various countries self-branded as a choice destination for investment or tourism, manipulating marketing mix elements to promote themselves to buyers, investors, and tourists (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002). Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002) found that tourism marketing uses mass-marketing – media advertising – by government and industry associations, with the country brand presented, in most cases, in a well-coordinated, consistent manner, whereas, in the case of exports, marketing is left to the individual exporters, with government and industry groups limiting their efforts to intermediary functions such as sponsorship of trade fairs and country weeks, creating a less consistent and coordinated image. On the other hand, for investment, promotion is performed by the government, industry groups, and by businesses in the form of personal selling, rather than mass marketing. Regardless of the purpose or type of promotion, it is essential that a unitary country image be built around a carefully conceived central theme to express a country brand personality attractive to target markets (Papadopoulos and Heslop 2002).

Central and Eastern European countries are currently engaging in extensive efforts to change their image abroad. In spite of economies ravaged by economic and political crises, and of the enormous challenges involved in the transition to a market economy, the countries of the CEE are investing heavily in creating a resonant and positive image abroad. However, on the most part, these efforts do not appear to converge to the unitary image that is required in the process of creating a consistent country brand (Szondi, 2007a). The next section offers a historical overview of country branding efforts in the countries of the CEE.

### **Country Branding in Central and Eastern Europe: Historical Perspectives**

The countries of Central and Eastern Europe engaged extensively in country branding, long before this term was coined – and long before countries in this region proceeded on the path of transition to a market economy. Before 1989, in most countries in the CEE, the Central

Committee of the Communist Party spearheaded the effort of creating a positive country image, actively engaging national (e.g., the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Foreign Trade) and regional/local government organizations in the effort. Whirlwind tours for foreign government officials, youth organization representatives, and corporate heads carefully showcased competent labor in immaculate and productive factories and sanitized agricultural production cooperatives processing goods for exports, with careful routing that involved time in spas in picturesque destinations that offered rejuvenation therapies by enthusiastic and overqualified service providers. At minimum, these efforts created successful destination brands for many of the countries. However, it is possible that they may have sown the seeds of a more comprehensive form of country branding, one that involved the systematic promotion of economic, commercial, and political interests with the purpose, at that time, to fuel inbound investment.

After the fall of communism, country image was no longer centrally managed, under the direction of a central government body. During the early years of transition, in the 1990s, national tourism organizations were among the first to take on country-image management in the CEE countries. In the late 1990s, image management became institutionalized and acquired a more strategic focus leading to a coordinated approach which would result in country brands. At this time, special governmental organizations were set up to research and evaluate existing country images in the different countries and to develop communication strategies that would effectively promote the countries abroad and coordinate campaigns and branding initiatives (Szondi, 2007b).

Examples of such organizations were the Country Image Center, set up by the Hungarian government to develop a concept for the new image of the country and to build this new image both inside and outside the country (Szondi, 2007a; 2007b), and the Latvian Institute, established in 1998, to help the world community better understand Latvia by providing essential and useful information on all aspects of Latvia's history, culture and society (Szondi, 2007b). In more recent examples, in 2004, Ogilvy & Mather created a country branding campaign for Romania, which cost \$1.7 million, with the theme "Romania, simply surprising." This campaign was replaced in 2009 with a new campaign, entitled "Romania Land of Choice," created by ADDV Euro RSCG as a result of collaboration between the country's Ministry of Tourism, and BRD Societe Generale. The campaign, created after research showed that Romania had serious image deficits, had at its forefront three sports legends – gymnast Nadia Comaneci, soccer player Gheorghe Hagi, and tennis player Ilie

Nastase. The campaign promoted cultural tourism, eco-tourism, agro-tourism, the seaside, Bucharest, and Sibiu (Haraga, 2009).

Country branding in Central and Eastern Europe is used to help the countries effectively compete for investors, tourists, and consumers, but it also serves particular functions that are specific to the region. Among these functions are those that distance the countries from their communist past and bring them closer to high-income countries in the West. Specifically, key functions of country branding in the CEE are to distance the country from its communist political and economic system; to change the negative stereotypes of the countries, especially in the cases where they maintained a pro-communist leadership after the fall of communism; to position the country as an eligible member of the new economic system; to position the country as a center of regional influence and as a leader in the process of transition; and to facilitate redefining and reconstructing national identities during transition (Szondi, 2007b).

Another trait of the transition economies of the CEE is that country branding is often used or perceived as being used in promoting the party in power. As a consequence, a change of regime will often result in the new government terminating the program in place and a lack of continuity in the country's promotional efforts. Among examples of institutions that have been closed as a result of the change of government are the Hungarian Country Image Center, terminated after the elections of 2002 (Szondi, 2007a) and the Poland Promotion Committee, discontinued as a result of the parliamentary elections of 2005, but the restored, in 2009 (*Regulation of Prime Minister of Poland*, June 8, 2009).

### **The Brand of Poland: Efforts in Country Branding**

In Poland, recent crises and political instability have set back the efforts to create an effective country image. Strategies used in recent years lacked appropriate coordination: redundant work performed by various governmental agencies, micro- rather than macro-level targeting, and the use of image stereotypes rather than creating novel positioning strategies that play upon the country's strengths have all led to a failure to create a coherent country branding strategy. Among examples of unsuccessful strategies were programs initiated in 2000 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Szondi, 2007b).

More recently, during the period of ascension to the European Union, in 2004, Poland embarked on concerted efforts create an integrated country image. The Prime Minister first created the Poland Promotion Committee in 2004, which was advisory in nature, with expenditures of over \$41 million annually; the committee was discontinued, as previously

mentioned, as a result of the parliamentary elections of 2005, but the committee was later restored, in 2009 (*Regulation of Prime Minister of Poland*, June 8, 2009).

The Institute of Polish Brand was created in 2004 to build the national brand of Poland (Szondi 2007b). This was followed by other unsuccessful attempts at a coherent branding effort: in 2004, there were efforts to establish a Polish agency responsible for promoting the economy, in 2006, a Polish Agency for Trade and Investments was in the works, and in 2009, there are new calls to create an agency aimed at promoting exports, supported by Business Center Club experts (*Opinion of Business Center Club*, February 12, 2009).

Table 1 offers an overview of the different bodies that have some responsibility with regard to the creation of the Poland brand, as identified by this research study. Of these, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs retains the primary responsibility for creating a national Poland brand, coordinating related tasks with other departments and governmental bodies, as well as with trade organizations. Polish embassies abroad are examples of such bodies and they have departments that address promotion, trade, and investment. Among their tasks are: to promote the Polish economy, Polish products, and companies; to set up information desks at fairs and exhibitions; to organize seminars and conferences; and to help in establishing trade contacts and co-organization of economic mission to and from Poland. Interestingly, the Ministry oversees the Internet portal [www.polska.gov.pl/www.poland.gov.pl](http://www.polska.gov.pl/www.poland.gov.pl), which offers information on tourism, culture, science, business and investments in Poland, in five languages. The site has over 1,300,000 visitors per year ([www.polska.gov.pl](http://www.polska.gov.pl)). It should be mentioned, however, that the main focus of the MFA is to promote Polish culture abroad; thus, the Ministry does not oversee and coordinate all aspects of creating a nation brand.

**Table 1. Organizations Participating in Promoting Poland Abroad**

Initiator of activities	Name
Government agencies	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
	Ministry of Sport and Tourism
	Ministry of Economy
	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
	Ministry of Culture and National Heritage
	Ministry of National Education
	The Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency
	Polish Tourist Organization
	The Adam Mickiewicz Institute
	Polish Agency for Enterprise Development
Trade organizations	Polish Chamber Of Tourism
	National Chamber of Commerce
	Chamber for Promotion of International Trade
Other	Institute of Polish Brand
	Polish Promotion Emblem Foundation

Source: Own study.

The Ministry of Sport and Tourism and the Polish Tourist Organization (PTO) are responsible for promoting tourism. The Ministry of Sport and Tourism promotes Poland by organizing international sports events, as well as subsidizing Polish delegations and youth rallies. The Polish Tourist Organization arranges information desks about Poland and supports companies operating in the tourist sector by sharing the costs of participation in trade events. For example, in 2009, the PTO organized Polish representation at 37 international events and contributed between 15 to 30% of incurred costs (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Level of PTO Contributions to Selected Fairs and Exhibitions in 2009**

	Area	Place	PTO Financing [%]	
			2009	2010
1.	North America	Miami, Las Vegas	0	15
2.	Asia	Shanghai, Tokyo	0	35
3.	Europe	Vienna, Graz, Zurich, Minsk, Paris	15	15
		Hamburg, Leipzig, Stuttgart	15	60
		Dublin, Vilnius, Moscow	20	15
		London	30	35

Source: [www.pot.gov.pl](http://www.pot.gov.pl), 30.06.2010.



There are, however, events in which travel agencies, hotel owners and carriers have to participate at their own expense because the PTO does not sponsor them. In general, there is a preference to lower PTO support and the PTO is currently lowering support, encouraging businesses to obtain support from the European Union (<http://msport.gov.pl/aktualnosci-turystyka>, 2009). Although in 2010 Germany is pointed as preferred market, and Great Britain, Japan and France as supplemented; and in 2011 Belgium, France and Holland will be the preferred countries (<http://www.pot.gov.pl/targi-i-wystawy/>, 2010).

The Ministry of Economy (ME) promotes mainly exports with special attention paid to the European target markets. A group of entities (minimum 4 entities) can apply for governmental support and obtain subsidies for promotion of services and products or actions aimed at establishing new trade relations. Small and medium companies that apply for international certificates can also receive the governmental support. The ME reimburses 50% of costs of advisory services, carrying out research, and issuing certificates, as long as the sum does not exceed \$13,770 USD, though). The ME is also active in the international arena and offers loans for operating in or exporting to developing countries. For example, in 2003, it promoted an agreement between Poland and Uzbekistan which provided for financing investments in education and health service, executed by Polish companies. ([www.mg.gov.pl](http://www.mg.gov.pl), 2009).

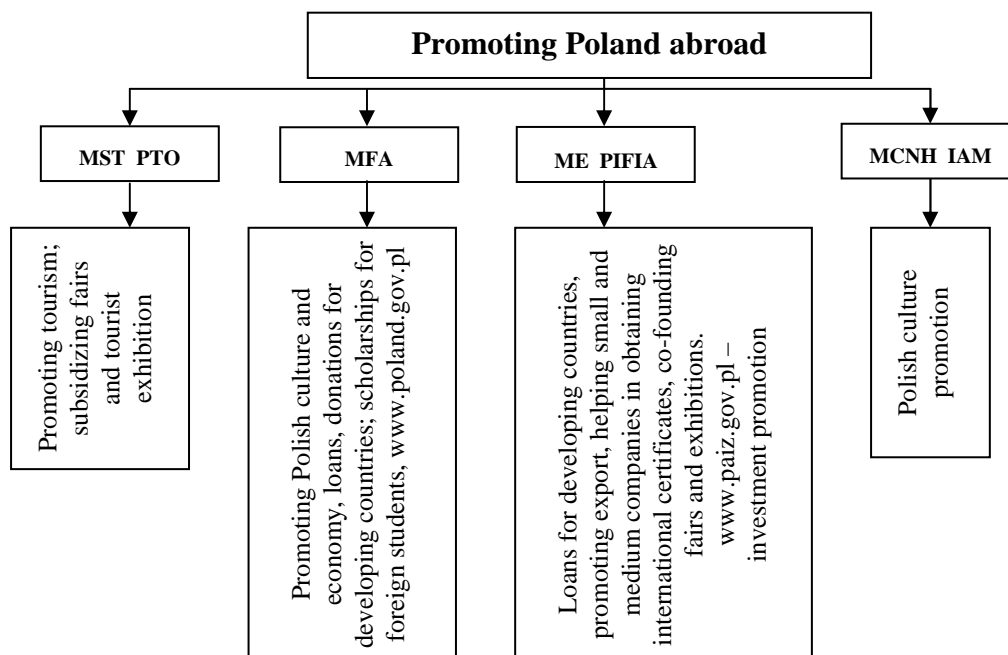
The Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency (PIFIA) is an independent body, a governmental agency that is aimed at supporting foreign investors in the process of entering the Polish market. PIFIA also helps those entities that already operate in Poland. The agency supports a few hundred projects a year – in 2007, it supported 313; in 2008, it supported 150 ([www.paiz.gov.pl](http://www.paiz.gov.pl), 2009). Among its objectives is also promoting internationally the image of Poland, along with Polish services and products. On the other hand PIFIA's strategy includes intensification of promotion activities in countries such as the USA, France, Germany, the UK, Japan and South Korea. Its website, [www.paiz.gov.pl](http://www.paiz.gov.pl), is available in 7 languages and visitors can find a 150-page guide on how to invest in Poland. PIFIA encourages investors to invest in Polish economy and monitors the scale of direct investments; in 2008 these investments amounted to between \$12.8 – \$15.4 billion, with an estimated \$8.9-12.8 billion in 2009 ([www.paiz.gov.pl](http://www.paiz.gov.pl), 2009). This agency is also responsible for the Polish participation in the World Fair, with the next Polish exhibition planned for EXPO 2010 in Shanghai.

PIFIA cooperated with the Ministry of Economy to first create an advertising campaign in 2008, broadcast by CNN, entitled "Invest in Poland," followed by a campaign entitled

“Autumn of Change: The New Poland” ([www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com), 2009). The campaign extols Poland’s economic makeover, its flourishing free media, and its film school that is pushing boundaries, while also glorifying its brave Solidarity movement that put an end to the Communist dictatorship ([www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com), 2009). The CNN Internet site of the campaign offers in-depth articles about Poland’s political past, its economic recovery, and video tours of Krakow’s history and culture, among others.

The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (MCNH) is responsible for promoting Polish culture. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also shares in this responsibility, as Figure 1 illustrates (see Figure 1). MCNH accomplishes its tasks through the 20 Polish Culture Institutes located worldwide, and through the Adam Mickiewicz Institute – a governmental agency supervising Polish culture promotion and initiating cultural exchange between Poland and international partners. The MCNH spent close to \$2 million in 2009 on supporting the presence of Polish organizations abroad, with participation scheduled in 85 international events ([www.mkidn.gov.pl/po/zagranica.php](http://www.mkidn.gov.pl/po/zagranica.php), 2009).

**Figure 1. Main Governmental Agencies Participating in Creating the Image of Poland**



Source: Own study.

The most common form of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage activities is organizing events under the heading “The year of Poland in...” The period between March, 2009 and May, 2010 is denoted as “The Year of Poland in the UK” and year 2009 is the “Grotowski Year” in New York” – in honor of the director and reformer of the theater in the 20<sup>th</sup> century ([www.unesco.pl/kultura](http://www.unesco.pl/kultura), 2009; [www.culture.pl](http://www.culture.pl), 2009).

Embassies also initiate cultural activities that promote the brand of Poland. The Polish embassy in Tokyo planned a series of events as a celebration of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishing diplomatic ties between Poland and Japan in 2009. The Polish embassy in Washington, D.C., scheduled concerts in March 2009 on the occasion of the 199<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Frederic Chopin's birthday ([www.mk.gov.pl](http://www.mk.gov.pl), 2009; <http://pl.chopin.nifc.pl/institute>, 2009). The program of Chopin's anniversary celebration is continued in 2010 – the year of his 200<sup>th</sup> birthday, although the bulk of events is organized in France and Poland (<http://obchody.chopin2010.pl/en/calendar/list-of-events/upcoming-events.html>, 2010).

The Ministry of Regional Development also participates in the promotion of Poland by distributing the financial support from the European Union to the provinces; the provinces, in turn, can assign these financial resources to promotion activities for the region. In case of the West Pomeranian Province, \$1.07 billion are to be used until 2013 to improve the region's innovativeness and competitiveness ([www.mrr.gov.pl/ProgramyOperacyjne](http://www.mrr.gov.pl/ProgramyOperacyjne), 2009). These resources should result in improving the region's positive image, and it will undoubtedly affect the country's image.

To conclude, Polish government bodies, industry groups, and businesses have adopted aggressive programs to develop a positive country image for Poland, and to create a strong country brand. However, the strategies used do not appear to be properly coordinated, and, as mentioned, they result in a great duplication of efforts; moreover, these strategies have failed to create a coherent country branding strategy.

### **Challenges to Creating a Country Brand for Poland - discussion**

In the mid 90s, Kolarska-Bobińska (2003) conducted a survey in 6 European countries evaluating individuals' perceptions of Poland. The study found that over 50 percent of respondents had no opinion about Poland, while the rest perceived it as a remote and different country, both culturally and politically. Other associations with Poland that were uncovered by the study were that it is Catholic country that is backward, traditional, corrupt, with poor work-organization. And most European respondents believed that Poland is located in the periphery of Europe despite the country's central location (Kolarska-Bobińska 2003).

Poland has not fully overcome its political isolation established during communism: even though it is a member of the European Union, it has parted ways with its most influential powers on issues related to constitutional voting limits, to building a Polish motorway that

cut through a European Union-designated nature reserve, and to its strong stance along with the Baltic states against Russia, among others. Moreover economic migration to the Western European countries post adherence to the European Union have further created negative stereotypes of Poland as a country that is poor, and not particularly well managed. These stereotypes were exacerbated by the image of the Polish plumber created by French anti-Constitution campaigners before the 2005 referendum on the European Constitution: the character of the Polish plumber received much publicity as the mystery worker who threatened the jobs of French workers (Szondi 2007b), creating awareness of Polish economic migration, thus reinforcing the stereotypes.

Much criticism of Polish endeavors to create a unified country brand for Poland centers on the fact that efforts of various agencies have targeted small groups, with minimal coordination between various agencies, leading to inefficiencies; almost non-existent activity of citizens; and a lack of messages informing about the specifics of the Polish economy, its political situation, and related international actions (Ryniejska-Kiełdanowicz, 2007). Poland has also done little to communicate about its humanitarian aid to countries such as Belarus, the Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Afghanistan, Angola, Albania and other Balkan and African countries ([www.msz.gov.pl](http://www.msz.gov.pl), 2009). It has also not promoted its involvement in promoting objective political information, and about its support of democracy, social solidarity, and independent civil initiatives – which should be used to create a positive country brand.

Finally, Poland has also not made reasonable use of its country logo (see Figure 2) designed in 2002, aimed at enhancing brand “Poland” and facilitating identification and association. Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs hired DDB Corporate Profiles to design a logo that could be used in promoting tourism and trade; a flying kite in the Polish national colors, red and white, was used to symbolize youth, freedom, playfulness and hope, values that marketers believed the country.

**Figure 2: The 2001 Polish Country Brand**



Source: Ministry of Economy, <http://www.mg.gov.pl> (2010).

However, despite the extensive research that went into developing this logo, our analysis of a judgment sample of 20 governmental agencies found that only one displayed it properly on its website ([www.polska.gov.pl](http://www.polska.gov.pl)); seventeen of the twenty agencies omitted it; and two displayed it in such a way that it was not readily visible from among other graphic symbols.

### **Strategies for a Unified, Coherent Polish Country Brand - conclusion**

Much of the country branding research suggests that countries would benefit from engaging in country branding using product branding principles. Marketing researchers and marketing practitioners alike suggest that countries can be branded similarly to companies (Jaffe and Nebenzahl 2001; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 1993; Kleppe and Mossberg, 2002). National tourist boards in particular have embraced the principles of brand management in the process of establishing country brands (Henderson, 2000; Kleppe and Mossberg, 2002). Principles of branding apply in equal measure to countries, as they do to corporations; however, the methods are different. Creating a branding program for a country such as Poland requires the ability to communicate in a coordinated and repetitive manner about themes that motivate consumers and that clearly differentiate the respective country; the country image created should convey information that resonates with consumers and corporations alike regarding labor skills, safety, the environment, political stability, and about the ability to create a country-of-origin image that will positively aid the sale of a product abroad – with the message appropriately adapted for the different audiences, e.g., for consumers, or for the investment community (Brymer, 2009), respectively. The country brand strategy should be developed in a unified fashion, in conjunction with representatives from different areas – an “interdisciplinary” team, with representatives from the national and local government, the tourism industry, business, the arts, education, and media (Brymer, 2009), as well as from non-governmental organizations. The media is particularly important because it is the vehicle that is used to handle questions regarding the brand, as a country branding project requires answering many questions (Brymer, 2009).

Poland must adopt a focused overall brand-communication plan. This strategy is particularly relevant for emerging economies such as those of Central and Eastern Europe, which appear to have put more emphasis on promotion, than on systematic marketing, and whose national images have not changed significantly in spite of the time elapsed since the fall of communism (Papadopoulos and Heslop 2002). The purpose of the plan should be to develop a strong brand, based on the different markets’ perceptions of the strengths of Poland, the Polish market, Polish products, Polish tourist attractions, and so on. At present, the market is

aware of one positive trait of Polish offerings: affordability. In the 30 categories evaluated by the Country Brands Index, Poland is ranked in the top ten in one category, “Value for the money,” where it is in fifth place (Country Brand Index, 2008).

Beyond “value,” the Poland country brand should differentiate itself from other countries based on other dimensions. One noteworthy attempt in this direction was to brand Poland as a country of contrasts, a country of change. In 2004, Poland hired Saffron Brand Consultants, a British company specializing in corporate identity and branding. Using the theme “Creative Tension,” the branding campaign focused on the change and contrast between past and present, relying on the paradox of characteristics that are commonly used branding themes for countries in transition (Szondi, 2007a). However, it can be argued that most of the countries in the CEE are experiencing a similar creative tension, a struggle between an oppressive past and a creative future. Additional differentiation is needed for Poland and other countries in the region to extricate themselves from the post-Soviet perception of being part of a conglomerate of Moscow's ex-colonies, lacking both an individual character and those features that make a common European heritage (Martinović, 2002).

Successful examples of differentiation are noted in the case of Slovenia and Croatia. Slovenia used tourism as a key ingredient of its national brand image, placing an emphasis on interior attraction, rather than the coast (which is more extensive and appealing in neighboring Croatia), showcasing the Julian Alps, its karstic cave systems, and the Lipica stud farm, famous for supplying the Lippizaner horses to the Vienna Spanish Riding School (Hall, 2002). It also emphasized its image as firmly belonging to Western, rather than Eastern Europe by stressing fashion, a focus on the environment and ecology, its Central European character with a Habsburg heritage, Alpine associations, and contiguity with the Western countries of Austria and Italy; this strategy clearly appealed to its Italian, Austrian, and German neighbors, which provide 60 percent of the country's tourists, and also high-spending cross-border shopping (Hall 2002). Similarly, Croatia also clearly differentiated itself from its neighbors, creating a strong brand image with its tourist attractions, in particular, with its coast and the medieval walled city of Dubrovnik, and with its claim of similarity with Italy, Spain, and France, countries with strong family and Catholic values (Hall 2002).

Poland could successfully position itself in a manner that is clearly differentiated. Through a thorough quantitative, as well as qualitative analysis of identity, of its attraction, and its strengths (Brymer, 2009), Poland can be positioned in numerous advantageous ways,

connecting its Central European past to its strong position as a member of the European Union. As a tourist destination, it can emphasize its history as a near-empire, in a manner similar to that undertaken in Austria, because in past centuries Poland was strictly connected with Lithuania, Czechoslovakia (so Czech and Slovak nations) and even with Sweden (by royal family Vasa). It can underscore its German heritage in cities such as Wroclaw, Malbork and Opole. It can also enhance its role as a memory/heritage educational attraction, using a strategy similar to that used in Germany to attract educational groups and individuals of Jewish heritage to destinations such as Kazimierz, a haven for Jews from 1495, when they were expelled from Krakow, until the 1930s.

In the process of enhancing its positioning relative to external constituencies, such as investors, tourists, buyers, etc., Poland should create tangible examples of brand enhancement, offering the best physical impression at the ports of entry, city centers, transportation infrastructure, etc.; it should build an integrated picture and back it up with quality on all fronts (Brymer, 2009). Research should be conducted to identify Polish traits that are enduring and valuable in attracting external interest and reinforcing a strong internal identity. For example, friendliness, hard work and resourcefulness, a deep desire for self-sufficiency and independence, and readiness for supporting other nations in gaining independence are among the traits that could readily be attributed to Poles. Using a vetted agency that specializes in country branding could create a comprehensive profile of a Polish country-brand strength that could then be readily communicated to target markets – consumers, investors, tourists, for example.

In the times of crisis it is also interesting that Poland is among countries with the best economic rates, and manages with difficulties much better than other countries and this new trait could be underlined as well. Ireland and Scotland have created brands that echo far beyond what would be considered their natural weight, by identifying themselves as the underdog (Brymer, 2009). It is possible for a country of Poland's complexity and diversity to identify traits that will appeal broadly and that it will communicate to different target markets in a manner that is unified, cohesive, and coherent.

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