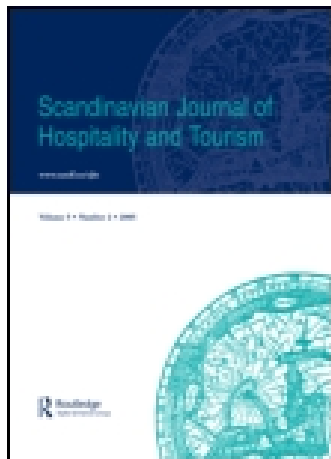


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Poetics and Politics of Destination Branding: Denmark

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Poetics and Politics of Destination Branding: Denmark

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Abstract

Most destination branding studies concentrate on how brand images and messages are formulated and presented. Their approaches stem mainly from general marketing, and deal narrowly with the poetics of branding. They leave many social and cultural issues embedded in the branding campaign unexamined. To overcome this shortcoming, this paper delves into the social complexity and multiplicity behind a branding campaign, that is, the politics of destination branding. Using a dialogic perspective, this paper identifies various functions served by a destination brand, the divergent agendas of different tourism stakeholders, and how different interest groups persuade, coerce and negotiate with each other so as to make the brand and the branding campaign serve their own individual needs. The case of Denmark was studied. And contextual differences between destination and corporate branding are eventually identified, stressing the need for critical reflection when applying conventional marketing ideas into destinations. Among others, the types of resources available to win over stakeholders towards the brand, local attitudes towards tourism and political support for the brand are factors that may determine the success of the destination branding campaign. This paper thus offers a more holistic and dynamic approach to destination branding research.

Keywords: destination branding, destination identity, destination image, destination marketing, tourism in Denmark

Introduction

Products ranging from underwear to universities are being branded today. Countries, cities, regions and other places are also branding themselves

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(Leonard, 1997; Hall, 1999; Olins, 1999; van Ham, 2001; Martinovć, 2002). It has become a popular strategy to establish a common marketing purpose and direction through a destination brand. Using seductive images and consistent marketing campaigns, many destinations are aiming to shape how the world imagines and perceives them (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Hall, 1999; Schneider & Sönmez, 1999; Cai, 2002; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002; Slater, 2002). While the branding of destinations is becoming popular, research on the subject has mostly concentrated on communicating the brand message. Most of these studies draw their inspirations from the general marketing literature (e.g. Nickerson & Moisey 1999; Williams & Palmer 1999; Kotler, Hamlin, Rein & Haider, 2002; Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2004). And differences in branding place-products and commercial organizations and manufactured products/services are largely ignored (e.g. Flagestad & Hope, 2001b; Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2001; Anholt, 2002). Similarities between them, on the other hand, are accentuated. For example, Anholt (2002, p. 42) states:

Just like manufacturers' brands, nation brands evoke certain values, qualifications and emotional triggers in the consumer's mind about the likely values of any product that comes from that country. A nation brand can behave just like a manufacturer's brand, providing an umbrella of trust, a guarantee of quality and a set of ready-made lifestyle connotations which kick-start the entry of its new 'sub-brands' to the marketplace.

Such a view has been translated into industry practice. For example, the Danish Tourist Board (DTB) launched a new branding campaign in 2000. The DTB states (DTB, 2000b, p. 3):

Just as we associate Lego with building toys, and Bang & Olufsen with advanced design, we want Denmark to be associated with "a cozy oasis in Europe, where free and unpretentious people have created a gifted, talented society based on a love of design, culture and social values".

With few exceptions (e.g. Crockett & Wood, 1999; Flagestad & Hope, 2001a; Ryan 2002; Ooi, 2004), the general destination branding literature does not address issues related to the implementation and mobilization of support for the destination brand. However, various tourism stakeholders in the destination will ask probing questions such as "How is the brand identity constructed?", "Who is asserting the brand?", "Whose brand identity is being asserted?" and "Why should it be that brand?". As this paper will demonstrate, these issues are part of the reality in destination branding, and can spell the success or failure of a destination branding campaign. Negotiation takes place between different stakeholders: national tourism authorities, sub-national tourism authorities, tourism attractions, domestic tourism businesses and non-tourism businesses. Besides communicating positive messages to the world, a destination branding campaign has to maintain the brand images and story, deliver the products and mobilize

local support for the brand. Promoting, maintaining and enacting a destination brand entails politicking, although politics in this case does not refer specifically to politicians and matters related to government, it refers to the negotiation processes amongst various tourism stakeholders as they want to make the brand and the branding campaign serve their own individual needs. The challenges that a destination brand faces come not only from the external market but also the internal local environment.

Thus in this paper, the politics of destination branding is defined as the dynamic processes of drawing support and cooperation by the brand authorities from different tourism agencies and local residents, so that the brand will be accepted, communicated and manifested through official and unofficial publicity and products. The poetics of destination branding, on the other hand, is defined as the process of inventing and presenting a unique and attractive brand story to tourists and tourists-to-be about the destination, so as to influence their perceptions of the place in a positive direction. The poetics and politics are intertwined because the brand will only be more credible and more visible to tourists when different tourism agencies and local residents accept, support and communicate the brand story.

This paper uses Denmark as a case study, and intends to firstly, demonstrate how and why domestic issues are central in destination branding and how they can be addressed in research; secondly, introduce a dialogic framework, which highlights the multiplicity of the situation so as to offer a better understanding of the dynamic processes in the poetics and politics of destination branding; and thirdly, point out contextual differences between destination branding and corporate branding, and thus alert future studies towards more holistic and nuanced analyses of destination branding campaigns.

With these objectives in mind, the next section will introduce the dialogic perspective and bring attention to four interrelated functions of destination branding, and the different interests of various tourism stakeholders. The dialogic approach points directly to the dynamic cohering and diverging branding forces and processes in Denmark. In section three, the discussion explains how data were collected in this study. Section four presents the case of branding Denmark – how the DTB dialogically and simultaneously constructs a seductive image of Denmark, and mobilizes support for the brand. Tourism stakeholders respond differently to DTB's strategies and efforts, creating a carnivalesque situation. Support for the brand is uneven; some tourism businesses cooperate willingly, others grudgingly, and others ignore it. DTB is engaged in the processes of making the brand relevant for different parties and seek joint-ownership for the brand. The fifth section offers lessons from the case. It will point to contextual differences between the branding of destinations and of corporations. Suggestions for future research will also be given. The concluding section summarizes the main points.

Dialogics of destination branding

This paper uses a dialogic approach (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984a,b, 1986; Rawlins, 1992; Gardiner, 1996; van Loon, 1997; Bell & Gardiner, 1998; Hirschkop, 1999; Ooi, 2002b). Such a framework accentuates social multiplicity and the simultaneous cohering and diverging processes behind the poetics and politics of branding.

With the different products and sights, the brand brings together an array of attractions to package the destination into a seductive entity. The destination brand also aims to pull together the destination, draw cooperation between different parties and stimulate the imagination of tourists-to-be, tourists and tourism agencies. As a focal point, the brand provides a common message, story and vision for various parties to come together in the tourism destination. It is thus a cohering force.

On the other hand, the multiple interests of different tourism stakeholders may not match. The different parties will use the brand in their own ways, which may not be consistent with the official national position; some of them may even send out alternative messages. These stakeholders and their differing interests are the divergent forces that make the realization of a coherent brand difficult.

The dialogic perspective seeks out the cohering centrifugal forces in the presentation and packaging of the destination, as well as, the divergent and disruptive centripetal forces stemming from different parties' interests in the branding processes. These processes unfold simultaneously. Consequently, the different parties interact via the brand, as they assert their own agendas, cooperate with like-minded parties and interpret and utilize the brand in their own ways. A range of manipulative, persuasive and coercive strategies are used by various parties to negotiate with and control each other, with each party's aim of using the brand to serve its own goals. The branding process is on-going and emerging.

In order to better frame the dialogic cohering and diverging processes, this paper identifies four embedded and interrelated functions served by the destination brand. These different functions vary in importance to different tourism stakeholders. For instance, according to national branding authorities, the brand is meant to communicate a coherent and attractive image of the country destination to the world, but to tourism businesses, they want the brand to promote their own products.

Branding and influencing public perception

The first function in branding a destination is to shape public perceptions of the place (Richards, 1992; McCleary & Whitney, 1994). Explicitly, a branding campaign is part of the "image modification process" (Andersen, Prentice & Guerin, 1997, p. 463). Many people rely heavily on their own perceptions when they decide where to go for a holiday (Gartner, 1993; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Nickerson & Moisey,

1999). These perceptions are based on these people's experiences and what they have learned from different sources, such as news stories, travel programs, movies, geography lessons, stories from friends and relatives, etc. Branding and marketing campaigns aim to become one of these sources that could shape people's perceptions, and also change the stories originating from other sources.

Brand campaigns also want to focus the public mind by marginalizing bad publicity, ignoring negative aspects of the place, and accentuating positive aspects of the destination. For many tourists, such selective presentation or manipulation is noted and even frowned upon. As a result, tourism authorities have to demonstrate the credibility of their brand messages, and one common strategy to increase the credibility of the brand is to deploy "independent" travel reviewers to present the destination in the light of the brand.

Branding and the selective packaging of the place-product

The second function of destination branding is to package the place selectively and aesthetically. As a cohering force, the brand draws people's attention to certain positive attractions and sights. There are many sights, activities and places in the host society but not everything is attractive or interesting for tourists. Through the brand, some sights, events and happenings are accentuated while others marginalized or ignored. Branding inadvertently frames and packages the destination into a relatively well-defined and coherent product, which focuses on attractions and activities that are considered significant and relevant to the brand values. Therefore, the brand offers not just a series of images but also a packaged selection of attractions (Ashworth & Voogd, 1994). The branding authorities may also try to get different tourism businesses to re-package their products so that more products will reflect the brand values. This strategy aims to enact the brand and give more opportunities for tourists to experience the place as it is described in the brand (Ooi, 2004).

Diverging from the goals of the branding authorities, some tourism businesses disagree on the brand because their businesses may be marginalized. The different tourism stakeholders want the destination brand not only to include their products but also to present their products in the best possible light. These stakeholders may not support, or may even lobby against, the brand because it does not yield any benefits for them. In an attempt to rope in these divergent interests, the branding authorities often deploy strategic programs to make various tourism stakeholders feel ownership of the brand.

Branding and asserting place-identity

The third related function of branding a destination is to make the destination stand out in the global tourism market, so as to compete with other

destinations. Inherently, the brand asserts the place's uniqueness. Destinations are becoming more globalized and alike in their offerings and infrastructure (Boniface & Fowler, 1993; Chang, Milne, Fallon & Pohlmann, 1996, pp. 286–287; Ritzer & Liska, 1997; Teo & Lim, 2003; Morgan & Prichard, 2004). The assertion of destination uniqueness has become an institutionalized global practice for celebrating place identity. This uniqueness is communicated in the brand, which often emphasizes the historical, social and cultural values of the host society (Boniface & Fowler, 1993; Oakes, 1993; Lanfant, 1995b; Chang, Milne, Fallon & Pohlmann, 1996; Richards, 1996; Hall, 1999).

This practice suggests that the spread of tourism leads to extroversion and internationalization of the society on the one hand, and works towards the entrenchment of a territorial and societal identity on the other (Lanfant, 1995a). A brand inevitably becomes a visionary exercise for the tourism authorities and the destination to imagine and reflect on how different they are from others and to identify the common cohering elements in a heterogeneous host society. The crystallized public image is also often introduced to the native population for it to recognize itself (Oakes, 1993; Lanfant, 1995b, pp. 32–33; Leonard, 1997; Ooi, 2002a). And in identity politics, probing questions such as “How is the identity constructed?”, “Who is asserting the identity?”, “Whose identity is being asserted?” and “Why that identity?” arise.

Local residents, politicians, journalists, tourism businesses and almost everyone else in the host destination have the right to question and challenge the brand identity. With concerns about the touristification of society, many local stakeholders are resistant to being caricatured for tourists. The branding authorities have to respond to the divergent streams of thoughts one way or another, and convince people that the identity is quintessentially the society's own.

Branding and place experiences

The fourth function of a destination brand is to shape tourism experiences. For example, the Singapore Tourism Board wants tourists to interpret Singapore as “New Asia”, meaning that Singapore is an exciting place with the cultural blending of East and West, old and new (Ooi, 2002a). The brand can help bring about this experience when it is used as gaze lenses by tourists to interpret the place.

As discussed earlier, a destination brand packages the place-product in terms of images and attractions. The brand package provides a framework for tourists to imagine the destination before they visit the destination. Studies have shown that tourists approach a tourism site with their own pre-visit interpretations, and this process enriches their tourism experiences (Moscardo, 1996; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Waller & Lea, 1999; Prentice & Andersen, 2003). Accurate or otherwise preconceived ideas and pre-visit

images will not only form the bases for tourists to understand the destination but will also form the bases for a more engaged and experiential consumption of tourism products. Therefore, as an image modification process, destination brand images feed into tourists' preconceptions of the place. And tourists who cognize the brand story will eventually interpret the destination in like manner (Ooi, 2002b, pp. 151–156). The brand offers a story that tourists can build their experiences around. The brand helps tourists develop a coherent, consistent and meaningful sense of place, and offers a “brand experience” (Olins, 2000, p. 56).

However, tourists have other sources of information about the destination. They will interpret the place in their own way based on their experiences and from different sources of information. Furthermore, there may be organizations that intentionally campaign against certain countries. For instance, The Burma Campaign UK, is actively asking the world to avoid and not support the Burmese tourism industry because of the Burmese military junta's poor human rights records. More information on the campaign is available at URL <http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk>. Such alternative sources of information feed into tourists' pre-visit images too and can dilute the brand experience.

These four functions of destination branding are embedded in multiple interests among various tourism stakeholders. From a dialogic perspective, a holistic understanding of destination branding requires seeking and teasing out these intertwined forces. As it will be discussed in the case of branding Denmark, the aesthetics and communication of the brand aiming to cohere the destination and tourism experiences is challenged by the divergent interests of various parties. But before presenting the case, the next section discusses how data were collected in this study.

Data collection

This is a case study on the branding of Denmark. A qualitative data collection strategy, in which the researcher emerges in the field, was used. The data collection process “started” in 1996, four years before Denmark had a branding campaign. At that time, this researcher was examining the tourism strategies of Denmark. A series of interviews was conducted with officers in different parties in the tourism industry, including the DTB, Wonderful Copenhagen (the official tourism authorities for Copenhagen), museums, festival organizers and tour operators. The persons spoken to were chosen because of their role in their organizations; all these organizations are part of the Danish tourism industry. For instance, the brand manager of the DTB, Mr Lars Schaldemose, was approached because he is the main strategist behind the branding campaign. Through the candid discussions with Mr Schaldemose, other parties were mentioned and eventually approached because these parties hold different or similar views of the

brand. Respondents which the researcher maintained contact over the years were also interviewed.

During the interviews and discussions, questions were raised on the happenings in respondents' organizations and also how these respondents are being affected and how they are reacting to the new branding of Denmark. The interviews followed the active interviewing method (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). In this method, all interview situations are considered interactional and the respondents are able to incite the production of meanings that address issues relating to the research subject. This is different from the perspective that the interview conversation is framed as a potential source of bias, error, misunderstanding or misdirection, a persistent set of problems to be controlled. The corrective is then to get the interviewer to ask questions in a fixed manner, so that the respondent will give out the desired information (Holstein & Gubrium 1997, pp. 113–120). Instead, in the active interviewing method, the interviewee is active, engaging in interpretative practice, perceiving, storing and reporting experience when properly asked.

The active respondent reacts to the interviewer. So, to encourage frank and open dialogues, respondents were assured confidentiality, and their interests will not be compromised. It is for this reason that many examples in this paper are presented anonymously, so as not to foster prejudice against certain respondents, especially when their comments can be seen as unhelpful for the branding campaign.

Another strategy to get sounder data in the active interviewing method is to delve deep into specific issues. While active interviews can be accused of coaxing respondents into preferred answers to their questions, an aware interviewer can relate with respondents in such a way that alternate considerations are brought into play. Asking difficult questions, seeking finer clarifications, and pointing out conflicts and contradictions, are effective in encouraging respondents to develop and elaborate on the contexts of what they are saying. The objective is not to dictate interpretation but to provide an environment conducive to the production of the range and complexity of meanings that address relevant issues, and not be confined to predetermined agendas. This researcher was consciously and conscientiously attending to the discussion and interview process in ways that are more sensitive to the social construction of knowledge.

Data and information were also triangulated. Besides discussion and interview data, other sources of information were also gathered, including websites, publicity materials, official reports and documents. The researcher visited almost all the official regional tourism websites in Denmark, as well as physically visiting a number of the tourism information centers around the country.

These various data sources provide a comprehensive picture of what is behind the branding Denmark campaign. So, for example, through the active interviewing method, the DTB is clearly enthusiastic about the

branding project but some other respondents are not. By holding active discussions with the DTB and other tourism parties, and reading publicity materials, the researcher became aware of the processes of negotiation, persuasion and coercion embedded in the branding project. In the emergent research process, the unofficial issues behind the branding campaign surfaced. New understanding and postulations emerged throughout the process, as the researcher interrogated respondents, collected new materials and digested new research literature. This paper is written, however, only after the researcher finds that new data are no longer changing his interpretation and understanding of the branding situation in Denmark.

However, caution must still prevail in the use of this study. This is a single case study, the results cannot be used to generalize every tourism destination. The poetic and political processes of destination branding, although universal in their principles, must always be contextualized because these processes will be enacted out differently in different places.

Branding Denmark

The DTB launched a new brand for Denmark in 2000. It is “Denmark. Enjoy!”. This is not the first time the DTB has tried to modify the world’s perception of Denmark (Andersen, Prentice & Guerin, 1997) but it is the first time it has used a brand. Regularly updated information on this branding project is available on its official website, URL <http://www.brandingdk.dk>. The brand aims to move Denmark away from its entrenched Viking, traditional and romantic images. In other cases, Denmark is seen as liberal – in the sense of sex and drugs. In the popular travel guidebook series, *Insight Guide*, Denmark is introduced light-heartedly as (*Insight Guide*, 2000, p. 15):

The world’s oldest kingdom may no longer be an empire, but the sons of those Vikings continue to pack plenty of clout. These days they’re spreading their seeds far and wide in canisters of frozen nitrogen: Denmark is the biggest supplier of meticulously screened and frozen human sperm on the planet.

While this may be funny and somewhat flattering, it is not a particular image that the DTB is interested in promoting. The DTB wants a more attractive and comprehensive image for Denmark.

Poetics of branding Denmark: Presenting the image

The new branding aims to present an attractive and coherent image of Denmark. As mentioned at the start of this paper, the brand wants to say that Denmark is “a cozy oasis in Europe. The visitor meets free and unpretentious people who possess a special talent in creating a society based on a love of art, culture and social values” (DTB, 2000a, not paginated). To

the DTB, this new brand is supposed to offer “the golden thread of communication around the various marketing activities that are aimed at attracting tourists and businesses to this country. Branding is the foundation of a clear, concise image abroad.” (DTB, 2000a, not paginated). To help communicate this image, three sets of brand values are constructed: coziness – unpretentious; design – talented; oasis – free (Fig. 1). Each set of values is said to reflect an aspect of Danish society and culture (DTB, 2000a, not paginated):

Each of the three sets has a rational and an emotional side – a counter-balance of fact and feeling. On the one hand, we describe Denmark with three words [coziness, design, oasis] that objectively express our tourism product in terms of fact-based criteria. On the other hand, we describe the country with three words [unpretentious, talented, free] that express Denmark’s character in softer, subjective terms.

The brand aims to tell a unique story about Denmark and its people. When probed, the DTB brand manager admits that the individual brand values are not unique to Denmark but he perceives and insists that the combination

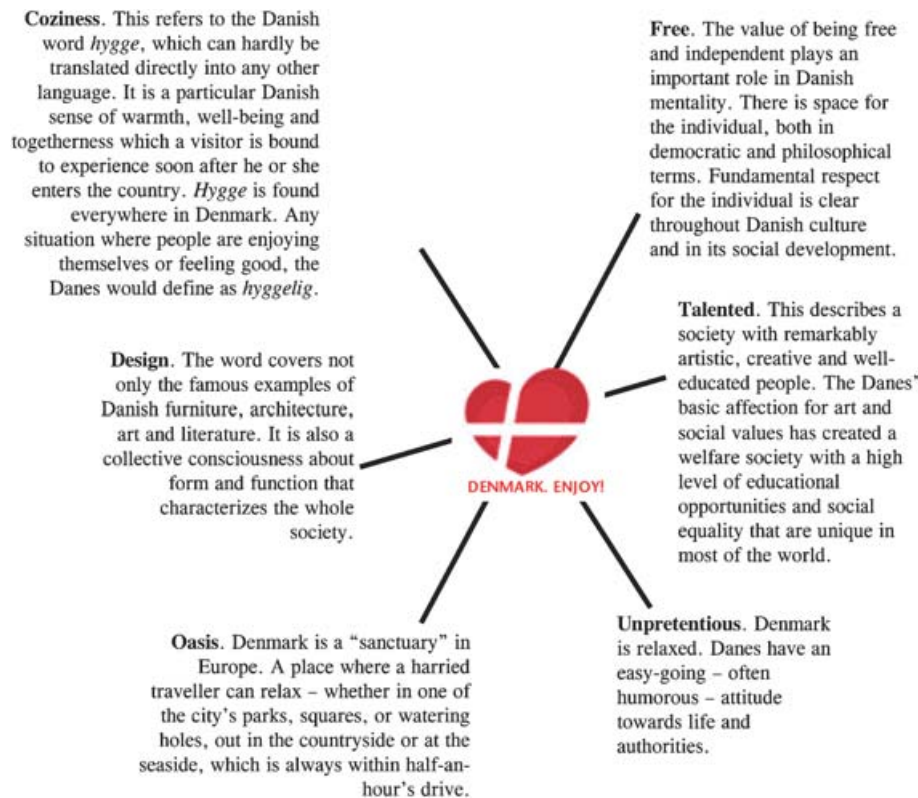


Fig. 1. The Heart Logo and Brand Values of “Denmark. Enjoy!”. Values as described by DTB (2000a, not paginated).

describes how Denmark differs, in particular, from other Scandinavian countries.

The Danish flag imposed on a heart is the logo of the brand (Fig. 1). The statement “Denmark. Enjoy!” is the “pay-off” line (DTB, 2000b, p. 5). It is to sum up the view that Denmark is “a safe, efficient country where one can supplement a business trip with valuable, stimulating experiences or simple relaxation.” (DTB, 2000b, p. 5).

Particular attention is given to finding ways to shape people’s image and feeling for Denmark through the brand. To get the message across by drawing emotional responses from people, the DTB associates two-word descriptions to images (Fig. 2). One word is crossed out, with the intention to show that “Denmark is not stressful. Quite the opposite. At the heart of a stressful world, Denmark is a well-functioning oasis where tourists can relax and enjoy life” (DTB, 2001, p. 39). This is part of the template in communicating the new brand. Tourism businesses are asked to cooperate and present Denmark using the defined brand template (DTB, 2002, p. 6):

The campaign’s graphical expression – typography, layout, pay-off – form a template that should be followed. However, the sender still has the freedom to choose the text and photo that best suit the market.

Politics of branding: Convincing the world

To focus the mind of the world towards imagining Denmark in the promoted brand images, and to spread and make the campaign more



Fig. 2. Two Images from the Branding Denmark Campaign (URL <http://www.brandingdk.dk>)

credible, the DTB seeks good publicity from the international mass media, travel agents and travel reviewers. For example, in 2000, the DTB started a new Internet portal with 12 languages. This portal (URL <http://www.visitdenmark.com>) is not meant just for tourists, it is also for the press, meeting and conference planners and professional travel agents (DTB, 2000b, 2001). The DTB also invites travel reviewers to visit and write about Denmark. By seeking the help of “independent” travel reviewers, their write-ups will offer more credibility to the destination product. For instance, the DTB supported a lengthy 80-page survey of Denmark in the November 2001 issue of *Wallpaper*. With some minor reservations, the “independent” *Wallpaper* special feature expectedly communicates the brand values of Denmark, particularly those in the design-talented dimensions. Besides using travel reviewers, the DTB responds to the credibility concern in its brand promotion (DTB, 2001, p. 38):

The brochures all share the key features of honesty and credibility, with honest descriptions – no clichés or rose-tinted images of Denmark. Pictures of rainy weather and black-and-white photos are therefore shown alongside yellow fields of oilseed rape, white sails against a blue fjord, Nyhavn harbor scenes and the Black Diamond central library. The goal is to create a specific atmosphere and paint scenery that tourists can identify with.

It is debatable whether any of DTB’s brand images have not been “rose-tinted”. Regardless, according to the DTB’s own market research, tourists are pleased with the new branding. The results from Sweden, Norway and Germany, which are the biggest tourism markets for Denmark, are positive, as respondents say that the brand is original, surprising, funny, warm and point to good experiences for families and children (DTB, 2002, p. 14; DTB, 2003). However, in the image economy, a good brand communication strategy will face constant challenges from other perception-shaping sources. The DTB brand manager observes that the increased influence of the anti-immigration Danish People’s Party in Danish politics after the 2001 general elections, as reported in the international mass media, has led to increased international anger against the country.

The branding authorities can neither control all aspects of the destination nor all the messages sent out about the country. In what Kotler et al. (2002, p. 287) identify as “uncontrolled communications”, formal messages in the marketing of places can be overwhelmed by other sources of information (e.g. from the mass media, stories from friends, etc). As mentioned earlier, there may also be organizations that intentionally send messages to discourage people from visiting a particular country. Denmark is a target country. It is under attack from a non-governmental organization, the European Community on Protection of Marine Life (ECOP). During the International Tourism Exchange in Berlin in March 2002, ECOP asked people not to visit whaling nations. Although Denmark is not a whaling

nation, its semi-autonomous protectorate, the Faeroe Islands, is. ECOP has unsuccessfully asked the Danish government to pressure the Faeroese to stop whaling. So, the group approaches Danish companies to pressure the government but it is unsuccessful. ECOP says, “Lego, one of the largest tax providers in Denmark, doesn’t want to engage themselves to end the slaughter of the whales” (ECOP, 2002, not paginated). As a result, ECOP produces an alternative image of Denmark via Lego toy bricks (Fig. 3).

Politics of branding Denmark: Convincing local stakeholders

There is also divergence away from the brand in the local environment. The brand and its values are selected after lengthy meetings and discussions with different regional and local tourism authorities, tourism businesses, tourism attraction managers, and other interested parties. The values are also based on the analysis of a survey on tourists’ expectations and their experiences in Denmark. Such a seemingly democratic process in selecting the brand did not lead to a unanimous consensus for the brand.

Mobilizing sub-national tourism authorities. In a complicated manner, Denmark has four layers of tourism authorities – national, regional, communal and local – reflecting roughly the way the country is organized administratively. Each layer of tourism authority functions relatively inde-



Fig. 3. A reconstructed Bloody Whale-Hunting Scene using toy bricks: People are asked to boycott Danish Tourism and toys by Lego. Source: ECOP (<http://ecop.info>).

pendently of one other, as each is supported by different agencies. These tourism authorities have similar interests in attracting tourists and serving the needs of visitors but they may differ in strategies and attitudes on how they should cater to tourists, even if they are selling a common area. The economic significance of tourism differs in the various parts of the country. Although the various sub-national tourism boards were consulted during the search for the new brand of Denmark, the various areas continue to offer different types of tourism products and attract different types of tourists, so the question of “whose brand?” surfaces all the time. As a brand identity, DTB claims that the six brand values are the common characteristics of Denmark but the choice of values remains debatable. Many local and regional tourism authorities are still uncomfortable with what the brand packages. Many areas in western Denmark, for instance, offer primarily beaches and country houses to tourists, and they are unsure how the brand is relevant for them. As a “compromise”, the DTB ends up trying to assure various sub-national authorities that they should pick out those brand values that are most appropriate for them. They can concentrate on the free and cozy values when promoting their rural and nature attractions, for example. Not all the values speak clearly for everyone, and the brand manager has come to accept a policy of selective identity, that is, various agencies are allowed to construct their own image of Denmark based on the brand values.

While the DTB tries to accommodate and maintain the brand’s relevance for all parts of the country, sub-national tourism boards continue to see the brand as a form of bureaucratic control from the capital. So, to some, the brand is not only seen as inappropriate but also seen as a means of control by the DTB. Support for the brand is at best uneven among the various sub-national tourism authorities; some of them have switched to the new branding campaign, while others have kept to their traditional ways. For example, Wonderful Copenhagen (WoCo), the capital’s tourism board, has embarked on a new “Living is easy” campaign to market the city (URL <http://www.woco.dk>). This campaign reflects the values of “Denmark. Enjoy!”, and WoCo’s officers are clearly enthusiastic about the match between the Copenhagen brand and the national brand. The historical and classical romantic images of Copenhagen have been replaced by modern and chic ones in WoCo’s publicity materials. Similarly, the city of Århus (URL <http://www.visitaarhus.com>) and the region of Southern Fyn (URL <http://www.visitsydfyn.dk>) offer materials that present the images of “Denmark. Enjoy!”. However, places such as rural Odsherred and Mid Jutland (URL <http://www.visitmidtjylland.com>), while references are made to the new brand, the values and images are not communicated in the same sleek and trendy manner. The inconsistencies are highly visible when one visits a tourism information center in Denmark because there is a mixture of literature that communicates the new brand and those that do not. Regardless, the brand manager in DTB maintains that sub-national tourism authorities should cooperate with the new branding and follow the

DTB's leadership because these sub-national agencies are receiving state support. But the DTB is still not able to dictate because it cannot offer total financial support for a sub-national tourism agency's publicity materials.

Mobilizing tourism businesses. All tourism businesses are encouraged to use the brand values in their own marketing, and also to re-package their products and services so as to reflect the values (DTB, 2000a, not paginated):

The entire Danish tourism industry can benefit from the Danish Tourist Board's investment in the brand values in the time to come. The values will become familiar to our target groups through active marketing and from tourists' own experiences in Denmark. The more products and services reinforce these values, the more visible they will become. To benefit, each player must define his individual position and associate his product with one or more of the brand values. The payoff for all of us is a clearer profile of Denmark, stronger market impact and closer ties among those taking an active interest in Danish tourism. We'll all be pulling in the same direction!

But some tourism players find the brand disadvantageous to them, in particular historical and classical art museums. For instance, a respondent who organizes events to promote romantic art laments that many museums he works with find it difficult to associate themselves with the brand values; their products are closely associated with the romantic and classical images that the brand intentionally aims to marginalize. These attractions, albeit relatively successful in the past, are understandably upset that their products are being snubbed and are not featured as prominently as before in tourism publicity.

Some other tourism businesses ignore the brand. For example, despite the "Living is easy" campaign in Copenhagen, private tour operators are still selling tours that predominantly highlight the historical and romantic sights of Copenhagen. One operator, while explaining to the researcher, insists that these attractions are what tourists want. Also in the above-mentioned special feature on Denmark in *Wallpaper*, the magazine notes (*Wallpaper*, 2001, p. 79):

Less promising is that Denmark's status as a design haven has yet to manifest itself in its hotels. Save the few chic chateaux and five-star gems that meet our discerning tastes, Denmark is utterly lacking in the type of hip design hotel that every self-respecting European country wouldn't be caught dead without.

Also reflected in many official tourism brochures and information booklets, advertisements by tourism businesses remain old-fashioned. These advertisers dictate how they want themselves to be presented, even though their images are not consistent with the body of the information guide.

Mobilizing non-tourism businesses. The brand manager conducts seminars and workshops for non-tourism businesses too. Non-tourism businesses are encouraged to communicate the brand because the brand is supposed to tell the world about Denmark, and not just Danish tourism. So, the clever and innovative designs of audio and video equipment maker Bang & Olufsen will communicate the “talented–design” set of values of Denmark, for example.

The strategy of conducting seminars and merely persuading businesses to present the same brand image of Denmark lacks incentives to win cooperation. In another strategy, the DTB offers Branding Prizes every year to encourage innovations and the use of the brand. The participants consist of tourism-related companies and sub-national tourism authorities. Besides cultivating a sense of ownership for the brand, participants are recognized for their campaigns and innovations in communicating “Denmark. Enjoy!” values.

Although the DTB is trying to assert leadership and use the brand to drive all future promotional activities, this organization does not have extensive financial and institutional resources to force private tourism and non-tourism businesses to use this brand in their publicity materials. The DTB can only persuade and encourage Danish businesses inside and outside the tourism industry to cooperate. Furthermore, the DTB has not helped private tourism businesses to convert and story their products in a way consistent with the brand. The brand concept has become broad and vague, and is subject to many interpretations. But the ambiguity of the brand seems to be needed for the DTB to garner support and include the diversity of products and interests in the tourism industry.

Discussion

Before the DTB can convince the various tourism stakeholders, it has to address these stakeholders’ individual needs. The politics of branding involves processes of seeking consensus, as well as, persuading different parties to use the brand and asking them to present aspects of Denmark in the “branded manner”. But the situation is carnivalesque, meaning that different parties approach and relate to the brand differently, and these parties receive and communicate the brand within their own contexts and interests (Ooi, 2002b, pp. 59–61). Branding Denmark is essentially a commercial program but there are social and political considerations in promoting it. The case above points to the negotiation processes that the DTB undergoes when it tries to brand the country. Tourism stakeholders respond differently to the brand. Issues with regards to “whose brand?”, the well-intended but somewhat ineffectual attempt to draw cooperation from tourism players to enact the brand and the lack of resources to garner support are just as important as the poetics of the brand. Such issues seem to be less prominent in the literature, and that is partly because most studies use

conventional marketing ideas, which are based on commercial firms. But obviously, firms and countries have different problems, and there is a need to identify these differences in the context of branding, so that a more holistic and accurate understanding can be developed for policies and further research. Based on the case of Denmark above, one can identify four significant differences between branding firms and countries.

First, unlike a firm where managers can fire workers if they do not toe the company's line, destination branding authorities, like the DTB, cannot fire those citizens who do not embrace the official destination branding, nor can the authorities normally close sub-national tourism authorities and private enterprises if they refuse to cooperate with the branding campaign. The DTB is embedded in the national administrative structure, and the sub-national authorities are decentralized agencies that have independent powers. Similarly, private tourism businesses can only be persuaded, as they are not beholden to the DTB. Many Danish tourism businesses do not want to change their relatively successful formula or to commit resources to re-establish new tourism products. They want to change their products according to their own experiences rather than to a macroscopic branding strategy. The attempt by the DTB to package the destination into a coherent whole is not fully welcome by tourism stakeholders with their divergent interests. But like a firm that tries to increase the morale of its workers, many tourism authorities engage in programs to warm and mobilize locals and local enterprises towards the brand, as in the case of Western Australia, where the tourism authorities also started brand ownership campaigns among businesses and local residents (Crockett & Wood, 1999). Similarly, the DTB has its Branding Prizes and branding seminars.

Second, politicians and local residents may not be supportive of changing their country so that it can attract more tourists. A number of museums and local authorities in Denmark, for example, are concerned that they are deliberately asked to change and be more tourist-friendly; tourists are welcome provided they do not demand changes to their local ways. The tourism industry is frequently seen as a commercial enterprise that will corrupt and demean local society and cultures (Cohen, 1988; Oakes, 1993; Watson & Kopachevsky, 1994). As a result, the DTB receives only one-third of their expenses through state funding. The relationship between a country and its tourists is not identical to that of a firm and its customers; tourists may not be welcomed by all in a destination, while the aim of a commercial firm is to serve as many customers as possible. Furthermore, most countries have their own resources, domestic markets, as well as, non-tourism industries to sustain themselves, without having to "sell" themselves. In the case of Denmark, the tourism industry is also not regarded as a high prestige industry.

Third, many commercial firms have decoupled their brand images with the basic functions of their products, for instance, smoking cigarettes and being independent-minded (rather than being unhealthy), or wearing Nike

sneakers and being trendy. Many brands today are constantly reinvented and re-fashioned over short periods of time. Companies, such as Sara Lee, Ford and Coca-cola, have experimented with the idea of just maintaining their brands and selling things through their brands, while the production of their products is outsourced (Dearlove & Crainer, 1999; Olins, 2000, pp. 57–61). These companies search for “quality” and appropriate products to match their brands. They can then change their marketing stories with new models and range of products while their brand maintains some semblance of continuity and assured quality. Researchers, such as van Ham (2001), use such a postmodern business model of primarily sticking brands and attractive images to country products in their work but the discussion in this paper on the politics of branding demonstrates that the task is easier said than done. Besides drawing and having to respond to positive and negative views from local stakeholders, tourism destinations as place-products cannot be outsourced nor changed easily in the way that consumer and fashion products can be; destination products are geographically immobile – at best, expertise, foreign investments, mobile resources, new products and attractions, and social engineering strategies are deployed to improve the place.

Fourth, commercial firms are profit-maximization entities and most do not have direct access to public funds, and they are not expected to carry heavy social and cultural responsibilities in a society. However, in the branding of countries, state-supported tourism authorities and its agendas are explicitly and closely tied to the domestic social, cultural and political issues (Ooi, 2002a, 2004). These issues surface all the time in the case of Denmark.

These four points mean that destination branding research should place more emphasis on the politics of branding. The various local stakeholders want their say in the destination brand identity, how the brand is packaged and presented, and they may criticize and eventually not support the brand. The often optimistic picture of destination branding found in the literature presents only half the picture. Convergence of support for the brand requires effort, energy and resources.

More research on destination branding strategies in other destinations will allow us to compare and draw lessons on how and why destination branding campaigns differ. Specific country factors will also explain why some campaigns are more successful than others. This paper suggests that the varying amount of resources available to win the hearts and minds of other tourism operators, the strength and will available to branding authorities to bring about change in society, and the host society’s views towards tourism play a role in determining whether the destination brand can act as a cohering force for the tourism industry.

To a large extent, this study is only exploratory. A future broad-scale testing of the findings would be highly recommended. With a stricter research design, data collected from more parties in the tourism industry,

as well as, gathering tourists' perception of Denmark, can then only one say if the above postulations are right.

Conclusions

This paper is a response to the destination branding literature that tends to ignore and marginalize the grubby business of enacting and mobilizing support for the brand, that is, the politics of branding. The poetics and politics of branding are dialogically intertwined. Branding authorities want to use the brand to cohere the destination but the divergent interests of different tourism stakeholders make the task enormously difficult. It is necessary to situate branding within the social and economic circumstances it functions within. The dialogic perspective used here emphasizes social multiplicity and points to the cohering centrifugal forces in the presentation and packaging of the destination, as well as, the disruptive centripetal forces stemming from different parties' interests in the branding processes.

This paper has also questioned the usefulness of using ideas from the branding of companies and non-place products in the branding of destinations. There are significant circumstantial and contextual differences. Future research should consider these contextual differences, as well as, consider the types of resources available to win over various stakeholders towards the brand, people's attitudes towards tourism and the political support available in realizing the brand.

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