Revealing The Meaning Of Nation Branding

Nation branding has not been an important segment in Republic of Moldova's foreign policy for a long time, due to internal instability and inability of the political forces to agree on future path of the country. The split revolved around pro-Russian and pro-EU forces. Eventually, the European Union prevailed and throughout the last couple of years, the priorities of Moldovan foreign policy and consequently public diplomacy were to attract the attention of the European Union and move along the road of the EU integration as a prospective candidate. The most recent campaign launched a new tourism brand centered on the symbol "Three of Life" and slogan "Discover the routes of life". The director of tourism agency of the Moldovan Republic explained that the new brand will "allow Moldova to compete as an authentic touristic destination, offering cultural experience unpublished in the heart of Europe, representing an example of conservation of cultural values and promoting them through modern marketing techniques. Its implementation will increase the flow of foreign tourists, but domestic as well. Also, this campaign will contribute to improve the country's image to attract foreign investments, as well as increasing national dignity, inviting citizens from everywhere to promote their country. Therefore the nation branding strategies of the country remain focused upon the same segments – primarily tourism, export and investment.

The export area of nation branding is probably the future of the Moldovan public diplomacy efforts. It is important not only for economic growth, but also for the international image of the country given the cliché nature of the general strategies put forward so far. Attempting to make Moldova using the same tools and mechanisms most of the countries do is not working in its advantage, particularly when contrasted to powerful nation brands that have been the creators of such approach to branding. The new late 2014 brand is better, culturally associable, but still lacks the action behind it, exports, on the other hand, are the area that has both political and economic means available for upgrading the country's image. Moldovan International Export Promotion Organization has been the major actor working towards this change. It was formed in 1999 by the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Moldova with responsibility for investment attraction and export promotion (MIEPO). In addition MIEPO works into different directions – advising and accompanying Moldovan exporters at international markets as well as acting as contact partners for companies which come to Moldovan market by searching for attractive and reliable opportunities/ locations/business partners in the country. MIEPO had created an easily accessible online resource page named Invest in Moldova that publishes first-hand information about the country and its economic climate in the Investment Guide. However, it also extends to social networks advocating their products, food and traditional commodities. For example, in February 2015 MIEPO participated in agri-food exhibition of the Gulf promoting local products. Still, there is one very promising product Moldova has branded in 2013 that carries a lot of potential for becoming the prevailing association for the country in the eyes of the foreigners, namely wine.

Moldova distinguishes itself in exporting some of the world's finest drinks, amongst them the Moldavian wine, champagne or the cognac. Although there is a high competition within these products, the country manages to maintain a top reputation registering major sales on an annual basis8. Moldova is also known for its fertile land which produces large amounts of fruits & vegetables. Its main trading partner is Russia; however its products are being exported all

across Europe.

Shortly after its emergence as an independent republic, Moldova realised that it required time to make the transition from an ex-communist regime towards that of a genuine democracy. The government’s agenda covers further development with the main priority of integrating within the European Union, nevertheless a continuous process of strengthening the trade and economic relationship with the neighbouring countries is also an important step towards a successful welfare state.

In its path to European integration as well as attracting foreign investors, Republic of Moldova is improving its brand ratings, therefore, exports and tourism has dominated nation-branding efforts in this area. In any case, the state understands the importance of the nation branding campaign, since the country is still in the middle of reforms and a huge amount of its budget is being invested in implementing them.