

# Branding of a (Desti)nation with a Deteriorated Image: The Case of Serbia

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**ABSTRACT** This paper offers insights into the differentiation between nation branding and destination branding and how important it is for the successful rebranding of a country with a deteriorated and negative image. It is on the case of Serbia that authors wish to demonstrate how a country engages in competitive marketing strategies in order to boost investments, exports and employment opportunities, but fails to develop a coherent nation branding platform at the highest strategic level. The literature review highlights the differences and relations between three concepts - place branding, nation branding and destination branding. The paper presents the results of the content analysis of key branding initiatives, followed by visual messages, developed and implemented by the Serbian Government and the National Tourism Organization of Serbia in the period from 1996 to 2016. The results are chronologically presented in the form of a discussion, establishing links between destination branding and nation branding practices in Serbia. The conclusion is that none of the branding initiatives have proved successful until now. This is predominantly due to the Government's lack of understanding of the very concept of nation branding and it being mistaken for destination branding and tourism marketing. Current promotional efforts focus on presenting Serbia to internal and external stakeholders primarily as a tourist destination.

*Key words:* nation branding, tourism destination, brand image, Serbia - a post-communist country.

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