

# Nation Branding During a Crisis

A thematic analysis of the 2010–2015 nation-branding strategies of Greece

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<p>To nations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the concept known as <i>nation branding</i> has become a common way to encounter economic, political, and social issues. However, many researchers question whether nation branding actually makes a difference during more serious circumstances, such as an economic crisis. This study looks at the branding strategies of the Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO) during the crisis years 2010–2015, with the aim of achieving a better understanding of how nation branding is conducted during a crisis.</p> <p>The research questions were the following: What were the nation-branding strategies of Greece during the crisis years 2010–2015? Are there signs or mentions of the crisis in the strategies? How does the Greek nation branding correspond to the findings of previous research?</p> <p>The data used in the study consists of strategic documents by the GNTO and the Greek Ministry of Tourism, and was collected from the website of GNTO as well as the European Commission (EC). The data was thematically analyzed based on the dimensions of Anholt's nation-brand hexagon. The texts were first coded according to the predetermined themes (Tourism, People, Culture &amp; Heritage, Investment &amp; Immigration, Governance, and Exports), after which the branding under each theme was further studied.</p> <p>The analysis revealed that the branding strategies of the GNTO to a great extent corresponded to the findings of previous research, and the six nation-brand dimensions appeared to be clearly visible in the strategies. The Tourism theme was the most prominent theme in the data, followed by Culture &amp; Heritage and People. Governance and Exports can be said to be the least common themes in the 2010–2015 strategies.</p> <p>In addition to the six nation-brand dimensions, a crisis perspective was added to the analysis. The Crisis theme was more visible than expected based on the theory of the economic crisis taboo. There was little to none economic crisis taboo to be found in the material.</p> <p>Future studies could look deeper into the ways that the crisis affected the Greek nation brand and vice versa. Examining the work of GNTO and other Greek organizations further to see to what extent these actors cooperate in the building of Brand Greece would also be beneficial.</p>		
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# 1 Introduction

The ways in which nations promote themselves globally – whether politically, economically or culturally – have gained a significant amount of academic attention during the past two decades. According to some researchers and practitioners, *nation branding* is not a new phenomenon, since nations have promoted themselves throughout history (Olins, 2002; Anholt, 2003: 213) in an attempt to support their own agendas (Kaneva, 2011: 117) and to manage other people's impressions about them (Augustine, 2010: 1). Although the idea of a nation as a brand has been contested (e.g. Aronczyk, 2013; Kaneva, 2011; Kavartzis & Ashworth, 2015), several scholars within the field argue that a more globalized world has led to increased competition between nations (Anholt, 2002; Aronczyk, 2013), which has made nation branding more prominent today than before. In line with this argument, nations compete for foreign investors, tourists, students, skilled labor (Aronczyk, 2013: 16; Dinnie, 2008: 17) and a good overall image (Anholt, 2003: 213), and they therefore need competitive branding strategies, both for their products and for the nation in itself (Anholt, 2002; Aronczyk, 2013; Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Nation branding is now used by various nations around the world, and governments of both market economies and emerging economies (Aronczyk, 2008: 42; 2013: 105; Dinnie, 2008: 23) tend to see nation branding as a panacea to many of their nation's problems, whether economic, political, social or cultural (Aronczyk, 2013: 3; Kaneva, 2012: 14).

The purpose of this research is to study the phenomenon of nation branding as it is used by nations who are struggling with a challenged image due to some form of crisis (economic, political, social, environmental, and so forth). This will be done by investigating the nation-branding strategies of Greece during the past years' crisis. The preceding theoretical overview will examine the history of nation branding, the methods that are used in nation branding and the way they are implemented by national governments and branding experts. Furthermore, some of the critique that has been aimed at this form of branding will be outlined, to illustrate the controversial nature of nation branding as an idea and as a practice.

In my research, I choose to focus particularly on one country, namely Greece. My interest in this particular country – with its history, its culture and its people – began when I lived in Athens to learn Greek in 2008 and 2009. In December 2008, I witnessed the riotous demonstrations that broke out after Athens police fatally shot a teenager – events that temporarily boosted the usually limited international media coverage of Greece (Tzogopoulos, 2013: 1–2). The amount of international media reports on Greece has increased significantly since October 2009, when Greece elected a new government, which, soon after the elections, was confronted with the country’s budget deficit, which turned out to be much bigger than previously reported (Tzogopoulos, 2013: 2). What followed were extensive spending cuts, lowered pensions and salaries, raised taxes, and other reforms such as land and business privatization (Tzogopoulos, 2013: 2). In exchange for these cuts and reforms, the Eurozone countries and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreed on three bailouts – rescue packages – during the five years that followed (2010 to 2015). The packages consisted of 110 billion euro in 2010 (Bickes et al., 2014), 130 billion euro in 2012, and 86 billion euro in 2015 (BBC, 2017a; 2017b). The austerity measures and its consequences triggered protests among the Greeks. For example, the youth unemployment was almost 60 percent in April 2013, and the total unemployment reached a record high of 28 percent in February 2014 (BBC, 2017b).

After spending the summer of 2011 working in the city of Rhodes, my interest in global media's portrayal of Greece and its crisis continued. I started wondering if the international media coverage – which had an increasingly negative tone starting from December 2009 (Antoniades, 2012: 7–9) – had affected the international (and the national) audience's view on Greece negatively, and if so, how Greece might be handling this internally. In fact, the role of the media during the Greek crisis has been studied by several authors (e.g. Bickes et al., 2014; Lampropoulou, 2014; Tzogopoulos, 2013; Panagiotopoulou, 2012; Antoniades, 2012). Antoniades (2012: 7) argues that the negative media coverage has harmed the image of Greece and that it “not only reflected but also generated entrenched negative attitudes and connotations not only in (foreign) political elites but also wider in publics and populations across the globe”, and according to Juko (2010), the Greek crisis was worsened by the “intensified and overly

value-laden coverage”.

Because of this personal experience with Greece and because of a general interest in how countries promote themselves globally – particularly during hardships – my case study in this research investigates the nation branding of Greece during the country’s current crisis conditions. This will be done by examining the nation-branding strategies of the main public sector organization that promoted Greece during the period 2010–2015.

## **1.1 Research questions**

After providing an overview of the phenomenon of nation branding and the way it is used during crisis conditions, I will examine official nation-branding documents of Greece (Chapter 6), in order to answer the following research question:

- **What were the nation-branding strategies of Greece during the crisis years 2010–2015?**

To complete this perspective, I will also answer the following two sub-questions:

- **Are there signs or mentions of the crisis in the strategies?**
- **How does the Greek nation branding correspond to the findings of previous research?**

These case-based research questions will be answered in Chapter 6, *Analysis and results*. Because of the limited scope of the study, I choose to focus on nation-branding strategies, and I do not analyze, for example, the reception of the branding.

## **1.2 Background and contribution**

Although nation branding has become a common practice in many countries, it is a

relatively new area of research, which means that the theory in the field is limited (Bisa, 2012; Aronczyk, 2013; Fan, 2006, 2010; Dinnie, 2008: 13). According to Aronczyk (2013: 32), there are still only a few nation-branding experts, and because they often base their methods on the British policy advisor Simon Anholt's work, the practice as well as the theory of nation branding comes out rather homogeneous. Fan (2010: 97) argues that the limited research – the “lack of progress in conceptual development” – makes the subject stand still and contributes to skepticism from the public, creating “an urgent need for conceptual and theoretical development of the subject” (Fan, 2010: 98). In a more recent article, Ståhlberg and Bolin (2015) argue that the practice of nation branding is less homogeneous today because the campaigns are increasingly carried out by domestic agencies, which means that the citizens of the nation are more involved in the branding efforts than before. However, Ståhlberg & Bolin (2015) also note that the role of national identity in nation branding is still not fully understood.

Furthermore, the studies on the contemporary nation branding of Greece are few, ranging from articles on Greek destination-branding strategies and campaigns (Kouris, 2009; Vazou, 2014), to a book about the brand of Greece (Bacaloumis, 2007). Among the related publications is also a short article which looks at the importance of nation branding and rebranding in the case of Greece (Bisa, 2013), and an article about how public diplomacy can be used for rebranding a nation during an economic crisis (Vaxevanidou, 2017) – topics close to those of my research. However, the article by Bisa (2013) only provides a brief look at the case of Greece's governmental nation-branding policy, and the article by Vaxevanidou (2017) focuses on public diplomacy. My study includes a more in-depth look at the case, both by offering an extensive theoretical framework and by examining the nation-branding strategies of the Greek National Tourism Organization during the crisis years 2010–2015. In this way, I will provide a more detailed view of the Greek case. Kaneva (2011) stresses the importance of investigating the nation-branding practices of different agents “situated in historical place and time” (Kaneva, 2011: 128), since nation branding increasingly affects other national policies. This further motivates a review of the Greek nation-branding case.

Nation branding can be seen as an important area of research because it influences



many different sections of society. For example, it can act as soft power and a form of public diplomacy (e.g. Aronczyk, 2013: 16; Wang, 2013: 2; Fan, 2008) – although its main contribution is said to be in the field of economy and not politics (Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2010: 95). De Chernatony (in Augustine, 2010: 1) emphasizes nation branding’s potential to stabilize currencies, and according to Anholt (2002: 59) and Yan (in Dinnie, 2008: 170–172), nation branding can support the distribution of global wealth and development between countries – a view that meets resistance by Klein (2000) and other critics, who consider branding to be exploiting developing countries. Anholt (2003: 213) argues that most poverty-stricken countries have a positive attitude toward branding their nation, as opposed to developed countries, where viewing a nation as a brand tends to be seen more negatively. Despite divided opinions on the phenomenon of nation branding, I agree with Kaneva (2011), who argues that the political, economic and cultural effects have remained vague and therefore need to be investigated. This view motivates further research on the topic.

Possible benefits of my research include getting a clearer picture of how influential nation branding really is, and seeing in what ways it has affected Greece during the past years' crisis. The wished-for contribution of the research is to provide both the supporters and the opponents of nation branding with useful insights.

### **1.3 Key concepts and excluded concepts**

The key theoretical concepts of my research are *nation brand*, *nation branding*, *crisis*, and *strategy*. What follows below is a short presentation of these concepts which will be examined more in depth in Chapter 3.

A *nation brand* has been defined in several ways. According to Fan (2006: 6), a nation brand represents a country’s intangible assets, and unlike the country-of-origin effect, which focuses on the origin of products, a nation brand focuses on the nation altogether, not exclusively on its products. Anholt (no date: 186) specifies both tangible and intangible assets of a country by defining a nation brand as “the sum of people’s perceptions of a country across six areas of national competence”; these areas being

tourism, exports, governance, investment and immigration, culture and heritage, and people.

As a practice, *nation branding* has also been interpreted differently by different authors. Essentially, nation branding refers to the application of “branding and marketing communications techniques to promote a nation's image” (Fan, 2006: 6). Some definitions of the term focus on the competitiveness of a country (Anholt, 2007a), others on national identity (Aronczyk, 2007) or image management and promotion (Fan, 2006: 6). Anholt (in Fan, 2006: 6) describes nation branding as an “all-embracing national brand strategy”, an approach I will take when analyzing the Greek nation branding in Chapter 6. The history and development, as well as the perceived pros and cons of nation branding, will be discussed in Chapter 3.

In this research, I choose to use the definition of a *crisis* as “a condition of instability or danger, as in social, economic, political, or international affairs, leading to a decisive change” (Dictionary.com, 2016). A *place crisis*, then, is often described as an image crisis of a place, such as a city, a region or a nation, which threatens the competitive potential of the place (Rasmussen & Merckelsen, 2014). Rasmussen and Merckelsen (2014) distinguish two types of place crises: sudden and ongoing crises. A sudden crisis is triggered by a specific event, while an ongoing crisis is the result of more long-term image issues (Avraham & Ketter in Rasmussen & Merckelsen, 2014: 231). The relationship between crises and nation branding will be accounted for in Chapter 3.

A *strategy* can be defined simply as a plan for achieving a particular goal (Merriam-Webster, 2016) or, more specifically for organizations, as “the direction and scope of an organisation over the long term, which achieves advantage in a changing environment through its configuration of resources and competences with the aim of fulfilling stakeholder expectations” (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington in Dinnie, 2008: 220). In the case of nations, these “resources and competences” are strategically put into areas that promote the nation, such as tourism, foreign direct investment and exports (Dinnie, 2008: 220). Developing a strategy is complex, but in theory, it can be done through three steps: analysis of the current brand, formulation of the branding goal, and

implementation of the branding (Dinnie, 2008: 220).

In this research, I choose to not engage in debates of globalization, national identity, nationhood, citizenship, nationalism or imagined communities, in order to keep my main focus on nation branding and the case of Greece. I will also leave out other concepts related to nation branding, such as image, reputation, public diplomacy and soft power. This narrowing down of concepts is motivated by the limited scope of the research.

#### **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

After presenting a theoretical framework for the concept of nation branding (Chapters 2 and 3), I will present my case (Chapter 4) and then go through the data as well as the method (Chapter 5) I use for my analysis. My analysis (Chapter 6) consists of a qualitative thematic analysis of Greek nation-branding strategies, using the themes of Anholt's nation-brand hexagon (GFK, 2016) as a basis. I will then present the results of my study (Chapter 6) and discuss these results as well as come to a conclusion (Chapter 7).

## 2 Branding products

This chapter provides an overview of the marketing concepts brand and branding. This kind of basic knowledge about branding can be relevant before moving on to discuss the branch of branding called nation branding.

### 2.1 Definitions of brand and branding

A much-used definition of a *brand* is given by the American Marketing Association, AMA (2015), who defines a brand as a “[n]ame, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers” (AMA, 2015). Fan (2010: 98) adds to this definition by suggesting that a brand is not merely a product name, but “a complex bundle of images, meanings, associations and experiences in the minds of people” (Fan, 2010: 98), a statement supported by Anholt (2010: 10) and Doyle (2011). Thus, a brand can simply be defined as the mental image of the brand in the mind of the user (de Chernatony & McDonald in Dinnie, 2008: 15), and it exists whether or not the branding is performed (Fan, 2006: 12). The challenges this particular issue brings to nation branding will be considered in subchapter 3.5.4.

As noted by Dinnie (2008: 14), the definitions of a brand vary, from those that focus on the visual characteristics of a brand to those that try to describe the essence of the brand and the values attached to it. The AMA definition above can be said to focus more on the visual aspects of a brand, while a definition given by Lynch and de Chernatony (in Dinnie, 2008: 14) focuses on values, by defining brands as “clusters of functional and emotional values that promise a unique and welcome experience between a buyer and a seller”.

According to Keller (2013: 30), the different *brand elements* – such as a product's name, logo and package design – are what characterize a brand. These elements can not only be used on goods, but also on places, people and even ideas (Keller, 2013: 31). Here it is important to note that the broad definition of a product includes all these categories:

physical goods, stores, services, persons, places, organizations and ideas (Keller, 2013: 31).

*Branding* can be defined as the way in which companies separate their own products from their competitors' products (Jobber & Fahy in Dinnie, 2008: 14). This includes the building, management and measuring of the brand (Keller, 2013). The process of branding mostly consists of a mental experience by the consumer (Anholt, 2010: 10), and if this experience is a positive one, it can lead to an increase in what is called *brand equity* – “[t]he total value that the brand brings to a company” (Doyle, 2011), whether through a product or a service (Keller, 2013: 57).

As Keller (2013: 31) points out, a brand is something more than a product, since it has more elements that can separate it from similar products than a product in itself has. An example of this is a product as basic as soap: there are a lot of different soaps that do the same thing – it is often the brand that allows a particular soap to differ from others. One reason for this added value is the *associations* that brands create among consumers. For example, a consumer may associate the product with a spokesperson or with a logo (Aaker, 1996: 25). According to Keller (2013: 32–34), brand associations are often seen as highly relevant to marketers because of their cultural influence on consumers – a topic that has attracted a lot of research attention during the past years. Brands are said to work as “symbolic devices” to support self-image and values, and for some people they almost reach a religious level (Keller, 2013: 32–34). According to Kotler and Gertner (2002: 249), brands can incite both beliefs and behaviors among the consumers.

## **2.2 Brand equity and building brands**

According to Keller (2013: 57), there is no single definition of brand equity, nor is there a common method for measuring it. However, brand equity says something about the marketing effects that a brand causes; it “explains why different outcomes result from the marketing of a branded product or service than if it were not branded” (Keller, 2013: 57). Aaker (1996) specifies this by defining brand equity as “a set of assets (and

liabilities) linked to a brand's name and symbol that adds to (or subtracts from) the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers” (Aaker, 1996: 7–8). The main assets listed by Aaker (1996: 8) are *brand (name) awareness*, *brand loyalty*, *perceived quality* and *brand associations*, and these need to be maintained if the firm wants to increase its brand's value. Here it is worth mentioning that intangible assets, such as marketing and branding, often are more valuable to a company than tangible ones (Keller, 2013: 32–33, 36).

Furthermore, brand equity can be valuable to both the consumers and the brand's owner (Aaker, 1996: 8). Consumers can use a valuable brand as a tool of identification and to create a social image with, while brand owners can use the brand equity – and the loyal consumers – for profit-making (Kotler & Gertner, 2002: 249; van Ham, 2008: 132). Aaker (1996: 8) also stresses the importance of knowing in which ways the brand's assets create value (for example by making the consumer satisfied with the product), since this knowledge can help the firm build and manage its brand. To further increase brand equity, the firm should make sure that the assets are clearly connected to the brand's name and its symbol (Aaker, 1996: 8).

As pointed out by Aaker (1996: 35), building brands can be difficult, but by building, managing and maintaining the assets known as brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand association, one can create brand equity. According to Aaker (1996: 35), “to understand how to develop a brand identity—to know what the brand stands for and to effectively express that identity” is one of the keys to successful branding. Managing “internal forces and pressures” in the firm, such as a tendency toward short-term results, is also important for successful brand-building (Aaker, 1996: 36). Van Ham (2008: 144) stresses that a brand is a vulnerable thing, and that being in control of it is difficult. This, as well as other challenges to branding and nation branding, will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

### 3 Branding nations

This chapter examines some of the historical milestones in the evolution of nation branding, as well as definitions on what nation branding is and is not, according to prominent researchers and branding professionals in the field. Furthermore, common strategies and benefits of nation branding, as well as the challenges it encounters, are addressed.

#### 3.1 A place as a brand: Branding national spaces

Building, managing and measuring the brand are all part of the branding process (Keller, 2013) through which companies, organizations and individuals are trying to make their product stand out from competing products (Jobber & Fahy in Dinnie, 2008: 14). However, the same kinds of methods have also been applied by governments and private-sector actors on national spaces.

One of the first texts to suggest that places should promote themselves in the same way as businesses was written in 1993 by Kotler, Haider and Rein, who developed the term *strategic place marketing* (Kotler et al. in Anholt, 2010: 2). This type of marketing aims at revitalizing places such as cities and nations, while improving their response to changes in the market (Kotler et al., 1993). Anholt (2010: 3) argues that the increased globalization-triggered competition between places has led to a situation where it is customary for rich cities to put resources into promoting themselves – a habit that can also be seen across other geographical areas; from villages to provinces to nations. Aronczyk (2013: 17) also recognizes globalization as the most central condition for the emergence of nation branding. It is often said that Anholt – one of the leading brand specialists according to some (van Ham, 2008: 138) – introduced the term *nation brand* in 1996 (Anholt, 2011: 6). However, the history of nation branding as a *practice* can be said to go further back than that (e.g. Anholt, 2003: 213, Olins: 2002; Augustine: 2010).

According to Wally Olins (2002: 245), newly founded nations “create self-sustaining

myths to build coherent identities” and as these nations change, they re-shape their identities (Olins, 2002: 242–245). Among the historical examples of nation branding listed by Olins (2002: 242–245) are France, the Ottoman Empire and former European colonies such as the Dutch East Indies and the British Indian Empire. These have all gone through branding and rebranding phases by for example changing leaders (like France), changing the name of the nation (like the Dutch East Indies), or even changing their alphabet (like the Ottoman Empire) (Olins, 2002: 242–245). However, Bolin and Ståhlberg (2010) distinguish certain differences between the nation building of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and that of today. According to them (2010: 79–80), today’s neoliberal environment has made nation-states act more like businesses, which nation branding clearly illustrates. Bolin and Ståhlberg (2010: 80–81) also argue that the 21<sup>st</sup> century nation building focuses on the future of the nation, as opposed to previous nation building, which focused on the history and traditions of the nation. Additionally, the audience aimed at by the nation building has shifted, from a domestic audience to an international one (Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2010: 80–81).

Aronczyk (2013: 3) traces the origin of nation branding to the time after the Second World War, and its prehistory even 300 years back, when the nation-state and the corporation became the main social institutions. According to Aronczyk (2013: 27; 2008: 43), it is important to consider the geopolitical and economic circumstances of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries as well as the role the nation has played in these, when discussing the origin of nation branding. Furthermore, nation branding can be seen as one of the features of today's *promotional culture*, and as in the case of other promotional phenomena, its growth can be linked to the proliferation of neoliberal values (Aronczyk, 2013: 22; Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2010: 79). Neoliberalism – the ideology to which liberalization, privatization and stabilization of the market is considered desirable – has led to that branding often is seen as a cure for not only economic problems, but also political and cultural problems (Aronczyk, 2013: 22).

In addition to neoliberalism, a major contributing factor to nation branding is the intensified globalization and global competition (Aronczyk, 2013: 17). The information systems have been expanded, which has created bigger audiences, which in turn has



made the “traditional state-to-state diplomacy” more complicated, according to Aronczyk (2013: 16). This is supported by the argument of Bolin and Ståhlberg (2010: 80–81), which states that the audience of nation building has shifted from domestic to international. Governments thus form brands out of their country in order to compete with other nations in the areas of tourism, foreign direct investment and “talent attraction” (Dinnie, 2008: 17). According to Aronczyk (2013: 17–22), the normalized ideas of globalization are not only creating the neoliberal values mentioned above, but are also “used to justify national change”, and this kind of justification is used by nation-branding consultants who aim at reinventing the nation. Furthermore, national consciousness is another factor that has been both used and reinforced by nation-branding practices, and Aronczyk (2013: 15) describes nation branding as a “form of national consciousness”.

The origin of the *study* of nation branding can be traced back to the studies of *country of origin*, *place* or *destination branding*, *public diplomacy* and *national identity* (Fan, 2010: 98). According to Fan (2010: 98), country of origin (COO) and place branding studies are mostly aimed at the economic dimensions of a country, while nation branding takes into account the economic as well as the political and cultural dimensions that affect a country's image (Fan, 2006: 6, 2010: 98; Anholt, 2010: 2). The study of nation branding itself is relatively new (Fan, 2006: 5) and, as previously mentioned, researchers and experts within the field call for more research on the topic (e.g. Fan, 2006; Aronczyk, 2013; Dinnie, 2008).

### **3.2 Differences between product branding and nation branding**

Anholt (2011) has observed that “the reputations of countries [...] behave rather like the brand images of companies and products, and they are equally critical to the progress, prosperity, and good management of those places” (Anholt, 2011: 6). However, Anholt (2003: 213) also emphasizes the difference between branding places and products, a statement supported by Fan (2010: 98–99), who notes that there are “more differences than similarities between a nation brand and a commercial brand”, one difference being

that a nation brand often is more difficult to maintain than a commercial brand. For instance, in conventional product branding, the product can be changed, removed from the market, or replaced by another product. In nation branding, the product – in this case the nation – is not that easy to manage (Frost in Fan, 2006: 8).

According to Dinnie (2008: 14), one factor that makes nation branding more complicated than conventional branding is that nation brands have more *cultural resources* than other brands, because of the role national identity plays in nation branding. Fan (2006: 7) lists the following factors behind a nation brand to show how it differs from a conventional brand: places, natural resources, people, culture, history, political system, infrastructure and so forth. According to Fan (2006: 7, 10), these factors are what make a nation brand so complex and difficult to understand and to communicate. Furthermore, Freire (2007: 421) points out that the building of nation brands – or geo-brands as he calls them – requires adequate knowledge about the target audience, since it consists of distinct segments, such as tourists and investors, who are interested in quite different aspects of the nation brand.

Although nation branding bases a lot of its practices on those of other forms of branding, like corporate branding, it is important to note that a place or a nation is more complex than a corporation. In nation branding, just like in any form of place branding, one has to “distill a place's identity without losing sight of its complexity” (van Ham, 2008: 133). This and other challenges to nation branding will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

### **3.3 Definitions of nation brand and branding**

What follows below are different definitions of nation brand and nation branding, as presented by various authors. However, to avoid confusion regarding different theoretical terms, I will start by briefly mapping out the term nation branding in relation to *place branding* and *destination branding*, as well as the difference between the terms country branding and nation branding.

As explained by Kaneva (2011: 121), nation branding (also called country branding) is a subcategory of *place branding*. Place branding is often used as an umbrella term in marketing and it also encompasses *city branding* and *region branding*. A similar term, which is mostly used in vacation marketing and tourism studies, is *destination branding* (Kaneva, 2011: 121). This term was introduced in the 1970s when the tourism industry expanded (Hanna & Rowley in Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2010: 81). Place branding is often seen as equivalent to boosting the image of a place, not just branding a place in the sense of giving it a name or a logo (Anholt, 2010: 7).

A slight difference can be noted between the terms nation brand and country brand, since the terms nation and country are defined differently. According to Fan (2006: 5), a *nation* is often “a large group of people of the same race and language” while a *country* is “an area of land occupied by a nation”. These definitions could motivate the use of *nation branding* instead of *country branding*, since country branding according to this definition would mean to brand the “area of land” that the nation lives on. Since I want to focus of the branding of the *nation* in this research, I choose to use the term nation branding. However, some authors question the use of the term *nation* in nation branding, because it assumes that nations exist naturally, instead of as mere social constructs (Widler, 2007: 145). Other problematic aspects of nation branding will be presented later in this chapter.

According to Anholt (no date: 186), a nation brand can be seen as “the sum of people’s perceptions of a country across six areas of national competence”: exports, governance, tourism, investment and immigration, culture and heritage, and people (Anholt, no date: 186). Kotler et al. (1993) have a similar idea about what they call a *country image*, which is “the sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about places” (Kotler et al., 1993). Similar to Anholt's nation brand, a country image steers people's perception of a country and its products, and according to Kotler and Gertner (2002: 249), it also stimulates investment, tourism and so forth.

Fan (2010: 98) defines a nation brand as “the total sum of all perceptions of a nation in the minds of international stakeholders, which may contain some of the following

elements: people, place, culture/language, history, food, fashion, famous faces (celebrities), global brands and so on” (Fan, 2010: 98). This brand, then, does not need any efforts to exist: every country has an image in the minds of people, which, according to Fan (2010: 98), is enough for a nation brand to exist.

Another definition of a nation brand is provided by Keith Dinnie (2008), who sees a nation brand as “the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences” (Dinnie, 2008: 15). Dinnie (2008: 13) points out that the nation brand is of a complex nature and that it cannot be treated as a conventional brand. According to him (2008: 14–15), a nation brand is more culture-based than other types of brands, and therefore the issue of national identity should be addressed when discussing the nation brand.

Fan (2010: 99) points out that there are several interpretations of what a nation brand and nation branding are, and he presents these interpretations with a figure featuring six different levels. Starting with a *logo* (easy to brand) on the first level, and ending with the concept of *national identity* on the last level (difficult to brand), Fan concludes that more research is needed to fully understand the role of national identity in nation branding. Fan (2006) also highlights the difference between nation branding and nation brand, because a “nation has a brand image with or without nation branding” (Fan, 2006: 5).

The practice of nation branding can be defined as “the phenomenon by which governments engage in self-conscious activities aimed at producing a certain image of the nation state” (Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2010: 82) – these activities being to apply “branding and marketing communications techniques to promote a nation's image” (Fan, 2006: 6). However, most definitions of nation branding try to be more all-encompassing by including further aspects of what it means to brand a nation. It can be seen as a way of constructing and communicating *national identity* (Dinnie, 2008: 116; Kaneva, 2011: 130; Anholt, 2003: 134) by using techniques that are typically used in corporate branding (Aronczyk, 2013: 15).

Furthermore, the aim of nation branding varies. One of its common goals is to generate capital and allow the nation to compete on the global market by, for example, attracting foreign direct investment, skilled labor and tourism. Another goal is to create international awareness of the nation and “an image of legitimacy and authority” (Aronczyk, 2013: 16–17) in cases of reputation issues. Furthermore, the foreign public opinion that is shaped through nation branding can affect the citizens of the branded nation in question, for example by encouraging consensus and nationalism (Aronczyk, 2013: 16). According to Jaffe and Nebenzahl, the aim of nation branding is “to create a clear, simple, differentiating idea built around emotional qualities which can be symbolized both verbally and visually and understood by diverse audiences” (Jaffe & Nebenzahl in Fan, 2006: 6). In addition, “nation branding must embrace political, cultural, business and sport activities” to be efficient (Jaffe & Nebenzahl in Fan, 2006: 6). This complexity of nation branding will be further addressed in section 3.5.

Researchers who have focused on the role of national identity in nation branding include Aronczyk (2007, 2008, 2009, 2013), Kaneva (2011, 2012), Kaneva and Popescu (2011), and Bolin and Ståhlberg (2010, 2015). According to Aronczyk (2013), nation branding is a form of national consciousness that is typical for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and she defines nation branding as “the creation and communication of national identity using tools, techniques, and expertise from the world of corporate brand management” (Aronczyk, 2013: 15). Some of the examples of how nation branding manifests itself are the prevalence of special nation-branding consultants, journals and books dedicated to the topic, and lists that rank countries according to the global perception of them, such as the Nation Brands Index (Aronczyk, 2013: 15, 25; Anholt, 2009b). Furthermore, as Aronczyk (2013: 16) points out, nation branding can be seen in very different contexts around the globe – both in countries with a capitalist economy and in countries whose economy is still on the rise.

Kaneva (2011: 118) describes nation branding as “a compendium of discourses and practices aimed at reconstituting nationhood through marketing and branding paradigms”, and according to her, its effects on nationhood are still unclear and have to be investigated.

### **3.4 Implementing nation branding: Strategies, uses and benefits**

Similar to other types of brands, nation brands can be seen as important intangible assets (Keller, 2013: 33, 61) that need to be handled with care and actively managed. According to Aronczyk (2013: 68), the nation-branding process is about “uncovering, not generating, value”, and this uncovering is seen as necessary by the proponents of nation branding. Another common argument for managing a nation brand is that it can help remove possible misconceptions about the nation (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002: 309, 311). The ways in which nation branding is implemented will be further discussed below.

#### **3.4.1 Strategies of nation branding**

The strategic brand management process, as described by Keller (2013: 58–61), aims at building, measuring and managing brand equity with the use of marketing techniques. This process is also increasingly used in the branding of nations, although Ståhlberg and Bolin (2015: 295) argue that nation-branding campaigns “are not necessarily built upon particularly coherent ideas and strategies”, but instead evolve rather randomly as a result of the different stakeholders and agendas involved. This is something I will keep in mind when analyzing the Greek nation branding in Chapter 6.

According to Vanossi (in Dinnie, 2008: 19), places need “clear and realistic strategies” when they promote themselves. However, managing a nation brand can be challenging due to its complex nature, and if it is poorly managed it can turn out to be a waste of resources (Dinnie, 2008: 235; Augustine, 2010: 1). According to Keller (2013: 49), even the strongest of brands can fail because of bad management or because of insufficient resources, for example, if there are not enough skills within the government (van Ham, 2008: 133). This is why various strategies have been developed to facilitate the branding process. Keller (2013: 49) stresses the importance to adapt the branding strategies according to changes in the market, such as trends, since brand management is the part of branding that is relatively easy to affect, while other reasons for brand failure, such as

changes in technology and in consumers' wants and needs, are more difficult to control. Although the requirements mentioned by Keller (2013) describe branding in general, the same tendencies can be seen in nation branding.

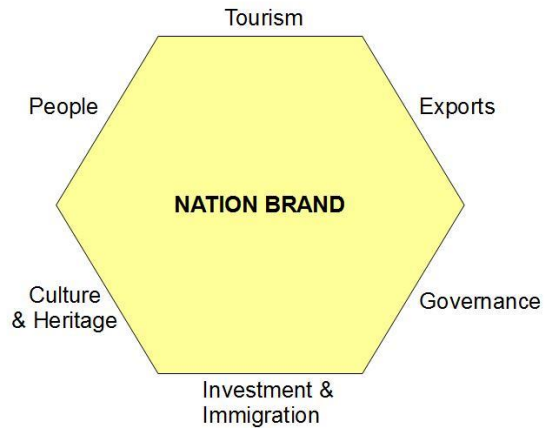
Anholt (2003: 214) defines a place branding strategy as “a plan for defining the most realistic, most competitive and most compelling strategic vision for the country, region or city”, a vision that also has to be implemented and communicated to the public. A good strategy, according to Anholt (2003: 214), takes into account both the people who live in the place and the things which are derived from there. Aronczyk (2013: 17) describes nation branding as a political, economic, as well as a cultural strategy.

According to Dinnie (2008: 220), a brand strategy is normally built upon three questions: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? And how do we get there? In developing a strategy for nation branding, this means to first analyze the nation's current brand, then to set forth goals for the brand, and finally, to implement the plan in order to create the new brand (Dinnie, 2008: 220). Similarly, Aronczyk (2013: 68–77) identifies four different steps in the making of a nation brand: evaluation, training, identification, and implementation or communication.

During the *evaluation* process in nation branding, methods such as public opinion interviews or surveys are used to evaluate the current situation of the nation brand, often focusing on its economic strength and competitiveness (Aronczyk, 2008: 50; Dinnie, 2008: 220; Anholt, 2003: 214–215). The perceptions that people hold of different nations are evaluated and ranked with tools such as the Nation Brands Index by Anholt and GFK (2016), the Country Brand Ranking by Bloom Consulting (2016), the Country Brand Index by Future Brand (2016), and the Nation Brands report by Brand Finance (2015).

The Nation Brands Index (NBI), which was developed by Simon Anholt, is one of the tools most commonly used and referred to in nation branding (Kaneva, 2011: 122). Anholt conducts the NBI survey together with the market research institute GFK, who describes the survey as “the world's most comprehensive global nation-branding

survey” (GFK, 2016). Every year since 2005, the NBI survey polls more than 20 000 adults in 20 “major developed and developing countries” (GFK, 2015b) to measure the perceptions – and thus the brand – of 50 different countries. The NBI ranks nations according to how the survey respondents perceive the nation through six categories or



“dimensions”, as depicted in Anholt’s nation-brand hexagon: tourism, exports, governance, investment and immigration, culture and heritage, and people (Aronczyk, 2013: 69; GFK, 2016). These dimensions considered to constitute a nation brand will be further discussed and used as an analytical tool in Chapter 6.

Figure 1: Adaptation of Anholt’s nation-brand hexagon.

The above-mentioned models and indexes have been subject to criticism for various reasons. Their commercial nature (Aronczyk, 2013: 70–72), their role in legitimizing the expertise of branding consultants (Kaneva, 2011: 122), as well as the use of stereotypes (Widler, 2007: 148) and public opinion instead of more fixed indicators (Aronczyk, 2013: 71) have all been questioned. They are, however, an essential part of the nation-branding practice, and national governments spend tens of thousands – even hundreds of thousands – of dollars on conducting a single survey (Aronczyk, 2008: 50). Because of this, and because nation-branding professionals use these indexes to further shape the nation brands – the mental images people have of nations – it can be considered important to study the indexes’ role in nation branding.

The second step in the making of a nation brand is *training*, which includes teaching public and private sector as well as civil society representatives – such as ministers, company CEOs, celebrities, and common citizens – about the brand and how to represent it (Aronczyk, 2013: 72–73). This can be done through seminars (often arranged by consultants) in which the potential of nation branding is discussed (Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2015: 301). As noted by Aronczyk (2013: 73), the nation-branding



consultants often stress the importance of private-sector involvement in the process, arguing that the creation and maintenance of a nation brand takes more time ('a 15- to 20-year timeline', according to Aronczyk, 2013: 73) than a single election period of government officials. This extended period of time means that the consultants themselves usually only participate in the early stages of the branding process (Aronczyk, 2013: 73). This issue of consultants distancing themselves from their clients (Aronczyk, 2013: 74) will be further mentioned in subchapter 3.5.3.

The step of *identification* is where the *brand essence* is developed, which, according to Aronczyk (2013: 68–77), is the most difficult part of the branding process. Here, the country should identify itself, find a balance between being different from other countries (differentiation), but at the same time being similar to them (standardization). Aronczyk (2013: 76) mentions peacefulness and normalcy as two commonly used ingredients in nation-branding strategies. These will be further discussed later on in the text (subchapter 3.6.2).

Finally, during the *implementation* or *communication* of the nation brand, the new brand is communicated through different campaigns (Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2015: 301). In this step, the citizens' role is crucial as they are invited to "live the brand" (Aronczyk, 2013: 76–77), to be *nation-brand ambassadors* who give a face to their country (Dinnie, 2008: 29, 227). Ideally, this group of representatives consists of people from many different social groups, and all of them get to have a say in how the national identity will be represented in the nation brand. This way, the building of the nation brand appears to be a democratic process (Aronczyk, 2009: 293). Furthermore, in addition to coverage across different media platforms (Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2015: 296) and the work of brand ambassadors, Dinnie (2008: 228) lists *diaspora mobilization* as an important part of the implementation of nation-branding strategy. He argues that diaspora communities in other countries have the potential to support their home country's nation brand by strengthening the foreign direct investment and by building a reputation of the nation in question (Dinnie, 2008: 209, 228). As done by Augustine (2010: 2–3), it is common to add the step of following up – *tracking* – the nation-branding process after the strategy has been implemented.

In practice, nation branding can consist of both somewhat superficial activities, like designing a logo for a nation, and more comprehensive activities, such as the establishment of state bodies to develop long-term nation-branding strategies (Kaneva, 2011: 118). Anholt and other “ambitious architects of nation branding” (Kaneva, 2011: 118) view nation branding as an important part of national policy and not only a temporary campaign (Anholt in Kaneva, 2011: 118). They argue that brand building requires a long-term commitment by marketers and that a long-term strategy therefore is needed in nation branding as well (Aaker & Joachimsthaler in Dinnie, 2008: 15). In this way, the risk that nation branding might become a mere quick fix for an issue that requires more attention is avoided (Dinnie, 2008: 15). In addition to long-term planning, Aaker (1996: 182) lists the right target group, persuasiveness and consistency over time as important factors to take into account when developing a branding strategy. Olins (2002: 244) stresses the importance of consistency and coherence in all types of branding.

Another commonly mentioned premise for successful nation branding is the “amplification of the existing values of the national culture rather than the fabrication of a false promise” (Gilmore in Dinnie, 2008: 18), and according to Freire (2005: 348), it is desirable for both products and places to develop a brand management system that focuses on their identity, because this makes the branding more consistent. Furthermore, a brand needs to correspond to the current time, for example by adapting to changes in the market, in order to be successful (Dinnie, 2008: 14; Keller, 2013: 49).

In addition to the national government and other stakeholders, such as businesses and citizens, *nation-branding consultants* are influential in the branding process (Aronczyk, 2009: 293). Aronczyk (2009: 295) defines these consultants as “professionals whose primary role is to offer advisory services to national leaders in the general arenas of reputation, image, and identity” and argues that they tend to consider their responsibility for the nation brand to be ended when they leave the country, which means that the stakeholders, ultimately the citizens, are being held responsible for the brand (Aronczyk, 2009: 293; 2013: 74–75, 165–168). The citizens are then expected to continue “living the brand” (Aronczyk, 2013: 76–77), and to act as nation-brand

ambassadors (Dinnie, 2008: 29, 227), as previously mentioned. Here, it is worth noting that while nation-branding consultants used to be based primarily in the UK, nation branding today is increasingly conducted by domestic consultants in their respective countries (Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2015: 294).

### **3.4.2 Uses and benefits of nation branding**

Dinnie (2008: 17, 31) lists three main goals of nation branding: to attract tourists, to increase investment and to boost exports. Furthermore, Temporal (in Dinnie, 2008: 17) mentions currency stability, international credibility, international political influence, as well as strengthened nation building as possible benefits of nation branding. Van Ham (2001) describes nation branding as a more peaceful version of nationalism, and suggests that it can contribute to the “pacification of Europe”. According to Dinnie (2008: 18), a nation brand can give a “competitive advantage in today's globalized economy”. This includes bringing more tourists and foreign investors to the country, as well as increasing consumption of the country's products and services (Dinnie, 2008: 18).

Dinnie (2008: 252) also sees the potential of nation branding in supporting sustainable development and a more equal competition between countries – “the ultimate expression of soft power” – a statement which is supported by Anholt (2002: 59, 2003: 224), who argues that nation branding can support the distribution of global wealth and development. Yan (in Dinnie, 2008: 170-172) agrees, arguing that it can help small nations who lack the hard power of economy and military and who instead rely on other assets, such as their culture, when competing with bigger and more powerful nations. Nation branding done right, according to Dinnie (2008: 170), is “a culturally sensitive yet commercially driven set of techniques and strategies to deliver tangible social and economic benefits to those nations most in need of it”. However, Fan (2006: 5) argues that further research is needed to determine whether nation branding can stimulate economic growth and, if so, how. Further, he points out that branding is only one component of a nation's strategy (Fan, 2006: 11).

Furthermore, nation branding can help to remove “misconceptions about a country” and then let the country “reposition itself more favourably”, according to Dinnie (2008: 18, 170). This perception is common among proponents of nation branding and is based on the idea that a nation already has a brand, and that it should actively manage this brand, or else someone else will (e.g. Gilmore, 2002: 283; Dinnie, 2008: 170). By using branding techniques, a country has the potential to differentiate itself from others, which Dinnie (2008: 19) argues is increasingly important especially in the tourism sector. Again, Fan (2006: 12) argues that there are many other things that affect a nation's image and therefore nation branding's role in improving the image may be small.

One example of what is often considered to be a success story, is the nation branding of Spain (Gilmore, 2002). In the early 1980s, the country founded a national promotional program with the aim to reposition itself as “fresh, free and more competitive” (Gilmore, 2002: 282) than during the Franco regime. What followed, in addition to a rearranged political system, were several accomplishments within the economy and the cultural sector. According to Gilmore (2002: 282), this case acts as proof that nation branding can be successful, and that especially young nations can benefit from it, since they have often not yet gained any negative perceptions about themselves.

Aronczyk (2013: 16) also lists three different functions of nation branding: a competitive, a diplomatic, and a recursive function. First of all – and this seems to be the most obvious dimension of nation branding – nation branding can be seen as a *competitive* strategy for capital generation and regeneration. Through this strategy, nations compete for international capital in tourism, foreign investment, skilled labor, educational institutions, and so on (Aronczyk, 2013: 16). Anholt (in Dinnie, 2008: 22), who often is said to have coined the term nation branding, now calls it *competitive identity*, because of his idea that national identity and competitiveness actually play a bigger role in nation branding than conventional branding does.

From a *diplomacy* perspective, nations can create an image of legitimacy and authority through nation branding. This gives the possibility to mend an already damaged reputation or to avoid negative international (media) attention after undesirable national

decisions, for example (Aronczyk, 2008: 44, 2013: 16). One example of this is the nation-branding campaign Inspired by Iceland of 2010, which aimed at improving the negative image of Iceland after the country's banking collapse during the financial crisis (Aronczyk, 2013: 1). As a diplomatic tool, nation branding can also be used to obtain access to international organizations such as the European Union (Aronczyk, 2008: 44). It can also assist cross-cultural communications as well as support international relations (Fan, 2006: 12).

Finally, Aronczyk (2013: 16) describes the *recursive* function of nation branding, which refers to its potential “to generate positive foreign public opinion that will 'boomerang' back home”, meaning that it will affect the nation's own people as well. In this way, nation branding has the potential to build consensus among the citizens, for example in the shape of patriotic pride (Aronczyk, 2008: 44, 2013: 16; Kaneva, 2011: 118). This consensus-building function can be seen during big international events such as the World's Fair – the recurring world exposition that allows countries to showcase their national cultures and innovations (Wang, 2013: 1–3). In 2010, the event was hosted by China, and according to Wang (2013: 3), it acted as a “nationalizing project” which aimed at producing a collective national identity for the Chinese people, as well as strengthening the authority of the central government. Other big events – now often called *media events* – that can be said to have a recursive function are the Olympic Games, world championships, royal ceremonies and the Eurovision Song Contest (Bolin, 2006: 190). However, Bolin and Ståhlberg (2010: 95–97; 2015: 292) argue that the primary aim of nation branding is to produce *commodities* rather than *communities* – that the citizens are not taken into account in the process. The recursive role of nation branding (Aronczyk, 2013: 16) is thus seen as secondary to its competitive and diplomatic roles.

### **3.5 Critical perspectives on nation branding**

As a consequence of the commercial nature of the phenomenon, much of the existing literature on nation branding is written by marketing practitioners, often from a

perspective that defends the practice (Kaneva, 2011: 120–121; Anholt, 2007a; Olins, 2002). Other scholars in the field have thus called for more critical research on nation branding, stressing the need to examine the broader implications it has on people, both on a global and a national level (e.g. Aronczyk, 2013; Kaneva, 2011; Kavaratzis et al., 2015; Widler, 2007). Kavaratzis et al. (2015: 2) argue that place branding – both as a field of study and as a practice – needs rethinking, and that scholars from various disciplines are needed in order to grasp a holistic view of this kind of branding. The following is an overview of the critique aimed at nation branding.

### **3.5.1 Treating nations as brands – a paradox**

First of all, nation branding at large is controversial (Olins, 2002; Fan, 2010; Dinnie, 2008: 13). Treating the nation as a brand has been criticized (e.g. Kaneva, 2011), because, as Aronczyk (2013: 105) puts it, “the idea that nations can be produced, branded and consumed” in the same way as consumer products is not very pleasant, and according to Dinnie (2008: 15), “[n]ations do not belong to brand managers or corporations”. Furthermore, what makes a nation more complex than a product is that it not only has a history, but also a geographical place, inhabitants, practices and beliefs (Aronczyk, 2013: 107; Widler, 2007: 146). Nation-branding proponents, however, use several statements to justify the branding, for example the idea that nations have always branded themselves (Olins, 2002), since they have always tried to manage their reputation.

According to the definition by Keller (2013: 31), a place is a product, but whether a place can actually be branded is still questioned (Anholt, 2010: 4). Anholt describes how, on one hand, places cannot be brands because they were not deliberately branded, but on the other hand, they can be brands, since there are places that acquired their name in order to promote themselves with it. As examples, Anholt (2010: 4) mentions Greenland and Liberia, which were named with the hope to attract people, in the same way as products and corporations are named – “it is territorial marking as cattle branding is property marking”, according to Anholt (2010: 4).

According to Fan (2010: 98), a nation does have a brand, since it “has a unique name and images in the minds of people both inside and outside the country” (Fan, 2010: 98). Freire (2005: 355) points out that tourism destinations, or places in general, can act as tools for self-expression and he argues that places therefore should be treated as brands.

The *paradox of nation branding* refers to the notion that a nation brand should be clear and simple, but at the same time diverse (Fan, 2006: 6), and trying to be one thing for many different audiences does not work (Fan, 2006: 10). Fan (2006: 10) argues that “[b]randing requires simplicity and clarity, but the image of a nation is complex and vague” (Fan, 2006: 10). For example, as pointed out by Jaffe and Nebenzahl (in Fan, 2006: 6) “nation branding must embrace political, cultural, business and sport activities” in order to be efficient (Jaffe & Nebenzahl in Fan, 2006: 6). Furthermore, the time dimension of nation branding is a challenge, according to Fan (2006: 10). A nation's image develops during a long period of time, meaning that it is also takes time to change. Additionally, the image is sensitive, and can quickly be negatively affected by one single event, such as a scandal (Fan, 2006: 10).

### **3.5.2 Important or mere housekeeping?**

The factors that affect a nation's image are several, and not only marketing factors. Therefore, nation branding may only play a small role in image building (Fan, 2006: 5). Anholt (2010: 9) agrees and states that nation branding is just “good practice, a useful exercise of reassurance, a piece of housekeeping” (Anholt, 2010: 9).

Fan (2006: 13) compares the nation branding of a troubled nation with trying to make a cancer patient feel better with the help of make-up. By this, Fan (2006: 11–13) means that nation branding does not work if a country has severe political, economic, social or environmental problems. If a nation like this puts a lot of its resources into the branding, it risks a lot if the efforts turn out to be fruitless, and the nation branding might end up doing more harm than good.

Similar to this, nation branding in developing countries might not work if the countries

lack products to sell, because nation branding needs some kind of product in order to work (Fan, 2006: 13). According to this statement, the link between a nation brand and the country-of-origin effect is strong. However, Fan (2006: 8) also argues that a nation brand, compared to a product brand, does not have any clear offers, and that the possible benefits for the audience are purely emotional.

### **3.5.3 Ethical challenges**

One of the challenges to the study of nation branding is that some social and political responsibility is needed because of the field's proximity to public relations. Just like when practicing nation branding, one should strive for transparency and fairness when studying the topic (Dinnie, 2008: 15, 161).

Furthermore, the practice of nation branding has been accused of commercializing national or local culture (Freire, 2005: 350; Aronczyk, 2013: 65), corrupting the authenticity of nations and abusing their natives (Boorstin in Freire, 2005: 350). However, the criticism that sees the practice of nation branding as being unfair meets resistance by Freire (2005), who argues that this kind of branding “does not equate with the commercialisation of local culture, but with the protection and promotion of diversity” (Freire, 2005: 347), and like Anholt (2002: 59) and Dinnie (2008: 252), Freire (2005: 347) suggests that nation branding can support the development of places. Similarly, Dinnie (2008: 252) opposes the view of nation branding as cultural commodification by arguing that “nation branding aspires to allow cultural diversity to flourish and to enable all nations, regardless of size or power, to compete effectively on the global stage”. Nation branding’s goal can thus be said to be “to create and communicate a particular version of national identity that will make the nation *matter*” (Aronczyk, 2009: 291), and while trying to do that, national governments and brand consultants use the citizens’ national identities as a tool for competing (Aronczyk, 2009: 291). However, Bolin and Ståhlberg (2015: 295) question the nation-building potential of nation branding, and argue that citizens in fact are more likely to question the phenomenon than to participate in it.



Another common critique of the nation-branding practice is that it not only serves as a form of nation-building, affecting national identity, but that it also, to some extent, exploits the nation's citizens by encouraging them to act as brand ambassadors and "live the brand" (Aronczyk, 2009: 293–294). Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the consultants tend to hand over the responsibility of the nation brand to the citizens as soon as they leave the country (Aronczyk, 2009: 293; 2013: 74–75, 165–168).

Furthermore, Ståhlberg and Bolin (2015: 299) argue that it is challenging to combine the outward branding – the representations of the nation to the rest of the world (the commodity building) – with the inward branding – for example creating solidarity and a national identity among the citizens (the community building). One of the reasons for this is that the domestic audience is sensitive toward the ways in which their cultural identity is represented (Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2015: 309). This presents another ethical challenge in nation branding, according to Dinnie (2008: 170): the negative stereotyping it can lead to. Similar to other proponents of nation branding, Dinnie (2008: 170) argues that nations already are brands, and that they either have to let others brand their nation (with the use of "ignorant stereotyping") or actively brand it themselves.

Aronczyk (2013: 64, 113) questions the democratizing potential of nation branding by pointing out the fact that much of it is carried out by private advertising agencies, as opposed to public entities such as ministries. The question here is whether nation branding can be seen as a "public good" if it is carried out by private corporations with a profit focus, and according to Aronczyk (2013: 64–65), it "affects the moral basis of national citizenship". A related issue is the question of who gets the right to define the brand values and to manage the brand. Dinnie (2008: 169) presents the dilemma of choosing between the elected head of state and marketing professionals, as the former has the democratic mandate but tends to lack the skills needed for nation branding, while the latter group usually has the skills but lacks the mandate. The solution to this, according to Dinnie (2008: 170), is to use a collaborative model, where both public and private sectors are involved in the nation branding. This way, the citizens can get their opinions heard through the politicians involved. This "inclusive stakeholder approach" (Dinnie, 2008: 170), in nation branding is quite common in practice, since it usually is

someone in the national government who initiates the nation branding and then hires a consultant to actualize it.

### **3.5.4 Difficult to influence and protect**

According to van Ham (in Dinnie, 2008: 18), image and reputation are more important to states than before, but they remain difficult to influence and measuring their effects can be almost impossible (van Ham, 2008: 133; Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2015: 296). One of the reasons for this is that the brand is said to exist in the mind of the consumer, and this brand is not always the one that the marketers meant to create. In nation branding, “pre-existing national stereotypes may be entrenched in consumers' minds and therefore difficult to change” (Dinnie, 2008: 15). However, Fan (2006: 6) argues that these kinds of stereotypes, as well as the term national identity, do not have a notable effect on branding, since their focus lies on culture and people instead of on the nation as a whole. Nation branding should, according to Fan (2006: 6), encompass all intangible assets of a country.

Since a nation brand does not have a clear owner, the nation cannot control the use of its brand, like the owner of a product brand can. This means that it is hard to protect a nation brand (Fan, 2006: 8). Fan (2006: 8) argues that some kind of leadership by the government or industries is needed to keep up a nation brand. Furthermore, a stable nation-branding campaign requires coordinated action by all involved parties; the government, NGOs, agencies, universities and other bodies participating in the branding efforts. If these actors act separately, the risk is that they send out different messages about the nation, while in nation branding, all parts should ultimately be coordinated and cooperate (Anholt, 2007b: 4–5). However, as Ståhlberg and Bolin (2015: 295) point out, the coordination and cooperation are difficult, because all of these parties have their own agendas. Furthermore, as new media platforms for nation branding emerge, the amount of actors increase, which makes the cooperation even more complex (Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2015: 296).

Keller (2013: 52–53) argues that brands now mean more to consumers than before,

which has caused challenges to brand management. The consumers are more informed – and thus more demanding – today, which means that new communication methods are needed to persuade them. Other challenges to brand management include for example economic recession, increased competition on the marketplace, and new non-traditional media (Keller, 2013: 52–57).

### 3.5.5 Critique of and changes within the field

Some of Kaneva's (2011) questioning of nation-branding research concerns the risks of viewing a nation as a brand. According to her (Kaneva, 2011: 118), critical research within the field of communication should take notions such as *cultural imperialism* and *capitalist globalization* into account when studying the possible effects of nation branding.

Kaneva's (2011) study shows that most of the nation-branding research is conducted within marketing, which means that the focus of the theory often is *technical-economic*. This view sees nation branding as purely functional, “a strategic tool for enhancing a nation's competitive advantage”, and recognizes a link between building a nation's image and branding a product (Kaneva, 2011: 120–121). One of the methods which demonstrates this view is the use of surveys, such as Anholt's Nation Brands Index (GFK, 2015a), to measure brand value.

Kaneva's (2011: 122) main point of critique is that the competition between nations is seen as dominant in much of the technical-economic research on nation branding. She argues that national well-being is portrayed as something that can be achieved through economic competition, for example through nation branding (Kaneva, 2011: 122). Additionally, the authors of these kinds of texts are often nation-branding practitioners themselves, and, according to Kaneva (2011: 121), they often defend their work by arguing that nation branding is something inevitable and natural, and that nations already are brands (Aronczyk, 2013: 68). However, they still do not present much evidence of nation branding's effectiveness (Kaneva, 2011: 121). Aronczyk (2013: 32) also states that the small number of nation-branding experts has led to homogenous

theory and practice in the field.

According to Freire (2005: 347), the arguments that are used against nation branding are poor, and he defends the concept by arguing that it is a natural societal development and “probably the strongest tool society will ever have to protect and maintain its identity and fight the trend of modern standardisation” (Freire, 2005: 348).

### **3.5.6 Homogenization versus differentiation**

Although one of the tasks of nation branding is said to be to differentiate nations – “to identify the unique characteristics of a nation and to display them in a comprehensive way” (Widler, 2007: 147) – nation branding has a tendency of making nations become “the same”, culturally homogeneous (Aronczyk, 2013: 33, 109; Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2010: 95). Behind this tendency lies the contradictive branding idea that the authenticity or uniqueness of an item is less important than its tradability (Harvey in Aronczyk, 2013: 118). Aronczyk (2013: 118) explains how “in order to function as a commodity, the item must have a price, which presents its value as exchangeable rather than as truly authentic or unique” (Aronczyk, 2013: 118). In the case of nation branding, this means that every nation is reshaped into “preordained market categories” (Aronczyk, 2013: 120) in order to fulfill the marketing ideals of sending out efficient and coherent messages. The consequence of this is that “the social, cultural and physical topography that makes a place inherently unique” (Aronczyk, 2013: 120) is flattened out.

Similarly, Valaskivi (in Laurinolli, 2013) argues that things that are considered too strange and original are left out when developing nation-branding strategies. This means that instead of creating difference between countries, nation branding creates similarity, also because the practices used are the same everywhere (Valaskivi in Laurinolli, 2013).

### **3.6 Nation branding in crisis situations**

As stated by Kavoura (2014: 32), the impact that political, economic and social

situations have on a nation's brand also steers the branding policies. This section presents an overview of how nation branding can be used during a crisis, and discusses some of the challenges that a crisis poses to the nation brand and branding.

### **3.6.1 Image crises and economic crises**

In addition to more instant socioeconomic and humanitarian consequences, a nation can experience issues with its image and its competitive potential during a crisis (Rasmussen & Merckelsen, 2014). As previously mentioned, Rasmussen and Merckelsen (2014) distinguish two types of place crises: sudden and ongoing crises. A sudden crisis is triggered by a specific event, while an ongoing crisis is the result of more long-term image issues (Avraham & Ketter in Rasmussen & Merckelsen, 2014: 231). Similarly, Heath (2012: 3) points out that a crisis can be composed of separate events or part of a bigger organizational issue.

In the context of organizations, Coombs (in Heath, 2012: 6) views a crisis as “the perception of an event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can impact the organization's performance”. This definition can be applied to nations' image crises as well, replacing organization with nation and stakeholders with citizens and external audiences. Thus, a nation is in a crisis if its image does not meet the expectations of the citizens and others.

According to Heath (2012: 1–13), a crisis is generally seen as a newsworthy event, which means that news media are influential in the way a crisis is described but also how it develops. Avoiding negative media coverage is considered essential during a crisis, and thus the organization (in this case nation) will do anything it can to manage the crisis and the communication surrounding it. Anholt (2009a: 133) and Kotler and Gertner (2002: 251) also argue that the media have a big influence on how people perceive a place, especially when the coverage is negative.

### 3.6.2 Challenges to nation branding during a crisis

During economic turbulence, many sectors, including the tourism sector, are affected. Since the tourism industry – especially the national tourism organization – contributes largely to the nation-branding efforts of a country, an economic crisis can pose challenges to the way nation branding is conducted (Piha et al., 2012).

According to Ståhlberg and Bolin (2015: 309–310), nation branding “requires a certain degree of social as well as political stability” in order to be carried out. Aronczyk (2013: 76) agrees, and states that normalcy and peacefulness are two common features in nation-branding efforts. During a crisis, the nation-branding efforts often turn out fruitless, because they are contrasted with the image that is created through the media. News coverage tends to show demonstrations, riots, violence and police intervention (Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2015: 309–310), as in the case of Greece. Attracting tourists and investors – essentially conducting nation branding – is difficult when social and political harmony is missing (Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2015: 309–310). Furthermore, in addition to the socio-economic issues, domestic opinion can also interrupt the nation-branding efforts of a crisis-stricken country (Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2015: 309).

However, there are many cases of nations which have used nation branding despite being in the midst of a crisis – this is often done by leaving out mentions of the crisis in the branding material. Whether or not this is the case in the Greek nation branding will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

Vanolo (2015) gives an example of branding a place hit hard by the economic crisis. The city of Turin in Italy experienced a steady economic growth in the 20<sup>th</sup> century thanks to its Fiat car company, but as the industry began to stall and the socio-economic conditions worsened during the 1980s, the city started applying branding techniques to change people’s perception of the city. The 2006 Winter Olympic Games, which were arranged in Turin, boosted the economy as well as the image of city, but since then, Turin has struggled with serious socio-economic issues caused by the economic crisis starting in 2008 (Vanolo, 2015: 1). Here, parallels can be drawn to Athens, which

successfully hosted the Olympic Games in 2004, but was hit by the economic crisis as well. The Olympics cost Greece around nine billion euro, an investment that has later been criticized by many Greeks in regard to the ongoing crisis (Bloor, 2014).

As pointed out by Vanolo (2015: 1), “the economic crisis is a taboo subject in urban branding discourses”, and as an example of this, he notes a change in the branding of Turin, from a *here and now* focus to a focus on the future of the city. This is also noted by Bolin and Ståhlberg (2010: 95), who argue that nation branding typically focuses on the future of the nation and on opportunities it may have, while the past “is often considered an embarrassment that is covered up, or at least not mentioned” (Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2010: 95). Similarly, Ståhlberg and Bolin (2015: 297) also describe how the cultural assets used in post-colonial states’ branding efforts tend to be either very old or very new, in order to avoid mentioning the colonial times. According to Vanolo (2015: 1), the *here and now* focus in the case of Turin suggests that the economic crisis, which is clearly present in the city, is left out of the branding efforts.

Although the case described by Vanolo (2015) is about city branding, similar tendencies of this *economic crisis taboo* can be spotted in nation branding, since nation branding tends to leave out anything that is not considered normal (Aronczyk, 2013: 1, 33, 76–79; Valaskivi in Laurinolli, 2013; see subchapter 3.5.6). These *hygiene factors*, such as corruption or an economic crisis, are left out of the branding because they are thought to jeopardize the nation’s reputation (Aronczyk, 2013: 78). Simply put, if the things that differentiate a country from others are not considered to add any value to the brand, they will usually not be included in the branding (Aronczyk, 2013: 79).

The struggles, contention, and conflict that characterize national distinctiveness are risky to the international discourse; they must be contained if channels to trade, tourism, and diplomacy are to remain open.

- Aronczyk, 2013: 122

An example of the economic crisis taboo in nation branding is the 2010 campaign inspired by Iceland, which aimed at steering the international attention toward Iceland’s people and “quirky culture” instead of the political, financial and environmental issues the country was struggling with at the time (Aronczyk, 2013: 1–2; Inspired by Iceland,

2016). Here, the unconventional – quirky – features of Icelandic culture may have replaced the “normal”, but the campaign nonetheless avoided mentions of the economic crisis.

The economic crisis taboo is of interest to my study, because in answering my research question (“What were the nation-branding strategies of Greece during the crisis years 2010–2015?”), I will study the main nation-branding strategies of Greece, with a particular focus on any crisis mentions in the strategies, to answer whether or not the crisis has been taken into account in the branding. I will also look at how the branding corresponds to the findings of previous research, what the differences and similarities are, and what the possible issues are.

Furthermore, Kaneva and Popescu (2011) describe how post-communist countries like Romania and Bulgaria have used nation branding to reinvent their images and strengthen their national identities after dealing with political as well as economic and cultural issues following the fall of communism. Their findings show that the Romanian and Bulgarian branding campaigns “appropriate national identity for the purposes of neoliberal globalization” (Kaneva & Popescu, 2011: 191), in line with Aronczyk’s (2013) arguments. Furthermore, Kaneva and Popescu (2011: 191) argue that this appropriation makes national imaginaries ahistorical and depoliticized – a “national identity lite”.



## **4 Case: The nation branding of Greece**

In this chapter, I will describe the current nation branding of Greece by offering an overview of the main public sector actors who promote the nation. To be able to discuss the branding efforts of any nation, it is important to take into account the political, economic, social and cultural environment within which the branding takes place, since these areas affect and are affected by the branding (Anholt, 2005b). In the case of Greece, that could mean accounting for the political, economic and social issues the country has been facing for the past decade. However, due to the limited scope of this thesis, the surrounding factors will only be briefly discussed, and the main focus will lie on the branding itself. Starting with an overview of the current Greek crisis (4.1), the chapter proceeds to discuss the perceptions of Greece before and after the crisis, and lists the main authorities and private organisations responsible for the Greek nation branding (4.2). Finally, some of the challenges that the branding encounters are presented.

### **4.1 The crisis and its effects on Greece**

The global financial crisis of 2008 hit many countries and their economies hard, but among those particularly affected was Greece. For Greece, the current economic issues became public through the election of a new government in the fall of 2009. It was then revealed that the old government had reported erroneous fiscal statistics, covering up a serious budget deficit (Matsaganis, 2012: 406–407).

The new Greek government responded to the situation by issuing austerity measures and tax reforms in the spring of 2010. Since these were not enough, a 110 billion rescue package was issued by the troika – the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Commission (EC) and the European Central Bank (ECB) – in May 2010. In exchange for this package, Greece agreed to follow a three-year program of economic policies, which included major spending cuts within the public sector, as well as tax increases and structural reforms. The government also announced further austerity

measures, affecting public services and other social benefits, such as housing benefits (Matsaganis, 2012: 407; Matsaganis & Leventi, 2011: 6–10).

Some of the social consequences that followed were rising unemployment, inequality and poverty, lowered wages, business closures, and a lowered quality of public services (Matsaganis, 2012: 408–413; Matsaganis & Leventi, 2011: 11–12). Political turbulence and protests also became common. In addition to this, the largely negative international news coverage of the events proved to be harmful to the image of Greece (Antoniades, 2012: 7; Juko, 2010).

In 2010, at the height of the crisis, there was concern regarding the survival of the Eurozone, and a “Grexit” from the euro was a real possibility (BBC, 2018b). Since the first rescue package in 2010, Greece has received both more financial aid – two packages worth 216 billion euro – and debt relief. At a total debt of 289 billion euro, the bailout is the biggest in financial history, according to BBC (2018).

In 2015, the majority of Greek voters rejected austerity by voting “no” in a referendum that questioned whether or not Greece should make compromises in a new bailout deal. This referendum was initiated by prime minister Alexis Tsipras, who did not find the creditors’ bailout terms acceptable (The Economist, 2015). However, at the same time, Greece was defaulting, which resulted in that Tsipras had to give in to the demands in order to secure the third bailout of up to 86 billion euro (ABC, 2015).

In addition to the economic and social issues Greece was already facing, the refugee influx of 2015 and 2016 put additional pressure on the nation. During “Europe’s worst refugee crisis since the second world war” (AFP, 2016), almost 857 000 people passed through Greece in 2015 alone. Thousands of migrants and refugees from the Middle East and South Asia were stranded in Greece, after Macedonia closed its border toward Greece in March 2016 (EC, 2018).

Despite the bailouts, which reduced the negative effects that the Greek crisis had on the global economy, the economy of Greece still had not recovered by 2017, and according

to Nelson (2017), the country's debt was higher than ever. The IMF also called the situation "unsustainable" (CFR, 2017). Greece was reported to still have an unemployment rate of around 23 percent (compared to 27.5 percent in 2013), with one in three Greeks living below the poverty line (Smith, 2017). More than 40 percent of people between the age of 15 and 24 were unemployed (BBC, 2018a). Due to the lack of employment, more than 400.000 Greeks are reported to have emigrated over the past eight years (BBC, 2018a).

In August 2018, the emergency loan program was officially over and the Greek economy was slowly recovering. However, it is estimated that it will take decades for Greece to pay off its debt, and it will require sacrifices in the form of further spending cuts (BBC, 2018b).

Furthermore, speaking of one single Greek crisis is a simplification, because what is often referred to as "the Greek crisis" is a combination of other separate crises: the economic, the political, the humanitarian. However, I will use the term "Greek crisis", to keep my focus on nation branding and the way it is used during crisis conditions in general, not specifically economic, social, political or environmental crises.

#### **4.1.1 Perceptions – and reality – of Greece before the crisis**

As stated by Markessinis (2005), the modern Greek state has only existed for around 200 years. As the country was reinvented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so was the image of it, portraying Greece as a phoenix rising from the ashes after "centuries of darkness and decay" (Markessinis, 2005) during the Ottoman rule (Britannica, 2018). The leaders wanted to show that ancient Greece in a modern form still existed in Greece. This image – based on religion, culture and the legacy of ancient Greece – was projected to both external and internal audiences and has had a big influence on the modern Greek identity (Markessinis, 2005).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, events that affected the global image of Greece included the

totalitarian regime between 1936 and 1941, and the military junta regime between 1967 and 1974 (Britannica, 2018; CFR, 2017). Greece's starring in international literature and film has also had an effect on the image of the country (Markessinis, 2005; Britannica, 2018). In fact, movies such as *Never on Sunday* (1960) and *Zorba the Greek* (1964) can be said to have boosted the tourism boom in the 1960s and 1970s, and they have had a long-lasting impact on the image of Greece (Moiras et al., 2009; Markessinis, 2005). However, as pointed out by Markessinis (2005), Greece has since then received a fair share of negative press, consisting of reports on accidents and violence, political scandals, and economic issues after adopting the euro in 2001.

A big challenge, Markessinis (2005) argues, is that a nation brand no longer is created by specific individuals, but by the uncontrollable mass media, which tend to favor negative reporting. According to Markessinis (2005), no clear rebranding attempts have been conducted since the mythical pop-cultural depictions of Greece in the 1960s. However, according to Livadas (2007: 12–16), Greece became “repositioned on the global map of perceptions” after the Olympic Games in 2004. This seemed to be the case based on an international survey conducted by the General Secretariat of Information before and after the Olympics. In addition to more traditional attributes associated with Greece – such as landscapes, family values, hospitality and fun – the survey showed an increase in other attributes, such as progress, security and stability.

All in all, the 2004 Olympics appeared to have contributed to positive perceptions of Greece, viewing the country and its inhabitants as stable and reliable (Livadas, 2007: 12; Kapetangiannis in Dinnie, 2016: 51). According to Livadas (2007: 13), the Olympics allowed Greece to show its competitiveness in various fields, such as the maritime, energy and financial sector. Furthermore, a study of the media by the Greek Press and Communications offices in several countries confirmed the dominance of positive perceptions (Livadas, 2007).

Regarding the actual situation in Greece at the time, it was said to be enjoying steady economic growth, dropping unemployment, falling budget deficit and public debt, and increasing foreign investment (Livadas, 2007: 15–16; Koumoutsakos, 2007: 18). Greece

was also considered an active member of the European Union, the Eurozone and NATO (Koumoutsakis, 2007: 18).

The 2004 Olympics contributed to the Greek tourism and economy not only by attracting international attention, but it also brought new infrastructure and facilities to the country, in the form of a new subway, airport, museums, and olympic venues (Ikonomou, 2007: 40). However, the games' price tag of almost 9 billion euro has since been subject for criticism, since the country could not finance the maintenance of the olympic venues because of the economic crisis, which has led to that many of the venues now lie deserted (Tagaris, 2014; Sanburn, 2012). On the other hand, the more vital infrastructure that was built for the games – such as the new subway, roads and airport – have been actively used (Sanburn, 2012). Furthermore, Panagiotopoulou (2012: 2341) argues that the 2004 Olympics did not do much to improve the image of Greece, despite the efforts by organizers to highlight the nation's cultural and historical heritage in their promotion.

#### **4.1.2 Perceptions after 2009**

Many authors (e.g. Antoniadis, 2012; Bisa, 2013) argue that the negative coverage of Greece in international media has harmed the image of Greece. According to a study by Vaxevanidou (2017: 61–62), online search results seem to reveal that the image of Greece was worsened during the crisis years 2010–2017, with negative themes like economic crisis, corruption, and even stereotypes like “lazy Greeks” overshadowing more traditional associations, like ancient Greece or architecture. “Corruption”, “lack of credibility”, and “irresponsibility” were also the negative themes that Antoniadis (2012) found to be dominant in his study of the media coverage.

This “serious image and reputation deterioration” (Bisa, 2013: 63) resulted in an extensive rebranding campaign launched by the Greek government in 2013, aiming at recovering the economy with the help of tourism and FDI (Bisa, 2013: 63). Whether or not this campaign had an impact on it, the total contribution of tourism to the GDP did start growing again in 2013, as mentioned earlier (WTTC, 2014).

## 4.2 Promoting Greece



The promotion of Greece consists of both public and private sector initiatives, inside and outside of Greece. In this thesis, I will focus on the domestic promotion of Greece conducted by the Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO). The GNTO is chosen because of its significance as the dominant nation-branding organization of Greece.

Figure 2: The public and private sector organizations promoting Greece in 2015.

### 4.2.1 The Greek National Tourism Organization

The main public sector organization that promotes Greece is the Greek National Tourism Organization – GNTO – which operates under the Ministry of Tourism (known as *Ministry of Culture and Tourism* in 2009–2012 and *Ministry of Economy, Development and Tourism* in 2015–2016). GNTO was founded in 1927 and has been responsible for the promotion of Greece since (Visit Greece, 2015). The early campaigns used tourism posters and art work to promote the country, and in the late 1930s, GNTO developed a tourism policy. According to Vazou (2014: 31), it was not until the 1990s that GNTO introduced more comprehensive branding campaigns.

The Ministry of Tourism is in charge of the short-term and long-term strategies for the Greek tourism product. The ministry also supports investment in Greece, promotes tourism education and training, conducts research, handles international tourism agreements, and coordinates the communication of the image of Greece abroad

(Ministry of Tourism, 2017a).

Meanwhile, GNTO handles the organizing, development and promotion of tourism in Greece, as well as collaborates with actors in the tourism industry (GNTO, 2017). Their main online platform for promotion is the Visit Greece website, but in recent years, they have increased their presence on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Google Plus, in order to keep up with the technological developments as well as interact more with followers (Vazou, 2014). In addition to that, GNTO has also introduced new promotional tools, such as a monthly newsletter, a blog, and an online marketing strategy (Vazou, 2014: 35–36).

As Greek economist and brand strategist Economides (2017) points out, the advertising conducted by the GNTO constitutes only a part of the Greek nation branding. Other factors, such as events like the 2004 Olympic Games or the current crisis, also have an impact on the brand. This means that changing or affecting Greece's brand takes more than just advertising. It is, however, a relatively easy way to start, since “nations do great things when they feel great about themselves” (Economides, 2017). This can lead to a boomerang effect – described earlier as the *recursive* function of nation branding (Aronczyk, 2013: 16) – where “doing great things” leads to an improved perception of the nation, which then affects the nation itself positively. Greece's Tourism Minister of 2012–2015, Olga Kefalogianni, made a statement when launching the All Time Classic campaign in 2012, saying that “restoring the country's reputation is the only choice that will allow our country to regain development and prosperity” (MFA, 2012). She also said that “crises come and go [but] Greece still is and always will be a strong brand name” (MFA, 2012).

It is worth noting that the tourism and travel sector constitutes an important part of the Greek national economy as well as the culture, and it also attracts foreign investment (OECD, 2016a; Coccossis, 2007: 25–26). Its total contribution – both direct and indirect – to the economy in 2015 was 32.5 billion euro, which is 18.5 percent of the total GDP. The total contribution to employment was 822,000 jobs, or 23.1 percent of total employment (WTTC, 2016). These numbers can be seen to have declined at the time of

the crisis, from a total contribution of 36.3 billion euro in 2008 to a total contribution of 28.1 billion 2012, but have increased again since 2013. The total contribution is estimated to be 49 billion euro by 2024 (WTTC, 2014). According to Coccossis (2007: 38), Greece's strengths as a tourist destination are made up by the hospitality, culture and traditions of its people, and the country's warm climate and natural beauty. Other strengths include gastronomy, hotels and services (Coccossis, 2007: 38).

#### **4.2.2 Briefly about GNTO's campaigns**

The main advertising campaigns of GNTO during the period 2010–2015 consisted of *You in Greece* in 2010–2012, *All Time Classic* in 2013, and *Gods, Myths, Heroes* in 2014–2015. During these years, funding cuts were applied to the advertising and promotion sector, which is said to have put a strain on the GNTO (EOT, 2012). These spending cuts also motivated GNTO to increasingly use online advertising and in 2010, a renewed Visit Greece website was launched, along with Facebook and Twitter accounts (Vazou, 2014: 34–37).

The *You in Greece* campaign consisted of 13 videos in three different languages which were posted on a separate *You in Greece* section on the Visit Greece website as well as on their Youtube channel. The campaign was launched as an attempt to battle the negative publicity that Greece had received recently in international media (GTP, 2010; EC, 2018a) and featured testimonials from tourists themselves. In GNTO's communication strategy 2010–2013, it is pointed out, that *You in Greece* also was a cost effective campaign due to incorporating tourist contributions in the campaign.

During the *Greece: All Time Classic* campaign 2012–2014, Greece was once again portrayed as “the place that gave birth to democracy and Olympism, the cradle of sciences, home of culture, the land of natural beauty” (GNTO in Vazou, 2014: 31). These “universal values” of Greece can be compared to the portrayal of normalcy and peacefulness that often appears in nation branding (Aronczyk, 2013: 76). After the rebranding attempt in 2008 – *Greece: The true experience* aimed at portraying unknown contrasts of Greece – the 2012 campaign thus went back to promoting normalcy in the



form of ancient history. As discussed earlier (Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2015; Vanolo, 2015), this appears to be common nation-branding behavior among nations during hardships, as they choose to focus on whichever period of time they find more representative: historical achievements or future potential, rather than keeping a *here and now* focus.

In 2012, GNTO also introduced the *True Greece* initiative which was an online platform aimed at promoting Greece while offering “official and reliable information” about the country (True Greece, 2013). The initiative included not only official statements by GNTO themselves, but also encouraged social-media users to tweet and post positive messages about Greece online, in order to “set the record straight” (True Greece, 2013). In more formal terms, *True Greece* was an “Online Reputation Management & Brand Monitoring Mechanism” (Vazou, 2014: 36).

The 2014–2015 campaign *Gods, Myths, Heroes* aimed at highlighting Greek mythology and enriching the communication of Greece “with its core, timeless components” (Krinis, 2014). However, it turned out to be less of a success after a controversial video was released as part of the campaign. GNTO had to re-edit the video after the first version featured footage from the 1936 Berlin Olympics (Smith, 2014). Additionally, the video was criticized by many for its hackneyed portrayal of Greece, as it focused more on the nation’s classical history and myths than on contemporary Greek life and culture (Mac Con Uladh, 2014). Once again, as described by Ståhlberg and Bolin (2015), Greece appeared to highlight its past achievements rather than present ones, possibly as a way of diverting attention away from the crisis.

### **4.2.3 Enterprise Greece and other organizations**

Enterprise Greece operates under the Greek Ministry of Economy and Development and is the official agency “to promote investment in Greece, exports from Greece, and make Greece more attractive as an international business partner” (Enterprise Greece, 2018a). More specifically, the goal of Enterprise Greece is to promote Greek products and services, and to support foreign investment in Greece. Furthermore, the organization’s aim is to support “the outward-looking orientation of the Greek economy”, and provide

relevant information about investment and business opportunities in Greece. They promote six different sectors which are considered main sectors for investment: tourism, energy, ICT, life sciences, food and agriculture, and logistics. In order to reach a global audience, Enterprise Greece cooperates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with Greek embassies abroad (Enterprise Greece, 2018a).

Marketing Greece is another prominent organization that promotes Greece. It is a non-profit organization which represents the Greek tourism industry, and through cooperating with the GNTO it acts as a link between private and public sector organizations (Marketing Greece, 2013). The establishment of Marketing Greece was part of the Samaras government's initiative to rebrand Greece in 2012. The Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE) and the Hellenic Association of Travel and Tourist Agencies (HATTA) are other examples of organizations that promote Greece. Despite their cooperation with GNTO, these organizations will not be further discussed due to the limited scope of this research.

According to Bisa (2013: 65), there has also been an increase in citizen initiatives aiming at boosting the image of Greece in recent years. Some examples are the crowd-funding initiative Up Greek Tourism that was launched in 2011, the "public diplomacy" campaign Repower Greece, also from 2011, and the campaign Give Greece a Chance from 2012 (as of 2019, these campaigns are no longer active). Another private-sector initiative, which is still active in 2019, is Alliance for Greece (GTP, 2010). Bisa (2013) argues that rebranding plans have also been made on a state level, by the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This became evident as the Greek government closed down eight embassies and consulates as a part of the austerity measures, while still launching a costly nation-branding campaign. According to Bisa (2013: 66), this shows that nation branding is seen as the best option for Greece to improve its image.

### **4.3 Challenges to the Greek nation branding**

Not only political and economic factors, but also social and psychological factors, need to be taken into account in what is considered successful nation branding (Kavoura, 2014: 32–33). Because “a sense of place can be the unique selling proposition and a competitive weapon in the world of nations where cities, countries, regions, places aim to gain a share from the tourism market” (Kavoura, 2014: 34). According to Kavoura (2014: 34), one crucial issue in the branding of Greece is that there is no clear view on what Greekness is – what the elements that constitute Greekness are. The reason for this, Kavoura (2014: 34) argues, is that the two main periods of Greek history – the Hellenic period and the Byzantine period – both have left an imprint on today’s Greece. The idea of, on the one hand, the ancient Greece of the Hellenic period and, on the other hand, the Greek orthodox religion of the Byzantine period, appear to be contradictory (Kavoura, 2014: 34) and position Greece at the crossroads of eastern and western civilization.

Kavoura (2014: 34) argues that this uncertainty of what Greekness is makes the communication of the nation brand, and thus the promotion of Greece, difficult. Because if the policy makers are unsure about what Greekness is, it becomes very difficult for tourists and other targets of nation branding to understand what is “on offer” (Kavoura, 2014: 36). This issue is also mentioned above in the paragraph about identification and the developing of a brand essence (subchapter 3.4.1). Kavoura also stresses the importance of conducting market research to understand visitors’ perceptions of Greece, because “the core of a country’s brand must incorporate the spirit of its people [as well as] target groups” (Kavoura, 2014: 36).

Another issue in the Greek nation branding, according to Kavoura (2014: 35), is the lack of consistency in the branding. Despite increased cooperation between public and private stakeholders, the synergy which is needed for a consistent branding message – the kind of synergy seen in the Spanish case – is still missing (Kavoura, 2014: 35–37). This argument is supported by Piha et al. (2012: 6), whose study shows that the main

challenge to the Greek nation branding is not the economic cutbacks, but rather the lack of brand clarity and consistency. The GNTTO has also conducted its own study on the previous advertising campaigns (see Kouris, 2009) and has found several additional problems, both in the campaigns themselves and in the strategies they are based on.

According to GNTTO (2012a: 12–18), the campaigns from 1999 to 2009 tend to be based on stereotyping and unrealistic portrayal, and the image created does not represent actual Greek values. Additionally, the “Greek experience was limited to sea, sun and ancient ruins” (GNTTO, 2012a: 12), which means that Greece had to compete with other destinations with similar physical features, such as Turkey and Croatia. To respond to this issue, Kouris (2009: 170–171) suggests that “Greece must challenge tourists’ knowledge of the destination by presenting its extraordinary, lesser-known aspects”, such as its diverse flora and fauna. The more strategic issues, according to GNTTO (2012a: 17–18), included a lack of a long-term vision in the strategy, an inefficient use of resources, an inefficient website, no consistent logotype, and a lack of social media presence.

According to Vazou (2014: 31), the lesser known Greek attractions and activities – such as gastronomy, nightlife, and sports activities – became more commonly promoted from 2006 and onwards. During the *Greece: The true experience* campaign in 2008, GNTTO attempted to rebrand Greece by promoting it as a land of contrasts and by inviting tourists to “discover the Greece they don’t know” (Vazou, 2014: 31; Kouris, 2009). However, the following years, GNTTO appeared to return to its roots with the campaigns named *Greece 5000 years old: A masterpiece you can afford* (2009), *Greece: Kalimera!* (2010), *Greece: All time classic* (2013), and *Gods, Myths, Heroes* (2014).

The above-mentioned issues constitute some of the previously mentioned signs of unsuccessful nation branding. I will keep these features in mind when analyzing the nation-branding strategies of Greece in Chapter 6.

## 5 Data and method

Through my case study of the Greek nation branding, I want to find out in what ways the Greek public sector actors promoted Greece as a nation during the period 2010–2015, and how this portrayal corresponds to previous findings of nation-branding research. By examining official branding strategies with the help of Anholt's nation-brand hexagon and thematic analysis, I also wish to answer whether or not the strategies appeared to develop during the past years' crisis (2010–2015), and if any signs or mentions of the ongoing crisis can be found in the material.

This chapter starts with a review of the research questions and continues by describing the data as well as the process of gathering it. After that, I introduce the methodology and present the way the chosen method – thematic analysis – was used for analyzing the data.

### 5.1 Review of research questions

The following research questions will be answered in Chapter 6, *Analysis and results*:

- What were the nation-branding strategies of Greece during the crisis years 2010–2015?
- Are there signs or mentions of the crisis in the strategies?
- How does the Greek nation branding correspond to the findings of previous research?

### 5.2 Data: Official branding strategies of Greece

My data consists of strategies that aim at promoting Greece in different ways. This kind of material is publicly available as texts and images on both public and private sector actors' websites. This thesis will focus on public sector texts and documents online, since these tend to have a wider spread among a more diverse audience, as well as be more influential, both on an internal and external level (Kaneva & Popescu, 2011: 193–

196). For example, on an external level, the branding material is widely distributed abroad, often in the shape of online texts and images or through commercials on more traditional media channels (television, radio and print). On an internal level, the nation-branding material provided by the public sector often starts a discourse about national identity, which can lead to a situation where the national identity as it is perceived through the branding will loop back to the nation, and thus be reinforced (Kaneva & Popescu, 2011: 193–196). Vazou (2014: 38) supports this statement by saying that destination branding today is increasingly conducted online, which has made the brands more dynamic.

### **5.2.1 Strategies and campaigns as social constructs**

It is worth mentioning that nation-branding campaigns and strategies that are not based on crowd-sourcing or other audience contribution can merely be seen as representing the views of a selected group of people (Dzenovska in Kaneva & Popescu, 2011: 193), and these views do not necessarily reflect those of the branded nation's citizens nor of external audiences.

Furthermore, Ståhlberg and Bolin (2015: 295) argue that the campaigns tend to evolve rather randomly – not necessarily with a clear vision and strategy – depending on the different stakeholders and agendas involved in the process. However, as Kaneva and Popescu (2011: 193) point out, the narratives that are spread by nation branding are still influential, since they create a “loop of identity articulation” (Kaneva & Popescu, 2011: 193) which affects not only the external audiences but also the national imaginaries within the nation itself.

This also correlates with the constructivist paradigm (Barry & Elmes, 1997; Bergström & Boréus, 2000) acting as a backdrop for this research, viewing the strategies and other promotional materials as social constructs, as intentional portrayals of the nation in question. A *strategy* is a “plan, ploy, pattern, position, or perspective” (Mintzberg in Barry & Elmes, 1997: 433) that is “constructed to persuade others toward certain understandings and actions”, according to Barry and Elmes (1997: 433).

As explained by Schindler (2017), a brand communicates *who you are*, while a campaign communicates *what you do*. A brand campaign combines the two, by both communicating the core identity and ideals of the company, and advertising its products and services. In the case of nation branding, the campaigns thus tend to present some of the established image of the nation (e.g. Greece as the birthplace of democracy), while also offering something new (e.g. Greece as a start-up hub). In order for a brand campaign to work, Schindler (2017) argues, it is crucial to first have a well-established brand.

### 5.2.2 Data selection

The data in this research is selected based on; a) that it can be defined as nation branding, b) its official nature and thereby high visibility, c) its format (strategies in text format, available online), and d) the call by previous research for studying the nation-branding practices of “particular agents situated in historical place and time” because of the influence nation branding has on national policies (Kaneva, 2011). Because the branding activities of GNTO can be seen to be directly linked to national policies of Greece, I choose to analyze the documents of this specific agent. Finally, e), the materials are chosen from the time period 2010–2015, based on that 2010 marked the start of the Greek debt crisis, with the first bailout being approved in May, followed by the extensive austerity measures (CFR, 2017). 2015 marks the year of the third bailout, being approved by the European creditors in August. Content on other channels, such as traditional media or more interactive social media platforms, is left out because of the limited scope of the study.

The strategic documents are found online in different forms, such as texts available directly on the websites, conference material in the form of Powerpoint presentations, booklets, and brand guides for industry professionals. As previously mentioned, I will analyze the material available in text format. I define *strategic texts* as texts that are mainly aimed at an internal audience, in this case the organization behind the document as well as other agencies involved in the Greek nation branding.

All relevant material (GNTO nation-branding strategies) is collected from the website of GNTO as well as from the European Commission’s website, and is skimmed through in order to discard possible irrelevant texts. Each piece of data (text document) is listed in the figure below (*Figure 3: Data selection*), along with its title, format and size, the source of it (as listed in the list of data sources at the end of this thesis), and the time period for which the document was intended (in this case: for which year the strategy was valid). The analytical process is described in detail in subchapters 6.1 and 6.2.

GNT0	Title	Format and size	Source	Time period
<b>Strategies</b>	“Greek Annual Tourism Reporting for 2010”	PDF document, 27 pages (of which pages 5–20 used for analysis)	EC, 2015a	2010–2011
	“Annual Tourism Reporting for 2011”	PDF document, 25 pages (4–22)	EC, 2015b	2011–2012
	“Annual Tourism Reporting for 2012 – Greece”	PDF document, 25 pages (8–22)	EC, 2015c	2012–2013
	“Annual Tourism Report 2013 – Greece”	PDF document, 21 pages (7–14)	EC, 2014	2013–2014
	“Member States’ Annual Tourism Reporting Template – Country: Greece”	PDF document, 18 pages (7–18)	EC, 2015d	2014–2015
	“Communication strategy of Greece”	PDF document, 110 pages (19–34, 82–86, 104–109)	GNTO, 2012a	2010–2013
	“Strategy for the promotion of Greece..”	PDF document, 10 pages (1–2)	GNTO, 2012b	2012–2014

Figure 3: Data selection

### 5.2.3 GNTO strategies 2010–2015

*Communication strategy of Greece* (GNTO, 2012a) is a 110-page-long presentation which lays out both the results of previous campaigns (1999–2009) as well as the strategy for the upcoming campaigns (2010–2013). Pages 19–34 as well as 82–110 are used in this analysis. GNTO’s vision is for the new campaigns to be anthropocentric, to highlight things that are authentically Greek, as well as to emphasize that Greece is an all-year-round destination.

GNTO's (2012b) document *Strategy for the promotion of Greece by the Greek National Tourism Organization for the next three years (2012–2013–2014)* provides a brief,



rather general description of the strategy for 2012–2014. It describes Greece as a very successful tourist destination and brand, highlighting the classic resources of the country: sun, sea, landscapes, history, and friendly inhabitants. However, the text does point out that sticking to the old model of mass tourism also prevents the country's tourism industry from developing, and that the solution is to access new “niche markets”. This is planned to be carried out through nine “thematic axes” of tourism: sun/sea, culture, diving, health and wellness tourism, luxury tourism, nautical, city breaks, MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions), as well as touring. In addition to these, gastronomy, monuments, and Greek cities are other themes said to be included in the promotional package.

Every year, the Greek Ministry of Tourism and GNTTO also provide the European Commission with annual tourism reports. These reports include both an overview of the past year and outline the national tourism policy and strategy for the upcoming year. The documents I will use in this analysis are the reports for 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014. These reports thus feature the strategies for the years 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Subchapters 6.1 and 6.2 will analyze and discuss the content of these documents more in detail.

### **5.3 Method: Thematic analysis**

The main method selected for conducting this study is thematic analysis, which is a qualitative research method used for identifying and analyzing reoccurring patterns of meaning – *themes* – in a set of data. A theme is described as capturing “something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 82).

Thematic analysis is commonly used in social, behavioral, as well as in applied sciences, and can for example be used for studying people's experiences and

perceptions of a phenomenon, or the construction of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2017). As this research studies nation-branding strategies of authorities, and considers them tools for creating meaning, thematic analysis is an apt choice of method.

The method is rather similar to *content analysis*, although the latter can be used for quantifying the data – measuring the frequency of the patterns and themes – in addition to analyzing the data qualitatively (Gbrich in Vaismoradi et al., 2013: 400). According to Krippendorff (2004: 16), it is not necessary to distinguish between qualitative and quantitative content analysis, since the latter also needs some form of qualitative interpretation to be sufficient. Content analysis in general is about analyzing the data – whether texts, images or sounds – to understand what meanings they bring to different people. This is done through a “systematic reading of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter” (Krippendorff 2004: 3).

Furthermore, when it comes to using texts as the data for one’s research, it is important to remember that the researcher’s own interpretation of the texts is one of many (Krippendorff, 2004: 30). A text can be read, understood and can create meaning in countless ways, depending on the reader’s experience and intentions, as well as the purposes, contexts and discourses surrounding the text (Krippendorff, 2004: 22–24; Bengtsson, 2016: 8).

Using interpretation, qualitative studies generally aim at acquiring an in-depth understanding of the topic studied – something that also shows when presenting the results, which often are accompanied by more commentary than in quantitative research (Streubert Speziale & Carpenter in Vaismoradi, 2013). A qualitative method is suitable for analyzing subjects that can be seen as complex or contextually relative, such as implicit social structures, strategies, patterns or experiences (Langemar, 2008: 39–44).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 79), thematic analysis also includes interpretation of the studied phenomenon, in addition to identifying, analyzing and reporting of the themes. Its focus lies on “identifying and describing both implicit and

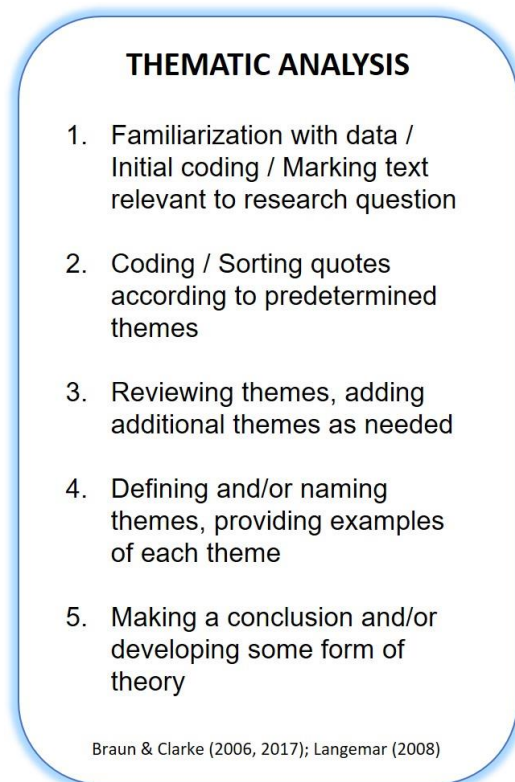


Figure 4: Steps of thematic analysis

explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes” (Guest, MacQueen, Namey, 2012: 10). Because of the high degree of interpretation in thematic analysis, reliability can be a concern, according to Guest et al. (2012: 11). As with other qualitative textual analyses, other possible weaknesses include confirmation bias, hindsight bias, priming, and finding patterns where there are none (Langemar, 2008: 94–100). However, the method is still considered useful when it comes to “capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set” (Guest et al., 2012: 11), and it is an accessible and theoretically flexible method, according to Braun and Clarke (2006). Furthermore,

Silverman (2006: 157) argues that using text as data is advantageous because it is easily available, it occurs naturally, and its rich character is well suited for analysis.

Braun and Clarke’s (2006, 2017) version of the thematic analysis consists of a “rigorous process of data familiarisation, data coding, theme development and revision”. More specifically, their approach conducts the analysis in six phases; 1) familiarization with the data, 2) initial coding, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) writing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2017). In theory, these phases are carried out in the above order from phase one to phase six, but as Braun and Clarke (2017) point out, the analysis is often a recursive process, meaning that the researcher might have to go back and forth between phases. This statement is supported by Vaismoradi et al. (2013: 399), who describe the thematic analysis process as non-linear.

By combining Braun and Clarke’s (2006, 2017) version of the thematic analysis with Langemar’s (2008: 127–130) version, the above-mentioned phases are carried out in the

following way in this study: The first step consists of going through each text document from beginning until end and marking parts that are considered relevant to the research question (initial coding). The second step is to sort the selected quotes or codes according to the predetermined themes – the six nation-brand dimensions. The third step consists of reviewing one theme at a time, making sure that everything that can be considered part of that particular theme is included. If themes other than the predetermined ones are found, they will be presented here. The fourth step is to name the final themes (if they require a name other than “tourism”, “people”, and so on) and to define them and provide example quotes for each theme. The fifth step presents the results; first by summarizing the material, then by presenting a conclusion and possibly developing some form of theory. Steps four and five explore the nature of the branding under each theme and will be discussed in depth in Chapter 6.

To successfully conduct a thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), it is essential that the identified themes are coherent and distinctive, and that they are analyzed in addition to merely described. Furthermore, the analytical process should be described transparently and in detail, and the selected extracts should match the claims made in the analysis and vice versa. The researcher preferably has an active role in thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

As with thematic analysis in general, the approach in this thesis can be labeled both *deductive* and *inductive* (Vaismoradi et al., 2013: 399). I start my analysis by using the six dimensions of Anholt’s nation-brand hexagon as predetermined themes (deductive approach), but I also remain open to identifying additional themes in the data (inductive approach). Holding pre-existing ideas of what types of themes the data may contain based on previous research can affect the interpretation and theme classification. This and other potential challenges and limitations to the validity of the research will be presented in subchapter 7.2.

## 5.4 Anholt's nation-brand hexagon as an analytical tool

The six categories, or *dimensions*, of Anholt's nation-brand hexagon (tourism, exports, governance, investment and immigration, culture and heritage, and people) will be used as a template for the thematic analysis. According to GFK (2016), the awareness of how the nation brand is built on these elements “helps governments, organizations and businesses understand, measure and ultimately build a strong national image and reputation”. This is supported by Vazou (2014: 29), who states that “a brand lies at the core of [all marketing activities] and guides all marketing communication activities”. The six nation-brand dimensions can therefore be considered important to, and very likely frequently used by, national governments in their nation-branding efforts.

Here, it is worth going through what each of the hexagon's categories – or *dimensions* as Anholt (GFK, 2016) calls them – entails, before using them as predetermined themes. Starting with the *tourism* dimension, it refers to the nation's attraction as a tourism destination across areas like nature, historical buildings, tourist attractions and a vibrant city life.

The *exports* dimension evaluates the COO effect (country-of-origin effect), that is, how the knowledge of a product's origin (in this case “Made in Greece”) affects the respondents' attitudes toward the product. It also assesses the nation's perceived strength in the areas of science and technology, as well as in the creative industry.

The *governance* dimension of the hexagon represents how well the nation is perceived to govern itself and its citizens. It also takes into account factors like levels of corruption and poverty, and commitment to honesty, human rights, peace, and international relations. Additionally, environmental conservation is evaluated under this dimension.

*Investment and immigration* assesses the nation's economic situation and power, as well as the quality of life there. It evaluates what kind of place the nation is perceived to be

when it comes to studying, working and conducting business. Innovation and creativity are some of the assets that are evaluated.

The *culture and heritage* dimension evaluates the perceived cultural heritage of the country, as well as contemporary events in the fields of music, film, art, literature and sports. Traditions, history, and archeological remains are some of the features of cultural heritage.

Finally, the hexagon's *people* dimension refers to the perceived friendliness and other attributes of the nation's people, but also the employability of the people – how likely someone would hire a Greek citizen based on their perceptions of Greeks, for example.

The above dimensions are what make up a nation brand, according to Anholt and GFK (2016). Thus, the Nation Brands Index (NBI) is calculated based on the average of the respondents' perceptions of the nation across each of these dimensions. In the survey, there are three to five questions to be answered for each dimension, and the respondents evaluate these on a scale from one to seven. Additionally, there are questions where the respondents have to choose adjectives that they think describe the country. This means that the NBI merely provides a picture of what a nation looks like in the minds of people, and as previously mentioned, many critical points can be made about this kind of index. Widler (2007: 148) argues that the index and hexagon are built on national stereotypes and simplifications, and according to Kaneva (2011: 122), the consultants use the indexes as a way to legitimize their work.

## 6 Analysis and results

This chapter is dedicated to going through the analytical process of the thesis, starting with a thematic analysis of the data. As mentioned above, Anholt's nation-brand hexagon will be used as an analytical tool, dividing the texts into predetermined categories or themes. The branding and strategies under each of these themes will then be further analyzed, and additional themes will be added as needed. The results of this analysis will answer the research questions and will be presented at the end of the chapter.

The analysis focuses particularly on the crisis and its possible effects on the Greek branding efforts. Previous research concepts that are kept in mind during the analysis are, for example, those of the *crisis taboo* (Vanolo, 2015), the tendency to highlight *normalcy and peacefulness* (Aronczyk, 2013: 76), and the focus on *historical achievements versus future potential of the nation* (Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2010; 2015).

### 6.1 Thematic analysis of strategies

The organizing and coding of the data in this study is kept simple by using Microsoft Word to categorize the material. The PDF documents are first read through, one by one, and relevant quotes and paragraphs are underlined (step 1). Pieces of text are cut out and pasted into separate Word documents, depending on the predetermined theme(s) the content covers (step 2). The themes are then reviewed and additional themes are added if needed (step 3). At the end, each Word document is studied in order to find out what the nature of the branding strategies is like under each theme. Example quotes are picked out, and the correspondence between the strategies and the theoretical background is discussed (steps 4 and 5). The subchapters below constitute steps 4 and 5. They describe the content of the strategies in detail, according to the predetermined themes, and reflect on how the content corresponds to the theoretical concepts discussed earlier. Figure 5 (Appendix 1) below consists of a table with a summary of the material.

Tourism	People	Culture & Heritage	Investment & Immigration	Governance	Exports	Crisis
<p><b>Quotes</b></p> <p>"Greek nature / environment (beyond just beaches and sun, a place of unprecedented experiences and incomparable / unique natural beauty, variety, contrasts)." (GNTO, 2012a)</p> <p>"The Ministry of Tourism and GNTO face the issue of mitigating seasonality by enriching and diversifying the Greek tourism product through the development of special forms of tourism (maritime tourism, diving tourism, winter tourism, rural tourism, gastronomic tourism, religious tourism, cultural tourism etc.)" (EC, 2015c)</p> <p>"The unique combination of tourist resources of Greece is comprised of: its mild Mediterranean climate, its exquisite gastronomy, its pristine beaches, its unique monuments..." (GNTO, 2012b)</p> <p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mostly remained the same from year to year</li> <li>- not necessarily reflected in the actual campaigns</li> <li>- focus on traditional sun/sea tourism can be compared to "normalcy &amp; peacefulness" (Aronczyk, 2013)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quotes</b></p> <p>"...different, warm, extrovert, traditional and cosmopolitans, hospitable and spontaneous." (GNTO, 2012a)</p> <p>"...dialectic of the past with the present, contemporary thinking and ancient ideals, antiquities as an inspiration and a heritage." (GNTO, 2012a)</p> <p>"Local communities and economies enjoy the multiplier effects of tourism, and an integrated approach that takes into account the various impacts of tourism is adopted." (EC, 2015c)</p> <p>"...enhance the quality of life of local communities through tourism, and engage them in its planning and management." (EC, 2015a)</p> <p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- vague idea of Greekness (Kavoura, 2014)</li> <li>- focus on historical achievements (Söllberg &amp; Bölin, 2015)</li> <li>- engaging local communities - "living the brand" (Aronczyk, 2013)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quotes</b></p> <p>"...the promotion of the Greek cultural heritage and the contemporary Greek creation (arts)." (EC, 2015c)</p> <p>"...contributes to the improvement of the attractiveness of the country, its regions and cities, both through the protection and promotion of the Cultural Heritage, which is directly related to the preservation of the natural and physical environment, and through the development of modern culture." (EC, 2015a)</p> <p>"...the rich natural and cultural resources of the country and giving value to the abundant Greek tourism resources, cultural heritage and rich ecosystem." (EC, 2015a)</p> <p>"...the Greek brand draws much of its power from these unique characteristics." (EC, 2015a)</p> <p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- main focus on ancient history, but also mention of "contemporary Greek creation"</li> <li>- culture as a valuable tangible resource of a nation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quotes</b></p> <p>"Greece's tourism resources are well-known and admired; the investment environment is favourable for both Greeks and foreigners to invest in key sectors such as convention tourism, medical tourism, tourist accommodation complexes, maritime tourism, airports, ports, etc." (EC, 2015c)</p> <p>[Green development is] "a key opening up new horizons for greater competitiveness, attracting new investments and upgrading the quality of life for all citizens since it stimulates new business opportunities." (EC, 2015a)</p> <p>[There is a] "need to differentiate from competition and promote new aspects of the Greek experience – thus offering visitors stronger reasons to visit." (GNTO, 2012a)</p> <p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the idea of what the nation is like for studying, working and conducting business is part of the i &amp; i dimension of a nation brand</li> <li>- discussed investment in tourism only</li> <li>- competitiveness was a clear sub-theme, not only under i &amp; i, but also under other themes, such as Exports</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quotes</b></p> <p>"Through the 'Green Tourism' programme, tourism enterprises were given the opportunity to reduce their operational costs through energy and water saving, by using alternative sources of energy, developing an integrated system of waste management, adopting environment and energy-friendly technologies and equipment as well as high environmental standards. The ultimate goal was to upgrade the conditions of their environmental management through innovative interventions." (EC, 2015d)</p> <p>"The liberalisation of services within the internal (consumer) market is expected to create new conditions in which the Greek public administration has to quickly and effectively adapt."</p> <p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- environmental conservation was a clear sub-theme, not only under Governance, but also C &amp; I, Exports, and Tourism</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quotes</b></p> <p>"the promotion of the extraversion of Greek enterprises" (EC, 2015c)</p> <p>"...support business investments oriented at innovation, the environment and information technology, and the direct stimulation of entrepreneurship in a period of crisis." (EC, 2014)</p> <p>"...strength of Greece as a brand name in the international market." (GNTO, 2012b)</p> <p>"...Greek products (natural products, authentic tastes, gastronomy, quality)." (GNTO, 2012a)</p> <p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the creative industry and technology are part of the Exports dimension of a nation brand</li> <li>- greater competitiveness is one of the main goals of nation branding (e.g. Arndt, 2002; Aronczyk, 2013)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quotes</b></p> <p>"[A] real challenge – under the present inconvenience of the Greek economy and the unfavourable climate – is to find imaginative and creative ways for the maximum possible promotion of the Greek tourism and the country as a whole, since funds from the regular national budget are very limited." (GNTO, 2012a)</p> <p>"Greece remains a destination unaltered through time, reliable for the high degree of satisfaction it offers, lively for the unique richness in tourist resources, and untouched by any crisis. Greece remains enchanting as ever!" (GNTO, 2012b)</p> <p>"There is a need to address in a very targeted manner the key issues and barriers as regards to Greece (e.g. issue of value for money for UK, issue of character / bad image of the Greek people for Germans, etc.) and to some extent re-establish the image of Greece for these nations." (GNTO, 2012a)</p> <p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no clear "crisis taboo" in strategies (Vainolo, 2015)</li> </ul>

Figure 5 / Appendix 1: Themes with example quotes and corresponding theory

## 6.1.1 Greek Annual Tourism Reporting for 2010

### Tourism

In this strategy, The Ministry of Culture and Tourism (EC, 2015a) acknowledges the close proximity of the different nation-brand dimensions by listing cultural heritage as a part of tourism, and says that these will be prioritized in their 2011 promotion of Greece. The aim of the national tourism strategy is said to be to promote Greek culture and to create "a human-centred and environment-friendly identity of the Greek tourism".

As is also mentioned in the strategies of the following years, the 2010 report stresses the need to diversify and make the tourism product more innovative. Some of the strategic priorities were to lengthen the tourism period, to move beyond the traditional "sea, sun, sand" model, to use new technologies, and to improve the infrastructure in order to develop special forms of tourism. The 2010–2011 strategy also highlights nine different tourism sectors: seaside tourism, nautical tourism, cultural and religious tourism, touring and gastronomy, business tourism (MICE), countryside or rural tourism, health and wellness tourism, city breaks, and sports tourism.



## **People**

The strategy features brief mentions of the role of the Greek people. One of the goals is said to be to “enhance the quality of life of local communities through tourism, and engage them in its planning and management”. This can be compared to the “living the brand” aspect of nation branding (Aronczyk, 2013: 76–77), where citizens are encouraged to participate in the branding by acting as brand ambassadors.

## **Culture & Heritage**

Cultural heritage is described as an advantage in the strategy, because of its contribution to tourism:

It “contributes to the improvement of the attractiveness of the country, its regions and cities, both through the protection and promotion of the Cultural Heritage, which is directly related to the preservation of the natural and physical environment, and through the development of modern culture”.

The ministry also stresses the importance of infrastructure to promote “the rich natural and cultural resources of the country and giving value to the abundant Greek tourism resources, cultural heritage and rich ecosystem”. Furthermore, the Greek cultural and natural resources are described as an important part of the strategy and promotion, and “the Greek brand draws much of its power from these unique characteristics”.

## **Investment & Immigration**

The ministry and GNTO are said to support entrepreneurship and to attract tourism investment by introducing new regulations, such as the National Development Law. Furthermore, one of the main aims of the strategy is listed as ensuring “the long term competitiveness, viability and prosperity of tourism enterprises and destinations” and “green development” is seen as “a key opening up new horizons for greater competitiveness, attracting new investments and upgrading the quality of life for all citizens since it stimulates new business opportunities”.

## **Governance**

In the strategy, governance is visible as mentions of the organizational structure of

Greek tourism and of the ministry in charge of the strategy. Vague references to the role of the public administration are made:

“The liberalisation of services within the internal (community) market is expected to create new conditions in which the Greek public administration has to quickly and effectively adapt.”

### **Exports**

In this year’s strategy, there are no mentions of exports as such. The only product discussed appears to be the Greek tourism product, but that will not be counted as an export in this analysis. As mentioned earlier, the Exports dimension also assesses the nation’s perceived strength in the areas of science and technology, as well as in the creative industry, but no mentions of these are found in the text.

### **Crisis**

In 2010, the “particularly innovative” campaign You in Greece was used as a communication tool to battle bad publicity. The campaign gave “a chance for everyone to recite their unique, authentic story from Greece”, which apparently was an attempt to steer away attention from the negative news coverage and other negative effects of the ongoing crisis. Furthermore, the 2010–2011 report states that:

“[A] real challenge – under the present inconvenience of the Greek economy and the unfavourable climate – is to find imaginative and creative ways for the maximum possible promotion of the Greek tourism and the country as a whole, since funds from the regular national budget are very limited.”

## **6.1.2 Annual Tourism Reporting for 2011**

### **Tourism**

The 2011–2012 strategy repeats many of the goals of the previous year, such as ensuring long-term competitiveness and mitigating seasonality by introducing special forms of tourism. The special-interest tourism differs slightly from last year, and “covers eight areas: cultural tourism, diving, nautical, conference, touring, city break, health & wellness, luxury”.

## **People**

Just like the previous year, the role of the Greek people is not particularly mentioned in this year's strategy. When mentioning the different projects and how they will improve infrastructure, the ministry briefly states that “[t]hey are not only addressed to tourists but, largely, to the inhabitants, significantly influencing their quality of life”. In addition, the Greek people is mentioned when addressing the GNT0 initiative called Tourism for All, which offers affordable holidays to low-income citizens. The initiative aims at “supporting the tourism activity of low or middle-income persons, employees, pensioners or independent workers, persons with special needs, and other categories of insured persons, by subsidizing tourism enterprises to offer lower prices for said categories”.

## **Culture & Heritage**

One of the plans listed under “Alternative Tourism” is the “restoration and promotion of traditional cultural and historical resources of tourist interest”. Other mentions of culture and heritage are almost identical to those of last year's strategy. A top priority as well as a great challenge for the Greek Ministry of Tourism is the “consistency, synergy and complementarity of all three thematic axes which constitute the three-fold scheme ‘culture-tourism-sports’”. In order to eliminate the seasonality and stimulate the economy, the ministry plans to establish “mega sport and cultural events”.

## **Investment & Immigration**

In addition to the investment aims of last year's strategy, “the improvement of the global presence of Greece (new markets, further boosting of traditional markets)” is listed as a goal. This improvement would “ensure favourable conditions for greater investments”.

## **Governance**

The mentions of governance are mostly the same as the ones in the 2010 strategy. In addition, technological development – “[t]he adoption of all modern methods of integrating technology and social media networking” – is briefly mentioned as one of

the objectives of this year's strategy.

### **Exports**

Like last year, this year's strategy does not feature any clear mentions of any exports or products other than the Greek tourism product.

### **Crisis**

Once again, the ministry provides the same text as last year, mentioning the "inconvenience of the Greek economy" and the challenges it poses to tourism. In addition, the ministry states that:

“[t]he real challenge – given the adverse economic and financial conditions – is to maximize the country's tourism promotion and attract visitors with the limited funds available from the main regular budget particularly, since the financial and social situation of the country shows no signs of strong recovery.”

## **6.1.3 Annual Tourism Reporting for 2012 – Greece**

### **Tourism**

The 2012–2013 strategy is similar to the previous years' strategies, and still stresses the need to upgrade the tourism services, to extend the tourism season, to provide alternative forms of tourism, and to minimize the environmental impact of tourism.

“The Ministry of Tourism and GNTO face the issue of mitigating seasonality by enriching and diversifying the Greek tourism product through the development of special forms of tourism (maritime tourism, diving tourism, winter tourism, rural tourism, gastronomic tourism, religious tourism, cultural tourism etc.).”

### **People**

Like in the previous strategies, “the protection and promotion of the values and lifestyle of the Greek people” is highlighted as a key element in the strategy.

“Many of the implemented projects are part of local developing plans and reinforce initiatives of local

society. They are not only addressed to tourists but, largely, to the inhabitants significantly influencing their quality of life as well as contributing to enhanced community prosperity by the increased consumption which is caused. Local communities and economies enjoy the multiplier effects of tourism, and an integrated approach that takes into account the various impacts of tourism is adopted.”

### **Culture & Heritage**

In addition to what is listed above, one key element of the strategic development of Greek tourism is now listed as “the promotion of the Greek cultural heritage and the contemporary Greek creation (arts)”. The latter is an interesting addition, since both the campaigns and the strategies of Greece during the crisis can be seen to mainly focus on the old achievements and ancient history of the nation. As discussed earlier in this thesis, nations tend to focus on either the past or the future in their branding when they are experiencing difficulties (Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2015; Vanolo, 2015).

“The development and promotion of authentic experiences” is another new addition to this year’s strategy. Furthermore, cultural tourism, city-break tourism, and religious tourism are listed as parts of the “polythematic tourism” that GNTO wishes to provide.

### **Investment & Immigration**

Once again, this year’s strategy mentions the importance of supporting entrepreneurship by “facilitating investments and utilising the funds”. It also mentions “high quality of infrastructure and services” as a priority. The competitiveness of Greece as a tourist destination is mentioned several times in the text, and “supporting greater extraversion and competitiveness of tourism” is listed as a primary objective of the branding.

“Greece’s tourism resources are well-known and admired; the investment environment is favourable for both Greeks and foreigners to invest in key sectors such as convention tourism, medical tourism, tourist accommodation complexes, maritime tourism, airports, ports etc.”

### **Governance**

What could be considered a governance aspect in this strategy, is the mention of “creation of a simpler licensing institutional framework for tourism enterprises”, as it refers to action to be taken on ministry-level. Environmental sustainability is another

reoccurring theme in the text.

### **Exports**

This year's strategy features what seems to be the first mention of exports by listing "the promotion of the extraversion of Greek enterprises" as one of the key elements of the strategy.

### **Crisis**

Like the previous years' strategies, the crisis is briefly mentioned in this strategy when discussing the limited resources.

"Given the limited financial resources available, the Strategy for the Promotion and Advertising of Greek tourism comprises a series of actions aiming at achieving the best possible result at the lowest possible cost (value for money)."

## **6.1.4 Annual Tourism Report 2013 – Greece**

### **Tourism**

The annual tourism report for 2013 – like the other strategies – highlights the importance of moving beyond the "sun and sea" model of tourism and introducing new special-interest forms of tourism, such as health and spa tourism, maritime tourism, and cultural tourism. The extension of the season is also mentioned as a priority. Furthermore, protecting natural resources and the environment is listed as another key element of the strategy.

### **People / Culture & Heritage**

One of the key elements of the strategic development is once again said to be "the protection and promotion of the values and the lifestyle of the Greek people". Additionally, "the protection and valorisation of cultural and natural reserves" is mentioned as a crucial part of sustainable tourism. The tourism sector is seen to be strongly linked to cultural and natural heritage, and therefore Greek tourism relies on the protection and promotion of this heritage.

## **Investment & Immigration**

The strategy briefly covers investment by listing “facilitating investments” as one of its basic principles with the aim of strengthening entrepreneurship. As also mentioned in other years’ strategies, strategic investments can be encouraged through “legislative reforms for the simplification of procedures”. Furthermore, the strategy outlines that increased competitiveness can be achieved through high-quality services. “Competition against other destinations” is also listed as one of the key challenges in the strategy.

## **Exports**

This year’s strategy describes a government initiative that was introduced to support small businesses, with the objective to “support business investments oriented at innovation, the environment and information technology, and the direct stimulation of entrepreneurship in a period of crisis”. Since technology and the creative industry are included under the Exports dimension of a nation brand, the previous quote can be included here. Like in the 2012–2013 strategy, “the promotion of the outward orientation of the Greek enterprises” is listed as a key element in the strategic development. Furthermore, this year’s strategy introduces the *Greek Cuisine Label*:

“GNTO has set quality criteria for the control and the provision of the “Greek Cuisine Label” to the restaurants which enhance traditional Greek gastronomy, using high-quality Greek products, such as olive oil, Greek cheese, etc.”

## **Governance**

The governance theme can be seen in this year’s strategy as mentions of administrative reforms, legal framework changes, and modernization of public administration. One of the strategic goals is to get Greek authorities to reduce the administrative burden in tourism, and to review the regulatory framework in tourism.

## **Crisis**

Once again, the limited financial resources are mentioned, and the need to achieve “the best possible result at the lowest possible cost” is stressed. The economic crisis and the recovery from it is also listed as one of the key challenges for the Greek tourism sector.

In the text section focusing on the crisis, “entrepreneurship in a period of crisis” is said to be stimulated by a special program launched by the Ministry of Tourism.

### **6.1.5 Member States’ Annual Tourism Reporting Template – Country: Greece**

#### **Tourism**

The report for 2014 includes the strategy for 2015, and once again it mentions moving away from the sun and sea tourism model, and prioritizing special-interest tourism, such as spa tourism and business tourism. It also highlights the need to improve the tourism product, to provide quality services, and to incorporate new technologies. A new addition to this year’s strategy is the mention of e-promotion in tourism. Another addition is “[i]mproving infrastructure with respect to all tourism-related transportation means”.

#### **People / Culture & Heritage**

Another interesting addition to this year’s strategy is the mention of creating synergies with public and private sector agents as well as the local communities. As discussed in the theoretical overview of this thesis, this kind of cooperation is crucial for a clear branding message (Anholt, 2007b; Piha et al., 2012; Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2015), and Kavoura’s (2014) research showed that the lack of synergy has been one of the main issues of the previous Greek branding efforts. Furthermore, one could interpret the involvement of local communities as a form of “living the brand” (Aronczyk, 2013: 76–77).

“..[d]eveloping multi-thematic tourism products based on synergies with both public and private sector and the local communities, their culture, production and gastronomy.”

In addition to this, the 2014–2015 strategy still acknowledges the importance of protecting and “[v]alourising cultural, archeological and natural resources”.



## **Investment & Immigration**

To strengthen entrepreneurship and competitiveness is still listed as a main objective in this year's tourism strategy. Also, another recurrent mention from last year's strategy is that of "legislative reforms for the simplification of procedures and the encouragement of strategic investments".

## **Governance**

One of the goals of the strategy is said to be to achieve a high competitiveness while also ensuring sustainability and minimizing the environmental impact of tourism.

"Through the 'Green Tourism' programme, tourism enterprises were given the opportunity to reduce their operational costs through energy and water saving, by using alternative sources of energy, developing an integrated system of waste management, adopting environment and energy-friendly technologies and equipment as well as high environmental standards. The ultimate goal was to upgrade the conditions of their environmental management through innovative interventions."

## **Exports**

Still left from last year's strategy is the mention of the *Greek Cuisine Label* which aims at promoting Greek gastronomy by awarding restaurants that advocate Greek cuisine and local products such as olive oil, feta cheese, and wines.

## **Crisis**

The economic crisis and the recovery from it is still listed as one of the key challenges in this year's strategy. An initiative launched by another ministry was said to have as its main objective to "stimulate entrepreneurship in a period of crisis while creating new jobs since the support is also directed to businesses under establishment". Furthermore, the strategy still aims at "achieving the best possible result at the lowest possible cost (value for money)" due to the economic challenges.

### **6.1.6 Communication strategy of Greece**

#### **Tourism**

Like the strategies discussed above, the 2010–2013 communication strategy also highlights the development of alternative forms of tourism. Furthermore, the strategy states as its mission to promote Greek nature and environment “beyond just beaches and sun – a place of unprecedented experiences and incomparable, unique natural beauty, variety, and contrasts.” It also wishes to “reveal the uniqueness of Greece, the unique natural environment with many contrasts and well-hidden secrets that offers the visitor the opportunity to live different and exciting experiences”.

While listing it as a goal to “establish the position of a top Mediterranean destination for sun & beach vacations”, GNT0 also stresses the importance to “move beyond the ‘seaside’ model, become a leading all-year-round, four season European destination and one of the Top 5 European destinations specializing in ‘experience journeys’ as well as to “develop alternative types of tourism (e.g. wellness, gastronomy, religious, business” and “become a No 1 destination in the ‘nautical’ tourism sector”.

On the whole, one could argue that GNT0 and the Ministry of Tourism try to achieve too much at once with this kind of strategy, trying to move away from the sun and sea model, while introducing a myriad of other types of tourism, and also wanting to specialize in “experience journeys” and “reveal the uniqueness of Greece”.

### **People / Culture & Heritage**

The communication strategy includes many mentions of “authentically Greek” attributes, such as hospitality, compassion, spirituality, openness, warmth, and family-orientation. All in all, the list with nouns and adjectives is somewhat generic: Harmony, simplicity, cleanliness, depth, innovation, sharing, freedom, action, joy, and so on. These words could technically describe almost any nation. Nation branding often sees this challenge, as the branding tends to avoid mentioning anything “too original”, and instead, the branding often aims at portraying “normal” features, and thus, creates similarity between nations instead of differentiating them (Valaskivi in Laurinolli, 2013; Aronczyk, 2013: 76, 109–120).

Greek people according to GNT0 are “different, warm, extrovert, traditional and cosmopolitans, hospitable and spontaneous”. GNT0’s vision is to “be anthropocentric –

place man in the centre of all activity, defend and uphold a lifestyle that lifts human values as they are inherited and sustained through time”. Furthermore, GNTO defines the “Greek spirit” as a “dialectic of the past with the present, contemporary thinking and ancient ideals, antiquities as an inspiration and a heritage”. The “Greek lifestyle” includes “Greek habits and moeurs, Greek traditions, healthiness, wellness, entertainment..”. All in all, these varied descriptions of the Greek people could act as an indication of the aforementioned lack of consensus regarding the Greek national identity (Kavoura, 2014).

### **Investment & Immigration**

The strategy states that there is a “[n]eed to differentiate from competition and promote new aspects of the Greek experience – thus offering visitors stronger reasons to visit”. There is also a mention of the “eminent need to open up to new markets”, such as China, Russia and India.

### **Governance**

This year’s strategy does not feature any clear mentions of governance or anything that can be counted as such, such as environmental conservation, human rights, or general government matters.

### **Exports**

Exports are briefly mentioned in the strategy as “Greek products (natural products, authentic tastes, gastronomy, quality)”. No mentions of science, technology, or the creative industry are found in this strategy.

### **Crisis**

In the campaign brief section of the strategy, GNTO lists some of the challenges for the upcoming campaign: “low budget for campaign due to general financial crisis”, “debts in key international media – not able to run a new campaign unless issues resolved”, “negative image of Greece as a country (instability, strikes, insecurity, etc.) – losing credibility – not being able to ‘talk about itself’ in the way it used to”. In the strategy for

2012–2013, GNTO lists three communication approaches to be utilized. One of them is the “crisis management” approach, to “tackle the negative publicity of Greece [due to the crisis], especially in specific European markets”. This also includes to “reinforce loyalty besides tackling the negative publicity of Greece”. Furthermore, GNTO points out, “there is a need to address in a very targeted manner the key issues and barriers as regards to Greece (e.g. issue of value for money for UK, issue of character / bad image of the Greek people for Germans, etc.) and to some extent re-establish the image of Greece for these nations”.

### **6.1.7 Strategy for the promotion of Greece by GNTO for the years 2012–2014**

#### **Tourism**

In the short document that constitutes the GNTO strategy for 2012–2014, the tourism industry is described as a “vitaly important economic sector” for Greece. Once again, the strategic vision is stated as making Greece “a leading European destination all year round, for all seasons, specializing in ‘experiential travel’”. The strategy also highlights:

“[t]he unique combination of tourist resources of Greece is comprised of: Its mild Mediterranean climate, its exquisite gastronomy, its pristine beaches, its unique monuments..”

#### **People / Culture & Heritage**

The 2012–2014 strategy also highlights the traditions, the culture and the values of Greeks: “their positive energy, their directness, their warmth, and their authenticity..”, as well as cultural events happening all year round.

#### **Investment & Immigration**

The only part of the strategy that can be considered investment-related, is found in the strategic vision which stresses the need to meet “the fluidity of international economic and tourism demand, of the situation of tourism businesses and of the intensification of competition”. Also, when discussing the role of Greek tourism, the strategy mentions the significant economic benefits that the sector brings to the country.

## **Governance**

Environmental protection is briefly mentioned when discussing the need to intensify competition and to attract more experienced travelers, and it is also said to be supported by the nine thematic tourism sectors introduced earlier.

## **Exports**

No clear mentions of exports are found in the text. The “strength of Greece as a brand name in the international market” is pointed out, but the strategy does not mention actual products – nor science or technology – that contribute to the strong brand.

## **Crisis**

The crisis is mentioned clearly a few times in the document, and it is stated that “[t]he recent global financial crisis and its consequences for the Greek economy reinforce the need for a new, coherent and long-term strategy”. At the same time, the text states that:

“Greece remains a destination unaltered through time, reliable for the high degree of satisfaction it offers, idyllic for the unique richness in tourist resources, and untouched by any crisis. Greece remains [as] enchanting as ever!”

## **6.2 Results**

I have studied the nation-branding strategies of Greece during the crisis (2010–2015). Through a deductive thematic analysis using the dimensions of Anholt’s nation-brand hexagon as themes, I found that the branding strategies of the Greek National Tourism Organization to a great extent corresponded to the findings of previous research.

The six nation-brand dimensions turned out to be clearly visible in the strategies of GNTO. Unsurprisingly, the Tourism theme was the most frequently used theme in the data. This was expected, since the branding of GNTO is mainly focused on tourism. Culture & Heritage and People were also clearly visible themes. Governance and Exports can be said to be the least common themes in the 2010–2015 strategies.

GNTO's own research showed that their previous marketing strategies (1999–2009) presented a “fragmented image of Greece” that did not “correspond to Greek values” (GNTO, 2006). The strategies were also shown to focus mainly on sea and sun tourism, and on one season only. Additionally, GNTO (2006) found that differentiation was lacking, meaning that Greece was not distinguished enough from its competitors. Looking at the 2010–2015 strategies, it is clear that GNTO has taken the seasonality issue – as well as other limitations of their tourism product – into account in their strategies. However, the lack of differentiation can still be seen, perhaps as a result of the highlighted normalcy in the branding. Traces of the “fragmented image of Greece” and Greekness can also still be seen in the documents, as Greeks are described with a myriad of somewhat generic adjectives. The following is a summary of the content of the themes.

### **Tourism**

The parts of the strategies that fell under the theme of tourism appeared to largely remain the same between the years 2010 and 2015. The Tourism theme featured mentions of the following:

- Tourism as an important economic sector
- Promoting Greece “beyond just beaches and sun” and introducing alternative forms of tourism
- Mitigating seasonality
- Improving the tourism product and providing quality services
- Minimizing the environmental impact of tourism
- Ensuring long-term competitiveness

### **People**

The People theme features mentions of:

- Traditions, the culture and the values of Greeks
- Enhancing the quality of life of local communities
- Engaging the locals in the planning and management of tourism
- Protecting and promoting the values and lifestyle of the Greek people

- Creating synergies with public and private sector agents as well as the local communities

### **Culture & Heritage**

Greek cultural and natural resources are described as an important part of the strategy and promotion. In addition, the Culture & Heritage theme highlights the following:

- Establishing big sports and cultural events
- Promoting the Greek cultural heritage and the contemporary Greek creation
- Protecting and valorizing the cultural, archeological, and natural resources

### **Investment & Immigration**

The theme of Investment & Immigration includes the following strategies:

- Intensifying the competition
- Supporting greater extraversion and competitiveness of tourism
- Opening up to new markets
- Strengthening entrepreneurship and competitiveness
- Encouraging strategic investments

### **Governance**

The Governance theme is perhaps the least commonly found theme in the 2010–2015 strategies. However, the governance-related mentions are the following:

- The need for environmental protection
- The importance of administrative reforms, legal framework changes, and modernization of public administration

### **Exports**

The Exports theme is also not easily identified in the texts. The brief mentions are:

- The promotion of Greek products
- Awarding restaurants that advocate Greek cuisine and local products
- The promotion of the outward orientation of the Greek enterprises
- Supporting business investments oriented at innovation

## **Crisis**

The economic situation of a nation is usually included under the Investment & Immigration dimension of a nation brand. However, in this study, a separate theme is assigned for anything crisis-related in the data, in order to get a better overview of how the crisis is visible in the texts. The economic crisis turned out to be more visible in the strategies than what was expected based on the theory (Vanolo, 2015; Aronczyk, 2013: 78). All of the strategies included mentions of the economic challenges and the negative image caused by the crisis. For example, the *You in Greece* campaign is said to have been designed to battle the negative publicity by letting visitors share their positive experiences. This shows that the crisis was actively taken into account in the branding efforts.

The following is a summary of the crisis mentions:

- Greece remains a destination unaltered through time
- There is a need for a new, coherent and long-term strategy due to the crisis
- The negative image of Greece as a country, need to re-establish image
- The limited financial resources and the need to achieve the best possible result at the lowest possible cost when promoting Greece

Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that all six dimensions of a nation brand can be seen to pervade each other. From a social scientist's point of view, especially culture and heritage can be part of, or affect, all the other dimensions of the nation brand. Tourism, people, investment and immigration, governance and exports are all based on culture and heritage in one way or another. Sometimes it was difficult to just choose one theme for a particular quote, because the Investment & Immigration, Governance, and Exports themes were often intertwined. The same thing goes for the Culture & Heritage theme and the People theme, because attributes of people are very closely linked to their cultural heritage.



### **6.3 Answering the research questions**

#### **■ What were the nation-branding strategies of Greece during the crisis years 2010–2015?**

The strategies of GNTO between 2010 and 2015 appeared to be rather similar from year to year. Some of the priorities of the branding are said to be the following:

- To promote all-year-round tourism
- To develop alternatives to sun and sea tourism
- To protect the environment
- To improve the competitiveness of tourism
- To protect and promote local culture
- To strengthen entrepreneurship and support innovation
- To open up to new markets
- To promote Greek products and enterprises
- To get the best possible outcome of the branding despite limited resources

#### **■ Are there signs or mentions of the crisis in the strategies?**

\* There are many mentions of the limited resources, and the need to have a cost-effective campaign.

\* The negative image due to the crisis is also mentioned, as well as the need to battle this with the help of branding (e.g. You in Greece 2010).

\* The crisis can be seen to have played a part in the branding, at least while making up the strategy and planning the campaigns. Whether or not the crisis was mentioned in the actual campaign material could be the subject of future research.

\* There were very few changes to the strategies between the years 2010 and 2015, and thus, one cannot notice any particular rebranding attempts in this material.

#### **■ How does the Greek nation branding correspond to the findings of previous research?**

- \* The predetermined themes were visible in the strategies. The themes that appeared particularly evident were those of tourism and culture and heritage. The less common themes were those of governance and exports.
- \* The strategies can be said to be rather repetitive, but at the same time, their focus was sometimes unclear. This lack of consistency was mentioned as one of the issues of the 1999–2009 strategies and campaigns as well.
- \* As expected, based on previous research, the focus of the strategies lies on highlighting the history of Greece and the traditions of its citizens, instead of contemporary life of Greeks or the nation's future potential, for example, in the fields of technology and science (see Hartocollis, 2015).
- \* Interestingly, there appears to be no clear *crisis taboo* in the strategies. All strategies openly mention the crisis (albeit briefly) and the consequences it has for tourism and the promotion of Greece.

In conclusion, the Greek nation branding can be said to be highly tourism-centered. The reason is most likely the fact that GNTTO is the main organization that promotes Greece, and that their main focus as a national tourism organization is tourism or destination branding. As previously mentioned, this has been proved to be one of the main challenges to nation branding, since a nation-branding campaign ultimately has to take into account other aspects that make up a nation brand, such as local culture, politics, the COO-effect of exports, and investment and immigration.

## 7 Conclusion and discussion

### 7.1 Conclusion

My case study of the Greek nation-branding initiatives of the crisis years 2010–2015 showed that the branding strategies of Greece partly correspond to previous research findings. Anholt's nation-brand dimensions were clearly visible in the texts, and can therefore be said to have affected the branding efforts, at least on a strategic level. However, there seemed to be little to none *economic crisis taboo* is the material.

During difficult conditions, such as an economic crisis, nation branding tends to ignore mentioning the crisis and instead favors positive portrayals of the nation. In addition to this economic crisis taboo, other “hygiene factors” are usually left out of the branding. However, the Greek nation-branding strategies of 2010–2015 mentioned the crisis and its effects on the branding several times. Some of the mentions did, however, appear to romanticize the situation slightly. For example, one of the strategies underlined that “Greece remains a destination unaltered through time”, “untouched by any crisis”, and “as enchanting as ever”.

Furthermore, according to Bolin and Ståhlberg (2010: 96), “[t]he branded nation does not seem to need history; it is the representations of the future that form the main force influencing the present”. However, Greece might still be leaning on the nation's history in their branding. The present (2010–2015) is tarnished by the crisis, and perhaps the future is not clear enough to include in the branding. Meanwhile, the traditional associations have often been positive ones, such as those of democracy, ancient culture, art, and architecture, and later on the positive attributes of tourism (sea, sand, sun). This might be one of the reasons why the recent branding of Greece tends to highlight historical achievements, rather than contemporary ones.

## 7.2 Limitations of the study

One of the practical challenges to the study was the lack of material available online, especially in English. Also, the websites were not updated for years, perhaps due to the lack of resources during the crisis. I found that the best way to obtain up-to-date information about the ministries was to look at the Greek versions of the pages, as they were more frequently updated. However, due to my limited knowledge of the Greek language, and in order to avoid possible misinterpretation, I chose to analyze only the material that was available in English.

Changes and cutbacks within the Greek government during the crisis years also meant that the ministries changed names and tasks rather frequently. An example of this is the past years' development of the Ministry of Tourism. The ministry changed its name to *Ministry of Tourism Development* in 2004, then to *Ministry of Culture and Tourism* in 2009. It became *Ministry of Tourism* again in 2012, but was later merged other ministries to become *Ministry of Economy, Development and Tourism* in 2015. In 2016, the *Ministry of Tourism* and the *Ministry of Economy and Development* became two separate ministries (Ministry of Tourism, 2017b; Ministry of Development and Economy, 2014). According to Piha et al. (2012), cutbacks and changes within ministries are some of the challenges nation branding faces during a crisis.

It is also noteworthy that the methodology has some limitations. Anholt's nation-brand hexagon can be a helpful analytical tool when studying nation-branding efforts, because it makes the concept of a nation brand more concrete and visible. However, the index has been criticized for being too commercial, built on national stereotypes, and for being a simplification of reality (Widler, 2007: 148; Aronczyk, 2013: 70–72). Nation-branding professionals are also said to use these kinds of indexes to legitimize the nation-branding practice (Kaneva, 2011: 122). However, similar indexes are now much-used tools among national governments around the world, which might have an effect on the ways nations choose to portray themselves through branding. This was the reason why I chose to use the hexagon as an analytical tool in my study.

Furthermore, *reliability* can be defined as “the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions” (Hammersley in Silverman, 2006: 282). As mentioned earlier, thematic analysis is – like other qualitative textual analyses – based on the researcher’s interpretation of the data, which makes the reliability a “greater concern [...] than with word-based analyses” (Guest et al., 2012).

*Validity* is another key concept used when discussing the credibility of scientific research. It refers to whether or not the research can answer the questions it was set out to answer (Bergström & Boréus, 2000: 41). According to Bergström & Boréus (2000: 42), the researcher herself also has to be evaluated when the research is based on a constructivist perspective. Despite my personal history of living in Greece and sympathizing with Greeks during the crisis, I have done my best to remain objective when studying the nation-branding strategies of GNTO.

As described by Langemar (2008: 57–65), the purpose of a qualitative study is to provide a detailed qualitative description of a phenomenon within a certain population. This is what is referred to as *qualitative representativeness*. The chosen population can be small and not necessarily proportional, and it can also be hand-picked, as opposed to randomly generated. The material I picked consisted of seven text documents that contained the official nation-branding strategies of Greece. As some of the documents turned out to be rather similar when it comes to content, future studies would benefit from analyzing campaign material in addition to the strategies, in order to get a better perception of how Greece branded itself during the crisis.

In the end, the main purpose of nation branding is to achieve a positive image and reputation, in order to gain an economic advantage. The commercial methods used in doing this, however, are not always ethically and democratically considered. Therefore, the amount of scholars who analyze, question and criticize this type of marketing is increasing. Perhaps their research will affect the way nation branding is conducted in the future – and thus also affect its implications on national culture, politics and governance.

### **7.3 Suggestions for future research**

After examining the communication and branding strategies of GNTO, I am left to wonder whether the content actually can be labelled nation branding, or if it classifies as merely destination branding. Nation-branding researchers and practitioners have stressed the importance of having an all-encompassing nation-branding strategy that involves tourism, business, education, and other relevant sectors that can be promoted internationally. The material I analyzed was mostly focused on the tourism aspect of nation branding, but future studies could examine the work of GNTO and other Greek organizations further to see to what extent these actors cooperate in the building of Brand Greece. Including smaller stakeholders' role in the branding could also lead to increased insight into the subject matter.

As mentioned in the analysis, the crisis appeared to be taken into account when planning the 2010 campaign *You in Greece*. Here, it would be interesting to find out whether or not the campaign actually had an impact on the visitors', investors', immigrants', and international students' view of Greece at the time.

Furthermore, a crisis perspective can possibly be used to gain more critical insights on nation branding, because a crisis can be the factor that reveals weaknesses to the nation-branding practice. Nation branding may be a useful tool in many situations, but the question is whether it actually has an effect during more acute situations, such as an economic crisis. Extensive comparative studies would be required to answer this question.

In the case of Greece, it would be beneficial to look deeper into the ways in which the crisis affected the nation-branding efforts and vice versa. This could be done by conducting interviews with those responsible for the campaigns and strategies, both on a public and private sector level. The turbulence and changes within the Greek government at the time also affected the ministry in charge of the nation branding, as ministries were restructured and budgets were cut. Gaining more insider knowledge

about these challenges – and essentially understanding how nation branding works (or does not work) in situations like this one – could help organizations and nations struggling with similar challenges in the future.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Themes with example quotes and corresponding theory

Tourism	People	Culture & Heritage	Investment & Immigration	Governance	Exports	Crisis
<p><b>Quotes</b></p> <p>"Greek nature / environment (beyond just beaches and sun, a place of unprecedented experiences and incomparable / unique natural beauty, variety, contrasts).", (GNT0, 2012a)</p> <p>"The Ministry of Tourism and GNT0 face the issue of mitigating seasonality by enriching and diversifying the Greek tourism product through the development of special forms of tourism (maritime tourism, diving tourism, winter tourism, rural tourism, gastronomic tourism, religious tourism, cultural tourism etc.)" (EC, 2015c)</p> <p>"The unique combination of tourist resorts of Greece is comprised of: its Mediterranean climate, its beautiful economy, its pristine beaches, its unique monuments.", (GNT0, 2012b)</p> <p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mostly remained the same from year to year</li> <li>- not necessarily reflected in the actual campaigns</li> <li>- focus on traditional sun/sea tourism can be compared to "normality &amp; peacefulness" (Aronczyk, 2013)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quotes</b></p> <p>"...different, warm, extrovert, traditional and cosmopolitans, hospitable and spontaneous.", (GNT0, 2012a)</p> <p>"...dialectic of the past with the present, contemporary thinking and ancient ideals, antiquities as an inspiration and a heritage.", (GNT0, 2012a)</p> <p>"Local communities and economies enjoy the multiplier effects of tourism, and an integrated approach that takes into account the various impacts of tourism is adopted.", (EC, 2015c)</p> <p>"...enhance the quality of life of local communities through tourism, and engage them in the planning and management.", (EC, 2015a)</p> <p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- vague idea of Greekness (Kavoura, 2014)</li> <li>- focus on historical achievements (Stahlberg &amp; Bojn, 2015)</li> <li>- engaging local communities -- "living the brand" (Aronczyk, 2013)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quotes</b></p> <p>"...the promotion of the Greek cultural heritage and the contemporary Greek creation (arts).", (EC, 2015c)</p> <p>"...contributes to the improvement of the attractiveness of the country, its regions and cities, both through the protection and promotion of the Cultural Heritage, which is directly related to the preservation of the natural and physical environment, and through the development of modern culture.", (EC, 2015a)</p> <p>"...the rich natural and cultural resources of the country and giving value to the abundant Greek tourism resources, cultural heritage and rich ecosystem.", (EC, 2015a)</p> <p>"...the Greek brand draws much of its power from these unique characteristics.", (EC, 2015a)</p> <p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- main focus on ancient history, but also mention of "contemporary Greek creation"</li> <li>- culture as a valuable tangible resource of a nation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quotes</b></p> <p>"Greece's tourism resources are well-known and admired; the investment environment is favourable for both Greeks and foreigners to invest in key sectors such as convention tourism, medical tourism, tourist accommodation complexes, maritime tourism, airports, ports etc.", (EC, 2015c)</p> <p>[Green development is] "a key opening up new horizons for greater competitiveness, attracting new investments and upgrading the quality of life for all citizens since it stimulates new business opportunities.", (EC, 2015a)</p> <p>[There is a] "need to differentiate from competition and promote new aspects of the Greek experience -- thus offering visitors the reasons to visit.", (GNT0, 2012a)</p> <p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the idea of what the nation is like for studying, working and conducting business is part of the I &amp; I dimension of a nation brand</li> <li>- discussed investment in tourism only</li> <li>- competitiveness was a clear sub-theme, not only under I &amp; I, but also under other themes, such as Exports</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quotes</b></p> <p>"Through the 'Green Tourism' programme, tourism enterprises were given the opportunity to reduce their operational costs through energy and water saving, by using alternative sources of energy, developing an integrated system of waste management, adopting environment and energy-friendly technologies and equipment as well as high environmental standards. The ultimate goal was to upgrade the conditions of their environmental management through innovative interventions.", (EC, 2015d)</p> <p>"The liberalisation of services within the internal (community) market is expected to create new conditions in which the Greek public administration has to quickly and effectively adapt."</p> <p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- environmental conservation was a clear sub-theme, not only under Governance, but also C &amp; H, Exports, and Tourism</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quotes</b></p> <p>"the promotion of the extraversion of Greek enterprises" (EC, 2015c)</p> <p>"...support business investments oriented at innovation, the environment and information technology, and the direct stimulation of entrepreneurship in a period of crisis.", (EC, 2014)</p> <p>"... strength of Greece as a brand name in the international market." (GNT0, 2012b)</p> <p>"...Greek products (natural products, authentic tastes, gastronomy, quality).", (GNT0, 2012a)</p> <p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the creative industry and technology are part of the Exports dimension of a nation brand</li> <li>- greater competitiveness is one of the main goals of nation branding (e.g. Anholt, 2002; Aronczyk, 2013)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quotes</b></p> <p>"[A] real challenge -- under the present incoherence of the Greek economy and the unfavourable climate -- is to find imaginative and creative ways for the maximum possible promotion of the Greek tourism and the country as a whole, since funds from the regular national budget are very limited.", (GNT0, 2015a)</p> <p>"Greece remains a destination unaltered through time, reliable for the high degree of satisfaction it offers, loyal for the unique richness in tourist resources, and untouched by any crisis. Greece remains enchanting as ever!" (GNT0, 2012b)</p> <p>"There is a need to address in a very targeted manner the key issues and challenges to Greece, e.g. issue of valuations for UK, issue of character / bad image of the Greek people for Germans, etc.) and to some extent re-establish the image of Greece for these nations.", (GNT0, 2012a)</p> <p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no clear "crisis taboo" in strategies (Vanolo, 2015)</li> </ul>