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PLACE MARKETING: DEVELOPING COUNTRY'S POSITIONING STRATEGY

Place is one of the elements of marketing product mix. However, majority of marketing specialists view place from a rather narrow point of view. Place as one of the p's of marketing mix can include not only the location of the business, its logistics and physical stores, but it could also be connected to the image of the whole country, its brand. So, this is necessary to research the topic of place marketing in terms of the country's positioning strategy, its brand.

The factors that could affect country's positioning are: geography, history, art, music, famous people, events held there. Moreover, entertainment industry of the country plays an extremely important role in shaping people's ideas about this particular country, since tourists mostly come for rest and entertainment. On the other hand, media is another channel that characterizes the country, communicating its features and peculiarities. Certainly, certain stereotypes are not so easy to change, so some negative views of the country could not be easily erased from the people's mind.

Nevertheless, each country should strive to develop its positioning strategy, since tourist industry contributes to the overall prosperity of any country in the world. Graph 1, shown below, gives a good idea of what groups should be targeted in order to develop country's brand. All groups could be divided into skeptics and believers- those who either possess positive or negative opinion about this country; besides, their level of knowledge on this country plays an important role too. So, country brand managers should do everything possible to turn uninformed skeptics into informed believers, who would recommend this country to their friends and families as a worthwhile place to visit.

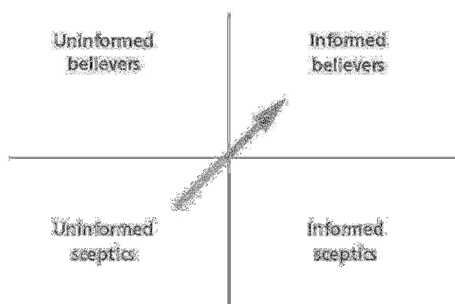


Table 1. Target groups for country's positioning strategy (*Source: Kotler, 2002*).

There is another interesting feature of place marketing: the spirit of the country. The spirit of the country is a rather elusive term, since it has no physical performance; it is something people feel when they stay in this place. The spirit of the country is shaped not only by the geography, history of this location, but also people-citizens- who live there. So, the spirit of the people is tightly related with the values they share, with the behavior they have, with the routine life they lead. Altogether, these features help country's visitors experience a spirit of the place that remains in their memory for much longer than pictures taken there.

To understand better the meaning of a spirit of the place term, we should turn to example of the Netherlands. This is a relatively small country that shares its borders with Belgium, Germany and France. The spirit of this country is definitely one of the features that attract tourists to visit this place. The spirit of the Netherlands is, indeed, different from other European countries' experiences. Conducting the Netherlands' SWOT analysis, one can distinguish such strengths as canals, that are original and ancient, Dutch cheese and chocolate (Gouda cheese, Milka chocolate), windmills and green fields. Moreover, strength of the Netherlands that contributes to its country brand is a rather free culture that allows soft drugs. Even a famous street of the Red Lights in Amsterdam can be seen as a smart country positioning move that draws attention of thousands of tourists every year.

Finally, Ukraine could be a very popular resort vacation if its country's brand would be positioned in the right manner.