

3-2-1 Happy New Year Sydney ®

While the whole world was celebrating New Years Eve one country had another point on the agenda – to leverage those pressures seconds after the clock had turned twelve to brand it self. Australia among many countries has developed a highly sophisticated branding program with one focus – to attract the world's eyes on their beautiful country. Turning in some eyes the disadvantage of being on the other side of the world – far away from Europe and the U.S. – the country has ever since 2000 spend tons of millions of dollars establish a fire work – which conveniently is leveraging the time zones and is beamed to the rest of the world in time for the news reports and all the chaos when the time is reaching twelve in Europe and the U.S.

But this is only the beginning of the story. The Olympic games was just one ingredient in a cocktail of activities counting the world's first sport science institute using the most advanced technologies in the world identifying and training athletics in being the best by inventing calculated methods in the best NASA style. Or what about the Australian actors school – which since it's foundation has spon out famous people from Nicole Kidmann, Russel Crowe, Guy Pierce and Heath Leather (pls. check spelling) or not to forget the ever going Neighbours machine – the worlds most seen TV series – creating such stars as Tina Arena and Kylie Minogue.

But what does all this have to do with branding – a lot. Selling a country is everything but playing a

couple of stunning ads on CNN – in fact you'll have huge difficulties ever finding an ad for Australia on CNN – where you'll find Australia is when the country instead persuaded Tom Cruise to film his Mission Impossible 2 in Australia only. 1 hour and 30 minutes of TV commercial for a country – endorsed by a Hollywood star – that's indeed branding.

A coincidence – no – not at all – for several years Australia has consistently worked on getting on the map in a world where the Australian continent seemed further and further away – did it work? Tourism numbers have boomed – as have the number of foreign investments – and even the number of students seeking Australian soil from Asia to get an education.

Country branding seems to be the hit of the century – pick almost any country and they've discovered that the reputation of a country hardly can be left to the coincidences. Event the country of branding – United States of America has turned to strategic branding to change its fading image – by officially yet unofficially planting positive stories of the country in the world press – hoping to get the country image back on track again. And the little kingdom of Denmark has realized that such small detail as being present on CNN's weather map was essential enough to approach the head of CNN on his visit to Denmark to secure that Denmark has a weather too – when the worlds viewers are exposed for the ups and downs in the temperature.

Branding once belonged only to the world of traditional products pumping out of the factory – tangible stuff, sold at a fixed price and attached an instruction manual. The migration of branding to encompass everything – and I mean everything – looking at my own portfolio of jobs including branding not only countries but also personalities, the very concept of the diamond and even royal families.

Yet ironic as it may seem – branding countries might infact benefit much more than boosting the tourism and business environment – it might infact help the very sales of products.

And that completes the ecosystem of branding. You see products from countries respected in the worlds public eye tends to do better than brands spinning out of no-where-land. I bet you that you wont hesitate purchasing a totally new cell phone brand – when hearing it's from Finland, Or an owner from Germany or what about water from Norway or chocolate from Switzerland? Some countries have even become so aware of this that they do whatever they can to protect their very brand before abused in a traditional product branding sense. First in line was Champagne – securing a trademark of the bubbly wine – but non-branded-brands like Parma, Prosciutto or Port, which



still are struggling, with securing its identity. It is claimed that even the Italian government has gone that far that they are planning to protect the concept of Italian Pizzerias – by employing an army of people identifying and seeking out claimed to be Italian Pizzerias across the globe to seek out the authenticity of these – and close them down if their identity happens to a bit too stretched from Italy.

So just as a country can benefit from strong brands – just think about Coca-Cola, Rolex, Champagne and Disney – and I'm sure the products of origin has added another positive dimension to their home markets – just as well as the home markets has helped the brands to become even stronger.

Branding therefore no longer can be seen in isolation – in many way it's a cycles which every government, should be just as aware of as every marketeer. Leveraging the heritage just as much as the products of the heritage. So think twice before you discard the value of "made in" whether you happen to be a government or a manufacture or a person claiming the branding only belongs to the supermarket shelves.