



‡‡ TRANSITIONS

*Collana di studi  
sulla traduzione e l'interculturalità  
nei paesi di lingua inglese*

## IV.

La collana intende investigare la centralità del concetto di interculturalità nei paesi di lingua inglese offrendo una prospettiva interdisciplinare tra lingue, letterature, culture e media. Il termine “traduzione” è dunque inteso nella sua accezione più ampia che prende in considerazione non solo gli studi di traduzione interlinguistica ma anche intersemiotica e si apre ad un discorso sulla traduzione come trasposizione, adattamento e ibridazione tra generi e arti. Il discorso sull’interculturalità, sempre più centrale anche in un’Europa multietnica e multilinguistica, è fondamentale nelle aree anglofone dove il processo di decolonizzazione poi globalizzazione ha portato ad un ripensamento dei concetti di lingua, identità, nazione e cultura. La collana intende proporre strumenti di analisi per approfondire competenze linguistiche e culturali muovendosi tra diverse aree di studio come gli studi di traduzione, gli studi postcoloniali e di genere, gli studi culturali, la sociolinguistica (in particolare le varietà della lingua inglese), la critical discourse analysis e i linguaggi specialistici. Se come afferma Adrienne Rich “negli interstizi delle lingue si nascondono significativi segreti della cultura” è proprio dallo studio di diverse tipologie testuali che può iniziare un percorso critico verso un approfondimento di ciò che viene definito come interculturalità.

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DESTINATION BRAND  
NEW ZEALAND

A SOCIAL SEMIOTIC MULTIMODAL  
ANALYSIS

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# CONTENTS

FOREWORD	9
INTRODUCTION	15
I. Aims and Scope of the Book	15
II. Branding the Destination, Constructing the Narrative of a Nation	21
III. 100% Pure New Zealand	30
IV. Making the <i>DestiNation</i> . A Brief History of New Zealand's Tourism Industry and Tourism Publicity	35
V. Organisation of the Book	45

## **PART ONE** **THEORY, METHODOLOGY, CONTEXT**

1. A SOCIAL SEMIOTIC MULTIMODAL APPROACH TO DESTINATION BRANDING	51
1.1 Destination Branding	52
1.2 The Discursive Dimension of Destination Branding	62
1.3 Social Semiotic Multimodality	67
1.4 A Social Semiotic Multimodal Approach to Destination Brand New Zealand	77
1.5 Destination Branding, Tourism Discourse and Language	80
1.6 Conclusion	85
2. DESTINATION BRAND NEW ZEALAND	87
2.1 Brand <i>Tohu</i> : the Story and the Discourse of Destination Brand New Zealand	93
2.2 Nature and Natural Landscape	102

2.3 Maori People and Culture: Stories of an Allegedly Bicultural Nation	113
2.4 Urban New Zealand	126
2.5 Conclusion	133

## PART TWO

### A SOCIAL SEMIOTIC MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF DESTINATION BRAND NEW ZEALAND.

#### CASE STUDIES: PRINT ADS, TVCS AND THE OFFICIAL WWW.NEWZEALAND.COM WEBSITE

3. DESTINATION BRAND NEW ZEALAND IN PRINT ADS	137
3.1 Advertising as Genre and Medium	138
3.2 The <i>100% Pure New Zealand</i> Ad Campaigns between 1999 and 2011	146
3.3 The “Everyday a Different Journey” Campaign (2015)	173
3.4 The “Everyday a Different Journey in Northland” Campaign (2017)	182
3.5 Conclusion	193
4. THE 100% PURE NEW ZEALAND TVCS	
4.1 Tourism TV Commercials and the <i>100% Pure New         Zealand</i> TVCs	197
4.2 The <i>100% Pure New Zealand</i> “Don’t Dream It’s Over” TV Commercial (1999)	209
4.3 The <i>100% Pure New Zealand</i> “You’ve Been Waiting Too Long” TVC (2004)	214
4.4 The <i>100% Middle Earth, 100% Pure New Zealand</i> TVC (2013)	218
4.5 The <i>100% Pure New Zealand</i> “Everyday a Different Journey” TVC (2015)	228
4.6 The <i>100% Pure New Zealand</i> “One Journey Leads to Another” TVC (2017)	234
4.7 Conclusion	239

5. WWW.NEWZEALAND.COM: THE OFFICIAL TOURISM NEW ZEALAND WEBSITE	243
5.1 Analysing Websites and Webpages: a Multimodal Analytical Framework	246
5.2 The www.newzealand.com Homepage	249
5.3 Maori Stories of Aotearoa: Northland, a <i>Waka</i> Journey to the Ancestral Home	268
5.4 Urban New Zealand: Queenstown, the Birthplace of Adventure Tourism	278
5.5 Urban New Zealand: Wellington, Capital of Creativity	285
5.6 Nature: Aoraki Mount Cook National Park	292
5.7 Conclusion	308
<i>Conclusion</i>	313
REFERENCES	327

## APPENDIXES

### THE 100% PURE NEW ZEALAND TVCS AND VIDEOS: TRANSCRIPTIONS AND SHOT-BY-SHOT MICRO-ANALYSES

Appendix 1. “Don’t Dream It’s Over” TVC (1999)	346
Appendix 2. “You’ve Been Waiting Too Long” TVC (2004)	349
Appendix 3. “100% Middle Earth”, TVC (2013)	355
Appendix 4. “Everyday a Different Journey” TVC (2015)	363
Appendix 5. “One Journey Leads to Another” TVC (2017)	369
Appendix 6. <i>A Waka Journey</i> , Feature Video	377
Appendix 7. <i>The Birthplace of Adventure Tourism</i> , Feature Video	385



## FOREWORD

The first time that I deliberately looked up New Zealand in my encyclopaedia was back in 1987, when Irish rock band U2 released a song called *One Tree Hill* to commemorate one of their Kiwi roadies who had been killed in a car crash. Many years later came the All Blacks: I would stand in awe to watch them play. I must admit, perhaps my original desire to visit New Zealand arose from the attempt to find out how such a distant land could spawn so many great players. Eventually, my interest for the team urged me to discover more about the country, for a long time a tiny, neglected dot on my world map.

Finally in 2012, I travelled to New Zealand on my honeymoon. It was meant to be the trip of a lifetime. And it certainly was a life-changing experience. Upon our return, both my husband and I realised that that country had left an indelible mark in our minds and hearts. In my case, it made me constantly reflect on our practices and expectations as tourists. While travelling across the North and the South Island we were keenly aware that there was so much more that we wanted to see and know about

Aotearoa than that trip could materially and spiritually allow us to know. Therefore, since our return, I have continued to travel virtually to and around Aotearoa New Zealand and to develop a critical insight into the processes that had informed my journey across New Zealand, and into the cultural and mental projections, expectations and images that official touristic representations, or filmic ones, had contributed to developing. While in New Zealand I experienced an uncanny feeling of being at the same time in a familiar and in an unfamiliar place. For example, I had to question my everyday (and markedly European) notion of spatial organization. Instead of the highly urbanized, densely populated city areas and road and train infrastructures that are so typical of European landscapes, I often came across vast expanses of uninhabited bush traversed only by a two-way provincial road. Imagine the sense of freedom! Apart possibly from Auckland, which many Kiwis do not even consider New Zealand at all, nowhere did I find the hustle and bustle of major airport hubs, with their strict security checks and long lines. There are no such things as coal-fuelled barbecues for environmental reasons so the meat does not taste quite the same as home, nor are there wolves, foxes or snakes. As a result you can easily take a walk through the woods without worrying about getting bitten. As little as two people alone can run a cattle and sheep farm of several thousand heads aided only by a dog. Trivial as they may be, these examples reveal that there is more to a tourist than the quest for pleasurable activities, for a superficial dip into the exotic or the so called “authentic”. While a three-week experience can never compare with the knowledge arising from living in a country, nonetheless it can prove to be considerable food for thought.

This book is a tribute to a land that has offered me the opportunity to remake myself as an academic and to explore new and previously uncharted territories in the combined study of linguistics, tourism and multimodality. Aotearoa has led me to meet people from different parts of the world who share a love of this country and also to know people from New Zealand, especially Maori and Samoan (my New Zealand *aiga*), and to deepen my knowledge of the latter cultures, which in many aspects, I have been learning, are not so different from my Southern Italian one.

This book is a conscious reflection upon the ways in which the official representations of Aotearoa New Zealand can influence potential tourists and their choice of a destination, how in a very postmodern way representation and reality overlap, how the language, images, colours and a myriad other signs used in the touristic promotion of a country reflect specific constructions of particular power groups and foster the country's identity construction. Ultimately, the pages that follow are the sum of a three-year long research journey, my own personal *waka* (canoe) journey, that has led me to land in different territories, whereby I had to engage with different aspects of the linguistic, cultural and visual representations of Destination New Zealand. The tale of this *waka* journey is about to begin and I hope that readers will enjoy this voyage to the Land of the Long White Cloud.

Throughout this book I have tried to be as exact and neutral as possible in describing my findings and in conveying my opinions. If I have made any mistakes in the process, I take full responsibility and will be glad to correct them. All the material used in this book has been fully cited. Permission to use images available on various webpages

beyond the official ones has been requested several times and partly granted by Tourism New Zealand, in the person of Jaimie Reid, Brand Manager, whom I thank. The rest of the material has been used in accordance with the Italian copyright laws.

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There are many, many people that I must thank and not enough space to do so. First and foremost, my endless gratitude goes to my husband Tommaso for bearing with me throughout these months and for constantly motivating me though the hardest of times. Then I must thank my family and friends for putting up with me. I am indebted to Eleonora Federici for making the publication of this work possible, and to Mirko Casagrande for the precious suggestions and constructive advice during the writing of the book. I would also like to thank Ian Conrich for allowing me to join the New Zealand Studies Association and to present early versions of this work at the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> NZSA conferences. I would like to thank my New Zealand friends and *nbanau* for befriending me and for sharing some great moments in Vienna, Lugano and Strasbourg.

Ki a Tommaso me te aroha kore

‘Ko te pae tawhiti, whāia kia  
tata. Ko te pae tata, whakamaua kia tīna’-  
(Endure until your distant goals are near. Once near,  
seize them and hold them close)

*Maori proverb*

*Oh great the Ocean, Oh great the Sea  
Run to the Ocean, Run to the Sea*

U2, *One Tree Hill*, The Joshua Tree,  
Island Records, 1987



# INTRODUCTION

## *I. Aims and Scope of the Book*

This book will investigate Destination Brand New Zealand through a social semiotic multimodal analysis of its official representations produced over the last 18 years. The analysis developed in the book aims to expand the investigation of New Zealand as a destination brand carried out mainly in the fields of Tourism and Hospitality Management and Tourism Marketing and Advertising by focusing on the communication of the Destination Brand as a meaning-making event and by exploring in detail the modes and the resources that are used to construct and (re)present a branded identity for New Zealand as a destination.

The primary claim of this book is that destination branding goes well beyond mere touristic promotion. While tourism communication, discourses and texts significantly influence several aspects of destination branding, yet, traditional tourism promotion is no longer sufficient to cut through the clutter of dozens of competing destinations. Tourists no longer seem to be satisfied with traditional services and offers, but increasingly seek to live meaningful experiences. Therefore, destinations have begun to «move

away from promoting physical destination attributes towards a goal of promoting emotional attributes that generate lasting and unique memories for visitors»<sup>1</sup>. In order to gain competitive advantage over rivals, destinations have increasingly been adopting marketing techniques that were once devised for the commercialisation of products and services or for the promotion of corporate identities. Destination branding provides a manifesto for a destination whose ultimate aim is to convey the same coherent message about a place across a plurality of fields. Thus the official, systematic and prescriptive role and purpose of destination branding communication cannot be overlooked when analysing the promotional material of a destination. Indeed, destination branding becomes prescriptive, forcing every subject operating in the promotion of a specific destination to adhere to pre-defined guidelines and contents that Destination Marketing Officers (DMOs) have identified for the brand in order to avoid sending confused and mixed messages about it. Therefore, global and regional marketing campaigns will communicate the brand identity, attitudes and values in order to construct a powerful and lasting destination image. Print ads, TVCs, official websites and social media pages are the texts, understood as semiotic events, through which the brand is communicated.

The texts that I set out to examine, and the stories they tell, rely on a vast array of meaning-making resources, or to use Gunther Kress's terminology, *modes*. These include not just images and writing, but also layout, music, colour, moving images, typefaces and fonts. Each of these modes «offer different potentials for making meaning [...] and

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1. R. LAGIEWSKI-B. ZEKAN, "Experiential marketing of tourism destinations" (2006), available at <http://scholarworks.rit.edu/other/633>

have a fundamental effect on the choice(s) of mode in specific instances of communication»<sup>2</sup>. Within a social semiotic perspective, communication results from the interaction between different participants in a network of social relations, whereby some participants engage in the making of meanings through signs while others receive and interpret those signs. Destination branding communication is a perfect instantiation of such a communicative model as it functions through the creation and the interpretation of tourism and marketing messages. These texts should be investigated together as instantiations of the specific messages about a destination launched by DMOs and within the broader context of the diachronic and synchronic development of the Destination Brand.

The main focus of this book, therefore, is to analyse those texts that emerge out of the «interest of the initial maker of the *sign-complex*, the *rhetor*, with his or her intent of disseminating the sign-complex as a message and for the message to be taken as prompt»<sup>3</sup>. A social semiotic approach to multimodality, as both a field of application and as a set of tools, focuses on and investigates the process of meaning-making, the:

*agency* of meaning-makers, the constitution of *identity* in sign [...] how knowledge is produced, shaped and constituted distinctly in different modes; and by whom. Multimodality includes questions around the potentials— the *affordances*— of the resources that are available in any one society for

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2. G. KRESS, *Multimodality. A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*, Routledge, London, 2010, p.79.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

the making of meaning; and how, therefore, “knowledge” appears differently in different modes<sup>4</sup>.

Through the use of social semiotic multimodal analysis, the book will focus on the multiple semiotic resources that are used in the formulation of Destination Brand New Zealand’s «unique destination proposition»<sup>5</sup>. Because of the success of its destination branding project and of its global marketing campaigns, New Zealand provides an exemplary case study to look into the ways in which destination branding communication in the digital age constructs its textuality and discourse. Within such a context, my work seeks to offer a methodology and a box of tools that, drawing on multimodality, critical discourse studies, and tourism studies, seeks to unravel the discursive and multimodal dynamics at the heart of the promotion of destinations brands that could be usefully applied to the study of other countries who adhere to destination branding programs, such as Australia, South Africa or Canada. Also, because the development of New Zealand as a tourist destination coincided with the colonisation and the development of the country as a nation, the study of the agencies and processes that lie at the heart of the making of a tourist destination also offer useful and significant insights in the creation or invention of New Zealand as a nation and its identity. By analysing such representations as narratives of the nation, and by examining the discourses

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4. G. KRESS, *Multimodal Discourse Analysis*, in J.P. GEE-M. HANDFORD, *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, Routledge, London, 2012, p. 35.

5. N. MORGAN-A. PRITCHARD-R. PRIDE, *Introduction*, in N. MORGAN-A. PRITCHARD-R. PRIDE (EDS.), *Destination Branding. Creating the Unique Destination Proposition*, cit., p. 4

that arise from, and are constitutive of, it at the same time, it is also possible to understand whose story they tell, and from which point of view these narratives are told. This point becomes particularly important in a postcolonial society such as New Zealand's, where the subversion of the asymmetrical relationships of power between Maori and *Pakeha* (white New Zealanders mainly of European origins) entails challenging the existing power structures: these structures include the tourist industry, where Maori people still strive to achieve greater direct «involvement in the tourist business, through either collaboration in, or control of, the production and dissemination of Maori tourism product and identity»<sup>6</sup>.

Providing a comprehensive account of the myriad facets of Destination Brand New Zealand is beyond the scope of the present work. For example, this book will be exploring the relationship between New Zealand, film and tourism only in passing, since very comprehensive and more authoritative accounts of this relationship already exist. Also, the subject of rugby will only be brushed upon, since the dynamics of sports, branding, tourism and national identity in New Zealand would require a separate investigation and will be the object of forthcoming research work.

My selection of what is criterial in the construction of the Story of Destination Brand New Zealand will concentrate on what have historically been the most important assets in the promotion of the country first, and then in the construction of this brand, namely natural landscape and Maori culture; it will also consider an emerging aspect of the destination

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6. A. DE MARCO, *Hongi, hangi, haka, moko: Language and the representation of Maori culture in contemporary mainstream travel guidebook*, in «Journal of New Zealand & Pacific Studies», 4, 1 (2016), p. 70.

brand story, namely cities, which are important touristic resources, in addition to being gateways to the country.<sup>7</sup> These three themes have been central to the promotion of New Zealand's unique character as a place since the very beginning, and have considerably contributed to shaping the construction of national identity. Furthermore, while the literature on the marketing of nature and of Maori culture from a strictly tourism studies perspective is considerable, research has so far shown less interest in the analysis of the promotion of New Zealand cities.

By analysing the official representations of New Zealand as a destination brand, the book will explore the multiple modes that DMOs, coupled with advertisers, directors and web designers use to construct and disseminate a specific messages about New Zealand and about New Zealandness. The ultimate aim of this analysis is to deconstruct and investigate how destination branding uses contemporary forms of communication and representation as a form of «political process that encodes and reinforces the dominant ideology of tourism culture, essentially a global process which manifests locally and explicitly involves the construction of places»<sup>8</sup>.

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7. As the world population becomes even more urbanised, cities and mega cities have been competing with regions and countries for visibility in order to attract visitors, talents and investment. Therefore, the phenomenon of city branding is gaining currency and is increasingly being studied as a separate branding phenomenon that departs from other forms of branding as a result of the different nature of the stakeholders involved and of the specificity of the city vis-à-vis broader geographical entities. Cf. K. DINNIE (ED.), *City Branding. Theory and Cases*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2011.

8. I. ATELJEVIC-S. DOORNE, *Representing New Zealand. Tourism Imagery and Ideology*, in «Annals of Tourism Research», 29, 3 (2002) p. 648.

## II. Branding the Destination, Constructing the Narrative of a Nation

The globalisation of the world economy has heightened competition among touristic destinations, which now have to differentiate themselves and their touristic offer in order to compete for their share of the market. As a result, destination marketing strategies and techniques have become crucial for the promotion of a destination, understood as a nation, a region, a city or an attraction, especially because tourism is often seen and used «as a major mechanism for attracting investment, creating employment, and promoting regional economic growth»<sup>9</sup>. In addition to being a global industry that revolves around, and facilitates, the global flow of money, people and goods, tourism is also «a complex set of social and cultural phenomena»<sup>10</sup> that have given rise to specific practices and discourses. Tourism was originally mainly regarded as a series of practices and activities separated from the ordinary hustle and bustle of everyday life, and revolving around the superficial quest for pleasure, the exotic or the unusual. More recently, however, scholars have gradually recognised it as «a central component of modern social identity and engagement [...] *infused* into the everyday and [...] one of the ways in which our lives are ordered and [...] in which consumers orientate themselves, or take a stance to a globalised world»<sup>11</sup>. Adrian Franklin affirms that tourism actively contributes to developing our modern sense of identity

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9. C. M. HALL, *Geography, Marketing and the Selling of Places*, in «Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing» 6, 3-4 (1997), p. 63.

10. A. FRANKLIN, *Tourism. An Introduction*, London, Sage, 2003, p. 2.

11. *Ibidem*.

and can be conceived of as «spaces and times of self-making— rather special types of space and time that allow latitudes, freedoms and experimentations»<sup>12</sup>. In his view, through a network of social relations and social practices that are established through the interaction of providers of tourist attractions and visitors, tourism allows for «a set of experiences, transitions, understanding and additions to the way people construct a sense of self»<sup>13</sup>. In addition to acknowledging a more active and constructive role for tourists, Franklyn's approach to tourism also accounts for the latter as «one of the new cultural expressions and performances of nation formation»<sup>14</sup>. Arguing against the supposed withering of nations in a globalised world, he contends that tourism has a strongly national character and nations were paramount in the articulation of tourism as a source of national income and as a key factor in the construction of international policies and relations among countries. Nations have also been explicitly using tourism as «a means of creating a sense of citizenship and social solidarity»<sup>15</sup>. Franklyn's analysis of tourism is the one that best equips us to discuss the shift from traditional tourism marketing towards destination branding and the latter's role in the construction of a narrative of a national identity and culture.

From a marketing perspective, tourism today is no longer about promoting the physical attributes and functional benefits of a destination, but rather catering to consumers' pursuit of a lifestyle and of the affective emotional rewards attached to style and status symbols. Thus, destinations

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12. *Ibidem*.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

are seeking to tap into «the emotional power of travel as “experience”»<sup>16</sup>. As Morgan, Pritchard and Pride argue «as style symbols, destinations can offer consumer benefit to highly branded lifestyles items. These are used to communicate statements and group memberships, just as vacation trips are expressive devices communicating messages about identity, lifestyle, status»<sup>17</sup>. For these reasons, many destinations have embarked on a process of branding and are now addressed, treated and discussed as brands.

Brands are all around us and yet it is often hard to pin down their actual meaning and import in our daily lives. For the American Marketing Association, the term “brand” indicates «a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition»<sup>18</sup>. Yet, consumers’ and investors’ preferences and loyalties arise out of that which exceeds the mere physical attributes of a brand. Indeed, brands «represent a promise of value [...]. Brands incite beliefs, evoke emotions and prompt behaviors [...]. Brands have social and emotional value to users»<sup>19</sup>. According to another definition, brands are «clusters of functional

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16. N. MORGAN-A. PRITCHARD-R. PRIDE, *Introduction*, in N. MORGAN-A. PRITCHARD-R. PRIDE (EDS.), *Destination Branding. Creating the Unique Destination Proposition*, cit., p. 4.

17. *Ibidem*.

18. The American Marketing Association cited in P. KOTLER-D. GERTNER, *Country as brand, product and beyond: a place marketing and brand management perspective*, in N. MORGAN-A. PRITCHARD-R. PRIDE, *Destination Branding*, cit., p.41. The word ‘brand’ derives from the Old Norse verb “Brandr”, literally to burn and originally indicated the practice of marking cattle by burning it in order to signal ownership by a specific farmer. Oxford English Dictionary, *Brand*, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/brand>.

19. *Ibidem*.

and emotional values that promise a unique and welcome experience between a buyer and a seller»<sup>20</sup>. Or, to have it with Celia Lury, the brand:

is a platform for the patterning of activity, a mode of organising activities in time and space [...] the brand is not a closed object, but is, rather, open, extending into—or better, implicating—social relations. It is some-thing that is identifiable in its doing [...]. It is implicated in everyday life, and we are— sometimes only just—implicated in it. Finally, [...] the brand is not a matter of certainty, but is rather an object of possibility.<sup>21</sup>

Lury's definition may better help us to start conceiving of tourist places as destination brands, especially because it highlights the role of brands as social phenomena that impact on the lived experiences of people. Brands result from a process, branding, which in turn originates « within a social, economic and political framework characterized by informationalization, globalization and the dominance of neo-liberal forms of governance», a process which, as I shall argue later, impinges on «the formation of both individual and collective identities»<sup>22</sup>.

From a strictly tourism marketing perspective, destination branding refers to «the promotion of a country as a tourism destination which involves the use of promotional tools to help potential visitors identify and differentiate a

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20. J. LYNCH-L. DE CHERNATONY, *The power of emotion: Brand communication in business-to-business markets*, in «Journal of Brand Management», 11, 5 (2004), p. 404.

21. C. LURY, *Brands. The Logos of the Global Economy*, Routledge, London and New York, 2004, p. 1.

22. L. MOOR, *The Rise of Brands*, Berg, Oxford and New Your, 2007, p. 13.

destination and to promote the uniqueness of the tourism experience at that destination»<sup>23</sup>. Such policies have gathered momentum in the last fifteen to twenty years, and tourism discourses and practices have become inextricably enmeshed with, and in fact subsumed within, those of destination branding. Indeed, the branding phenomenon has transcended the domain of tourism proper to encompass other significant spheres and activities that guarantee nations a competitive advantage in the global market. While developing a country as a tourist destination may be one of the key goals for a nation, competing in the global market also entails «stimulating inward investment and boosting exports, attracting talents, whether they may be higher education students or skilled workers»<sup>24</sup>. In their search for a «competitive identity»<sup>25</sup> that will allow them to attract new investments, funding, or expand their political sphere of influence, countries have started «to position themselves as holistic place brands»<sup>26</sup>. Thus, destination branding has been incorporated into a much broader process of *nation branding*, a process and a set of instruments that «countries use to build a favorable image, attract investment and trade, visitors, or even new citizens»<sup>27</sup>.

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23. F. DESMARAIS, *Caught in an inconvenient nation-branding promise: the problematic '100% Pure New Zealand'*, in «Interdisciplinary Environmental Review», 16, 1 (2015), p. 3.

24. K. DINNIE, *Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice*. Butterworth Heinemann, 2007, p. 17.

25. S. ANHOLT, *Places. Identity, Image and Reputation*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 8.

26. N. MORGAN-A. PRITCHARD-R. PRIDE, *Introduction*, in N. MORGAN-A. PRITCHARD-R. PRIDE (EDS.), *Destination Branding. Creating the Unique Destination Proposition*, cit., p. 4.

27. F. DESMARAIS, *Caught in an inconvenient nation-branding promise*, cit, p. 2.