

# Successful country branding for Sri Lanka, positioning tourism as an important social and economic force



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W O N D E R O F A S I A

# Changing negative perceptions after a prolonged negative situation

- A country's **image creates a context** for the way people regard the country
- A poor reputation affects how messages are received and whether they are believed.
- Negative brand equity means investment in branding and marketing is more difficult, expensive, and requires more care and persistence with media.
- The difficulty should not be underestimated





# There is no quick fix. But there is a fix

- Genuine ongoing peace and stability — don't pretend all is tranquil if it isn't. **Nothing hurts reputation more than not delivering expectations.**
- A systematic, thoughtful and well-crafted communications campaign well targeted to the opinion formers and perception changers, and geared to the market audience

# Turning negative perceptions around

- Country branding needs to encompass the **full range of capabilities** across politics, trade, tourism, culture and community.
- This demands the way a country presents and represents itself is not as an end in itself but a **strategic investment to improve reputation**.
- Reputation drives economic value and sustainable practices.

# Tourism is a fast path to changing perceptions

- Don't try to change everything at once. Best to get one area working perfectly than lots of areas imperfectly. People remember the imperfect scenarios.
- Make sure that when people do come they have a good time.
- **Tourists are the best ambassadors of change.**



# Tourism is a fast path to changing perceptions



Tourism is a key vehicle to rebuild image:

it allows a country to demonstrate behaviours that can win approval and build trust with fans.



# Tourism is a critical dimension for country branding

- **Tourism captures the romance, mystery, and emotion of a place**
- It tells unique stories of authenticity, sets expectations and drives visitations
- It showcases a country's heritage both traditional and contemporary, using the arts, music, film, art, literature, architecture, sport as well as its spiritual beliefs.
- Tourism is built on people, their hospitality, friendliness, and their professionalism.

# Tourism is about authenticity

- Tourism appeal is based on natural beauty, historic buildings and monuments, its nature, its city life and urban attractions.
- But finally **authenticity is the heart of any successful country brand** - and communicating the essential and distinctive truth of a people.
- Note that authenticity should not be viewed as synonymous with the folkways of the indigenous culture. It can be socially oriented, but also be politically and economically driven.



# Tourism is about authenticity





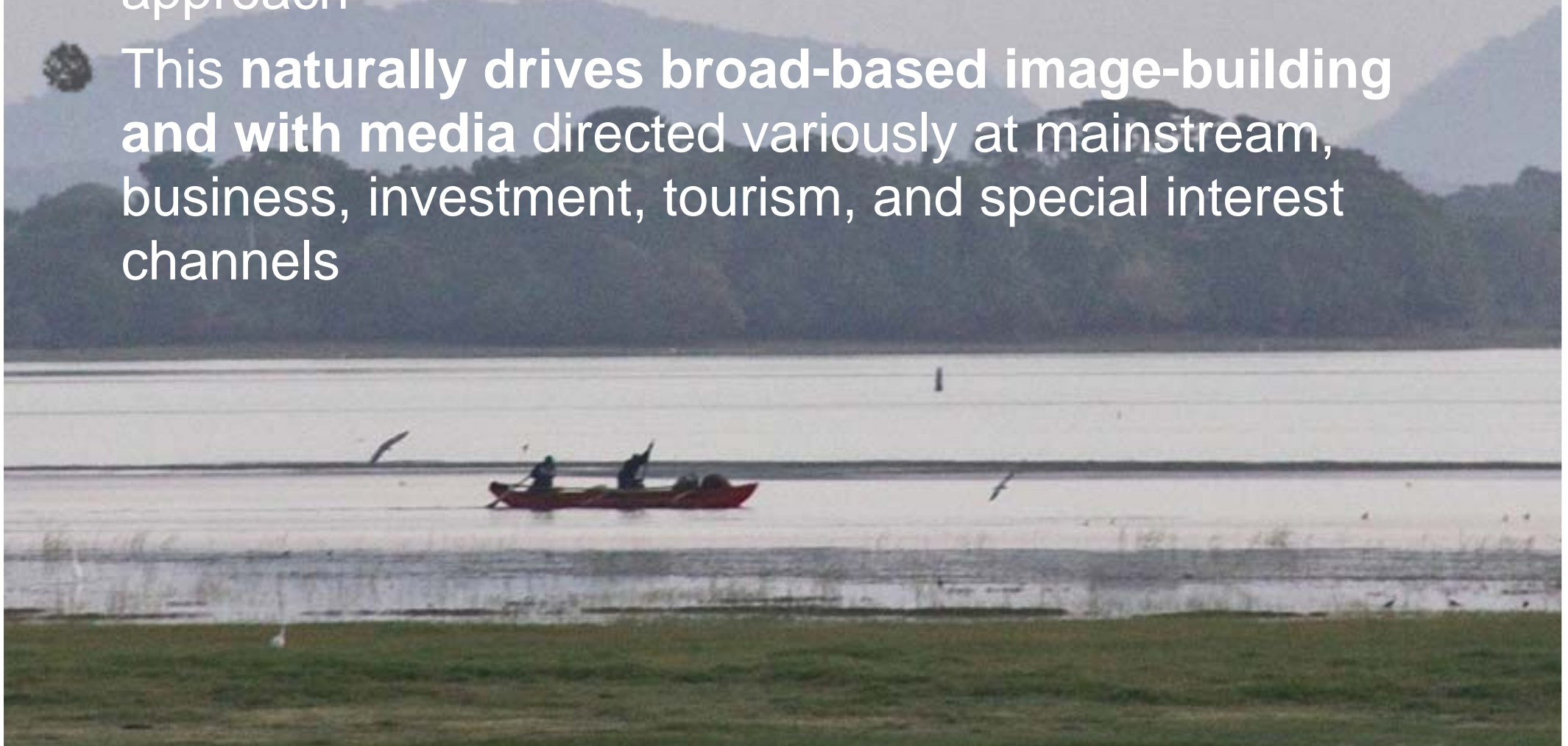
# Country reputation is firstly about governance

- The way the Government delivers on policies, strategies, investments and innovations.
- The competency and transparency of Government, respect for citizens' rights and fair treatment, is behaviour in peace and security, environmental protection, and in poverty reduction.
- It cannot simply a matter of marketing and media profile.



## Managing country reputation requires an integrated approach

- The most skilful approach to image-building is led from the top with an inter-ministerial and integrated approach
- This **naturally drives broad-based image-building and with media** directed variously at mainstream, business, investment, tourism, and special interest channels





## Targeting specialist media to tell different stories

- Tourism professionals must work closely with other Government Departments / Units:
- Economic development, Investment and ICT, to drive and reinforce consistent messages and information.
- A country's power to attract talent and capital is measured by whether people want to study, work and live there and by the country's economic prosperity, equal opportunity, and perception that it has a high quality of life.

## Trade & exports

“Country of origin effect”  
can add to the power of a  
country’s reputation,  
and if set in a positive  
country branding context  
can influence  
purchasing decisions.



# Integration of tourism promotion into the country brand

- Tourism can create a skewed leisure-oriented country brand which can conflict with other Departments such as Investment.
- Why more and more Governments are coordinating their image building efforts to ensure coordination and a balanced representation of the country.
- Reflects risk and reputation management, keeping expectations realistic and delivering on the brand promise.



**A demonstrable commitment to sustainable development - and to be able to demonstrate this!**



# Disciplines of country branding

- Identify your image - How much of your reputation is deserved?
- Analyse how you want to be positioned
- Is there a gap between reality and perception? Between reputation and its actual capabilities; address this gap with a programme that better communicates the country's offer
- If image unfair...a communication problem
- If image fair.....new policies and new behaviours required



## A new campaign for Sri Lanka



The proposed positioning of *refreshingly Sri Lanka* supports the re-presentation of a contemporary Sri Lanka, building past fame and fortunes and leveraging its attributes – for tourists, investors and local people.



# Sri Lanka a safe, secure and attractive destination

- Focus on good human interest stories that demonstrate how local tourism is working as an economic and positive force.
- Carefully guide the people who write these stories, and take the pictures, and produce the films to nurture the image.
- It requires a small communications team at national level working exclusively with the brief to change negative perceptions.
- Important to get the first messages right, so planning is essential.

# Bliss Auryeveda





A photograph of a rustic, eco-friendly hut with a thick thatched roof made of dried grass or straw. The hut is supported by several thick, natural wooden pillars. It has a small wooden deck in front with two wooden lounge chairs. The walls appear to be made of mud or clay. The hut is situated in a grassy area with many trees in the background, suggesting a natural, forested environment. The lighting is warm, indicating it might be late afternoon or early morning.

# Essence eco tourism



# Heritage Pilgrimages







**CUISINE**

# Sri Lanka Tourism UK Wins the prestigious Chartered Institute of Marketing -Marketing Excellence Award



.....encouraged new visitors from the UK in 2009 despite most other countries witnessing a significant decline.

This campaign brought together Hoteliers, Ground Handlers, Airlines, Tour Operators and the Tourism Office in order to secure tangible and measureable results....



## Enlightened communications

- If you don't communicate, people will begin to draw their own conclusions.
- Don't try to change everything at once.
- Best to get one area working perfectly than lots of areas imperfectly. People will remember the imperfect scenarios.
- Align tourism communications with other Government Departments and with the private sector

# Why invest in an integrated branding strategy?

- Increasing volume and value of visitors
- Increasing inward investment in human resource and capital
- Increased and higher value trade
- Attracting and retaining skilled talent
- Increasing political influence and clout
- Social and cultural benefits



"The truth isn't the truth until people believe you, and they can't believe you if they don't know what you're saying, and they can't know what you're saying if they don't listen to you, and they won't listen to you if you're not interesting, and you won't be interesting unless you say things imaginatively, originally, freshly."

Bill Bernbach, one of founders of DDB, famous ad man



# Thank you

