

# Branding Finland



**EVERY COUNTRY** has a brand, an image. When you think of Sweden, Russia, China, Japan or the UK, you probably have an immediate image in your mind of what that country represents. It may be positive. It may be negative. Most likely, it's a bit of both.

Think of Finland. What comes to mind? Lakes, trees, Santa Claus, world-class education, Nokia, Formula 1 drivers, design, snow, sauna or the land of the midnight sun?

Or perhaps something negative comes to mind, such as the recent school shootings, long dark winter nights, high suicide rates or binge drinking. Or worse, perhaps you draw a blank when asked what you think of Finland.

**We all make** hundreds of decisions every day. Which product should I buy? Where should our company expand? Where should I go on holiday? These are only a few reasons for thinking about how best to brand a country.

Branding a country is a two-way street. First and foremost, it's about projecting an image to the outside world. Second, it's about how we perceive ourselves. What does it mean to be a Finn?

It's against this backdrop that we decided to set up a panel of experts from all walks of life to brainstorm and develop Finland's brand by the end of 2010.

As Nokia is one of the most respected brands in world, it was natural for the chairman of the company, Jorma Ollila, to head the group.

**A brand** is not just about creating an image. Every brand must be backed up by a true story, good or bad. An advertising agency might be good at projecting a positive image for a product, but that alone doesn't make the product good.

The brand of a country is the

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sum total of its people. If you think that Finns are honest and open, no-nonsense kind of people, well that's what we are. If you think that Finns are a bit reserved, well that might be equally true.

Branding is in essence a form of soul searching and reflection. You're always going to have people complaining that branding is a worthless exercise. You're also going to have people disagreeing about the content of the brand itself.

Be that as it may. I think that branding is a modern take on cultural identity. Some soul searching is not bad from time to time.

It's difficult to control a brand, let alone build it. A brand is a perception, and ultimately a subjective one.

Let me know what you think about Finland. Just drop me an e-mail on [alexander.stubb@form-in.fi](mailto:alexander.stubb@form-in.fi) or post a comment on my blog at: [www.alexstubb.com](http://www.alexstubb.com).

Looking forward to your comments – replies guaranteed. #

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