

a branded world

PODCAST

with
Luiza Campos



028 | BUILDING A PLACE BRAND WITH
DANIEL VALVERDE FROM ESSENTIAL
COSTA RICA

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

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A BRANDED WORLD PODCAST – 028 | BUILDING A PLACE BRAND WITH DANIEL VALVERDE FROM ESSENTIAL COSTA RICA

- Luiza Campos: [00:00](#) You're listening to a branded world podcast, episode number 28.
- Announcer: [00:08](#) Welcome to a branded world podcast where we explore great brands and give you tips, tools, hacks, and guides to create brands that captivate clients and drive growth in revenue. And now your host, Luiza Campos.
- Luiza Campos: [00:28](#) Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of a branded world. A branded world is a member of the Alberta podcast network, powered by ATB and talking about the Alberta podcast network. The network is putting on a live show on June seventh during the Inventures conference here in Calgary. The show's called podcasts. Connect a talk fast about the future. In the show, you'll get to see four different podcasts including that so maven, the work, not work, show future chat, in action, and of course a branded world talking to fascinating people about all kinds of innovation. Our friends from ATB will also be on hand to answer questions about all of the transformative things that they are up to, including a I block chain robotics and more. It's going to be really fascinating. You can come for as many shows as you like, and the best part is that it's free.
- Luiza Campos: [01:22](#) All you need to do is register at podcasts, connect.eventbright.ca, and I'll have the link to this in the show notes, so make sure to check that out and you can learn more about these shows and the Alberta podcast networks events at Alberta podcast network, so make sure to go. I will be there and I would love to see you and talk to you on June seventh. I also want to give a shout out to atb who helps support podcasts like this one. You are looking for a position and want to work for purpose driven organization. ATB is always hiring and looking for talent, so not only were they just named a number two on Canada's best places to work list, but they're also diving deep into some creative and very wacky tech stuff, so you don't want to miss that. Check out ATB's linkedin page to see how you might fit in.
- Luiza Campos: [02:18](#) I am very excited to share with you today's episode. Today I'm interviewing Daniel Valverde from Costa Rica. Daniel is the director for the nation brand, Costa Rica called essential Costa Rica, and this brand has been

recognized in ct nation is one of the best brands. OK, if you think it's hard to build a brand for a product and service, imagine creating a brand that has to be genuine and authentic to a whole country and that has to address the objectives or many different institutions within that country. So today's episode is full of really great insights and tips that can be applied to any brand, however small or big one product to a whole nation and make sure to check out the show notes where we'll have tons of examples of some of the things that Daniel talks about in the show. This is really an amazing show. You don't want to miss it. He shared so many great stuff. So without further ado, here's my interview with Daniel Valverde.

- Luiza Campos: [03:20](#) Hey Daniel. How are you?
- Daniel Valverde: [03:22](#) Hi, how are you?
- Luiza Campos: [03:24](#) Oh, I am really excited to have you and I think it would be so useful to hear your story and how you developed and how you've been implementing the brand for Costa Rica. Because of course now it's been a few years, so you have seen some of the results of this, so I'm really excited to have you with us today.
- Daniel Valverde: [03:49](#) Thanks for having me. I'm excited. I mean the Costa Rica Tale about country brand is a tale I love to tell of course, and we take very good and well there's a lot to say so just let me know where you want to.
- Luiza Campos: [04:08](#) Yes, and you're right. There's so much to talk about. I mean, building a brand is, is difficult even if it's just for a specific product organization, but to build a country brand now we're talking in a much larger scale that involves so which diversity is particularly in this case of Costa Rica and just so many different organizations that are involved that are responsible of course to promote the country and so many different goals that the brand is also trying to achieve. So I am. I'm really excited to learn how you guys managed all that and to share some of the insights and the learnings that you have. But before we start, I would love for you to tell us a little bit about the country that diversity and the appeal of the country and what was the impetus or the reason for you to decide to develop this country brand?
- Daniel Valverde: [05:11](#) I can tell you right away from Costa Rica is a very diverse country, both naturally, culturally in terms of what most

people know is that Costa Rica owns five percent of world's biodiversity in only zero point two percent of the whole earth surface. Are there interesting things regarding renewable energy and sustainability? Is that we, we have managed to have practically 99 percent of our electrical power is generated by renewable sources. Uh, but there's much more to Costa Rica than that. I mean, we can say that we are the most solid democracy with him. Nothing. America regional 1948. That's another thing that a lot of people don't know. We abolished the army and we were like pretty novel in that specific scenario because we don't only abolish the army. We, we also took that budget, relocated into education. So we sort of speaking, we traded guns for books and um, well

Daniel Valverde: [06:22](#)

yeah, that's a pretty amazing tale. It happened just after our last civil war, a gun gun. I mean, we're really thankful days was the last one and uh, it was [inaudible] ended and I'm the winning party decided to do that because they, they, uh, what they intended to do is to create more of a whole generation of people that believe more in education and what you could bring into our country rather than have military forces for any particular reason that gave birth to a, to, to what we have today. We have the best education in educational system in Latin America as well. I cannot tell you. Well, San Jose, the capital city is currently named, uh, uh, first city or the best dad in Latin America for setting a outsourcing operations. So we have a lot of multinational companies that have come to Costa Rica operations. You too, because of the fact that we have, you have a local population that is very well educated in sciences in engineering careers.

Daniel Valverde: [07:35](#)

So it's um, I don't know our country of opportunities to develop the services products as well. Well, I'll tell you already, it's about education. It's about piece about sustainability. There's a lot to tell. Also, 30 percent of our territory is protected by some sort of flow. So that's how we, um, foster the, by the diversity and how we try to protect it to keep that five percent steady or hopefully increasing numbers rather than decrease it. And also he's a country about well-being. We'd have a who happened to be in the first place of the happy planet index because of that. And also you have a very good, uh, healthcare system and there's free for all citizens.

- Luiza Campos: [08:22](#) I mean, it's such a positive story. And I love the country has made, is now paying off. That's a great story. It's from, from the facts here. I can see that have your country potentially attract a lot of businesses as you were mentioning, a lot of tourism potentially as well, just because of how the diversity and how beautiful and, and of course the weather you have and even potentially some students. So was this sort of the impetus for creating the, the country brand was to attract talent, business students. What led you to create this country brand?
- Daniel Valverde: [09:11](#) Have to go back, wait, when no one in the hallway world. We're talking about sustainability Costa Rica. So these are the good competitive or comparative advantage and they started in the congress resolving these laws to protect the environment on our biodiversity in the country, all this last and gave birth to a set of rules that have been discussed with worldwide dean in several forms. And that gave us a niche in the kind of tourism that we wanted to attract to the country. Uh, we wanted to have a tourist or appreciate more the, the fallen on the floor of a country on a variety rather than these big hotel complex that we do have some of those, but that's not our core. We were more into
- Luiza Campos: [09:11](#) More eco firendly
- Daniel Valverde: [10:08](#) absolutely. And to protect what we have been given and to share it with the rest of the world. So a little bit forward into that kind of socio economical development scenario. We were a nation that was based on the culture of a mainly pineapple coffee and banana, but at some point in late seventies, I believe our, our government decided that we needed to do a little twist in our model economic experts model. We needed. We had a very well educated population and we had a very good age that we were in taking good advantage of. So we started doing, creating all these public policies in order to switch that model. We protected our, what we had the coffee, the banana and pineapple farms, but also we started investing in, in developing a different non-traditional folks as well and also the services. So the country started just slowly changing to a different economic scenario and we needed a brand that could represent the whole thing.

- Daniel Valverde: [11:25](#) Both the tourism but also the investment part, the exports on the FDA and the FDA. The attraction of, for the direct investment. So we made a lot of studies, a lot of them in practically over 18 different cities around the world is strategic markets. And, um, we wanted to know what people knew about Costa Rica and positive values around that, that position and from that start building what we wanted people to know about Costa Rica that we were aware that they didn't know that the, um, all these great things that I've just mentioned at the beginning of the interview about education, our, a political system, a very stable one. And also they will be in the kind of people that you will find here that are, um, yeah, they're hard working but also very well educated to develop it, to develop and foster innovation within any come to any company that comes to the country.
- Daniel Valverde: [12:29](#) So, um, that's how essential Costa Rica, that's name was born. It was practically four years and half and half is very important. I go and um, we learned around the last World Cup soccer World Cup soccer is a very important thing right here in Costa Rica, you know, and our national team, the great, great performance, less time in Brazil. And that gave us a very clear window to deploy the conversation around what Costa Rica is all about. The soccer players were like our ambassadors, like a very organically from that, both the rural and, um, our free promotion office, uh, took advantage of that and it started rolling out all the videos and the website on the essential Costa Rica brand in pieces of content that strategically placed in these markets. That's how we launched them. We how we started is a very young brand and uh, we have been every single year try to do something new for it to make it stronger and to go farther and deeper into the market so that we can see there is [inaudible]
- Luiza Campos: [13:43](#) first of all, doing the research to find out where the existing perceptions before you ever launch that campaign or the brand, I should say, using that timeframe of the World Cup of course, when, when so much of the world is paying attention to that and use that as the platform to, to launch the brand and using the, your own football players as ambassadors. I think that's brilliant. I'm really curious as well as what else did you involve? Because I know with any, as I mentioned in the beginning with any place brand in particular, there's so many different players. There's usually economic

development and tourism and all, you know, all of the different players that are part of forming the brand and part of promoting the brand. So if you could tell us a little bit about how, who decided on some of the key elements brand and you know, how you got approval from everyone as well as sort of the two part question, you know, how you formed that brand groups were involved with that as well. You mentioned you're making changes to the brand because it's a young brand, but he's still making changes to make it stronger. So if you could tell us what some of those changes have been, that would be great.

Daniel Valverde: [15:13](#)

A brand created by the tourism bureau, the bureau, and it was called Costa Rica, nor to visual ingredients, which is a great. I mean, it's a great, great brand because it, it, uh, capture what, what speaking was our strategy at a time. But the thing is that it didn't do not include what we wanted to say about the experts and also the FDI strategy that we were trying to deploy. So the story tells that every single head of the tourism bureau, the local, the national free promotion agency, which is called pro covered the agency or um, IPA promotion that you didn't called scene the also the salary or for your first ministry and um, the Ministry of culture as well. Participate in that process. And obviously the international, I mean the old, um, started this process that took quite a bit long journey, was a very long journey discussing how was Costa Rica going to face the fact that they needed to move from only a destination brand into a country band that was inclusive enough without losing all the leg as he was already built.

Daniel Valverde: [16:35](#)

So for that, they came to the conclusion that there were so many things going on going on for a specific sector that they needed an outsider. So they hired an outside research, a company to do this, to roll out this, this, this research within these 18 cds on. And they went to the CDS and asks if they holders, um, both well, people that visited the country tourism's a people that were buying products or services from Costa Rica and people that were thinking about a Costa Rica as a possible place to go on a test and they tried to fix or at least to settle the common aspects for each kind of stakeholder. And they prepared this report that was discussed it within these interesting national committee, just call it somehow once they saw these research results, some competitions were taken. So they hired another agency and outside

there as well just to start doing some proposals of, uh, about this country brand.

Daniel Valverde: [17:43](#)

Currently the government didn't have a budget for it, so someone had to pay for that. So the tourism bureau, I volunteered and they paid for the, for the whole build of this part of this project. They were, they were particularly interested because they wanted to protect the legacy of what they already built a through probably 20, 30 years by, by the time. So, um, I don't know, like probably six different types and the brand proposals came to the table and they chose a essential Costa Rica for that particular important thing about that story is that, uh, they all these guys from the different ministries and agencies went to the president of Costa Rica at the time and convinced, convinced them that, that the country needed to have some law behind it to protect it and to overcome government changes either if a, I don't know, for sampling in the states you have the Republicans and the Democrats. So when you have a switch in, in government, some of these lesions may change some, some, some policies may be changing. So a brand is, you know, going into marketing basis, a brand is all about consistency. So they were well aware that they needed to a brand that was able to go over different governments without suffering changes or at least not marketing based changes, technical change,

Luiza Campos: [19:17](#)

right? Yes. Risks I think that a country brands have is in the change of government that can, it will government, as you mentioned, place and they want to change the country. Brandon, of course, you lose all of them, not that you have built and the consistency that that's it's confusion in the marketplace. So, uh, it was a really important step, I think that you guys

Daniel Valverde: [19:56](#)

loader launched the, was able to sign that and I'm sort of the came the country brand was born. Then after, um, Mrs Lauder to Tj came, the current president, uh, he's from a different political party, totally different, but there was a law and we were very careful to explain to him what a Social Costa Rica was all about. He understood perfectly what the brand intended and a technical aspects behind it and to protect them to make her stronger through his government. And he did as well. Thanks to him too, that a specific decision wise one of the brand has last year, um, which you've, we managed to be on the top 10 of the country. Brands within the

Americas are quirky and that was a, that's according the bloom consulting bloom country brand index, I believe is called how it's called evaluate both dimensions. Tourism, they mentioned on also the investment direction they mentioned. And um, the thing is that in both what are like the most, not being top 10, but also what I like about it is that it was equally ranked in the ninth place both in tourism and in the investment they mentioned. So that talks about our very well Dannon's contribution and that's where, so for me, that's not an objective

Luiza Campos: [21:40](#)

design or creative behind the brand or the execution of the vendor actually in the results. So that's a, that's an important insignificant,

Daniel Valverde: [21:54](#)

I think that this is your idea, an idea that is represented through lower type. You have to support it and put something behind it, a content, something valuable. So you have public policies, you need to have citizen engagement, people in locals, the citizens have to adopt brand and uh, make a dairy and also become ambassadors. So you'd have to do some local campaigns just to explain what their contribution is all about, but also a settle the key messages for Costa Ricans to, to carry on their minds. So if they ever have the chance to talk about their country abroad or locally to any tourist or a business than they will have the right message for that or talk about the proof points that made up the country brand. Uh, so a factor.

Luiza Campos: [22:56](#)

Yeah. I want to make sure I emphasize some of the things you said Because for a lot of the brands, the focus usually external, in external communications in attracting the tourism or the talent or the investment and there's not a lot these, there's not a lot of attention paid locally in making sure that the residents at and the businesses or even the government and the policies are reflective and express and understand the brand. So, and this is also one of the reasons why I wanted to talk to you because I really admire the work you have done, not just externally, which of course we talked about you being recognized and being in the top 10 for the actual results that the brand brought. But you also focused internally. You took the time to make sure that policies in place for protecting the brand, for ensuring that everybody understood what that brand was, the key messages and getting that civic engagement as part of it. So this is a very significant step that you made a lot more work, but also I think what

made, what is helping and making it such a successful place brand.

- Daniel Valverde: [24:13](#) There's regular commercial, commercial brands about products that are nowadays looking for, I don't know, bloggers or a people have the tech
- Luiza Campos: [24:13](#) social media in influencers
- Daniel Valverde: [24:31](#) Yeah. Influencer, yes, of course influencers and B, because they know for sure that that's a very effective channel to talk to their audiences. Right? So in a way these campaigns for citizen engagement to explain Costa Rican. So residents, uh, on the coastal regions of everybody who lives in the country actually about what the country brand is all about is, is like turning 6,000,000 people into your brand ambassadors, uh, the very low cost. So you have 6,000,000 people talking about what Costa Rica is all about with the right key messages every single day, not only in their networks, but also in the other companies, their jobs with the families through reasons that visit the country or if they go abroad to talk to other people about where do you come from, where you come from, Costa Rica, where can you tell me about your country? And they have for sure to write messages for that and they know the assets about what Costa Rica is all about.
- Daniel Valverde: [25:33](#) So that for as the CDC engagement campaigns are very, very important and something that we take very seriously to also another stakeholder is the private sector, local companies that are here not only born in Costa Rica, but also the ones that have settled operations to come from abroad for them. We created this, this protocol. Well, you know, brandon is all about, as I was telling to you an idea, we're, we our idea behind the story to tell you about all, all about these country, right? And we talked about eh piece. It's an ability will being talented people. Right? But everything we go outside and say about this brand and this country is not reflected in the experience that people from abroad and have when they visit or get in touch with country companies or, or just visit. So for that we created these licensing protocol. So if you have a company that has operations in Costa Rica, you can go over these evaluation and get a certificate of putting the seal, which is the country brand, the logo.

- Daniel Valverde: [26:43](#) And by owning it, it means that you have committed to excellence to innovation, sustainability, social progress, and Costa Rican origin initiatives. This incorporates over 21, I believe, 21 different worldwide value, valuable standards that go from ISO 9,001 to ISO 14,001 carbon neutral. Certification for trade with have a local one called blue flag, which is a ball environment. So the has that we take a little something from these different standards have incorporated into one single protocol. So the company is evaluated and if the past evaluation they are able to carry out their essential Costa Rica brand within their packaging and corporate communications, uh, they have access to our footage or the pictures as well. They're the contraband uses. And of course I'm the old day institutions or governmental interest efficiency in bold in the country. Brand are more favoring to participate in from any private initiative where you are the CEO, Costa Rica licensee of rather than. You're not because it says which of company already are using
- Luiza Campos: [28:14](#) pain, but it's really thinking it through how you actually going to ensure, and this is true or we talk a lot in the podcast about the brand and which are based on your values. But then you have to communicate it. You actually have to make sure that you living by those values that whenever audience member engages the organization that they can feel. And there's proof points of you living in a country brand. This is exactly what you're doing. You're making sure that civic engagement with the residents, but the private sector, the companies that are in Costa Rica, that they adhere to the principles and the values that form this brand and you've created a method in which they can, they can do that which is also in their own advantage because then having these license of course brings them a credibility. Astin confidence in cache and all of those. So it's, it's really entitled. I love it.
- Daniel Valverde: [29:19](#) It's been very exciting and it's been a very useful learning process, you know, uh, up to date, we have 256 companies from the commercial sector and we have over a hundred and 10 from the tourism sector that have already passed the license. A protocol. It sounds a little. There's a very small community, but if you can see there, the fact that Costa Rica is quite small, actually a very good number because we, with this licensed protocol, we have been running it out for three years and a half now. So far as these very successful, he's have very

complex evaluation is not easy to pass. Um, but we are, we're very happy is I think these, this certification is not quantity is important, but quality is more important for it. So we, we always, um, take care of and pay attention to WHO's going through the protocol, who's evaluating and uh, on the outcomes, of course, other country brands within the, especially Latin American region have, have a very high interest.

Daniel Valverde: [30:30](#)

They want to know how, how we do, how was this a licensed protocol came to be and how we build it and how are we protecting it and developing it. And it's always something that keeps the bowl, you know, for now there's um, the ITC International Trade Center. It has this, a new initiative is called sustainability to him apps. It's a place that they have created these in their website and where they're trying to map all the certifications worldwide that somehow our align with their initiatives of our trade policy and uh, that incorporates all the good values of the UN and a w t o as well, what they want the international commerce and they have a talk to us. How about the our, our protocol does just to upload the whole protocol for public usage worldwide into their, into their website, and then that's something that we're currently working on.

Daniel Valverde: [31:35](#)

We're probably couple of months away from my achieving it. That's a very good thing. For instance, we get to share something that we believe is good not only as a competitive advantage but also because if our licensing protocol is something that every other nation around the world adopt the whirlwinds somehow, right. Because we are well aware that the value is for from which we created these brand values in terms of upper worlds very economical and economical environment as well. And for the other a scenario, all the companies that have already passed it, the licensing protocol automatically have like a special showcase because they already are licensed under essential Costa Rica. Brandon,

Luiza Campos: [32:23](#)

I would love if you could talk to us because you mentioned a little bit in the beginning of this course to form the brand. You did research in 18 different cities and because the brand is, you know, has different goals in terms of attracting tourism, investment talent. I am really curious if you could share with us, how did you launch the brand, because this could be a very expensive proposition to promote hunt internationally. So can you

tell us a little bit about the strategy and some of the platforms that you use to promote the country? Brand

Daniel Valverde: [33:01](#)

our report four and a half years ago. So our main for lunch, we did some efforts, we put some digital efforts in Europe, some in South America, some in Asia, but our core was in the United States and Canada. OK. And um, what are the very important partner in is very important part for us. So we, we are the cds that we already had settled some sort of businesses going on so we had the very powerful presence in the east coast and the west coast, but in particular some not that hard, not that strong but we had some spots over there but we bought his cable TB mainly as a pl initiative but also we, that's, there was a very short, a very specific, very tactical implementation but where, um, because w how we reach. But in terms of frequency we use, so obviously digital because, well first budget but also country, our country brand is all about the conversation and the relevance, uh, you have to be, to be relevant, you have to tell stories.

Daniel Valverde: [34:26](#)

And the details scenario has proven to be just the best for that. That was four years and half ago and up until now as well, our latest international campaign was, was not focused on the US, it was actually, I'm focusing in Spain, France, Germany and England and niches in which recently we opened direct flights. Uh, we increased our exports and we started talking about a stronger presence in terms of [inaudible] in the country. So those, those lesions, those markets were defined within our technical unit that the country brand has with representatives from every single institution that meets, makes up the country brand committee. So we talked to the BBC and we created these, these hubs. We edited this short 32nd video and we used to, we use it in his home, a strategic BBC channels and more business oriented. And also we created through their network out off of digital ads that lead to a hub to a landing page that had very, very nice pieces of, of work regarding the friend things about what Costa Rica was valid in terms of business in a parallel scenario, the tourism bureau magnificent campaign, absolutely directed to a tourism audiences also using the country brand, but with a tone that it's quite a different because it's more about, uh, we'll be doing is a, is more about the come visit, see this sustainability, uh, opportunities that Costa Rica has to show all the eco tourism.

- Daniel Valverde: [36:15](#) But also there's culture also. There is also there as well being, I don't know if, I don't know if aspects that we wanted to talk about and there's. So we needed a separate campaign for that. But we learned both at the same time. Obviously the tourism campaign was greater, bigger because the audience was quite massively bigger, stronger than that than the audience in terms of of businesses. More niche audience. Both complaints run in the second half of 2017. We're very amazing results. For instance, uh, I believe there were over 133,000,000 people were reached through the TV channels and 22,000,000 in terms of the eco only individually complained. The other one was way bigger. And uh, so that's something that, that we, that we're very proud of because in four years and a half week, uh, have learned a lot about what our country brand campaigns should be. We think a lot about our audiences and the people that we are targeting our messages to. We not only want to put out the law one, a beautiful shots on the whole thing, we think about entertaining. We think about educating, um, hopefully create some sort of starting point to generate a conversation that will hopefully end in people visiting our country either for business or just literally.
- Luiza Campos: [37:48](#) I love it.
- Luiza Campos: [37:50](#) One of the things you said because there's a lot of really great learnings there which is you have one, of course the brand, but you still need to use different key messages or highlight different aspects of that country brand depending on the audience you're talking to in this case tourism versus businesses. So it is relevant to that audience and of course this is the case with any brand. I mean you have the core, the DNA is the same, but you need to be flexible depending on which audience you're talking to. And I love the fact that even though those two campaigns had two different audiences, you launched them at the same time because of course, um, and often forget about this, right? But of course you may, you may be in the, in the target of being the business, for instance, a business owner. So you may be in the target audience of business, but you're also a person. So you also go home and watch to Vienna and so forth. So that adds on the frequency that you would potentially, the campaign could potentially reach, right? A wider audience and the higher frequency that way. So I love what you're doing there.

- Daniel Valverde: [39:06](#) It's been a learning process or the placemaking a scenario. They have the initiative, the concept of per se. It's something that's been around for quite a while, but not that long. Even if you go right now into any online book of your preference and you look for the term country branding or placemaking, you'll find very few books, not that much. There has not been a lot a greeting about it. So podcasts like yours are, have a very good guide because, Eh, we, people that are working in every single country under these, uh, to, to develop our country brands or this nation brands of, for the benefit of our economies have, have to struggle because there's not much guides into buildings. So you have to keep learning. You have to keep documenting every single step grading and be sure to have their records of the results to measure constantly and to go back into the numbers share is something that we do.
- Daniel Valverde: [40:13](#) We do it, uh, for instance, uh, once a year we get together, or Latin American countries in particular, uh, in our country to define every, every year is different and we share our best practices. Also, we attend forums like the, for instance, the simulation place and Simon that happens in different parts of the world. There's one chapter in America in New York, every single tune. There's one in, um, London global. That's how, that's how they called initial plays global. That happens in London every November and I believe there's one in Asia Pacific that happens at the very beginning of the year. But the thing is that we need to get together and discuss what we are doing. A read reports, a share knowledge because that's the only way that you have a fast learning curve in order to have the best for your country and the air force your country's trying to deploy, to have an edge in the international markets and to be more competitive as well
- Luiza Campos: [41:22](#) mean. Building a brand, as I mentioned in the beginning, is a difficult task for any one country. Brand is particularly so because it involves so many different people, so many different aspects, you know, characteristics of the, of the country and you really have to bring everyone along because you have to create a brand that is not only attractive and relevant or compelling to the audience. You're trying to attract being business or tourists, but also to the residents that are part of the country because otherwise, you know, you have civic engagement and you have private sector engagement within Costa Rica,

but you wouldn't have that if that brand didn't resonate with the, with the Costa Ricans didn't resonate with the population. So it's really, it's really important to involve all of those aspects and create a brand that is really true and genuine about the place as well as compelling to those outside. So it's, it's not an easy task and you have done an amazing, amazing job. And I love the fact that you're sharing those learnings with other nations as well.

Daniel Valverde: [42:45](#)

I've been in marketing for quite a bit now. I've worked for holding companies with four different, um, I don't know, markets within the Latin American region maybe, but I've never, I've never been close to something that looks like a or happens to be managed as a country brand for instance. You don't get to control the product at all. You can have, you can provoke some conversation around it and uh, start, uh, know I'm trying to make some public policies happened in order to, for the benefit of the countries as well as the brand. For instance, the renewable energy thing that I was talking to you about at the beginning of the, of the, of the interview. I mean, it's a, it's a public policy regarding not depending on fossil fuels for energy production in the country. That was a decision taken a half a century ago, uh, by the government at the time and it has given us this positioning statement about the country of renewable energies and that's something that we achieved thanks to a public policy initiatives somehow push the kind of things. But in the end, the product a country brand represents, is not something that you as a marketer control is something it's owned by the people, the residents or the citizens, the people that made up a country with only the land. And that's what the Social Costa Rica understands and tries to, to develop for the benefit of the whole country.

Luiza Campos: [44:28](#)

Yeah. As I started, the challenge is for country brand are really significant and it's not easy and I never quite thought of it that way, but you're right, like you have no control over your product and so it, it, it adds that additional difficult, the whole process.

Daniel Valverde: [44:51](#)

Carnegie.

Luiza Campos: [44:52](#)

Yes. I absolutely. I have. I've been engaged in, in a few places. Brandings and I, I find it fascinating. It's um, I think the bigger the challenge, the, the, the more interesting it is. Can you share with us what were some, was there any

particular challenges talking about challenges? We talked about a few, but were there any particular challenges or on the other hand, any really interesting surprises, things that you didn't expect a happened that took place?

Daniel Valverde: [45:25](#)

Well, for instance, I'm into easy campaign. We were talking about the blue zones, which was a major thing last year. Uh, the bluestones these particular geographical areas where people get to live a longer than most people around the world. Costa Rica happens to have one of the biggest on we wanted to to to state police a report that we pay as part of these using hub addressing these particular issue and so, and the connection with economical development is that actually they will being initiatives in the country give birth to these blue zone is specifically, but the rest of the countries will have a very good living standard that was the scope about that particular part of the campaign. But we were going through that. National Geographic writes this article and the cover page is all about the blue zones and they talk about Costa Rica and they were like, it was amazing. I mean, it was exactly a diversity.

Luiza Campos: [46:34](#)

Couldn't have planned it better.

Daniel Valverde: [46:37](#)

I was telling my team if we planned for it is we, we don't have it. Like, like so, so neat and so perfect timing. So they're only good surprises about that. And uh, the other thing is that I was traveling last year. I was going to, I was in, I don't know, I wasn't in some summary reports through La over and there was this guy, there was, it was, he wasn't going to Costa Rica and he was showing his, um, he saw and I believe a brochure about Costa Rica and I was sitting close to him, so I kinda heard, although manners, you know, you shouldn't be, but I can help it. And they were talking about, um, the country, Costa Rica about what we're going to, to, to find this country. And it was impressive how the things that this guy was doin son were practically the same things that I wanted all the campaign to be.

Daniel Valverde: [47:43](#)

He was talking about, he was not talking about, yes, you're going to see some beautiful birds and the jungle and the whole thing, but you know, something good about Costa Rica, they have no army. And the kid was making those smart questions like, well, if they don't have an army, how do they defend themselves from innovation? And uh, he was at a responding like a, well,

the best way to defend the country with words because we've been yourself with words with this questions using the right places to do that because wars do not solve anything. And they were going through this. I was, I was impressed. I mean, it was, it was the whole campaign just, Ah,

Luiza Campos: [48:22](#)

you have to round in that conversation.

Daniel Valverde: [48:24](#)

Exactly. So, um, so it was rates or price for me. I mean the, uh, there was right there, but we sold all of our team's work, uh, decades of public policies and supportive quarters of the private sector in developing what the country is today and happening right in front of my eyes. So it was a beautiful, beautiful experience. Something totally unexpected. Wow.

Luiza Campos: [48:48](#)

Can you imagine? Yes. You seen all the fruits of your labor and somebody else's is being able to express all of that. So that must have felt really good.

Daniel Valverde: [48:58](#)

So that's, um, that's a challenge is what I can tell you is that, well, the political factories always a thing I'll thought that. Um, we have managed. So it was, we were talking before w, w we managed to create all this structure just to protect the brand from oil changes, there's still a risk, so you have to take care of this stakeholder on going to keep a sustainable, uh, information process in which you tell them what you're doing, where were achieving, where the brand is all about. So how is this moving? So, um, so they don't see that the brand is a problem to solve, which is a politician's main key apis. That one, yeah, they're always trying to, to solve problems, right? So you don't want to be a province sold if you have a country on the board that uh, there's, there's, there's always a challenge about, uh, you need to, to meet your, your way into the office or a decision makers within government has explain in one country about. But the committee, the country brand committee does a usually a very good job regardless. So it's always a challenge, something that you have to keep an eye on. But it's something that we are aware that we have the tools to, to keep a steady brian consistent brand.

Luiza Campos: [50:26](#)

Exactly, I understand you are giving

Daniel Valverde: [50:28](#)

a speech at a, is it sitting nation about this, this topic I have to do to give this talk on, on June at the beginning

of your New York University and uh, the theme is particularly tough. How do you protect the brand from political risks? We have recently come through elections. Uh, we ended up, we went through two rounds of lessons and finally the, the, the winning party is actually the same party today is within right now in the government office, so we don't expect to have major risks, but still, um, while we've been talking about today is just a preview of, of, of the topic that I should be developing during this forum and ideas to share with other colleagues about how we managed to create the structure for the contraband on all this as it's. I mean, this, the thing that I was telling you about politicians, I mean, you don't have to create a brand that's strong enough, uh, that does not depend on a governmental government budget and have his own, uh, funding.

Daniel Valverde: [51:39](#)

Do you need to have a committee, a steering committee, and from different institutions, uh, you to be very close to the private sector and to have their opinion on involvement into the brand development and you have to be very well engaged with their citizens in order to make the brand. There's so the result is a very strong brand and uh, the best part of it is what I just told you. I mean, there's not a problem for a politician to solve so they can concentrate it and things are more relevant. For instance, uh, I don't know how to prove vacation. How do you prove infrastructure? How do you create a, a new opportunities for, uh, for the country to bloom and to grow into what we have always dreamed of. Story should be. So

Luiza Campos: [52:32](#)

my view is all is actually a very needed and amazing asset to have. And I love you hit right on the essential elements that need to be there. You know, engaging in all these different stakeholders, making sure that leaders understand the value and the importance of the brand. And this is true, um, you know, for a place brand as it is for any brand in any organization, if even though a brand doesn't sit in one specific department as it doesn't in this case with one specific governmental institutions, still need your leaders to understand the value of it, to be able to support it. So, and you, you are doing exactly that. So, so that's amazing. Any plans for the future? Where should we expect essential Costa Rica brand

Daniel Valverde: [53:27](#)

being asked because you need to grow and protect. Right now we're reviewing our licensing protocol to see

what new Ah, asked. So should we be incorporating into it according to a worldwide makeup tendencies? We are finding that there's a movement towards a well-being economies and this topic is, is getting a lot of traction in speaking and a Costa Rica has been called in by the WTO to become one. One of the, uh, of the week will be economy. Seven D is a group that they're trying to put together. Economies have proven that they can have a very, they can foster economic development with very high will being indexes, Eh, Eh, I'm under population as well. So, um, that's how I see already and that's something that we like to incorporate into our protocols so we can have this commitment from the private sector as well regarding the engagement where you're going to do part doing the hour by annual campaign campaign this time we are expecting to have to increase our engagement radios.

Daniel Valverde: [54:48](#)

So specifically in the digital area where our social networks have a over one point five percent of interaction rates, but we expect the chief to. That's our goals. Hopefully we do it. So we're preparing all these creative visuals and a dynamic for people to interact with your brand on. The other thing that we're doing later this year is that we are um, having these new international campaign. Don't only if it's going to be a, we're going to repeat the whole. You've picked off what we had last year between CNN and BBC, but also we're thinking about finding different markets and different audiences that we haven't tackled before. So we're, that's something that we are currently discussing. Oh, very important. We are renewing all the, the audio, visual, all the shots, the footage on the pictures that we currently use for the brand new, where were, are refreshing those do you know, that's a very important asset for us and they trade with our country from overseas so far as you. Something that we've taken very good care. And uh, we're currently hiring a, the different photographers, Eh, for that with new techniques. Uh, we went to shoot a or challenges to the show Costa Rica way that it hasn't been shown before with the optics when um, narratives when these stories. So that's something that we're very passionate and very well. What are you looking forward to it and later this year as well.

Luiza Campos: [56:28](#)

Very exciting, very exciting things. You so much for doing this. Where can people find out more about

- Daniel Valverde: [56:40](#) OK, there's a, our website in terms of tourism, which is w w dot visit Costa Rica Dot Com. Also we have the control brand, a website which is essential Costa Rica Dot com. And also there's a couple of words, websites that I believe are the best, uh, in terms of business. One is a Costa Rica through promotion or UC pro calmer, which is pro calmer.com and there's the, the or IPA investment promotion agency, a national investment promotion. You're using Costa Rica, which is called seen the C as in Charlie, I n, d, e Dot Org, the website as well in terms of the, if you want to see for investment opportunities within the country. We're currently working into centralizing all these different websites on there, the country run umbrella, so that's something that we are a kind of working on as well, but at the moment would have to all these different websites separated from each other. Both still, they have a very consistent message about about the country and I'll do opportunity, the opportunities it has to be assessed.
- Luiza Campos: [57:51](#) I'll make sure to include links in the show notes.
- Daniel Valverde: [57:57](#) Thank you. Thank you.
- Luiza Campos: [57:58](#) Thank you so much again for spending the time and sharing the essential. Costa Rica started with us today. He was. Was really, really insightful.
- Daniel Valverde: [58:09](#) No, thank you. Lose, again for the opportunity, um, love your podcast and I look forward to hear more from you.
- Luiza Campos: [58:16](#) Thank you so much Daniel.
- Luiza Campos: [58:18](#) And there you have it. I hope you enjoyed my interview with Daniel Valverde. They have really done an amazing job not only in being able to develop a brand that is a true expression of the country and the residents of the country, but they have done a remarkable job in engaging all of their audiences internal and external, and make sure you go to the show notes where Danielle has shared with us some of the amazing work that they have done and some of the assets that he talks about from the brand book, the licensee protocol video, as well as some brand launch videos that they have done that really explain all the essential elements of the brand. So make sure to go to the show notes at Brendan World Podcast Dot Com. So you can see all of these different assets that

Danielle shared with us. Thank you so much for listening.
And until next time.