



UNIVERSIDADE
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**NATION BRANDING IN A GLOBALIZED COMPETITIVE
WORLD: HOW CAN COUNTRIES UTILIZE NATION BRANDS
TO FOSTER THEIR POTENTIAL?**

Thesis submitted to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to
obtain a PhD Degree in Communications

By

Tarik Alhassan

Faculty of Human Sciences

June 2023



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Abstract

This thesis explores how countries can utilize nation brands in a globalized competitive world to foster their potential, and in so doing, how they can achieve the financial benefits referred to in different fields, including attracting tourists and foreign investors.

To answer this research question, this study reviews the subject of nation branding, what constitutes a nation's brand, and what makes a brand a positive one, to then comprehend the significance of effectively communicating the brand globally in order to achieve a positive perception.

Qualitative research was conducted within an interpretive epistemology, with the data collected using two methods. The first method was interviews, in which eleven relevant actors from the field were interviewed to discuss various aspects of the topic. This includes what constitutes a positive brand, previous anecdotes with global brands, influential elements in nation branding, and effective brand communications. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was applied to analyze the data collected in the interviews. Promotional digital campaigns conducted by the study's chosen nations, the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Spain, were examined through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a second method in the empirical section. This was to access concrete materials of media actions and comprehend the communication themes and elements used to promote nations and attract foreigners.

After analyzing the interviews, the researcher identified themes that define a nation's brand builders, as well as the importance of both internal and external communications, followed by an analysis of the intersection of politics and nation branding, based on the consensus view of participants. Furthermore, through the reviewed communicated brands' narrative and elements, CDA enhanced the researcher's understanding of how nations attempt to impress and attract visitors, investors, and tourists.

The findings of the investigation led to the thesis that nation branding is an ongoing and consistent process that is more complicated than what has been described in the literature up to now. The author submits that countries can foster their potential by first developing a competitive brand and then effectively communicating the brand's narrative and competitive edge using several types of communications channels continuously in order to impress and successfully attract tourists and investors.

In the process of branding themselves, nations must sustain a well-built and a competitive brand. Based on the analyzed themes from the interviews with global actors in nation branding,

and on the analysis of the campaigns within the theoretical framework, the author identified the brand-building elements that comprise a competitive and attractive nation brand. Vision, policies, the nation's role and contributions in social, humanitarian, and environmental global issues, infrastructure, culture, history, people, sports, and location are among these elements. Sustaining a competitive brand requires effective and continuous internal and external communications: internally, by informing all stakeholders about the nation's vision and objectives, and combining its resources to achieve those goals; and externally, by effectively communicating the nation's narrative, competitive edge, and uniqueness to various global audiences using a variety of communication tools and strategies. The significance of using a variety of communication tools stems from the aim of minimizing any distortion namely from global media platforms mainly due to political or economic motivations. While results from this study indicate that regional political and economic agendas can influence a nation's brand, nation branding is shown to be ineffective at influencing political agendas.

Keywords:

Nation branding, nation brand, country marketing, place marketing, brand communications

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my motivating, and loving mom, dad, brother, and sisters for the support. I also dedicate this to Prof. John Philip Hayes, Prof. Hassan Munir El Sady, and Bader Al Rifaie for believing in me and pushing me to do this PhD.

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Statement of original authorship

I certify that the knowledge presented in this thesis is the product of my own efforts. The work of other researchers has been utilized; full recognition has been made in accordance with academic protocol followed at the Catholic University of Portugal.

Also, I hereby certify that the thesis has never been published or delivered at another university.

The work in this publication is original, and all further sources were cited.

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Introduction

The concept of nation branding is linked with political, economic, and social gains once a nation achieves a positive brand. This study aims to explore how, in a globalized competitive world, countries can utilize their brands to foster their potential. This will be done by reviewing and analyzing the current theories and concepts about nation branding, previous studies carried out and their findings, as well as analyzing examples of successful nations' brands, followed by empirical research.

This thesis aims to integrate those findings and to point out new ones, contributing new knowledge to the field. This thesis will also take into consideration the findings of current theories, such as the importance of policies, internal practices, government regulations, strategies, visions, and media representation, as well as current and past communication strategies and representations of nations.

Current theories in country branding link 'good nation brands' with positive economic, political, and social outcomes. The author aims to increase knowledge in the field, particularly from a communication perspective, and improve current practices through further exploration and suggesting an international manual with guidelines for nations that aim to improve their brand's value and perception. This study aims to empirically explore the pillars of a positive country brand and how this brand can be utilized to maximize a nation's potential in a competitive globalized market. This study uses both the term country brand and nation brand. While the author acknowledges that there is a difference in the meanings of the words country and nation, the process of developing a country brand or nation brand is the same, and thus the terms are used interchangeably.

While most literature covering the subject explores the policy (policies and regulations in the nation), the communication, business, and marketing perspectives, or the political perspective of nation branding (internal and external political interests), this thesis aims to explore further angles including the cultural, social, promotional, and media influence on nation branding practices in a globalized competitive world. The focus of this study is on potentially finding appropriate elements and channels to communicate and promote the brand with the aim of attracting tourists and international investors.

The exploration of the phenomenon will be an ongoing process. The subject is linked with other issues that are in constant global development and review, such as a nation's global

perception, economic, political, and social development, sustainability, competitiveness, globalization, marketing and media communications, soft power, digital transformation, etc.

Research Question

The research question presented below is intended to be an invitation to countries, governments, and international organizations to view nation branding as an empowering element in developing a country's economic, social, and political potential.

Nation branding is a strategic approach, and it can potentially give an edge to the nations in different fields economically, politically, and socially. This takes place when nation branding practice is applied successfully and a positive perception is created about the nation (Torres, 2019; Anholt, 2011). The researcher aims to answer the question: How can nations effectively utilize their brands in a contemporary globalized competitive world? And, in so doing, how can they potentially attain the commonly associated benefits, such as the attraction of foreign direct investments and growth of tourism?

The importance of the research relies on utilizing nation branding as a supportive approach for countries to be in line with the global trend of economic development and sustainability visions for 2030 adopted by most governments. This study also aims to present a nation branding manual that can lead to fostering United Nations sustainable development goals 2030 initiative, through providing nations with new knowledge to grow economically (UN, 2021; UNWTO, 2022).

PART I – Theoretical Framework

Chapter One: Globalization

This study focuses on nation branding, which refers to the activities that countries engage in so as to be perceived positively on a global scale. As a result, it is necessary to first deconstruct, introduce, and define a chain of concepts around the term nation branding. Since this study is looking at the concept of nation branding and the application of the practice on the global scale, the author finds it relevant to start by introducing the concept of globalization. This will provide a perspective about the way nations ‘operate’ in a globalized world.

The rise of globalization in the 21st century has been described as a game-changer for economic, cultural, and political activities for nations. Richard Vietor of Harvard Business School described countries today as “companies” that compete economically (Churchwell, 2004).

This chapter will give an overview of the economic, cultural, and political dimensions of globalization. This is to help understand if there is an intersection between globalization and nation branding, and if so, the effect of that intersection on nations’ branding practices. The author is also interested in viewing how this global economic, political, and cultural network has been built to appear in its current shape and how is it related to nation branding phenomena in terms of making countries compete as ‘brands’.

The Concept of Globalization

From an economic perspective, according to the International Monetary Fund (2008), globalization “refers to an extension beyond national borders of the same market forces that have operated for centuries at all levels of human economic activity—village markets, urban industries, or financial centers”. Globalization has helped in the expansion of global markets in numerous industries, which resulted in raising the standards in economic global competitiveness and led to providing more ‘options’ for users and consumers at competitive prices (IMF, 2008).

A well-known scientific program in the Middle East known as “The Scholar” discussed globalization in multiple dimensions and gave the following example. Al Ghandoor (2018) said, “you know you are in the peak of what is so-called globalization when you watch my YouTube program, on your iPhone that is made in China and designed in USA, and shipped through a European company to your continent, and labourers working from all over the world to complete this assignment. Followed by connecting with people that you don’t know from all over the world through social networks and seeing local, regional, and global trends on social media, exchange ideas, discuss different topics, learn about new ideologies through pictures and videos produced in other countries, attending classes online given in English by a

Norwegian professor while the student is based Australia, this is globalization”, “thanks to technology”, he added.

Even though the term is mostly associated with economic global expansion, Manfred Steger (2008) believes that the term “should be used to refer to a set of social processes that are thought to transform our current social condition into one of globality” (p. 17). Putting this phrase into practice, imagine going to downtowns of cities from different parts of the world, for example, Sydney, Australia, Los Angeles, US, Dubai, UAE, Cape Town, South Africa, Madrid, Spain, and Buenos Aires, Argentina. Apart from seeing the names of international brands in different industries including Starbucks, Apple, McDonald’s, H&M, Burger King, Nike, and other global brands, would economic globalization participate in creating or forming global social practices?

Economically, globalization can be viewed as “the integrated internationalization of markets and corporations” which has resulted in changing the way modern and international organizations conduct business operations and strategies (Wheelen et al., 2015, p. 40). The revolution of technology, internet, and media, that took place in the 21st century have participated in the evolution of globalization phenomenon (Steger, 2008, p. 18).

Historically, there were different eras and stages of globalization; according to Michael Hendrix (2012) from the United States Chamber of Commerce Foundation, today we live in the third era of globalization. This era started in the beginning of the 21st century. In each previous era, global trading grew in different fields. Some world historians believe that globalization began in the 15th century, when Christopher Columbus arrived at the ‘new world,’ or what would later be known as South and North America (O’Rourke & Williamson, 2002). This opened new markets and opportunities for Europeans at the time. Some argue that globalization began much earlier, through the trade that used to take place between different continents, particularly the Chinese Silk Road, which linked three different continents centuries before Columbus’ voyage (O’Rourke & Williamson, 2002).

Thomas Friedman believes that there are three different eras of globalization. The first was globalization 1.0, which existed between 1492 and 1800 (Mirgani, 2021). Different factors at that time contributed to this phase of globalization, including colonial projects, international trade, and transportation tools development such as large ships (Friedman, 2007). “Globalization 2.0” is believed to have started in the 1900s, according to Friedman (2007, p.9). The main theme of this phase can be explained by larger companies trying to globalize to reach new markets and laborers (especially within colonial nations), more trips were conducted

across continents due to further development of transportation including trips between Asia – Africa – Europe – and North and South America. The last element in this theme was the search for and exchange of new resources and materials. Although in “globalization 1.0,” boundaries and borders were broken, in “globalization 2.0” more boundaries and international borders were broken for trade and cultural exchange (Friedman, 2007, p. 4)

Lastly, and according to Friedman (2007) the third era of globalization that we currently live in, “globalization 3.0,” started in the beginning of the 21st century, especially with further technological and communication growth globally (p.10). The ‘newest’ element about this phase of globalization is that it went beyond governments or organizations. In this phase, even individuals were able to go global and communicate a talent, skill, or service. An example could be the recruitment of artists, international football players, singers conducting concerts around the world, or scientists sharing knowledge. One contributing element is the revolution of communications, media, and internet services (p. 5). According to Friedman (2007) in all phases of globalization the expansion was mostly for white/European nations, however, in “globalization 3.0” the expansion was to new countries such as India and China (p. 11). It is also important to note that throughout history, globalization in all eras was interrupted due to wars or epidemics (Friedman, 2007).

While discussing globalization in all eras, Friedman (2005) believes that globalization has flattened the world: “The world became flat in the sense that the competitive playing field between industrial and emerging market countries is leveling; and that individual entrepreneur as well as companies, both large and small, are becoming part of a large, complex, global supply chain extending across oceans”. (p. 6)

1- Economic Globalization

On August 13, 2022, Al Jazeera news channel, along with other Egyptian news channels, announced that the Egyptian pound (Egypt’s currency) was suffering further depreciation in its value. The Al Jazeera report declared that there were three main causes for this drop: firstly, global supply chain struggles due to different logistical reasons; secondly, the Russian/Ukrainian war; and thirdly, internal factors related to the government’s policies. Since the beginning of the Russian/Ukrainian war in February 2022, the prices have risen in an illogical or unexplained way for ‘regular’ citizens. Prices of petrol and food, along with many other items (56 sectors in 44 countries) went up around the world, and the only reason given

as an answer to all the questions related to price increases was always associated with Russian/Ukrainian war (Yagi & Managi, 2022, p.693). Ukraine and Russia controlled an important portion of the global supply of energy, food, and logistics. Even though the war physically took place inside the Ukrainian territory, inflation in the prices of some items have affected many different countries, including Germany, France, Italy. This raises an important question: is economic globalization good or bad? Despite living the same global circumstances, countries such as KSA, Kuwait, Qatar, Emirates, and Russia have enjoyed economic stability and even growth for the first time after the COVID-19 epidemic in 2020. This is because those countries are all oil/gas/energy producing countries (Al Jazeera, 2022).

Economic globalization can be defined as “the widespread international movement of goods, capital, services, technology and information” (Babones, 2008, p. 52). According to Song, Li, and Cao (2018), “globalization characterizes the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres of the modern world”. Most references explore globalization from an economic perspective, including discussing the development of the internet, blockchain, and corporate expansion across borders (Friedman, 2007, p. 18).

The United Nations issued a report in 2000 on economic globalization and its trends and risks. Economic globalization was explained as “the increasing interdependence of world economies as a result of the growing scale of cross-border trade of commodities and services, flow of international capital and wide and rapid spread of technologies”, and the report described economic globalization as “an irreversible trend” (Shangquan, 2000). Being an irreversible trend means that countries either have the option to participate in this economic competition and grow, or choose to take a spectator’s seat in this global race.

The rise of economic globalization in the 21st century was aided by the technological revolution and significant advances in information and telecommunications. Transportation advancement resulted in lower travel costs, which was another encouraging factor for international trade growth. This also paved the way for more borderless trade, export, import, and manufacturing. For example, “Ford’s Lyman car is designed in Germany, its gearing system produced in Korea, pump in USA, and engine in Australia. It is exactly the technological advancement that has made this type of global production possible” (Shangquan, 2000). Borderless trade allowed global products from nations from all over the world to be available in local markets across the planet. As a result, consumers enjoyed a variety of international products and services. The selection is what comes next, and it is made based on different variables, including prices, brands, quality, and taste (Shangquan, 2000). When a country enjoys a positive reputation,

quality, and a specific competitive edge globally, especially an industrial one, it helps in becoming a favorable choice for consumers. In exploring the relationship between export of goods, globalization, and nation branding, Rita Ribeiro (2012) believed that nation branding surely helped improve competitiveness in this global economic race.

Examples of that can be the general trust of global consumers in German industries, Japanese technologies, and or American brands (Kotler, 1999; Dinnie, 2013). This shall be further explored and discussed in the section on nation branding. However, this point shall be a leading tip to help build a potential link between two variables: globalization and nation branding from an economic perspective.

Almost two decades ago, economic globalization was promoted as a major boost to all economies around the world. Although globalization has helped growing markets reach global consumers in other parts of the world with strong purchasing power, the truth was that some citizens living in the United States and Europe enjoyed ‘cheaper’ products made in economically disadvantaged Asian countries with far lower salaries. The profits made by multinational corporations in comparison to workers’ wages in countries of production show a large gap in distribution, in an unequal way (Collins, 2015).

It is fair to say that economic globalization benefited some countries more than others, perhaps the ones with higher political edge. Examples of successful economic globalization are mostly corporations from the United States and Europe producing goods for the rest of the world, including the ones that are made in China but are designed by an American company, as in the case of Apple (Collins, 2015). This raises the question of whether economic globalization is practiced fairly in the world. Another example is the United States banning the Chinese company Huawei’s products in the US market. Not only that, but the US government requested that the European Union and other Middle Eastern countries stop any business deals with Huawei. This took place between 2018 and 2020. Rumors about the reasons for the US sanctions against the Chinese giant were traveling fast between the continents. The US government at the time and then-president Donald Trump stated on different occasions that the decision was due to “political” involvement between the company and the Chinese government; at a later stage the sanctions were linked to data leaks and the privacy of users, and finally it was linked with national security reasons (Pearlstine et al., 2019). This raises the question of how fair economic globalization is in our era, given that this economic practice is being heavily influenced by political drivers.

Christine Lagarde, head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), commented at a global economic forum for the IMF that economic globalization helps in building global integration. Lagarde added that governments can benefit more from globalization by creating a positive business environment that supports business expansion and economic growth (IMF, 2016). Despite Lagarde's comments, however, this logic might not work if countries receive sanctions from markets that are politically stronger due to both their hard and soft power. The example of Huawei and the US government was a replica of many different sanctions made by the US against other markets. This includes sanctions made against supposed allies in the European Union, which took place when the EU refused to import meat from US markets in the 1990s due to the use of hormones that are a leading cause to cancer. The US government sued the EU and set sanctions against them for not importing meat from the US market; the dispute is published in the US Library of Congress (2009). These examples demonstrate a tie between economic globalization and the political influence of superpowers to lead this competition.

What is the relevance of these examples when a nation aims to have a better brand and use this brand as a communications strategy in a globalized competitive era? It is important to differentiate here between nation branding practice and a nation's brand. A nation's brand is the result of a long process, including branding, which will be covered in the branding section. However, it is an outcome and a result, which could be achieved through different variables including soft power, hard power, economic, industrial, social, natural, and cultural variables (Torres, 2019; Roll, 2018).

In an economic investigation conducted by *The Economic Informant* TV show, the researcher Ashraf Ibrahim (2021) took Taiwan as a case study to investigate whether or not countries can develop strong brands and compete economically in a globalized competitive world despite not being a superpower such as China or the US. Ibrahim explored the Taiwanese journey in being a leading nation in our global economy through the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC). According to Ibrahim (2021), and Wu (2021) TSMC has successfully created the most important corporation in the world with a value of 550 billion US dollars in 2021. This company specializes in producing semiconductor chips, which are used in most modern digital electronics, including mobile phones, cars, airplanes, weapons, and even F-35 fighter aircrafts. According to Ibrahim (2021), Perry (2011), and The Economist (NA, 2021), TSMC created that "competitive edge" for Taiwan, and strategically positioned the country in the global economic competition. Today the governments of the US, China, EU, and Japan are interested in developing positive relations with its administration due to the "need" they have

for TSMC. Ibrahim stated, TSMC “is the pride of Taiwan”; Taiwan successfully created an organization that the modern world cannot live without. “The poor Taiwan would not be in its global position today without TSMC” (Foreign Policy, 2021). Therefore, a nation can create its brand by offering value; in the case of Taiwan, the value of its brand relies in its industrial arm TSMC (Foreign Policy, 2021).

1.2 Cultural Globalization

Look to the spread of the Christian religion across the globe thousands of years ago despite starting from Bethlehem in Palestine for an example of how globalization took place in different aspects other than trade or exploration and travel. Same concept applies to *The Quran* or *The Torah*, where one religion started in what is today called KSA and the other started in Egypt. The spread of religion across the world created a sense of border breaking which led to having people in multiple locations across the world sharing similar culture and beliefs. This can also be considered globalization but not from an economic or trade perspective. According to Manfred and Paul (2019), cultural globalization took place in many forms other than trade, including the exchange of ideas, values, and meanings that lead to create “common cultures” (p. 137). Despite the significance of technology in globalization 3.0, the history of globalization did not begin with the rise of the internet, as some may believe (Friedman, 2007, p. 7).

Globalization has long applied to many parts of life, including languages, ideas, beliefs, ideologies, art, music, sports, trade, economy, politics, tourism, and lifestyle. According to sociologists Martin Albrow and Elizabeth King (1990), globalization is “all those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society”. Cultural globalization is defined as “the process through which the values, ideas, and experiences of a specific culture are transmitted and disseminated across the world. The process of cultural globalization has significant effects on international relations and interactions between different cultures in the same country” (Hepler, 2022).

An example of cultural globalization in sports can be found in supporting international football teams. Millions of football fans today come together from all over the world to support the Barcelona football club in *Camp Nou* stadium. For almost every game, 100,000 spectators fill the stadium to watch the game. These spectators are from different nationalities from all over the world, but they are united by their passion for the Spanish club. Spain in fact uses sports as a major arm to support its tourism and brand its nation, especially after hosting the Olympics

in 1992 (Torres, 2019). The Barcelona football club shows the possibility for nations to utilize the passion for any of its cultural elements for place branding and destination promotion.

Furthermore, cultural globalization in religion is similarly ‘used’ by some holy places’ governments. Pilgrimages to Mecca in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by Muslim worshipers from all over the world secures the Saudi government billions of dollars every year. Similar revenue is secured from Christian worshipers from all over the world visiting the cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Camino de Santiago, the Vatican, and Fatima. Jerusalem is also a place for Jewish worshipers to perform pilgrimages. Religious sites are essential touristic arms used by governments to attract international visitors. The holiness of the place is earned due to the global historical and cultural belief regardless of the race or national origin of the believer, making these holy places valuable for people from all over the world; in turn, they act as revenue creators for governments in these places (Badone & Roseman, 2004). Religious and holy sites leverage places and destinations to work as a supportive place branding notion to attract visitors with shared faith.

According to Leslie Marsh (2016), Brazil used its cultural global image as a tool in branding the nation. Brazil is famous for its ‘happy’ cultural carnivals, music, football, and food. This image is built through what is being communicated about Brazil globally. The global image of specific cultures shall perhaps make an impression or a notion about the nation. When it comes to cultural examples there is the Samurai in Japan, or the Arabian desert and the traditional Arabic clothing, African cultural rituals, Mexican tribes, Native Americans, and many other examples that can surely evoke a mental image, notion, or an impression.

According to Mariutti and Medeiros (2018), in a globalized world, where media and communications are influential, Brazil counts on its culture as an important dimension in its nation brand.

What is causing cultural globalization? According to Reed Hepler (2022), there are different elements causing the rapid development in cultural globalization, including:

- 1- **Tourism:** Travel is easier than ever; this allows more people to discover the ‘other side’ of the world and learn about other cultures.
- 2- **Social Media and Traditional Media:** Social and digital media have made the entire world accessible through our mobile phones. Any mobile user can access pictures, videos, news, and data related to any country across the world. This made other cultures available instantly. Furthermore, traditional media has always been a tool to

communicate ideologies, agendas, and ideas. According to Hepler (2022), “one of the most effective methods which governments can use to transmit their worldview onto the citizens of other nations is to use news and other media institutions to express this view. The most useful news media institutions are those that have local branches and use the native languages of the citizens of the host country.” The role of media in shaping public opinion in local and international societies will be explored thoroughly in the media chapter.

- 3- **Education:** The demand for a second and sometimes third language has allowed people to learn about other cultures’ competencies through learning the language.

Spanish is the official language in nearly 20 countries. Spanish is spoken by over 500 million people around the world (Sala & Posner, 2022). According to Kouqza and Al-Afif (2009), the spread of the Spanish language is a win-win situation for both people who are learning the language on one hand, and the Kingdom of Spain on the other. Highlighting Hepler’s earlier point about communicating a ‘culture’ in local language, this allows Spain to brand and promote the country, communicate ideas, news, perceptions, and culture to 500 million speakers around the world through its language. This results in economic, cultural, and political returns for Spain. On the other hand, it is a beneficial language for speakers as they get exposed to a different culture, economy, history, and lifestyle, according to the study (Kouqza & Al-Afif, 2009).

1.3 Political Globalization

Political globalization is another of the main pillars of globalization along with economic and cultural globalization (Babones, 2008, p. 142). Political globalization is a complex concept to explore or have a clear definition for, especially that the concept is shaped by multiple stakeholders. Political globalization has been defined as “the expansion of a global political system, and its institutions, in which inter-regional transactions (including, but certainly not limited to trade) are managed” (Modelski, Devezas, & Thompson, 2007, p. 59). One form of globalization in politics is the establishment of international organizations and membership in these organizations for different states. The United Nations (UN), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), World Tourism Organization (WTO), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), are examples of these organizations (Modelski, Devezas, & Thompson, 2007, p.

61). Being a member state in some of these organizations, such as NATO, entails providing security services if the state member abides by the international organizations' regulations.

From a security perspective, this could be a positive form of political globalization, forming a 'larger' system with more military power. On the other hand, due to separate agreements between individual states, there has been an increase in the presence of global forces in foreign countries for "security" reasons; this is also regarded as a form of political globalization, the following table presents examples of this form of political globalization.

Figure 1.3.1 Political Globalization

Name of Country	Military presence
United States of America	Military presence in 79 foreign countries
United Kingdom	Military presence in 7 foreign countries
France	Military presence in 10 foreign countries

Source: Merelli (2015).

Political globalization can also be viewed from a different lens. Şahin, Temür and Bozdoğan, (2019) argue that political globalization is the "the absence of the absolute sovereignty of a state's political borders over a certain area as well as increased interaction between the systems of government and increased external intervention and interaction on the basis of democracy, non-governmental organizations, human rights, and freedoms" (p. 2). Perhaps the aforementioned example about the presence of foreign forces in other nations can support this definition.

On the other hand, opposing the development of globalization or the expansion of international relations on the political, economic, or social levels, some countries choose isolationist policies. An isolationist policy can be defined as a strategy that strives to make one's economy entirely self-sufficient while avoiding participation in coalitions, alliances, international accords, and/or the commitment of foreign economic resources in order to keep one's country out of other countries' affairs (Department of State, 2013). When governments pursue an isolationist policy, countries become more difficult to explore on an individual level in terms of tourism or trade. Governments, by enacting such policies, even make it difficult for their

own citizens to travel freely. Multiple nations and governments have adopted this policy at different times in history. According to Hedley Bull (2002), the list of countries includes the United States of America, Paraguay, Japan, China, Cambodia, Albania, and North Korea. Throughout history, each country had its own reasons for isolating itself in a selected time; some adopt this policy until today. Isolationism's motivations go counter to other concepts like globalization and nation branding.

The isolationist example highlights the significance of governments, policies, and types of regimes a country can have. We live in a competitive global economic, cultural, and political system. When a government fails to be an effective member of the global system, some internal elements of the country, such as the economy, can potentially suffer (Babones, 2008, p. 134). Whether nations like it or not, the world has become, in some way, a connected system (Babones, 2008). Government policies are no longer only valid within the country's borders because countries rely on one another and are connected. For example, if a country decides not to join the WTO, it will be excluded from global tourism integration, development programs, and promotions, all of which can have a negative economic impact on the country.

The measurement of the effect can differ from one country to the next, depending on various factors such as a nation's size, economy, and power. For example, Russia's economic influence in deciding on a specific external policy will not be comparable to Jordan's, given that Jordan's economy is heavily reliant on tourism (Theuns, 2008). The significance of policies will be further explored in this thesis in the nation branding chapter.

The Takeaway

To conclude, by introducing different forms of globalization (economic, social, and political) that exist in our world today, the author has identified elements that can have a direct influence on positioning, shaping, and communicating a nation's brand, given the current complexity of economic, political, and social global web. Adding to that is the rapid development in communications and technological evolution that helped to create a borderless world. While it is debatable whether nation branding is a supportive arm to globalization or it is the other way around, Ribeiro (2012) claims that nation branding has contributed to raising the level of competitiveness in economic globalization. The example of 'the poor Taiwan,' in which Taiwan successfully built its competitive edge economically, a form of soft power, and an

industrial presence through its manufacturing arm, shows that it is possible for a country to position itself in this complex economic era once the competitive edge is built.

Cultural globalization of ideas, beliefs, and identities which could bring people together through shared thoughts, passion, religion, sports, language and a practice could also be a variable to be used in building a nation's brand or to be utilized from an economic perspective by leveraging these beliefs for the nation's benefit. For instance, understanding different religious beliefs allows for the understanding that some parts of the world will permanently have foreign visitors if that belief exists about the holiness of the places highlighted earlier such as Fatima, Jerusalem, or Mecca. In other words, this can be a competitive edge to 'sell' and a reason to attract a tourist or a visitor. This is applicable to other cultural aspects in promoting the nation and attracting tourists such as sports activities (large tournaments), music (concerts), and other cultural elements that can develop admiration by foreigners and as a result be employed by the country to attract tourists and investors.

Also, by understanding cultural globalization it is possible to begin to understand the importance of the spread of some languages in the world, which advantages some countries over others. Having a foreign audience that understands the language is a door-opener for smoother communication and gives the nation easier 'access' to communicate its cultural elements, as highlighted by Kouqza and Al-Afif (2009). History, culture, music, arts, and sports, as highlighted in brands in Spain and Brazil can also be elements to consider employing by nations in order to communicate a brand globally (Marsh, 2016).

It is evident that cultural elements are supportive elements to employ when promoting a nation, nevertheless a nation's brand needs different pillars to be constructed and culture can be one of them, culture on its own is not enough to construct a nation's brand.

Finally, political globalization exposed us to a tough political competition that includes foreign presence, international organizations, and allyships that are formed based on mutual political, economic, and or geographic interests. While it is possible to identify how cultural globalization can be employed to communicate a nation's brand, there is a need to explore further the relationship between politics and nation branding which will be explored in further sections.

Furthermore, the competition between nations is fed through branding and communications. Reputations, images, and perceptions people have about other countries contribute to shape a decision about the country, especially when it comes to tourism (Torres, 2019). This indicates the need to explore in the next chapter the concept of branding and its dimensions in general, and how is it linked to nation/country branding, if applicable.

Chapter Two: Branding

The previous chapter explored the complex concept of globalization economically, politically, and culturally. Countries strive to mark their presence and position themselves globally in our competitive era. Furthermore, nation branding appeared to be a helpful element in bringing this competition to higher levels. Countries with positive global perceptions are enjoying prosperous returns (Torres, 2019). While nations are seen to implicitly compete as brands, it is relevant to explore branding literature and identify any mutual backgrounds in the two concepts.

Branding can be viewed as giving an identity, meaning, or a description to a person, service, product, organization, or an event, and the practice of branding dates back thousands of years (Moore & Reid, 2008). The practice of selling branded goods dates to ancient Egypt, India, and Greece (Moore & Reid, 2008). The gradual transition of the development and application of brand characteristics evolved into today's perception of what a 'brand' is (Moore & Reid, 2008). Originally, the word brand "is coming from the German language, meaning to burn, its basic overall view is proclaiming ownership of property" (Mindrut et al., 2015). The way a brand is viewed today whether it is related to a product, organization, a person, and or a country is not associated only with the name. A brand today is more of an essence, meaning, soul, standards, and an identity to communicate with customers (Mindrut et al, 2015).

Hunt & Burnett (1982) explained that branding practice and research became more popular in the late 20th century due to the associated benefits. The concept of branding has been thoroughly investigated, and this proved to be a turning point in "the evolution of branding theories" (Hunt & Burnett, 1982). Smith (1956) coined the term "segmentation" in branding in the 1950s, and it has since become a major milestone in marketing theory (Hampf & Lindberg-Repo, 2011, p. 6). According to Kotler and Keller (2016), "branding is endowing products and services with the power of a brand" (p. 31). The power of a brand is the narrative that differentiates products and competitors in a globalized competitive world, and when the brand is well-built, it can communicate the competitive edge (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Depending on how it is perceived, a brand can create a set of ideas, attitudes, feelings, and expectations in the minds of users or customers (Aaker, 1991, p. 27-29), and as described by Chris Fill (2013), "brands are promises which frame the way they are positioned in the minds of stakeholders, and which structure their expectations." This is reminiscent of the definition of a nation's brand by Jose Filipe Torres (2018), which is the set of perceptions, thoughts, ideas, and emotions that a person can think of when hearing the name of a nation.

Branding as a practice has been implemented since a very long time on products, services, people, places, and organizations. “Producers of goods have used their brands or marks to distinguish their products. Pride in their products has no doubt played a part in this. Specifically, by identifying their products they have provided purchasers with a means of recognizing and specifying them, should they wish to repurchase or recommend the products to others” (Murphy, 1987). Aaker (1997) believes that the characteristics and emotions of building and communicating a brand develop to form a “brand personality”. Brand personality allows both branders and consumers to express their status through selecting products, places, or services that belong to this brand (Aaker, 1997, p. 350).

In 1995, Andy Mosman described the growing interest in exploring the “idea” of a brand, and what actually constitutes a brand. Mosman (1995) defined “brand” as the “integrated marketing ideas, concepts that drive the business, the (missing) link between a company’s core competences and its markets, streamlining the interaction between supply and demand.” Tanya Sammut-Bonnici (2015) defined brand and brand constitution as “a set of tangible and intangible attributes designed to create awareness and identity, and to build the reputation of a product, service, person, place, or organization”.

Next is the communication part; communicating a brand is conveying a set of messages communicated by the owners with representation of a promise and a description with the aim to be positively perceived by the public. It is a long-term process; it is a planned strategy associated with promotional activities with the aim of creating a competitive edge. The strategy of building the brand is a path created by brand owners to show why, where, and what they want to be in the future; as a result the brand becomes a point of self-expression for users (Aaker, 1997, p. 350). The previous description recalls the core process of nation branding, where nations thrive, compete, and communicate with the aim of building a positive perception and in turn enjoy the prosperous outcomes resulting from that perception.

In branding, a brand simply reflects the vision, culture, and values of the brand owners. When a brand stands out due to its individuality and exceptionality, the value of the brand rises, bringing in turn growth and prosperity to the brand developer or owner (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015). According to Keller (2003), “more and more firms and other organizations have therefore come to the realization that one of their most valuable assets is the brand names associated with their products or services (p. 7).” When a brand is ‘reliable enough’ to convey and reflect the promise of the founders, it acts as a relationship builder between the organization and the consumer (Dall’Olmo & de Chernatony, 2000, p. 137).

Despite its association with economic growth for brand owners, a positive brand has different dynamics beyond financial growth. For consumers, it helps in defining social status, emotional belonging, and influence. When the built relationship is positive, it can be of benefit to the organization by having a consumer be an ambassador for the brand and sharing the experience through word of mouth. This includes the pride of consumers and emotional admiration for being part of or associated with the brand (Dall’Olmo & de Chernatony, 2000, p. 138). The below table shows the outcomes of conveying a positive perception about the brand from multiple perspectives for both brand owner and consumer (Fill, 2013).

Figure 2.0.1 Advantages of Having a Positive Brand

Advantages of having a positive brand	Developer’s perspective	User/Consumer’s perspective
Better pricing	Economic growth	Social status
Better quality and experience	Brand personality	Benefits for users
Differentiation from competitors	Brand personality (The competitive advantage)	Social status Unique experience
Easier to promote globally	A benefit in a globalized market	
Encourage loyalty	Economic growth	Stronger connection between brand / user.

Source: Fill (2013)

Furthermore, the emotional attributes associated with brand loyalty helped in the evolution of the branding concept. This evolution continued due to the importance of the subject and its relevance in different sectors. One of the modern concepts potentially “replacing branding” is the concept of “Lovemarks,” developed by Kevin Roberts in 2004. Roberts’ (2004) concept stands for the idea that organizations and branders in general need to build emotional connection (love) with their audience rather than a brand. The central concept of lovemarks is that creating emotional affection fosters a stronger business relationship with customers than branding activities.

Roberts suggested the following key ideas to develop lovemarks:

Mystery: Tell great stories. Exercise your past, present and future. Tap into dreams, myths and icons. Inspire your staff and your customers.

Sensuality: Sound, sight, smell, touch, and taste. Excite the senses. Humans are sensual beings making emotional decisions. Tantalize the 5 senses and you will win.

Intimacy: Commitment, empathy, and passion. Show your customers you are an intimate person/company, and they'll show you love back.

(Roberts, 2004).

Marketing has changed dramatically over the past years, “it is not about building and sustaining brands or customers, it is about creating movements, brands are dead, and they have been replaced by lovemarks” (Roberts, 2013). As Roberts (2013) argued, “The key difference between brands and lovemarks is that brands are owned by brand managers, marketing managers, shareholders, lovemarks are owned by people who love them, who buy them, who talk about them”. When it comes to business transactions, brands are built around price, respect, attribute, benefit, performance, and they create loyalty for a defined reason. On the other hand, lovemarks are about “respect and love”, and they “create loyalty beyond reason, beyond price, beyond discount, beyond benefit, beyond attribute” (Roberts, 2013). When an individual, organization, company, or a nation is successful in triggering customers’ emotions, the return will be profitable in terms of brand value, economic growth, and social growth (Roberts, 2004; 2013). Applying Roberts’ concept to branding nations can be logical especially in terms of tourism attraction. Tourists visit destinations that they admire due to some or most of their brand elements, such as beauty, nature, technology, history, economy, policies, or culture. By linking Roberts’ (2004) theory to nation branding, the elements of “mystery”, “sensuality”, and “intimacy” can be considered. Visitors can relate to an advertised destination through movies or commercials and ‘develop love’ for the destination from the advertised story. Sensuality is applicable once the visitor is in the nation by experiencing the culture, food, nature, infrastructure, and having a sensual experience in the place. Finally, passion can be shown by word of mouth, revisiting, or promoting the destination. The concept of lovemarks is based on developing a business relationship through emotional admiration, according to Roberts (2013), and will be the future of business branding.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the financial/emotional/psychological intersection was highlighted by Daniel Kahneman (2002), who, in his research *Maps of Bounded Rationality*, proposed that almost 90% of financial decisions are made due to an emotional motive, not a rational one.

2.1 Managing the Brand

More attention has been paid to branding activity over time, due to its vital importance. This recognition by field directors and academic researchers has increased while brands have been recognized as a source of business sustainability (Louro & Cunha, 2001). Brands proved to be effective tools that can possibly create a competitive advantage in the market for brand owners (Louro & Cunha, 2001).

According to Lisa Wood (2000), “brands should be managed as valuable, long-term corporate assets” (p. 663). Brands should be managed and organized strategically; however, how can brands be managed? Stephanie Diamond and Emily Kolvitz (2019) argue that “brand management is a broad term used to describe marketing strategies to maintain, improve, and bring awareness to the wider value and reputation of a brand and its products over time”. In fact, Wood (2000), as well as Diamond and Kolvitz (2019) proposed the existence of a positive relationship between brand management activities, customer loyalty, and brand growth. Brand management was defined by Alberto Micheline (2017) as “the analysis and planning on how that brand is perceived in the market” (p.1). Micheline (2017) also linked brand management and developing a good relationship with the target market. In brand management, there are tangible elements and intangible elements of a brand, as explained in the table below:

Figure 2.1.1 Tangible & Intangible Elements In A Brand

Tangible elements	Intangible elements
Product itself	Experience (about quality, product, belonging)
How the product looks/quality/feels	Relationship with the brand
Price	Communication about the brand (word of mouth)
Packaging (visuality)	Loyalty because of the above

Source: Micheline (2017)

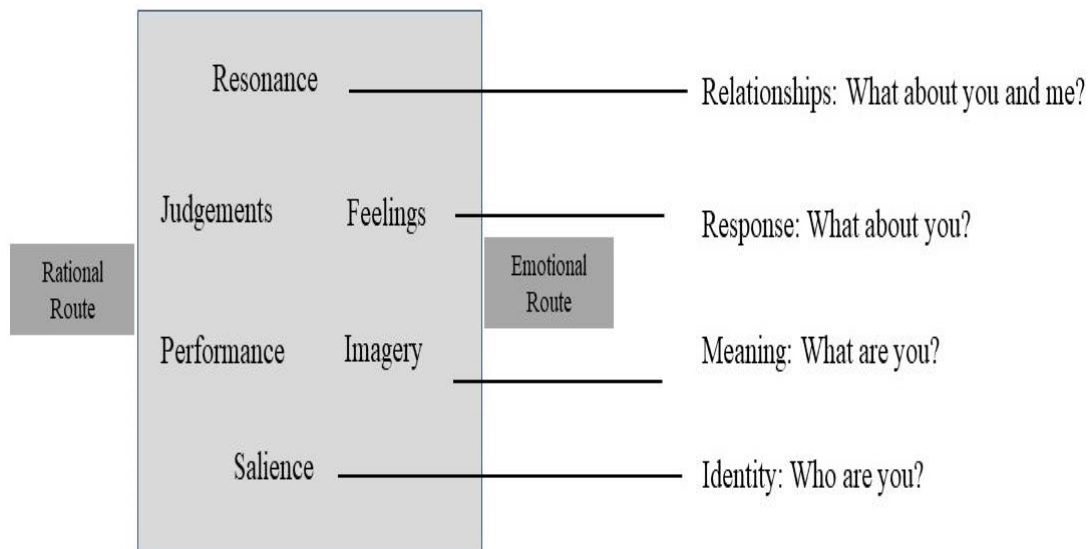
Michellini believes that the brand management 'process' begins when brand owners examine how the brand is currently performing, then evaluate the overall perception of the brand, and place the results against where the brand should be according to the vision of brand owners. The process itself includes the steps that will be taken after the evaluation until reaching the desired position in the market. The relationship between customer loyalty, positive reputation, and positive perception of "well managed" brands gives more weight to the brand management process. After all, the success in managing a brand creates a significance to the brand's equity (Wood, 2000, p. 662).

2.2 Brand Equity

While some perceive brand equity as the actual economic value of the brand, Diamond and Kolvitz (2019) believe that brand equity reflects the actual perception about the brand, and brand equity is determined by "consumers' perception and is driven by customers' experience". According to Aaker (1991), brand equity is the result of multiple brand management and brand promotion activities that take place by brand owners, and it is defined by the customer's perception of the brand (p. 85). Applying Aaker (1991), and Diamond & Kolvitz (2019) concepts to place/nation branding can be visualized through tourists' experiences, word of mouth due to the experience, and potential of referring new customers or returning back due to the experience.

Keller (2001) developed a model for brand equity, defining elements of brand equity building and prosperity. The model is called Customer-based brand equity (CBBE). Figure 2.2.1 below shows Keller's CBBE model.

Figure 2.2.1 CBBE Model



Source: Keller (2001)

The main elements in the model are identity, meaning, response, and relationships, and are explained as follows:

Identity: A communication made by the brand owner to explain what the brand is about. Defining the brand’s core values, and perception, in turn, check what the customers understood from the communication. Applying this variable to nation-branding practice, this element could be applicable through the vision of the government or leader of what identity the nation should have (Keller, 2001).

Meaning: After defining the brand identity, brand meaning goes deeper than product quality and price. The performance of the product is an important aspect of brand equity; after all, it is one of the reasons a relationship is formed between brand owners and customers. Other aspects such as durability, reliability, and service quality are also key at this stage. Another important step in this process is imagery; it refers to the matching of customers’ psychological, social, and emotional beliefs with the brand owners’ beliefs (emotional-mental-psychological matching). Companies with concerns about the environment, or political acts, or social responsibility towards some cases in our world can enhance the belonging, pride, and emotional attachment to the brand. Some international organizations re-plan operations in a specific region due to a political, environmental, or humanitarian cause. In 2021, Ben & Jerry ice cream company decided to stop selling its products in occupied Palestinian territories. Ben & Jerry

had an official statement on their website stating that “it is against the company’s values” to keep selling products in lands occupied by Israeli forces that belong to Palestinians as per United Nations regulations (Ben & Jerry, 2021). In 2022, after operating in Russia for 30 years, McDonald’s decided to end its operations in the Russian market after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The company stated that this was due to “the humanitarian crisis” (Morton, 2022). These examples could create a greater sense of belonging, pride, and emotional attachment between the organization and people, due to having shared values and standards around global issues. However, Keller (2013) highlighted an important theme regarding people’s beliefs and values. The aforementioned political examples can be seen differently according to political views, beliefs, and values of each society; for instance, pro-Russian customers could have a negative perception of McDonald’s and pro-Israeli customers could have a negative perception about Ben & Jerry’s. Therefore, Keller highlighted the importance of understanding different societies, and cultural, political, and social views of local communities, especially for brands that aim to thrive globally. After all, these ‘bits’ of communications are parts of the overall brand’s image, identity, equity and brand-building procedure (2013, p. 529). The application of this element to a nation branding is intangible due to political and economic logistics. However, people could connect with nations when they see that they share similar values, beliefs, and styles. Generally, romantic values such as liberty, freedom, equality, justice, equal opportunity, safety, and prosperity are attractive when describing a lifestyle in a country. Hollywood promotes these values and attaches them to the United States and the “American dream”. This promotion perhaps contributed to the United States being perceived as one of the most desirable nations for immigrants in the world.

Response: Response explores the action made by the client once the transaction is complete, and whether the quality has met the expectations of the client. Response relates to how satisfied is the client from the overall experience. It is part of the relationship-building process. According to Corporate Finance Institute CFI (2022), customers create feedback about the brand through four different categories:

- Quality: The perceived and actual quality of products/services.
- Credibility: The trustworthiness, likability, and expertise (innovation of the brand).

- Consideration: The relevance of the brand's services to the clients' needs.
- Superiority: How superior is the brand when comparing it with similar brands.

According to CFI (2022), customers respond to brands depending on how they makes them feel. Different brands can create different feelings, such as fun, warmth, excitement, luxury, security, respect, joy, pleasure, or indifference.

Relationships: It is the stage where the relationship or the bond is created between the client and the brand owner or organization. If the relationship formed is a positive one, loyal and happy customers will be willing to purchase any product associated with the brand (Keller, 2001; CFI, 2022).

Keller (2013) had a rule for business owners and brands developers: “don't take shortcuts in brand building”. When it comes to customer-based brand equity, forming a successful relationship with clients shall not include shortcuts; failing to meet these criteria shall not be supportive in the process of building a positive relationship and potentially could affect loyalty building process too (p. 530). The stage of relationship building or forming, and tie creation are made based on many factors that include:

- 1- Successful communications by the brand using the right 'influential' content. This communication created a specific emotional admiration for the brand.
- 2- Quality of products
- 3- Positive experience through quality, durability, brand association, or price.

(Keller, 2013, pp. 529-535).

According to Bhasin (2019), Keller's CBBE tends to have a special emotional focus in building relationships with customers. This recalls Roberts' (2004) “lovemarks” concept that solely focuses on building business relationships with customers based on emotional admiration. However, it raises the question of whether customers need to fall in love or develop an emotional admiration for a specific brand. According to consumer psychologist Peter Murray, consumers evaluate brands mostly based on emotions (Pathare, 2018). Skype Pathare (2018) believes that planning a branding strategy based on emotional connection with customers leads to better results than focusing solely on product features, prices, or description. Another answer to the question about the emotional approach comes from Gerald Zaltman (2003). In his book *How customers think: Essential insights into the mind of the market*, Zaltman stated that 95% of clients decide to be associated with a brand based on an emotional decision, not a

rational one. Additionally, according to Allen Martinez (2022), “Consumers who connect with a brand emotionally have a 306% higher lifetime value (LTV)”.

Keeping in mind the search for an intersection between nation branding and branding concepts, the following question is posed: can nations be promoted relying on the emotional aspect? In terms of tourism, the emotional factor was indeed used in different campaigns. “Romantic cities” promotion concepts for both couples and singles always feature France and Italy, Paris and Rome in particular. Despite the higher expenses to visit Paris for example in comparison with other cities from all over the world, a CNBC report shows that Paris ranks first as the most desired touristic destination for Americans (Handley, 2022). Lucy Handley (2022) explains, this is mainly due to the “emotional appeal” that Paris is associated with.

However, can a nation through branding develop emotional admiration by its potential tourists, investors, or talented immigrants? Very briefly the answer is yes. An example was highlighted in Aaker’s (2001) model about the possibility to have the brand emotionally admired by customers due to the intersection with shared values and viewing different global issues. However, this comes to the core narrative of the brand, which will be further explored in the nation branding chapter.

Some items’ prices are justified more by the accompanying status or image than by quality, practicality, or durability, demonstrating the emotive approach to branding. Think about Ferrari, which people do not buy for the sole function of transportation, but rather for social status, emotional connection, and emotional admiration. Louis Vuitton is able to sell bags for \$10,000 or \$50,000 (or more) not due to the quality/reliability/durability of the bag, but to the associated emotional connection and the status the client ‘feels’ when owning an LV product. People do not buy Rolex watches because they need to know the time, but for individuality. Brand owners benefit much from emotional admiration and engagement with their brands, especially when it is related to social status, exclusivity, and individuality (Zaltman, 2003; Aaker, 1991, p. 84).

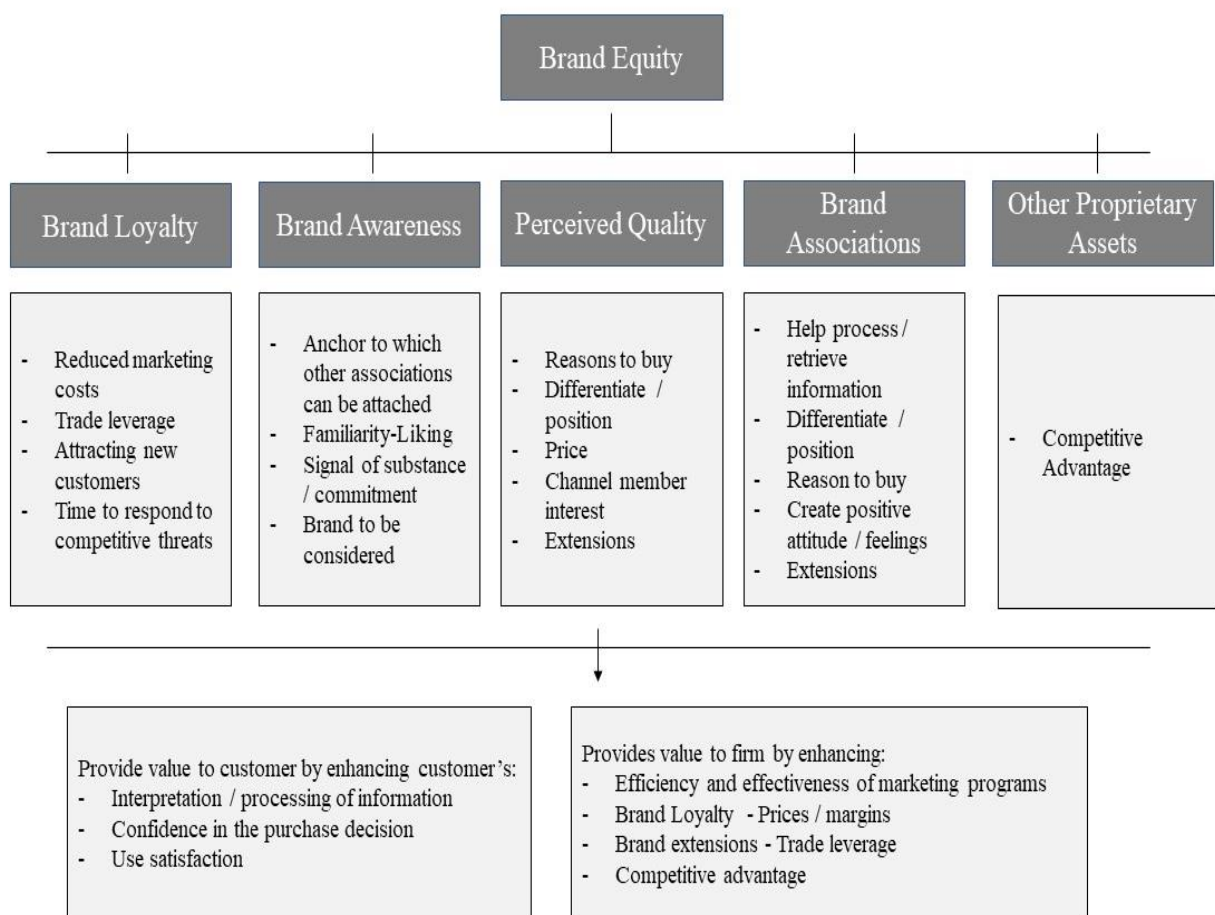
Dubai, the newly born destination in comparison with other European/American destinations, has recently joined the list of top global touristic destinations. Dubai associated itself with the luxury tourist. Time’s list of most luxurious destinations in the world had Dubai ranked first in 2021 (Berry, 2021). The city was mostly a desert in the ‘80s, but within a few decades Dubai became one of the top ranked destinations for luxury, investments, and pleasure around the world. The entire concept of the city that has the most expensive hotel in the world, tallest tower in the world, biggest mall in the world and other “-est” list promises Dubai’s visitors a luxurious experience, therefore, offering visitors satisfaction from that angle (Berry, 2021).

Dubai visitors are mostly searching for what a customer of Rolex or Ferrari looks for: luxury service and social status (Berry, 2021).

2.3 Brand Recognition

Aaker developed in 1991 the customer-based brand equity (CBBE) model with a special focus on recognition. Aaker believes that the most successful brands are those with the highest level of recognition (1991).

Figure 2.3.1 Aaker Brand Equity Model



Source: Aaker (1991)

In Aaker's model (1991), five elements were identified as brand equity builders. These elements are:

- 1- Brand awareness: Who knows the brand? What is the perception/impression of the brand?

- 2- Brand loyalty: How successful were you in building loyal customers/followers/admirers to the brand?
 - (3) Perceived quality: Is the brand expected to deliver products with specific quality standards?
 - (4) Brand associations: What are the feelings of your customers? What is that first thought when they see the brand/product or name of the brand?
 - (5) Other proprietary assets: What is the competitive edge of the brand?
- (Aaker, 1991).

Brand identity is defined as “the visible elements of a brand, such as color, design, and logo, that identify and distinguish the brand in consumers’ minds” (Tarver, 2022). Brand identity is the introductory image and is a pillar of the brand’s perception in consumers’ minds (Tarver, 2022). Branding processes, depending on the field or brand owner, can mean different implementations and processes, especially when it comes to branding nations.

When asked about the importance of having a logo in branding nations, Torres (2018) explained that branding a nation is about building a positive global perception of the nation through a brand building process which includes communications, however, a logo is not necessarily a key in branding nations. Torres (2018) used France as an example, being one of the most successful nation brands in the world without an official logo. Therefore, a ‘brand identity’ in nation branding will have a different path than branding a product or an organization.

Hitesh Bhasin (2019) believes that Aaker’s brand equity model aims to help in the creation of a successful brand strategy, Aaker’s brand equity elements highlight, advance, and differentiate the brand from its competitors especially when the recognition of the brand’s competitive edge is communicated. Despite the importance of the emotional factor highlighted earlier for branding, some products, services, and brands do not need to be dealt with emotionally on both the business-to-business and business-to-consumer level. For example, in some cases a client cannot compromise quality, reliability, or durability due to the emotional factor. When searching for a durable, reliable, and affordable car to purchase, clients will be looking perhaps at Toyota’s page, or Nissan, since these brands are known for high reliability, durability, and being an affordable solution in comparison to other cars.

This is the competitive edge that was built (communicated) by Toyota (recognition) to their consumers throughout the years, it is also the word of mouth, experience, and loyalty of those who communicate about the quality of the products. However, does this mean that Aaker’s

model is made for brands with specific needs, and Keller's model is made for clients with different needs and priorities? The answer is that this could depend on the product/service and type of transaction. As highlighted earlier, there are transactions that take place due to the 'need' of the product regardless of the type of 'promotion', marketing, and branding the organization does.

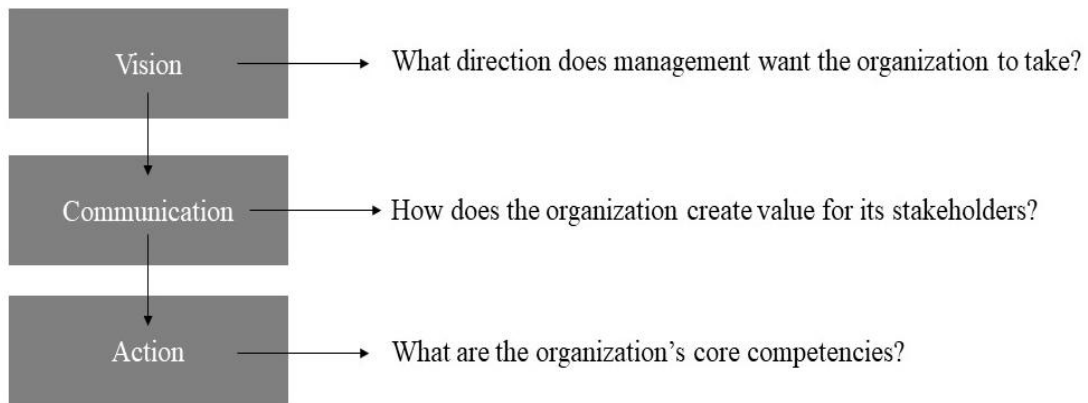
To conclude this section, whether the approach of brand owners and managers was emotional, as explained by Keller (2001) and Robert (2004), or through brand recognition, as explained by Aaker (1991), both models seem to share the ability to understand what a successful brand needs in order to gain trust, develop a relationship, and maintain loyalty. This as a result leads to financial gains (Hennigs & Wuestefeld, 2015). Associating this with the nation branding phenomena, Aaker's model and concept can be seen in the example of Taiwan in the globalization chapter. Taiwan did not seek an emotional connection, promotion, or perception. In fact, despite being one of the most desirable destinations for talented expats in 2022 (Taiwan Today, 2022), the brand was recognized through its industrial arm and created a competitive edge through its economic development. German and Japanese products enjoy a superior reputation when it comes to durability, quality, and price. These examples come to mind when thinking about global brand recognition. The author's view about the two different models is that each nation can potentially use the model that fits with its vision, strategy, and global positioning plan. The emotional model can be easily seen through branding communications related to tourism, as in the case of Rome, Paris, Maldives, and the associated romance narrative about these destinations. The associated romance with such destinations is due to historical communications about these destinations highlighting its nature, history, culture, and hospitality in a way that made these destinations admired emotionally by viewers (Handley, 2022).

2.4 Brand Vision

In his book *Strategic Brand Management*, Keller (2013) asked if everything in the world has a brand. He also asked if anything in the world can be "branded" or develop a brand (p. 36). He answered, yes it can, whether the branding takes place on a product, a company, an organization or international organizations such as the UN, a service, an individual, a place, a festival, or a continent. According to Keller (2013), even challenges, opportunities, and conflicts can be

branded, it all depends on the strategy. Strategy is important to deliver and reflect and sell a specific perception to the receivers/consumers/customers (p. 55).

Figure 2.4.1 Branding Strategy



Sources: Jones (2010)

According to Richard Jones (2010), it all starts with a brand vision. Brand owners/founders must have a direction or vision to share with the world and identify the desired brand's position in the market. This is followed by a communications and branding strategy to communicate that vision with the rest of the world, particularly the target audience. "Brand vision provides a powerful tool for communicating to several of the organization's stakeholders at one time and creating a meaningful future direction for corporate brand growth", and therefore brand vision is the starting point of the future of the brand (Jones, 2010). Aaker refers to a brand's vision as "the ideas behind a brand that help guide the future. When the brand vision clicks, it reflects and supports the business strategy, differentiates from competitors, resonates with customers, energizes, and inspires employees and partners, and precipitates a gush of ideas for marketing programs" (Aaker, 2021).

Brand vision covers the following elements:

- 1- Why does the brand exist?
- 2- Where should the brand be?
- 3- Brand vision is the driver of brand strategy.
- 4- The reference point for performance evaluation.

(Aaker, 2021; Dvornechcuck, 2021).

Once a brand vision is developed by brand owners, a roadmap will be created for where the brand should be. However, to achieve that, a strategy should be made (Dvornechcuck, 2021). It is important to mention that while creating a brand vision and planning the brand's future, this process gives birth to brand identity and other elements. According to Keller (2013), brand elements such as logo, font, symbols, images, and themes become some of the most important commodities a brand could have (p. 30-31). Brand elements include but are not limited to the logo, theme, font, slogan, colors, age, movements, and smells, depending on the nature of the business. Before concluding this section, it is important to mention that the process of building a strong basis for any brand which were called formerly brand pillars is a complicated and time-consuming process. Most importantly, this process does not have any "shortcuts" (Keller, 2013, p. 530). This process is built internally and communicated internally and externally through the strategy that is made by brand owners through the vision of where the brand is seen to be (or at least should be) positioned in the market.

While exploring literature about nation branding as well as data related to Spain and UAE, different researchers, such as Torres (2019), Aronczyk (2013), Balakrishnan (2008), Anholt (2007), and Freire (2005) have emphasized the role of vision and nation brand planning. This is conducted through the nation's leadership or government. Dubai's rise is heavily tied with the vision of its ruler, Mohamed bin Rashid Al Maktoum (Balakrishnan, 2008). The same is true for Spain after the fall of its dictatorship; the rise that Spain went through is mostly associated with the changes that took place in its leadership, along with a strategic plan to empower the brand (Aronczyk, 2013). The model of Jones (2010) was created for business branding purposes, however, the application of it to nations is possible, considering the fundamental differences between a nation and a company.

2.5 Developing a Brand Strategy

According to Keller (2013), "great brands are not accidents. They are a result of thoughtful and imaginative planning" (p. 39). Looking back at Jones' (2010) model described earlier, this process becomes more logical. Anyone building or managing a brand must carefully develop and implement creative brand strategies" (p. 68). Developing a brand strategy is a long-term and an ongoing process that shall not be confused with any provisional campaign or marketing strategy (Alizadeh et al., 2014).

In fact, the marketing strategy of brand owners should be part of the long-term brand strategy since the focus of brand strategy is on:

- 1- Brand image
- 2- Brand personality
- 3- Identifying the audience
- 4- Communications techniques
- 5- Overall brand equity

(Alizadeh et al., 2014)

Keller (2013) asserted that developing a solid brand strategy and positive positioning simply puts the brand ahead of the competition. Frederiksen (2022) explained a brand strategy as a “process” that goes through the following steps:

- 1- Aligning brand strategy with the business (brand owner’s) strategy.
- 2- Identify targeted clients/customers/consumers.
- 3- Developing the messaging strategy.
- 4- Develop brand positioning.

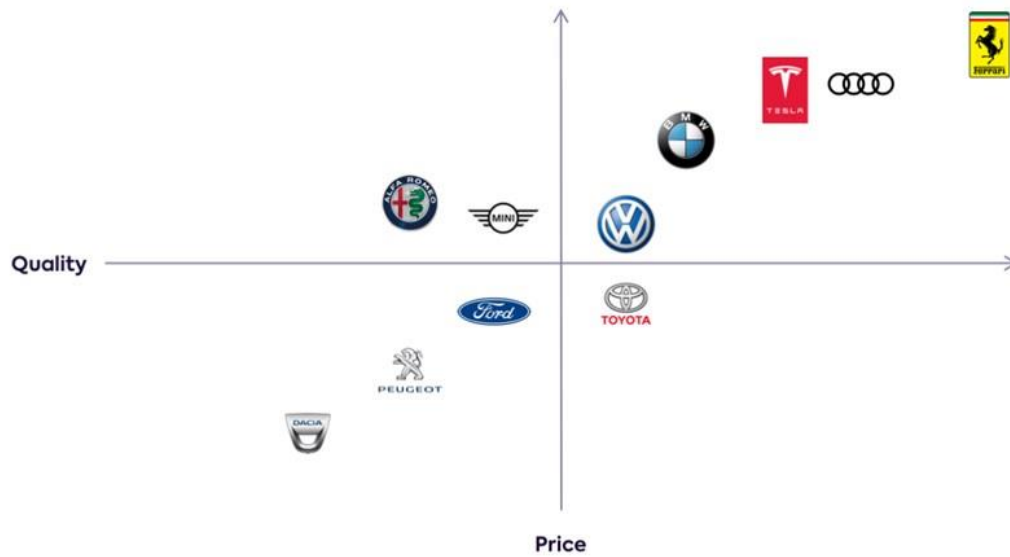
In a simple review, once a brand owner envisions what the brand is founded for, and whom it should serve, and where it fits in a global positioning perspective, branding strategy becomes the vehicle that transmits this vision into tangible results.

2.6 Brand Positioning

According to Derrick Daye (1964), when planning brand positioning “marketers often prepare perceptual maps that show consumer perceptions of their brand versus competing brands on attributes that are important to the consumer, whether functional or symbolic”. A brand positioning perceptual map example is below, in Figure 2.6.1 (Barja, 2022).



Figure 2.6.1 Brand Perceptual Map



Source (Barja, 2022)

The figure shows a perceptual mapping for the automotive industry in the Northern American markets using the indications of price and quality (Barja, 2022). Perceptual mapping helps Brand owners define a realistic position in the market. According to Daye (1964), the importance of perceptual maps relies on the following:

1. Evaluating competing brands' strengths and weaknesses using key customer criteria.
2. Identifying The Brand's uniqueness
3. Recognizing opportunities in the market
4. It's a chance for an ongoing evaluation to create a space for an improvement or brand shift (Daye, 1964).

Can perceptual maps be seen in nation branding? Yes, perceptual maps are represented in global ranks. Bloom Consulting, for example, has different nations ranks and indicators, including the country rank overall and those only related to tourism. Other ranks indicate the overall financial value for a nation's brand – *Brand Finance Directory* – along with other newly developed ranks such as happiness models, satisfaction, attraction, sustainability, and other markers developed by the UN.

The Takeaway

This chapter explored conceptual intersections in branding and nation branding. The theories, ideas, and concepts covering branding are numerous. However, this chapter discussed relevant concepts in branding in depth and viewed the applicability on country branding from a macro perspective and keeping in mind the logistical difference between nations, corporate, organizations, and product branding. Exploring branding concepts and theories showed a direct connection between the essences for both corporate and nation branding.

From the branding chapter, the importance of both the soul (vision, planning, policies, quality, structure) on the one hand, and the beautiful face (branding strategy, messaging strategy, communications) on the other, is clear, but most importantly, the process of building a brand, the time to mature, matching the message communicated with the reality of the communicator's status. After all, the ultimate goal of this process is to communicate and implant a positive perception in the audience through successful brand management practices. The positive perception results in gainful returns for the communicator.

The takeaway from the branding chapter is that branding nations, organizations, or individuals is different in terms of obvious logistical differences, however, the process shares the base components of vision, process, communications, maturity, brand management, positive perception, and, as a result, a positive outcome. Branding gained more attention due to the associated benefits of the concept, especially in a globalized competitive world (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Branding is about the ability to attract an audience through the narrative of the brand, values, and the associated outcome of the transaction between the brand owner and the audience. In some industries, the brand recognition concept can be a reason to be associated with the brand. Alternatively, emotional admiration and attraction is another strategy in branding that can also be applicable in nation branding, especially from the tourism perspective.

It is clear that branding as a practice is needed for nations, however, similarly to what was proposed in the previous chapter, branding alone, and culture alone, cannot construct a solid nation brand. Therefore, at this stage it is clear that a nation's brand requires different elements to put together. Culture and branding activities are relevant, important elements in constructing a brand. In other words, if a nation conducts 'branding' activities, what is the 'brand' and the 'components' that are being promoted?

Finally, theories and concepts from the branding chapter will be further explored in both interviews and the CDA methods that will be used in the empirical section. This is to measure the viability of applying branding concepts, procedures, and lifecycle in nation branding.

Building on the findings from both the globalization and branding chapter and the intersections with branding nations, the next chapter will explore the literature on nation branding and validate the intersections identified here.

Chapter Three: Nation Branding

Historical Branding Attempts

This chapter will explore the nation branding phenomena from multiple perspectives. The association between nation branding, the economy, politics, and communications (Anholt, 2006) suggests the need to explore the phenomena using these three lenses. Undoubtedly, the practice of nation branding is done to reap positive outcomes politically, economically, and socially, however the gains can only possibly be enjoyed after building a positive perception (Dinnie, 2016).

Nation branding can be defined as creating and promoting a distinctive image of a nation through strategic activities, both internally and externally. Internally, through government policies, procedures, and culture, and externally, through positive communications and media representation. A positive nation brand is associated with prosperity in multiple fields (Anholt, 2010; Kaneva, 2011; Aronczyk, 2013; Dinnie, 2016). In a globalized competitive world, nations compete in different fields economically, politically, and socially. Nation branding can be used to support countries in the mentioned fields. The use of the term nation branding has spread widely in the past two decades through economic, political, and social references due to its association with prosperity for nations that have successful nation brands.

On top of attracting the consideration of government officials, consultants, and scholars in different fields such as communication, and social and business sciences, nation branding successfully attained the interest of marketing professionals, especially when it comes to projects relating to growing tourism, attracting foreign direct investments, and place branding for other social, political, and economic purposes.

Before digging deeper into the phenomenon of nation branding, or the activity of deliberately conducting specific actions with the aim of communicating a positive image, it is relevant to explore a historical example of a ‘similar activity’ of place branding that has taken place for a long time. Utopia is a historical example of ‘country branding’, the purpose of this example is to highlight common grounds about the ‘effect’ of having a well-built nation brand. Thomas More (1499) used the term Utopia in the 16th century for the first time to describe an island nation in the Americas. Utopia was denoted as the ‘perfect nation’ at the time due to its safety, as well as its social, economic, and political stability (More, 1499). Utopia is believed to be a fictional nation, yet the description about the country, the regime, the social structure, and financial system of the nation (almost communist) Utopia was the land of dreams in the 16th century ‘branded’ by More (1499) and Acuna and Bleasdell (2020). Historically, the word

could have originated from the Greek word “*eu-topos*” which means “*the good place*”, designating such a title/adjective to a place/country is an example of an attempt to brand the place (Acuna & Bleasdell, 2020).

Without digging deep into More’s debatable fiction nation. Utopia was an attractive nation due to different elements including:

Vision and leadership: Internal regime, leadership, and vision for how to run and protect the country.

Policies, regulations, and laws: Stating clear policies, regulations, and laws in the nation led to having a solid and clear system to follow.

Social and cultural structure: The way communities were structured (religions and marriage rituals, social structure, social laws, jobs, housing) helped in the internal stability of the nation. This was done after declaring the country’s policies according to its regime.

Financial strength: The financial system in Utopia allowed the country to grow and sustain the nation. Utopia is probably one of the oldest examples in the literature discussing nation branding (Acuna & Bleasdell, 2020).

The example of Utopia shows us the admiration outsiders can develop about a foreign nation when it is well-built and is operating constructively. The common ground with ‘nation branding’ that as it is researched today is that governments today are deliberately stimulating the admiration through procedures in branding the nation, in order to gain different benefits.

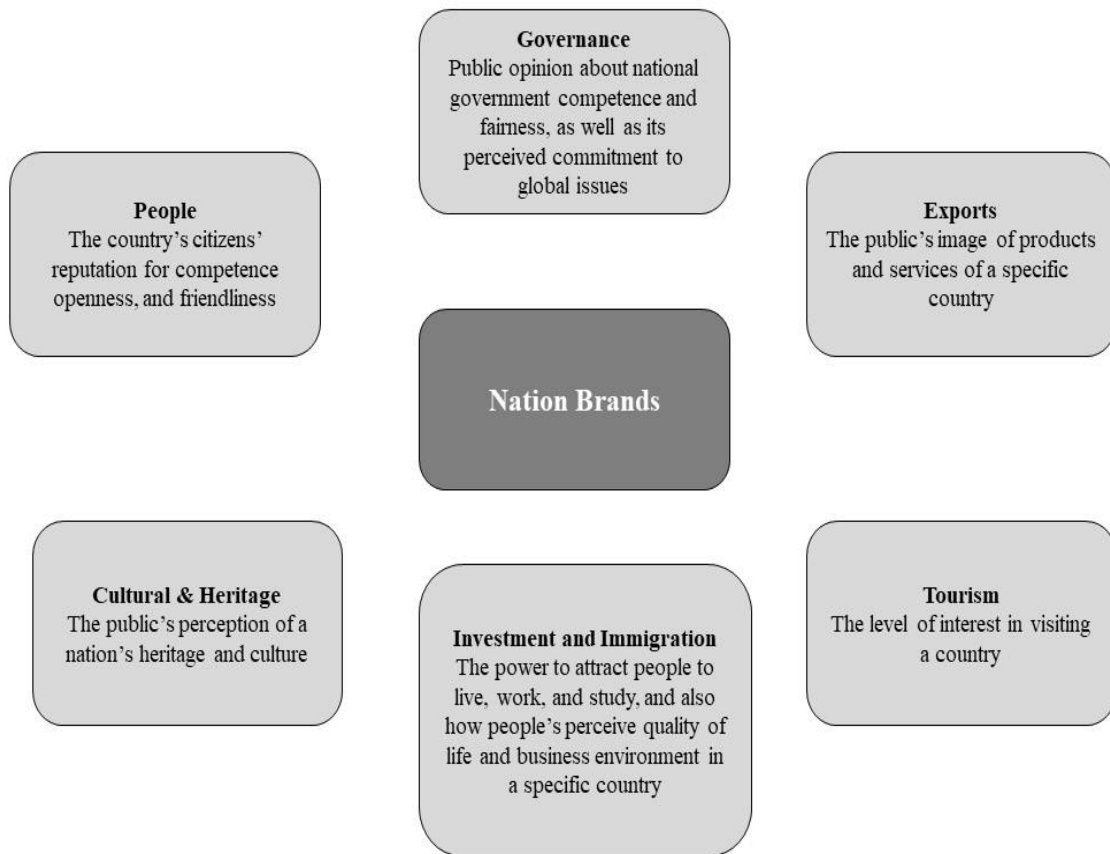
Also, historically, branding activities associated with colonization took place between the 16th and 19th century, and these attempts were undertaken to promote the new acquired lands in order to attract immigrants, such as when Europeans encountered the so-called “New World” in North and South America (Gold, 1994). With this historical background it is clear that the practice of branding places has a long history, despite being orchestrated differently, and for different objectives.

3.1 Nation Branding Models – Literature Review

Before exploring in depth the pillars of a nation brand’s and branding practices that some nations employ to be perceived as the ‘modern Utopias’ in our era, it is relevant to highlight an introductory review of the work of two prominent researchers in the subject: Simon Anholt’s nation branding hexagon (2006, p. 186) and Nadia Kaneva’s nation branding critical paradigm

(2011). These two examples merit consideration in particular because they are comprehensive and highlight the general elements, pillars, and orientations of nation branding in one map. These studies also identified nation branding mechanisms from multiple perspectives. These references can give a macro perspective about nation branding. The next section will break down the concepts from perspectives of different authors and the way nation branding is weighted internally (nation building) as well as the role of external communications and promotions activities (commercially).

Figure 3.1.1 Nation Branding Hexagon



Source: Anholt (2006)

The first review will be of Anholt's Nation branding hexagon (2006, p. 186). Anholt argues that the following elements are major influences on a nation's brand and as a result the global image of the nation. These elements are also major 'communication' pillars between the nation and the external world (Zeineddine, 2017).

Anholt (2006) communicated the outcome of constructing and communicating a positive nation brand through multiple pillars. These elements are explained as follows:

- **Exports:** Anholt highlighted a relationship between the influence of a nation's image on the willingness to buy or avoid certain products. This highlights the importance of a positive nation brand for export. Economically, this means that there is a direct relationship between admiration for the brand name and purchase demand.
- **Tourism:** This element covers whether or not a foreigner may be curious about or interested in visiting the nation according to the attraction or communication made by the nation. Mostly destinations are promoted as 'products/services' where the nation advertises the destination and attracts tourists; in this section the elements vary with the weight of promotions, infrastructure, policies, and reputation. Again, similarly to exports, the better the image and perception, the more tourists may be attracted to the destination, as highlighted by Anholt.
- **Investment and immigration:** This element relates to the ability of the nation to attract both investors and talented immigrants to the nation. This takes place when the nation offers stability, infrastructure, strategy, and a healthy environment for economic growth.
- **Culture and heritage:** This element weighs the global image and knowledge about the nation's culture, heritage, and history, where some countries use this as a competitive edge for country promotion.
- **People:** According to Anholt (2006), people can be an asset for the nation's brand in multiple perspectives, such as the type of reputation it has overall, in terms of education, skills, openness, hospitality, as well as discrimination against foreigners.
- **Governance:** Governance can be an asset or a liability depending on the internal and external view of the policies, achievements, as well as the government's contribution to public affairs. According to Anholt, policies can state a lot about the country's orientation and core narrative (Zeineddine, 2017).

Nation branding's significance has begun to be given adequate consideration, because a nation's brand can possibly determine its economic, cultural, and political destiny, as well as international competitiveness (Zeineddine, 2017; Anholt, 2006). The macro view of the highlighted elements in branding nations can give us an initial perspective about the logic of constructing a positive brand and achieving the associated gains.

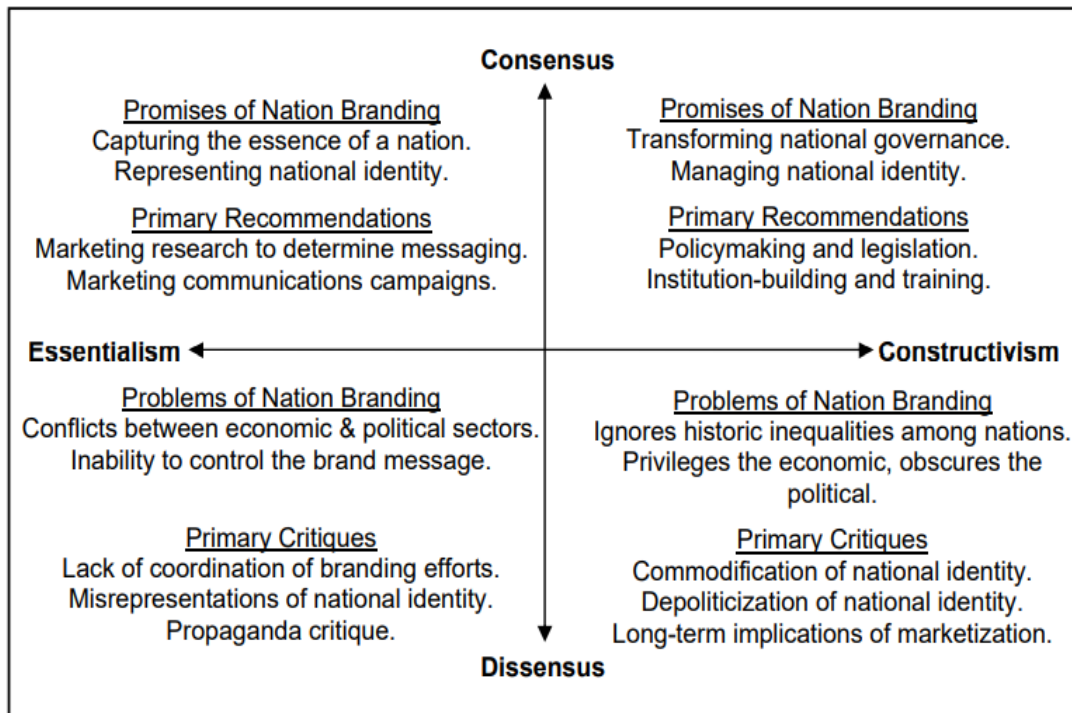
This introductory section about nation branding will next explore Kaneva's (2011) nation branding critical paradigm that was developed after "examining 186 sources on nation branding", published between 1997 and August 2009, and ranging from "scholarly articles to book-length studies" (p. 117). In her review, Kaneva highlighted different types of themes and elements in nation branding and placed her findings into three main categories:

- **Technical-Economic Category:** according to Kaneva (2011), "Of the 186 reviewed publications, 106 (57%) were classified as belonging to the technical-economic category, illustrating that the discourse of nation branding finds its strongest representation in the field of marketing" (p. 120). This means that the concept has mostly been explored from an economic lens articulating the financial outcomes of communicating a positive nation brand. This is reflected in different fields, such as tourism, export, and investments. This category explores nation branding mostly from a business perspective and the authors perceive nation branding from a commercial/marketing and communications perspective.
- **Political Approach:** 35% of the sources explored by Kaneva about nation branding had a political focus. The political angle evolved around international communications, nation branding as political PR (propaganda), as well as other concepts such as soft power and public diplomacy which are thought of as a shadow to the original concept of nation branding (2011). This angle highlights the political promotion of a nation through nation branding.
- **Cultural Approach:** Kaneva (2011) asserts that this is "the smallest and most recent group of studies", only 8% of nation branding work was linked with the cultural approach. This branch of research is less concerned with developing a theory of nation branding that can be applied in practice, and more concerned with developing a critique of nation branding discourses and practices as they relate to national identity, culture, and governance. The cultural approach revolves around different themes such as the nation's history and culture as variables, along with other concepts that are believed to intersect with nation branding from the cultural lens, including neoliberalism and globalization.

Finally, Kaneva proposed a conceptual map of nation branding research as an application of informing the practice of research around the phenomenon. Figure 1. Shows different themes grouped according to their aim, mechanism, promises, and direction in the way nation branding

has been explored and viewed in research. Kaneva believes that “the map can be used to evaluate the position of a study in relation to the “promises” and “problems” of nation branding” (2011, p. 129).

Figure 3.1.2 Conceptual Map of Nation Branding Research



Source: Kaneva (2011)

The figure can be explained as follows:

- The upper half of the research focuses on explaining and confirming the promises of nation branding, with the primary goal of arriving at recommendations for nation branding placement. The research in the consensus-leaning lower half, however, focuses on implicit or explicit issues with the notions, applications, and effects of the phenomenon. Although the scope and nature of critiques vary greatly, this map explores and evaluates the ideas and practices of nation branding (Kaneva, 2011, p. 130).
- In the consensus/essentialist research, nation branding is a method of persuasion that employs marketing communication tools with the primary goal of promoting the nation’s core to specific audiences. Studies from the so-called “communication” school

of nation branding would be found here, as well as technical economic and political approaches (Kaneva, 2011, p. 130).

- Research with a consensus/constructivist orientation observes nation branding as a “technocratic function of policymaking, governance, and statecraft”. This type of research highlights the application of brand “management” of the country’s identity. The approach is placed under the umbrella of “policy” in nation branding (Kaneva, 2011, p. 131).
- Studies with a dissensus/essentialist orientation still highlight technical-economic and political approaches “moderately”. This orientation acknowledges that market mechanisms “do not function perfectly, and that they may even have anti-democratic tendencies”. These studies explore internal collaboration (private and government sectors) to find ‘harmony’ with the political and economic agendas of the nation. These studies also undermine the role of branding, marketing, and communications and view it as a tool of “propaganda” (Kaneva, 2011, p. 132).
- Finally, studies with dissensus/constructivist orientations are concerned with exploring and questioning the tendency of nation branding to “depoliticize” and conceal the political struggles and disagreements that influence national identities. They are also concerned by nation branding’s implied “monetization” of national identity. The orientation in this research still falls under the umbrella of the economic side of branding nations through marketization (Kaneva, 2011, p. 132).

This study explores how countries can effectively utilize nations’ brands to foster their potential, in a contemporary globalized competitive world, and as a result, enjoy the positive returns discussed by Anholt (2006) in the previously mentioned hexagon. Because addressing all the aspects of nation branding are not feasible in PhD research, this thesis will place a greater emphasis on nation branding from the perspective of attracting tourists and investors. Literature on nation branding usually covers tourism and investments as key areas in the subject. Some of the approaches and orientations in nation branding highlighted by Kaneva (2011) will be explored in depth in the following section. Different perspectives from different authors on the nation branding phenomena, as well as the given variables and segmentations made by both Anholt and Kaneva will be highlighted. It is appropriate to structure this chapter by reviewing different authors’ perceptions about the phenomenon. Therefore, the literature and nation

branding 'layers' will be divided to uncover the pillars of building a nation brand and in the following format (approaches):

1- The Policies Approach

This section will review one side of researchers' perceptions about the role of vision, leadership, regulations, and policies internally shaping brands' equity, potential, and how this approach can build and sustain or be destructive to a nation's brand. This side of literature highlights the weight of internal procedures and practices in the nation, complemented by case studies of brands. The policies approach discusses the 'steps' that a nation can take to construct a positive brand.

2- The Marketing Commercial Approach

This section will review the other side of researchers' perceptions of the role of marketing, branding, and communications in building, sustaining, and communicating the nation as a commercial brand. This approach explores the possibility of commercializing the nation's brand through marketing communications. The emphasis in this approach is on the power of communication to create a positive perception.

3- The Political Approach

Although this study aims to contribute knowledge from a communication and marketing perspective about nation branding, it is relevant to explore and highlight the political side of nation branding and explore the communications role and its influence on nation branding, if it exists. The political approach explores the role of global politics and political interests in shaping, feeding, and influencing a nation's brand. This influence could occur positively due to being a political ally, or negatively due to being a political opponent.

3.2 The Policies Approach

The concept of nation branding has been explored, researched, and defined in diverse ways. In some cases, the definition of brand was literally examined as a brand concept for corporations or businesses. The definition has also been explored etymologically and ontologically respectively (Ali & Abdulrehman, 2015). “Simon Anholt, being the pioneer of this field, argued that nation branding concept can be used to achieve national competitiveness through developing and increasing the nation brand equity. All they need to do is align their efforts to improve the identity and image of the nation through the application of strategic management, policies, and strategies” (Ali & Abdulrehman, 2015, p.37).

Anholt (2006) defined nation branding as “the systematic process of aligning the actions, behaviors, investments, innovations and communications of a country around a clear strategy for achieving a strengthened competitive identity” (p. 22). Anholt (2011) refutes the application of business branding and marketing concepts on nations. Kaneva (2011) introduced Anholt as the author who coined the term nation branding, stating “he is undoubtedly the most prolific author on the subject” (p. 2). Anholt claims to be the founder of the term in all publications (see, e.g., Anholt, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2007, 2008). Kaneva (2011) writes “he has played a key role in establishing nation branding through consulting practice, speaking engagements, and efforts to institutionalize it as an academic field with scientific legitimacy” (p. 2).

The importance of policies in nations was highlighted before the formation of the ‘nation branding phenomenon’. In his book *The Competitive Advantage of Nations* in 1990, Michael Porter discussed the importance of internal regimes and the influence of policies on nations’ competitiveness in a globalized world. Porter (1990) believed that nations could achieve prosperity in different fields through creating and sustaining a competitive advantage, and that this advantage is created through policies.

According to Porter (1990), “nations choose prosperity if they organize their policies, laws, and institutions based on productivity. Nations choose prosperity if, for example, they upgrade the capabilities of all their citizens and invest in the types of specialized infrastructure that allow commerce to be efficient”, he added, in a “modern global economy, prosperity is the nation’s choice” (p. 8). Porter’s work mostly focused on the same ‘ingredients’ that are addressed when it comes to nation branding, but with a different ‘title’: tourism, industrial operations, export, product reputation (innovation and quality), people (human resources),

natural resources, and all elements combined could be strengths that nations have. According to Porter (1990), governments' role is vital in building this form of success; Japan and Korea's industrial growth and success were owed to government policies, vision, and thriving. In summary, economic, political, and social growth can be attained through competitive policies. Being a strong believer in the role of governments and internal policies and procedures in building a competitive brand, Anholt (2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2007, 2008, 2012), highlighted the importance of visions, policy making, strategies, and brand management practices, as key components to the formula of building a 'good brand' (the soul of a nation). This shall be called the policy approach. This approach relies on the weight of the vision, government procedures, and the consequences of current and future plans, to attract international tourists, investors, and convey a positive perception about the country. According to Pritchard and Morgan (2001), internal policies, planning, and procedures designed by governments are the keys of developing a country's competitive edge in the eyes of foreign investors and visitors. This internal competitive edge is one of the main drivers for international admiration and as a result attraction. In other words, the strength of a nation comes from within. In an interview discussing the role of leadership, policies, and inner strength of a nation and how that affects global perception, the former prime minister of Qatar, Hamad bin Jassem Al Thani, stated that nations' stability, growth, and positive reputation are claimed when the government/leadership of the country is in 'harmony' with the people. Al Thani added, if the country has a clear vision of where it should be in the future, policies are well-built to be encouraging for citizens and foreigners, and internal efforts are 'united', then a nation will prosper and enjoy a global positive perception; "when this exists in any nation, it would then be the best nation in the world, nation's strength comes only from within" (Taqi, 2022).

In 2018 the BBC hosted Anholt and explored the "successful case of Chile". Chile's global image/brand has grown due to different internal and external events that took place, including the change of the regime of Augusto Pinochet (King, 2018). King (2018) discussed successful marketing, advertising, and communications activities that Chile had undertaken using marketing, advertising, and media activities for almost two decades with the aim to rebrand its image globally. Anholt attributed Chile's success and brand growth to the fact that it changed from a dictatorship to a democracy, undermining the weight of advertising and marketing attempts by the country (King, 2018). The 'policies approach' always weighs the value of vision, planning and strategic management of governments in a country (Anholt, 2012; Kaneva, 2011). Anholt argued that in Chile's case, the news, and communications about the 'positive

change' in the nation had a bigger influence on global perception than marketing and advertising efforts.

Local legislation, policies, and the nation's regime are seen to have a significant impact on the global perception of a nation (Anholt, 2021). Other authors, such as Freire (2005) and Braun et al. (2014), appear to share this belief, particularly in terms of having the brand well-built before discussing its 'components' with the rest of the world, putting communications as a second step that a nation should take after completing the first step of setting policies and defining who the country is, and creating the core narrative of the nation.

Applying this point of view to a city such as Las Vegas shows us that if the city did not have the 'right' environment, internal policies, and regulations, and most importantly the appropriate laws that have been established by the administration of the city council, it would not enjoy its current perception and global advanced image. Las Vegas has worked internally through its leadership on what the city should look like, made the policies to suit the vision, and then communicated this identity to the world through movies and other commercial methods that will be discussed later.

In fact, reviewing the fundamentals of creating a brand's global position described in the branding chapter recalls the concept of vision. Vision is what brand owners communicate to the clients. In the case of Las Vegas, the vision was determined by the Las Vegas administration about what it wants to be perceived for (brand vision and aimed positioning) before communicating this vision with the world. Spain was mentioned by different authors, including Melissa Aronczyk (2013), Torres (2019), and Ulldemolins and Zamorano (2013) as a 'model' to follow when it comes to nation branding. According to Aronczyk (2013), "Spain is considered the original success story of nation branding", and it all started with the fall of Franco's regime (p. 51).

The authors agreed that the key concepts behind the success of Spain are:

- **Vision:** Juan Carlos's vision was to empower the nation through economic development and this development required different policies, regulations, and procedures.
- **Policies:** Policy making and setting up procedures that encouraged foreigners to visit, invest in, and participate in the development of the nation. The government of Spain in the transitional period after Franco's fall decided to 'put the house in order' and develop the nation internally through suitable infrastructure, empower projects related to

tourism, upgrade regulations to attract international investors, and attract talent to the nation.

- **Internal collaboration:** Private government sectors' collaboration to achieve the vision made by the new leadership.
- **Setting targets** (under the vision): Spain decided to empower its economy through tourism.
- **Fusion policies:** Spain lost its 'isolation' created by Franco's regime and when the new regime took over, Spain immediately upgraded its policies to be more 'open' with its European neighbors economically as well as politically.
- **Media and communications:** The internal renovation the nation made was followed by extensive communications efforts to brand the country.
- **Forming an official body to brand the nation:** The beginning of the 21st century marked the official birth of Marca España (the Spain brand).

To promote the 'internal building' of the country, Spain formed an official body to be responsible for the country brand, "Marca España's public institutionalization began in 2000, during the second term of Aznar's PP government. From this moment onwards three interrelated factors changed the nature and direction of state activity in the nation-building–foreign projection equation" (Ulldemolins & Zamorano, 2013, p. 7). A year later, Marca España grew further and stronger after creating multiple 'alliances' between different private and public administration including "Real Instituto Elcano de Estudios Internacionales y Estratégicos (Elcano Royal Institute for International and Strategic Studies, RIEEIE), the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy, and politicians" (Ulldemolins & Zamorano, 2013, p. 8). This alliance had a clear mission and a strategy. The panel worked on exploring Spain's image, analyzing its current position and potential, and working with the Spanish media to strengthen the Spanish brand inside and outside the country. The coalition was financed by both private and public sectors (Diez, 2003). Looking at both Las Vegas and Spain, there are similar steps that these two brands took to achieve their advanced global positions today. These steps are as follows:

- 1- Vision
- 2- Strategy to achieve the vision
- 3- Implementation
- 4- Communications

In any city, nation, or destination, policymaking is a double-edged weapon; the process of creating specific laws, rules, and regulations and communicating them with the world can lead to either creating a selling proposition for its desired client or transforming the place into an undesired place (Pritchard & Morgan, 2001). An advantageous tax return policy for foreigners, lower taxation rate for international investments, a competitive internal infrastructure, openness to foreigners through visa/residency regulations, and being a stable country politically and economically might create the competitive edge discussed by Pritchard and Morgan (2001). Another element that highlights the importance of policies in nation branding is the future positioning of the nation; this is a process that is planned by the nation’s leadership. This important element was raised by Bolin and Miazhevich (2018) when comparing nation branding and nation building. Some important elements were highlighted and compared in the article as follows:

Figure 3.2.1 Nation Branding & Nation Building

	Nation Building	Nation Branding
Agents	Politicians, artists, and intellectuals.	Politicians, marketers, and corporate business
Audience address	Domestic (citizens)	Foreign (Investors, tourists, visitors, immigrants)
Temporal orientation	Looking back (history as resource)	Looking forward (future as resource)
Media	Art, literature, poetry, maps, museums, music, educational media, cinema, and news media (radio & television)	Public relations, advertising and marketing media, print, and broadcast media (including native advertising).

Source: Bolin & Miazhevich (2018)

If nation branding is directed to a segment that is looking forward to witnessing a positive future, financially, economically, and politically, then it must be planned well. Today, investors, tourists, and skilled immigrants have a variety of options in terms of destinations to choose from to invest, live in, or visit). Therefore, governments should be well organized in

terms of setting up encouraging policies for foreigners. From reviewing the policies approach orientation, it is logical to propose that nation building should precede nation branding communications actions.

The policies approach has a clear orientation, putting the house in order before inviting foreigners through media and branding activities. This means a country's leadership is a key variable in both nation building and nation branding processes. Creating policies that would encourage tourism and investment in the country through a well-planned vision followed by effective strategies and communications is a major fundamental in creating the desired perception (Torres, 2019, p. 36). David Wineroither (2013) referred to political leadership as "the impact on decision-making and political outcomes that results from action by the holder of political office" (p. 1). Wineroither (2013) added, personality, leadership style, and internal and external perception about this leadership has a direct influence on the country's social, economic, political, and cultural pillars. Torres (2019) and Parker (2021) explored from a communications perspective how political leaders participate in creating an impression about a country when it is represented by a specific political or royal figure. Figures such as Vladimir Putin and the association of Russia's country image with its political leader, Adolf Hitler and his association with the German nation, and Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, were examples discussed by Torres (2019) in terms of how the association of these figures can be harmful to the nation's brand due to historic events that took place or specific decisions made by these figures (p. 35). Furthermore, Parker (2021) explored both the short- and long-term influence of leaders on their nations. The measurement was done by retrieving data from Anholt-Ipsos ranks 2020 and Brand Finance Nations Index 2020. Parker believes that a nation with a long 'positive' history or reputation shall not lose its perception by having a president for five or ten years. According to Parker (2021), it is "far more complicated than that", the influence however, can be effective as a short-term measurement.

An example of short-term influence is the drop of number of tourists visiting the United States after the elections when Donald Trump became president of the country. This was due to policies that he pursued towards foreigners entering the country. However, Parker (2021) argues that the US maintained its advanced global rank in terms of tourism and foreign direct investment, as well as its image as a strong nation with influential soft power.

According to Vincent Wolfington (2018), World Travel and Tourism Council Chairman, Trump's statements in the media have successfully created negative feelings for those who have planned to visit the US back then. Another example with higher negative short-term

influence on tourism due to political events was Hong Kong in 2019. The 'harsh' leadership decisions and the way they dealt with peaceful protests caused a drop in the number of tourists visiting Hong Kong in 2019. The number of tourists dropped by 40% due to the negative perception that people had about the nation due to the media reports about the government's way of dealing with protesters (Parker, 2021). Examples of long-term influence on nation brand is when the nation's name is always associated with continuous negative events such as wars, danger, terrorism, and international sanctions; such countries can be Syria, Libya, Iran, Afghanistan, Russia, Venezuela, and other examples where its leadership can harm its reputation (Torres, 2019, p. 36).

It is fair to say that leadership is a key influential element on both short- and long-term effects on any country brand (Parker, 2021). It is, however, worth mentioning that evaluations for some political leaders, governments, regimes and even nations especially in foreign media representations might not be reflecting the reality of a country. As mentioned in the globalization chapter, countries today are competing in a brutal economic war. Media and propaganda are used as a weapon to make a nation more 'likeable' than others. This could be due to political motives, or wanting to have a larger share of the global market. An example of this is the economic competition between China and the US and the efforts to convey positive perceptions and gain more market share. The Media and Communications chapter will cover the role of media in branding nations and shaping global perceptions and cultures.

The policies approach can expose one way of viewing the process of nation branding, as argued in the previous section; this approach views nation branding as a process that cannot take place without first putting the house in order. This approach sees the country's policies as a great component for generating interest and drawing attention to the country. The policies of a country can be a strong motivator for a foreigner to decide to immigrate to that country to live, work, and invest, or to visit for tourism (Freire, 2005).

The next approach has a different way of viewing the building and communicating a nation's brand. This approach views nation branding from a marketing angle, suggesting that a nation's brand can be viewed as a business brand, and it can be promoted and commercialized in a globalized competitive world.

3.3 The Marketing Commercial Approach

In a macro view of this approach, the marketing commercial approach relies heavily on stimulating interests and creating motives to be associated with the brand through marketing, communications, and advertising. This type of approach works to create and grow the interest of the audience through advertising and marketing communications (Jhally, 1991; Avraham, 2004).

Cities, places, and countries work hard to create, promote, and maintain a positive image among a variety of target audiences. These activities aim to excite individuals to visit the nation or international organizations to relocate headquarters to that place. This gives the country or city a variety of benefits, mainly economic (Avraham, 2004). According to Bolin and Miazhevich (2018) “nation branding as an activity is first and foremost about product differentiation, where nation states compete for attention within the global markets of tourism and economic investment” (p. 530).

Gray and Garrett (2004) and Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002) suggest that the progress and economic development of a nation involve different factors. In fact, it is a ‘process’ for development and it is attainable through corporate brand management concepts, successful marketing, advertising, communications, and branding activities. This helps to shape and reshape the identity accordingly. Traditional corporate marketing principles are dependable elements to put a spotlight on the nation and stand out globally (Gray & Garrett, 2004).

As a key author in marketing and branding, Philip Kotler (1999) discussed the importance of communicating a positive nation brand and how the mother brand (the nation) influences the sales of sub-brands, the brands that belong to a nation. Kotler (1999) argued that the umbrella brand, the nation, will have a direct influence on sub-brands. If Germany, for instance, was not known for excellence in different industries, sub-brands, such as Mercedes, would possibly be affected (1999). As a result, some authors and researchers including Jess & Israel (2006), suggested that being a successful nation brand requires a coalition of multiple national stakeholders in different sectors, tourism, policies, industrial competency, and social growth.

When it comes to Germany, as an example, does Mercedes sell and enjoy a positive reputation because it is German? Or does Germany have this reputation because the products are well-engineered? Does the sub-brand feed the brand or is it the other way around? Sub-brands here do not necessarily mean Toyota in Japan or Apple in the US. It could be summer holidays at Malaga beaches and the influence of Spain’s reputation on decision making for the tourist, or

an investment in Singaporean business, and the assessment of Singapore's brand to influence the decision.

Similarly, there is a question about the importance of the soul (policy) or beauty (image), or both. Looking at the example of Germany again, people have a perception about German engineering, but has this perception been built according to prior experience, or is it because of promotions, marketing, and communications?

Despite the enormous differences between nations, including economic, political, geographical, historical, ideological, social, and cultural variables, it is asserted that nations can be perceived as commercial brands (O'Shaughnessy, 2000). It is also argued academically and historically that nations have always had brands, images, or reputations, perhaps not identical to corporate brands, yet comparable, even before the emergence of the term nation branding. The early nation branding 'communication' was expressed through a symbol of a village or group of people or flags or religious symbols (Olins, 2002). It is believed that the current practices of nation branding are only a logical continuation of earlier attempts (Anholt & Hildreth, 2004). Whether the nation has built its own brand, developed purposely to communicate a specific message, or formed by local or foreign sources, such as word of mouth, trade, travel, international media, or history, the nation's "brand or image concept" has been there since the beginning of history (Loo & Davies, 2006, p. 198).

Furthermore, commercializing and promoting activities to sell nation brands as business brands through product placement have taken place in different forms of media. These promotional practices aim to sell these brands to foreign audiences. One study examined the influence of what is promoted in American media in general, Hollywood in particular about other countries, and the power of Hollywood to shape Americans' public opinion to sell destinations and brands through media (Spears et al., 2013). The study found that "Hollywood movies and media content are a significant medium in promoting tourism products and services" (Spears et al., 2013). Promoting Italy or France through product placement in an American movie seems to be as effective as corporate products promotions in media (Chang, 2018). In fact, having a specific destination associated with positive content turns into a medium to build a positive perception in the mind of viewers (for example, travel to Paris, it's a romantic city, Rome for those looking for history, Milan or Dubai for luxury and shopping, Spain or Mexico to enjoy the beaches, Australia, Miami, Cape Town, Las Vegas, for adventure, Monaco for luxury, and other examples from Hollywood movies) (Chang, 2018). This kind of promotion can be linked

to the emotional motive discussed in the branding chapter and turning brands into Lovemarks (Roberts, 2004) or Keller's (2001) branding model.

Dinnie (2013), Kotler (1999), Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002), and Reibstein (2017), argued that the marketing pillar plays a vital role when it comes to a nation's branding activities. This comprises media content, along with marketing strategies, internal/external strategic communications, and media-based brand promotion. Communications, according to this group of authors, play a larger role in developing a favorable nation brand overseas (the nation's beautiful face/image). This viewpoint encompasses the application of corporate marketing, public relations, and branding activities to a nation brand on a broader scale; for example, Reibstein (2017) has established a direct link between nation branding and economic development via the application of corporate marketing and branding operations.

When applying marketing communications strategies, nation brands (owners, builders, or communicators) try to convey a specific positive perception and deliberately impress the recipients. It is similar to a corporate advertisement/marketing campaign about a product or a service, and this communication creates impressions and expectations (Braun et al., 2014). The city of Las Vegas, as highlighted earlier, can be considered a successful example of place branding and place promotion. Once the name of the city is mentioned specific perceptions about the brand are immediately brought to mind (Dinnie, 2013). 'What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas' is a slogan that was shared through movies, series, and on social media. This was not a coincidence, it was part of the strategy of *Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority* (Dean, 2018). The 'seduction' of gambling, men and women socializing in a 'party mode' and having Vegas promoted as a 'sin city' is what the administration aimed for. The messages shared on all forms of media and in communications were clear. The type of hotels and exotic infrastructure in the city, services, and 'lifestyle' are communicated clearly. Someone who has never been to Las Vegas could have a perception of what to expect before even arriving due to the prior communications (Dean, 2018). In this marketing commercial approach nation brands rely on marketing communications and commercialization activities to promote the brands, some of these activities include:

Figure 3.3.1 Media and Communications tools used for place/nation branding.

Traditional	Modern
Events (World Cup, tournaments, carnivals)	Social media (Facebook – Twitter – Instagram – TikTok – Snap Chat)
Television: series – news – Hollywood	Netflix
Newspapers and magazines	Meta technologies (virtual world)
Made in signs (product of origin)	Google, other search engines
Word of mouth due to experience (mostly for investors – tourists – immigrants)	Digital applications and mobile platforms (mostly for tourism)

Source: Dean (2018)

KSA Brand and UAE Brand

A classic example of noticeable economic competition to attract international investors to Europe has been witnessed between Germany and France in the past decades (Ahmad, 2021). In this study, it is relevant to highlight recent examples about countries focusing heavily on the marketing commercial approach in branding nations; these countries are the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

Today, competition is rising between the allies UAE and KSA. Both nations are competing to attract foreign investors and international companies to relocate to their capitals. Both have used a variety of attraction tools including soft taxation policies and other logistical support. UAE has been known to be the global business hub in the Middle East; Emirates has also extensively relied on media to communicate its advanced image (Bohl, 2021). For the past 15 years, UAE's efforts (Dubai & Abu Dhabi) to brand the nation have been visible to citizens from all over the world through branding campaigns, sports sponsorships (such as Fly Emirates, Visit Dubai), celebrities, advertising, and Hollywood (producing some movies and clips with the focus on the *Burj Khalifa* tower in Dubai) (Al Marri, 2022; Michaelson, 2021; Balakrishnan, 2008).

Recent years, however, have brought new developments to the region and with the rise of the young and optimistic leadership in KSA, the picture in the region started to shift (Ahmad, 2021). In order to become more appealing globally, KSA worked parallelly on three different

elements to promote the country with the aim of becoming the modern Middle Eastern business hub. Some of these steps included:

- 1- The launch of the economic vision 2030 under the direct supervision of the crown prince of Saudi Arabia to attract foreign investors, relocate headquarters of international organizations, create new sources of revenue to the nation other than oil (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2022).
- 2- Global rebranding campaigns about KSA and link “the new image” of the Kingdom with NEOM city (aimed to be one of the smartest cities in the world). KSA allocated the largest “image promotions” budget in the world of \$2 billion for marketing, media, and promotional activities that will be highlighted in the next section (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2022).
- 3- Internal cultural and social reconstruction from ‘the old mentality’ of the Saudi society through different activities focusing mainly on media, celebrities, and carnivals; this includes the Riyadh season festival (the largest festival in the nation developed recently) (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2022).
- 4- KSA contracted with different international figures to represent Saudi tourism globally including the famous football player Lionel Messi (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2022; General Authority Statistics KSA, 2021).

The activities conducted by UAE in the past two decades made all the surrounding countries impressed by the astonishing economic development of the nation and becoming a global player in multiple fields (Crystal & Peterson, 2022). Dubai became popular among international tourists and investors, and desirable by skilled immigrants. Therefore, Saudi Arabia started to follow UAE’s path to becoming a regional and global touristic and investment destination through a heavy emphasis on the marketing perspective of branding nations.

The competition between KSA and UAE took a different direction in past months where both nations were literally commercializing the countries’ brands. Monitoring both countries’ activities in the past months it can be seen that both nations are heavily counting on promoting the brand through media, promotions, and communications to attract attention.

Summarizing some of the marketing communications tools activities used by both nations, the tools were highlighted in the earlier example of the Las Vegas branding strategy (Braun et al., 2014; Dinnie, 2013), and KSA and UAE conducted the following activities to promote their respective brands:

Figure 3.3.2 Comparison of KSA and UAE Communications Activities

Tool for competition	Saudi Arabia	United Arab Emirates
Events	Bid to host world cup 2030 (Martin, 2022).	Hosted expo 2020 (Kickham, 2021).
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Movie production on Netflix global platform as well as the recent initiative to produce movies, series, and be more active in the music industry to promote the nation regionally. This activity was highlighted by <i>Foreign Policy</i> as a strategy from KSA to create changes in perception (Vohra, 2022). - According to the New York Times, KSA is investing in different media tools (mainly Western) and agencies to promote tourism as a way to broaden its economy (Reed, 2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working closely with different producers in Hollywood to frame the destination with its associated luxury to global visitors (Kickham, 2021). - Working with multiple foreign newspapers, magazines, and media outlets (Kickham, 2021).
Promotions through global celebrities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Saudi Arabia has been active in associating the nation with global celebrities including appointing the Argentine star Lionel Messi to be the ambassador of tourism to 	Different celebrities were invited to UAE to launch businesses, and this has been highlighted by the Invest in Abu Dhabi authority and different celebrities from Hollywood appear in commercials promoting Dubai (Kickham, 2021).

	<p>Saudi Arabia (Zidan, 2022).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The signing of Portuguese football star Cristiano Ronaldo to play in the Saudi League and also to be a brand ambassador for KSA (Alhassan, 2023). 	
Promotions through global brands	<p>Saudi Arabia has recently purchased New Castle United football club through the Saudi Investment Fund. The club is used as a platform to communicate positive messages about Saudi Arabia, and it is a positive promotional tool of Saudi's 2030 vision (Kay, 2022)</p>	<p>On top of owning Manchester City English football club featuring Etihad Airways on the jersey of the club which is followed and watched by millions around the world. UAE has invested billions of dollars in associating its brands such as Visit Dubai, Emirates, Etihad, Investopia, Emaar and others to promote the country as a touristic and investment destination through sports and global brands (Al-Marri, 2022).</p>
Social Media	<p>Saudi Arabia has an extensive presence on social media platforms promoting tourism and investments.</p>	<p>United Arab Emirates has an extensive presence on social media platforms promoting tourism and investments.</p> <p>Dubai is the home for social media influencers that are sometimes officially invited and hosted by the country to post content online featuring the country's innovation, infrastructure, and touristic spots (Michaelson, 2021),</p>

According to Torres (2019), 120 out of 190 countries are working on place branding and nation branding “campaigns” with billions of dollars in value. This is due to the ‘generous’ rewards of place branding (p. 67). In branding nations, there is no certain way to identify the strongest brand-building ingredient. However, the approach of testing, marketing, and commercializing as a sole approach to build a brand was tested by Stahlberg and Bolin (2016) on Ukraine and Bulgaria’s attempts to brand those nations between 2005 and 2015. Ukraine commenced branding communications activities including media campaigns in the US, UK, and Europe, as well as hosting the European Cup in 2012 along with Poland in order to be detached from the “Russian historical label” and give itself a birth as a ‘European state’, “none of these efforts have, however, had any lasting impact internationally, at least that was the common impression among PR professionals in Kyiv” (Stahlberg & Bolin, 2016, p. 276). This was a result of working on the ‘face’ before the soul, rather than making an internal procedure more than a faceoff media campaign. Aronczyk (2013) believes the attempts of both Ukraine and Bulgaria to rebrand through a “brand book” did not reach their objectives.

While authors from the policy approach, such as Anholt (2021) and Porter (1990) highlight policy making as the significant factor in branding nations, others, such as Kotler (1999) and (2017) highlight the marketing communications and media as the key factor in the branding competition. While both sides are not aligned regarding the ‘best’ path to a good nation brand, both sides linked the outcome of communicating a good nation brand with positive outcomes, such as economic competitiveness, social development, and a path to nation’s sustainability (Dinnie, 2013). This again, is a given outcome once a brand is established, positioned, and communicated successfully, as highlighted in the branding chapter. Reviewing the first two approaches described in the previous literature, Figure 3.3.3 compares and analyzes elements constituting both approaches.

Figure 3.3.3 The Policies Approach & The Marketing and Commercial Approach

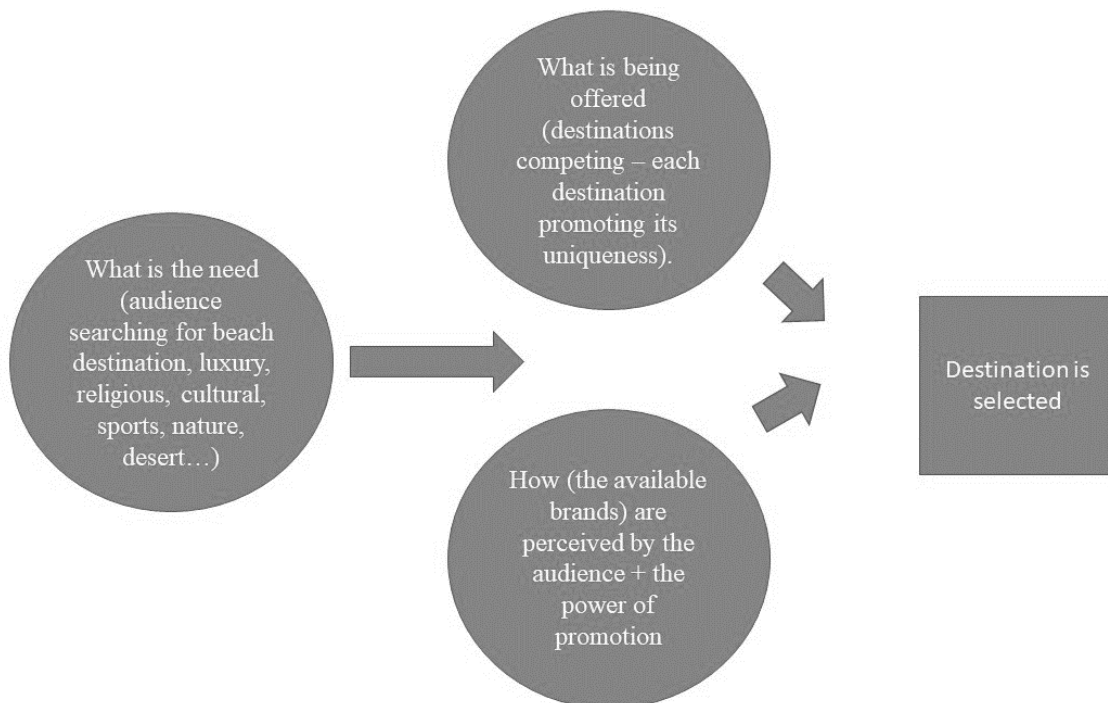
	The policies approach (Internal) <i>The soul</i>	The marketing and commercial approach (External) <i>The beautiful face</i>
Approach	Not in favor of applying corporate strategies and corporate marketing methods to commercialize the country brand.	A nation shall apply corporate strategies especially marketing and communications methods to convey/create a positive image.
Main tools	Government vision, planning, and policies are key in nation branding.	Media and marketing are key in country/place/city promotion.
Orientation	External interest is created through successful internal procedures. (Foreign interest is attracted from within)	External interest is created through a positive image made by positive media and marketing campaigns. (Foreign interest is attracted through promotions)
	Communications/branding activities are given importance in nation branding, however not from a corporate marketing perspective.	Vision, policies, and types of regimes along with branding strategies are key elements, especially when policies are encouraging (Las Vegas case).
	Governments give the nation a competitive edge through creating and applying strategies to have a positive change from within (Spain's constitution and regime change case)	Alliance between private and government sectors (mother brand) is important for a nation brand and economy growth (Spain's case). Media and marketing along with brand vision is enough to grow a successful brand image (UAE-Dubai).

While different authors in the policies and marketing approaches view the phenomenon differently, there is common ground between the two approaches. Both approaches aim to impress foreigners through communicating a competitive edge (place significance). Places, cities, nations, and destinations are competing on a global scale to promote themselves as the

‘Utopias’ of the era. According to the fictional story of Utopia, the place was admirable due to its internal policies and structure. As highlighted earlier, according to Bolin and Miazhevich (2018) “nation branding as an activity is first and foremost about product differentiation, where nation states compete for attention within the global markets of tourism and economic investment” (p. 530). Places are competing to attract different audiences according to their uniqueness. Places such as Monaco or Dubai could be appealing due to financial advancements, other places such as Spain, Mexico, and Greece, due to nature, beaches, and the sun. Each place is being promoted as the Utopia of the century. The evaluation of what ‘Utopia’ is from a communications perspective is the ability to communicate place significance that in turn stimulates interests according to the audience’s needs.

A person searching for luxury, warm weather, and an exotic desert will find a Utopia in Dubai. A person searching for nature, history, and culture will find a Utopia in Spain or Mexico. The chart below, developed by the author, shows the cycle of need (customer) + availability (destination) + perception & power of communications = selection.

Figure 3.3.4 Selecting Destinations



Anholt (2021) explained that the idea created about nation branding “turned governments astray”; he claims that the term “branding” has been distorted, “a global throng of design firms, advertising and public relations agencies, marketing consultancies, newspapers, websites and TV channels would see this as a new and exciting opportunity to sell their advice, messages and media to governments, and to tap into a virtually limitless global supply of public money”. Anholt confirms that the term has “backfired” on the original thought of what nation branding is. He believes that “branding” activity in the way it became, “turned an innocent observation about the importance of national reputation into something that sounded like a promise: if you don’t like the image your country is saddled with, it seemed to suggest, here are mysterious, expensive, but devilishly effective commercial techniques for improving, enhancing and manipulating it” (Anholt, 2021). It is not possible to deny or minimize the importance of policy making in nation and place-branding, however, Anholt’s claim in the previous paragraph is countered by examples of cases from the real world: cities such as New York (United States), Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Paris (France), and London (United Kingdom) have benefited from advertising, promotions, postcards, Hollywood, and other forms of communications. In a podcast shared in June 2021, Anholt gave an example of how some global cities such London, Paris, and New York gained ‘popularity’ and were known due to a long history of advertising and communications. Anholt gave the example of “postcards of Big Ben” or the “Eiffel tower in Paris”, yet he insisted that the popularity of UK and France was due to other essential factors, such as their internal policies, regime, and other internal historical and cultural factors (Cull & Anholt, 2021). However, according to statistics from United Nations World Tourism Organization UNWTO, in 2019, the US, Germany, Thailand, France, Spain, Italy, Mexico, Turkey, and UAE were on the top-ranked visited countries globally (Pololikashvili, 2019). These countries mostly do not share common ground when it comes to regime, policies, culture, history, or governance, yet they are all top destinations, due in part to their active branding activities (Pololikashvili, 2019).

The comparison between the first two approaches with the opposing orientations in this research invites deeper exploration when it comes to the phenomenon of branding nations. When countries with different political, economic, and cultural systems can make it to top destinations list as highlighted by UNWTO (2019), this can lead us to multiple suggestions:

- 1- Any country, regardless of its political system, orientation, can be a successful brand if it effectively develops a brand’s ‘core narrative’ that is enticing to visitors, investors, and skilled immigrants, and does so through stimulating policies and regulations.

- 2- The marketing, commercialization, and promotion of nations are “must-do” endeavors, particularly when the nation effectively creates a competitive edge. When a country has excellent natural resources, infrastructure, and a welcoming atmosphere and does not market itself as a travel, investment, or competitive destination, lack of communication and international rivalry will minimize its potential (Australia Trade, 2018).

3.4 Utilization of Nation Branding

In 2018, the American Marketing Association hosted an international conference with major researchers in the field of nation branding such as Heng Lu Wang, Dorothy Yen, Bradley, and Barnes, to discuss the advancements for a nation to have a positive nation brand in a global competitive market. According to He and Wang (2015), building and maintaining a solid nation brand at this time and era is a ‘necessity’ for survival. Also, according to Rendon (2003), nation branding can be a key to win this “world contest”. Furthermore, according to Hassan and Mahrous (2019) “nation branding is about building a sustainable differential advantage that defines existing or pre-existing national or regional stereotypes” (p. 147). Whether the drive was export, country of origin effect, soft power, tourism, social, political, or other reasons, some countries have started to conduct serious steps to improve the nation brand to compete in global markets (Torres, 2019). Countries realized that working on strengthening the brand of the nation will have a positive effect in global competitive markets (Hassan & Mahrous, 2019). In such a market, the American Marketing Association pointed out a direct relationship between consumer evaluation and nation branding, regardless of who the consumer was (tourist, investor, skilled immigrant, or a government) (He & Wang, 2015).

The use of nation branding as an ‘expression’ began around the turn of the century, and the nation branding communications “marvel” transformed from a “laughable” subject for government officials to one of the most influential elements for a country’s reputation in global competitive markets (Aronczyk, 2013, p. 4).

Country image has been divided into “cognitive country image (CCI) and affective country image (ACI)” (Wang et al., 2012). “CCI refers to consumers’ beliefs of a country, usually incorporating levels of economic development, living standards, industrialization and technological advancement”; on the other hand, ACI involves appraisals of foreigners about a nation and its people, such as whether they ‘like it’ or not (Wang et al., 2012).

According to Verlegh, Steenkamp, and Meulenberg (2005), communicating a positive 'country' and 'product image' has imperative outcomes, "research has tried to explain how nation branding may directly or indirectly affect consumer behavior and corporate performance (economic outcome in multiple fields), for example, improving product and brand image by leveraging a unique country image via nation branding". Forbes published a study in 2017 stating that the label "Made in Germany" was the most trusted label for international export when it comes to quality in production (Strauss, 2017). Going back to branding fundamentals in the previous chapter, this is a very helpful factor to support further growth for German exports and is due to the country's foreign image/perception (Roberts, 2004), or as explained by Kotler (1999) with the term "mother brand". The positive association of the mother brand is not only applicable to export/product of origin, but the association is also linked with commitment and customer admiration in multiple fields, including tourism and investments attraction (Hassan & Mahrous, 2019).

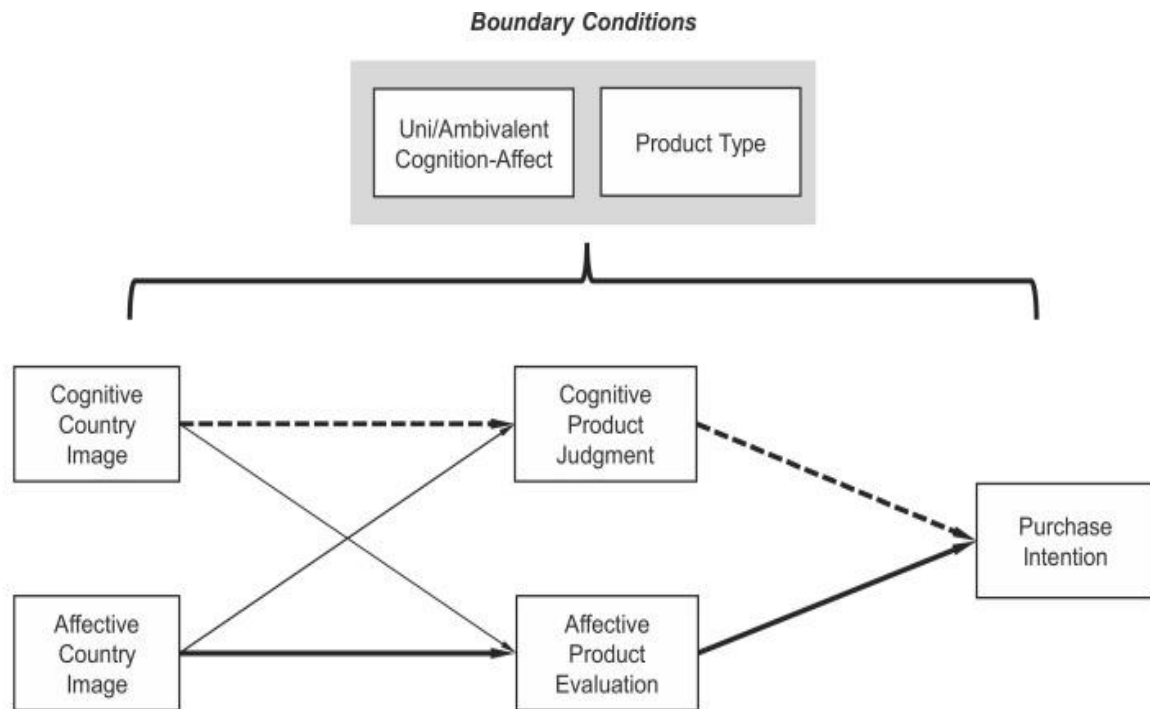
Therefore, building a strong brand allows the nation to use it as a promotional tool. "As a communications strategy, nation branding promises to generate international awareness of a national client, using proven marketing techniques to break through the clutter of a saturated and fragmented global media environment" (Aronczyk, 2013, p. 35). Economically, Hassan and Mahrous (2019) believe that "nation branding is about building a sustainable differential advantage that defies existing or pre-existing national or regional stereotypes" (p. 147). In fact, nation branding communication activities take place 'mostly' with the aim to advance the image and the perception of a nation, in multiple fields, including "improvement of international credibility, increase of international political influence, and stimulation of stronger international partnerships for economic or political advantage" (Kaneva, 2011, p. 118).

The process of creating a nation's brand includes conducting communications initiatives. The direct objectives for nation branding communication campaigns are to "stimulate exports; attract tourism, investment, or immigrants; and create positive international perceptions and attitudes" (Fetscherin, 2010; Stock, 2009). Some governments seek branding expertise to start using nation branding as a communication strategy when they see the "national culture and identity as a resource for global capital growth" (Aronczyk, 2013, p. 48). This means that the communications pillar is a complement to the nation building pillar and not a replacement for it. Therefore, from the review of the previous literature the following are clear:

- 1- Nation branding is the process of constructing and building a competitive brand which results in positive feelings, admiration, and leads to ‘purchase’ in multiple fields including tourism, investments, export, and overall promotion of the nation.
- 2- Nation brand is the result of nation branding process.
- 3- A nation’s brand can be used as a communications strategy as stated by authors such as Maher (2014), Hassan and Mahrous (2019), and Aronczyk (2013) when the brand is well-built to communicate the country’s potential and standards.

Maher (2014) conducted a study and found that purchasing decision makers were strongly influenced by their perception about the United States of America. The perceptions they had about the US that is mostly promoted in Hollywood helps consumers trust American products. As a result, when the brand is trusted/likeable, the purchasing decision will be easier and, in some cases, regardless of the price (Maher, 2014). Ma, Song, and Bian (2022) conducted a study of the influence of CCI and ACI on purchase intention in the overall purchasing cycle. “The findings unveil the asymmetric dominance of CCI and ACI in influencing purchase intention via consumer cognitive product judgment and affective product evaluation” (Ma, Song, & Bian, 2022). Figure 3.4.1 was retrieved from that study and shows the purchase cycle.

Figure 3.4.1 Purchasing Cycle



Source: Ma, Song, & Bian (2022)

“Solid arrows in bold indicate the predominant pathway for the influence of country image on purchase intention for consumers with ambivalent country cognition-affect in the purchase of both utilitarian and hedonic products as well as for consumers with univalent country cognition-affect in the purchase of hedonic product” (Ma, Song, & Bian, 2022).

“Dotted arrows in bold indicate the predominant pathway for the influence of country image on purchase intention for consumers with univalent country cognition-affect in the purchase of utilitarian product (Ma, Song, & Bian, 2022).

In terms of branding basics, it is fair to call the previous sequence of purchasing a logical cycle. In affect theory, originated by Silvan Tomkins in 1962, which “seeks to organize affects, sometimes used interchangeably with emotions or subjectively experienced feelings, into discrete categories and to typify their physiological, social, interpersonal, and internalized manifestations”, when it comes to branding, it is not difficult to understand the logic of product favoring due to a county’s image and as a result the influence of that on the purchasing cycle. When a country’s brand communicates specific messages, vision, quality, and perceptions, the

developed feelings, ideas, and understanding about the nation becomes a supportive tool in the cognitive ability of the purchaser due to this communication. As a result, it contributes to the decision-making process (the effect theory) (Ma, Song, & Bian, 2022; Frank & Wilson, 2020). When an appealing brand is used as a communications strategy, the nation should expect the returned benefits in the fields of tourism, investments, social, ideological, and export (Maher, 2014). This is the basic cycle of utilizing nation branding to benefit a nation in multiple fields. Eli Avraham (2004) recognized the significance of nation branding as an effective promotional strategy when he introduced Strategic Image Management (SIM), which is an “ongoing process of researching a place’s image among target populations, clarifying its advantages, examining the factors influencing its image, and leading to changes over the years”. In other words, it is a methodology of growing a nation’s brand while monitoring its performance (brand management + brand performance). This is an ongoing analysis that takes place while conducting the activity of communicating a specific positive image through media campaigns while remaining open to ‘upgrade’ policies that may cause any obstacle to reach the aimed target of creating a positive perception globally.

SIM is an ongoing process of communicating the image through marketing communications tools while working internally on developing policies and regulations to upgrade brand performance. This strategy takes place in a timed cycle with a specific target, similar to corporate business strategies, such as annual targets. Avraham’s SIM strategy brings to mind Alberto Michellini’s (2017) brand management process. Michellini’s brand management strategy or process starts when brand owners examine how the brand is currently performing, then evaluate the overall perception of the brand and place the results against where the brand should be according to the vision of brand owners while conducting the promotional activities.

For example, in terms of tourism, if a country receives 1 million tourists per year in the year 2022, they can plan to achieve 2 million tourists by 2027. This starts with communicating and marketing the nation’s positive image, destination, and city in new markets, or perhaps intensifying current branding, communications, and advertising activities in some cities or planning to host a major event. This is while conducting internal surveys and exploring the possibility to upgrade internal policies related to tourists’ visas, for example, security, facilities, regulations, internal communications awareness about the importance of tourism to receive support from local communities. Reviewing Avraham’s SIM concept (2004) recalls the traditional corporate branding/marketing cycle when conducting a campaign, in which a company/organization must have a vision, target, conduct market research, evaluate its

positioning, qualify customers, and create reviews/upgrades based on feedback until the objectives are matched. This is a cycle of sustaining the brand and creating constant room for growth, and as a result, allowing brand owners to maximize the utilization of the positive impressions created (Kazim, 2022).

3.5 The Political Approach

The previous section on nation and place branding explored multiple layers of the phenomenon: history, policies, leadership, vision, media, marketing, commercialization, and the economic variable to a nation's brand. This section will explore and discuss the political side of nation branding which can be referred to as soft power and public diplomacy. While nation branding is associated with economic outcomes in terms of tourism, FDI, export, and talent attraction, soft power is associated with shaping public opinion in a way that other nations will make decisions that feed the interest of the nation with soft power (Nye, 2008; Surowiec, 2016: Miazhevich, 2018).

Joseph Nye (2019), who is believed to have coined this modern term and practice (Fan, 2008), appeared in a video published by the Annenberg School at the University of Southern California (2019) discussing soft power and public diplomacy. He recalled John Arquilla's view of political competition between nations, especially in an age with advanced communications and technology. According to Nye (2019), Arquilla stated a couple decades ago that in modern political competition, it is not the side with more military power who wins, but the side with the best story who wins. Nye highlighted the importance of effective communications in our information and cyber age, stating that this is the best form of soft power. Nye continued, the capacity to successfully reach foreign audiences with the best story is the largest issue in public diplomacy today. The concept is associated with a historical Chinese proverb that states "Water can penetrate a stone" (滴水穿石 di shui chuan-shi) - Sun Tse (544-496BC)" (Ying, 2008; Leo, 2001; Fan, 2008, p.3). "A military strategist of 2500 years ago, advocates winning a battle without a fight. The Chinese philosopher Confucius (551-479BC) believes that the ruler should win the allegiance of people with virtue (soft power) not by force (hard power)" (Fan, 2008, p.3). The previously defined historical 'strategy' can be one way of explaining the term soft power.

Nye (2008) defined soft power as the "ability to shape the preference of others, or more bluntly, the power of getting others to want the outcomes that you want" (p.1). Nye linked soft power and public diplomacy, since public diplomacy is defined as the "activity of a nation state to

promote a country's soft power" (p. 6). The Center on Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California describes public diplomacy (PD) as "a key mechanism through which nations foster mutual trust and productive relationships and has become crucial to building a secure global environment. There is no single agreed-upon definition of the term; this lack of definitional consensus may well prove to be a good thing" (ND). Meanwhile, the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs defines public diplomacy on its official website as "the diplomatic activity carried out to non-state actors. It is about informing, communicating, and interacting with civil society: media, scholars, entrepreneurs, and the general public. Through public diplomacy, diplomats aim at conveying the right image of the country, promoting its strengths, and its differentiating and competitive factors" (ND). Finally, Gyorgy Szondi (2008) from Netherlands Institute of International Relations defined public diplomacy as a set of activities conducted by the government to promote the nation abroad. Public diplomacy according to Szondi (2008) was born in the United States and also is in sync with soft power whereas nation branding is a European concept, specifically British. Both nation branding and public diplomacy share a common ground of promoting the nation, however, they differ in terms of audience since one (public diplomacy + soft power) is associated with politics, culture, and the public, while the other, nation branding, is associated with commercial drive (marketing + branding).

Information management is another shared element between nation branding, public diplomacy, and soft power concepts (Surowiec, 2016). The goal of information management is to present a specific image of a country to an external audience to create a positive impression (Surowiec, 2016). Communicating soft power through public diplomacy seems to be the ultimate objective: a positive impression followed by a profitable result (Surowiec, 2016).

Since media is a powerful communications tool in our era, Galina Miazhevich (2018) believes that soft power and public diplomacy communications rely mainly on media tools. For example, Russia Today (RT), uses television and its social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to communicate with international communities coding messages, and ideologies to promote the Russian perspective. This is with the aim of shaping public opinion and in turn increasing public support for Russia and ultimately soft power. Media, propaganda, and public opinion are interconnected variables when exploring soft power (Miazhevich, 2018). In the media chapter, relevant literature explaining the role of media in shaping public opinion will be explored.

Miazhevich's (2018) perspective about the role of media and soft power can be seen in the example of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The United States of America led a coalition – Multinational Force (MNF); the name of the operation was “Operation Iraqi Freedom” (Partlow, 2007). The coalition was led by the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Poland, with the participation of 48 countries (Partlow, 2007). Some countries participated to repay a ‘favor’ to the United States, such as Georgia, which had part of their troops trained and armed by the US and as a result took part in that war. Turkey received approval for a 9-billion-dollar loan in turn for their participation in the invasion of Iraq, and for the same reason the US erased a 20 billion-dollar debt for Egypt in the International Monetary Fund (Andrew, 2007; Greenhouse, 1991; Taqi, 2019).

Dr. Abdullah Al Nafisi, former diplomat and former head of political sciences at Kuwait University, discussed in an interview that the US invasion is an example that soft power is a way to get others do what you want, however, this “cover” does not exist without constitutional pillars:

- 1- Hard power
- 2- Economic power
- 3- Mutual interest - Al Nafisi referred to the financial “benefits” for the US to help Kuwait retrieve their land from the Iraqi invasion to Kuwait in 1990 (Taqi, 2019)

Furthermore, Eric Li (2018) and Ying Fan (2008) believe that the term soft power used by Nye is broad and mostly theoretical. The “notion of soft power is largely ethnocentric and based on the assumption that there is a link between attractiveness and the ability to influence others in international relations” (Fan, 2008, p.4). In Fan's perspective, a country has different ‘actors’ and influential elements to the whole nation; some of these elements might rely on attraction, marketing, branding, communications, and information management, but most elements in a nation rely heavily on policies, which is not far from emotional influence. These reasons, according to Fan (2008), leave little or no doubt about the ‘real effect’ of soft power of a nation in ‘serious political’ events. Fan (2008) also believes that when it comes to relations between countries on the global scale, relations are made based on geopolitics, economic, and strategic interests, again, leaving minor influence of soft power.

Fan added, a nation's base of building its soft power is hard power. Below is a description of the difference between soft and hard power as described by Fan (2008).

Figure 3.5.1 Comparison of Hard and Soft Power

Hard Power	Soft Power
Ability to change others' position by force or inducement	Ability to shape the preferences of others by attraction
Military and economic power	Cultural power
Coercion, force	Co-option, influence
Absolute	Relative, context based
Tangible, easy to measure, predictable to certain degree	Intangible, hard to measure, unpredictable
Ownership specified	Unspecified, multiple sources
Controlled by State of organisations	Mostly non-state actors, uncontrollable
External, action, push	Internal, reaction/response, pull
Direct, short term, immediate effect	Indirect, long term, delayed effect
Manifested in foreign policies	Communicated via nation branding

Source (Fan, 2008)

Public diplomacy is viewed as a political form of communication in nation branding; it is also referred to as “people’s diplomacy” and defined as “any of various government-sponsored efforts aimed at communicating directly with foreign publics. Public diplomacy includes all official efforts to convince targeted sectors of foreign opinion to support or tolerate a government’s strategic objectives” (Munro, 2017). This pillar of ‘country branding’ implies a form of communication that aims to achieve a positive perception and foster the country’s political agenda (Munro, 2017). While the elements of the political pillar (public diplomacy – soft power – political interests) are defined through the political strategy and objectives of the nation, it is still unclear that the actual influence is solely based on the communications made or other reasons that make the strategies globally tolerated (Fan, 2008). Politically, examples of conflicts such as the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the ongoing Israel/Palestine conflict, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, show that perhaps, communications management does not give legitimacy after all. There are similar conflicts taking place in different parts of the world, and they are communicated and perceived

differently. It can perhaps be concluded that economic, hard power, geopolitics, and shared strategic interests are what contribute to the real impact in global political events (Fan, 2008). Soft power and public diplomacy can participate in developing positive relations, cultural integration, positive perception of a nation, and possibly support in the development of a political partnership after defining the mutual benefits and solid grounds. However, these elements cannot be powerful enough to overcome geopolitical and economic interests (Fan, 2008; Szondi, 2008).

When discussing soft power, Nye (2004) listed some elements that constitute the influence on the global scene, these elements are:

1. Foreign immigrants
2. Nobel prize winners
3. Asylum applications
4. Life expectancy
5. International students
6. Overseas aid
7. Tourists
8. Number of Internet hosts, book sales, and music sales
9. Spending on public diplomacy
10. Popular sports

(Fan, 2008)

With the abovementioned elements, Li (2018), Kluver (2014), and Fan (2008) believe that the concept has been 'over stretched' and that it is becoming vague. Not only that, but also, it seems that it is not clear whether these elements are causes or results of soft power.

Fan (2008) also asked an important question since most elements covering soft power are related to culture: if soft power is fed by culture as described by Nye, how can the US have a 'stronger' soft power than countries such as Egypt with a cultural history and wealth of 7,000 years as well as other countries such as China, Japan, or India? The concept or variables of soft power do not seem to be tangible or measurable (Treverton & Jones, 2005).

Munro (2017) explained that there are two different types of public diplomacy. The first is related to branding the nation through conducting cultural activities and communications. It consists of different types of communications activities, including media, cultural, and public relations activities that shall create a positive impression and generate an admirable image of

the country. This type of activity is believed to create ‘friendship’ bridges between nations and therefore, facilitate long-term relationships helping the nation to achieve its long-term strategy. Munro explains that these activities are ongoing and without any immediate expected results. Nye (2004) and Munro (2017) believe that the fall of Soviet Union and the rise of the US-Euro alliance was due to public diplomacy and soft power activities conducted by the US. This is one side of viewing the concept. However, Nye (2004) also discussed that one of the reasons that lead to the collapse of the Soviet Union was internal issues in the regimes’ policies and internal communications. This last example of the Soviet Union leaves room for Fan’s (2008) argument about the ineptness about soft power.

The second type of public diplomacy aims for faster results; according to Munro (2017), this type of public diplomacy is “called political advocacy. Whereas branding is meant to affect long-term perceptions, political advocacy campaigns use public diplomacy to build foreign support for immediate policy objectives”. Munro’s example about this type of advocacy was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, when the government of Kuwait asked the US Government for military help and conducted different types of PR campaigns working with American agencies to influence the American public. This resulted in liberating Kuwait in 1991 due to the influence that the campaign had on one hand and the solid relationship Kuwait and the US had before the war as a result of public diplomacy activities. While Munro thought that Kuwait’s liberation operation was due to public diplomacy, Al Nafisi highlighted that the liberation of Kuwait was due to geopolitical and economic gains the US received by “helping” Kuwait, and as a result of Kuwait’s liberation operation, the US gained permanent location for its troops in Kuwait as well as other economic benefits (Taqi, 2019). Those examples contradict the view and the perceived importance of public diplomacy and soft power and how tangible the concept’s effect is. If it were true that public diplomacy is all it takes for countries to gain immediate actions by other nations including military interference, Russia would likely not have had to invade Ukraine alone.

Another example to highlight the role of economic power in “building soft power” came from Cathrin Schaer (2022) in Deutsche Welle (DW) when she discussed the role of Qatar’s financial wealth in building its “foreign policy power”. According to Schaer (2022) “spending billions on everything from fashion, art, and sport to charities and industry” was Qatar’s formula to have its global “influence”, “friends”, and “soft power”. She added that “Qatar has good reasons for doing this. Most experts agree that Qatar — a small, resource-rich country, lying between large, occasionally threatening and always competitive neighbours like KSA

and Iran, but lacking its own “hard power” or military — needed to improve its standing and connections on the world stage. That way, it has insurance if attacked”. She concludes that Qatar’s push for soft power is also an important element for growing its economy (Schaer, 2022). This example supports Li (2018), Kluver (2014), Fan (2008), and Al Nafisi’s (Taqi, 2019) arguments that economic interests, political interests, and hard power are more realistic pillars to construct a nation’s soft power and public diplomacy. When it comes to soft power and positive perceptions, China can be a good example to explore. Sometimes, the activity of information management can reach a level of deceiving the public, this is in the case of considering the other nation as an opponent or a nation that is not considered an economic or political ally. China’s soft power and national image is perceived more positively in regions other than the US and EU (Ramo, 2006). Chinese positive reputation in Africa has been earned through decades of investments and projects along with a ‘friendship strategy’ and collaboration with the African countries (Pan, 2006; Fan, 2008). This was highlighted by Michael Keane in an interview when discussing Chinese soft power and its global image (Robinson, 2022). The activities in Africa in particular were part of the global ‘peaceful rise’ as it is called by the Chinese government. The same ‘peaceful rise’ that aimed to build a ‘likeable’ image globally through international cultural, public relations, and economic global activities, is also referred to as “China’s sharp power” in the Western world (Robinson, 2022). In Africa for example, financial investments were made along with a ‘peaceful’ approach to develop China’s positive image to give a different perspective to people in Africa. China was trying to communicate a different relationship with Africa, and to not have the same attitude as when the Western world came to Africa (colonizing, using African resources, and causing political, social, or economic turbulence) (Robinson, 2022; Repnikova, 2022). Furthermore, Keane believes that China’s cultural, social, and political restrictions are perhaps the reasons for its perception in the Western world (Robinson, 2022). China is perceived as a ‘closed’, and ‘controlled’ culture. Keane adds, the difference between Australia/the West, and China is that Chinese media, for example, constantly promotes the regime’s narrative (Robinson, 2022). Furthermore, Chinese soft power was highlighted by Maria Repnikova (2022) as a power that does not enjoy a positive reputation in the Western media and the West in general (p. 1-3). This is still the image, despite China’s efforts to build a positive bridge with all regions across the world, including Africa, Asia, and the Middle east (Robinson, 2022; Habibul, 2021).

The UAE hosted China's biggest book fair in the region in 2018, reflecting the development of positive relations between China and the Middle East region over the past decades. There are thousands of Chinese businesses and a strong economic presence around the world in different sectors, including energy, telecommunications, and manufacturing. China knows the economic, political, and social benefits of building a positive brand for its nation. Therefore, recent years have shown the increase of China's presence in different regions around the world (Habibul, 2021). China's efforts to go global since the turn of the century were clear' the recognition that China was seeking was to go beyond being a 'strong power' and, "the world's manufacturing superpower" (Richter, 2021), and a nation with one of the oldest civilizations in the world. China aimed to be likeable and perceived positively around the world; this decision was made by the Chinese leadership almost two decades ago (Repnikova, 2022, p. 4). These efforts resulted in launching 300 Confucius Institutes spread throughout Africa (59), America (160), Asia (126), Europe (182), and Oceania (26) (Habibul, 2021). Yet, China is still recognized as a hard power in Europe and the United States but not as strong in soft power (Repnikova, 2022, p. 9).

An example of how countries dealt with these institutions shows the perception of China. While in the UAE the institutions in collaboration with local universities started by offering language courses and expanded to collaborate with private and government organizations in different fields (Habibul, 2021), the same centers in the US, Australia, Japan, and the UK were viewed by the governments of these countries with suspicion due to the association of these institutes with the Chinese political or ideological "frictions" (Repnikova, 2022, p. 14). Socially, while the centers operated inside these countries, China was successfully earning a positive perception by people, at least the students. This, however, did not remove the "tense" relationship between the governments (Repnikova, 2022, p. 15). The main driver to view China as a threat is not only its government or local policies with its people, but also the aim and the agenda of the Chinese rise. Keane discussed the local agendas of nations, especially the superpowers around the world and agreed that even the US or the West in general also have an agenda that is communicated through branding, soft power, public diplomacy, and media. China's image remains distorted because it is perceived as a threat to the West's political and economic agenda (Robinson, 2022).

The Takeaway

It is logical to think about the process of constructing a solid nation brand, growing the brand, and leveraging its ability to create a global impression as an investment in a national treasure. Nation branding can also be viewed as a tool for a country's economic growth and sustainability (Hassan & Mahrous, 2019). This chapter reviewed different authors highlighting the positive outcomes associated with having a well-built brand.

Although different authors perceive the importance of brand-building elements differently, the political, economic, and social leverage of country branding is what unites them all. This chapter also explored the viewpoint of some authors that a well-built brand can be utilized as a tool to communicate the nation's competitiveness (Rendon, 2003). After all, the competition seems to work in a country's favor once a competitive edge is well-built and effectively communicated. This brings to mind the takeaways from the branding chapter and the globalization chapter respectively.

A nation's brand needs different elements to be constructed. These elements include different stakeholders; internal stakeholders include policies, government, communications, branding, people, culture, and infrastructure, while external stakeholders are the receivers of what is communicated about the country, including governments, foreign citizens, and international organizations. Overall, from the policies and marketing communications approach it is clear that branding nations is a process that involves different stakeholders and contributors. These different elements contribute to grow and sustain a positive brand that can communicate a positive perception.

When a nation successfully and consistently communicates a positive perception, it can attain some gains, at least economically from export, tourism, and investments (Anholt, 2011; Hassan & Mahrous, 2019; Torres, 2019; He and Wang, 2015; Rendon, 2003; Aronczyk, 2013; Dinnie, 2013).

However, there are also other contributors to shape a country's brand perception that go beyond brand building and brand communications. If nation branding activities can solely promote a positive global perception, there would not be different perceptions about Switzerland on one hand and Qatar on the other, despite both being active in nation branding activities.

Furthermore, from the political approach of nation branding, it is clear that despite the misconception about the definition, influence, and tangibility of soft power and public diplomacy in the 21st century, these variables are understood to be the political face of nation branding, or at least being a 'communication' activity with the aim of political advancement,

whereas nation branding is an activity with an economic objective (Szondi, 2008). However, these concepts are not 'clear enough' to be classified as a defined process that can lead to tangible outcomes, contrary to what was discussed in nation branding and its tangible economic outcomes (Szondi, 2008; Fan, 2008; Treverton & Jones, 2005). Nation branding, soft power, and public diplomacy share a common ground, which is relying on communications and information management. Whether adopting Fan's (2008), Treverton & Jones' (2005), or Al Nafisi's (Taqi, 2019) perspectives about the need for hard power, economic power, and mutual interests for the country to start facilitating soft power or public diplomacy, or looking at Munro (2017) and Nye's (2004) perspectives about the concept and their perception of how effective the concept can be in supporting the nation's short- and long-term economic, political, and social objectives, it can be suggested that any effort to promote the nation's political objectives is hard to achieve without having a solid mutual ground of political, economic, geographic, and social interests. The difference between nation branding with economic objectives (tourism, foreign direct investments, immigrants, and even product of origin) and nation branding with political objectives is that the economic concept is associated with individuals or corporations, whereas the second is associated with the nation communicating with an entire country with a political system that has its own political agendas, interests, and objectives. When an individual builds a positive impression about a nation and decides to visit the nation as a tourist, investor, or immigrant, the process is not as complicated as having an entire nation to conduct an activity. An individual is the sole stakeholder with their own purchasing power, whereas a country is a complicated system with multiple stakeholders driven mainly by political and economic agendas (Fan, 2008). The 'process' of a nation deciding to go to a war to support a 'friend' who conducted public diplomacy activities, is not similar to the process of an individual deciding to visit a destination for the next holidays due to nation branding activities.

Soft power in this aspect is fed and driven by different motives, such as political, economic, geographical, and social interests. This leads to the suggestion that the application of the nation branding concept and the expectations of its objectives as discussed by many authors, are more 'realistic' to achieve.

Different authors have highlighted the influence of media and communications in branding nations. Media and communications have also been highlighted as influential elements in both the globalization and branding chapters. The next chapter will explore the intersection between nation branding and media and the influence of media communications in developing global perceptions about nations' brands, if there is any.

Chapter Four: Media and Communications

In the previous chapters and while exploring nation branding phenomena and the components of the concept of nation branding, media and communications have been a dominant element discussed by most researchers as a key player in the phenomenon (Anholt, 2021; Torres, 2019; Chang, 2018; Dinnie, 2008; Fan, 2009). Media and communications have also been a key element in the branding chapter, globalization chapter, and nation branding chapter. The influence of media is perceptible in different aspects on a nation politically, economically, and socially (Anholt, 2021; Chang, 2018; Fan, 2009).

This chapter will review media and communications in two different sections:

- 1- A brief background about the development of mass media and discussing the mechanism of how media operates and deals with international issues as well as how the communications could affect the reputation of countries and build public perceptions and stereotypes, mainly through traditional media (TV, movies, radio, newspapers). In this section, a general description of traditional media will highlight regional and global media platforms as stakeholders that could influence nations' brands interest positively or negatively.
- 2- The use of digital media tools as a means of advertising and promoting countries. This section also highlights the importance of relying on a variety of tools in communications including digital media to communicate a nation's brand narrative.

According to Emrah Aydemir (2017), the US government has been using Hollywood as a key "soft power tool" in its foreign state. The US Department of State and other divisions, such as the US Army, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and other government departments work closely with Hollywood to communicate and position the American image, especially for viewers inside and outside the US. The CIA used Hollywood and has been collaborating with Hollywood movie makers for decades, mainly to inform the American audience about the role of the CIA in American society (Aydemir, 2017). Furthermore, Hollywood movies communicate ideologies about other nations with the logic of punishment or reward. This takes place depending on other nations' political/economic relations/interests with the US government. For instance, the stereotypes of Arabs, Russians, Chinese, Europeans, and Latin Americans in Hollywood are not a coincidence; it is part of the US foreign policy (Aydemir, 2017; Bayles, 2014). This brief introduction aims to answer questions about whether Hollywood and other media are driven by global political, economic, financial, and social

propaganda/agendas that are used to either empower a nation such as the US or to create a negative stereotype and perception of other nations.

4.1 What is Mass Media

“Mass media is communication—whether written, broadcast, or spoken—that reaches a large audience. This includes television, radio, advertising, movies, the Internet, newspapers, magazines, and so forth” (Compton, 2019, p. 214). Data, pictures, and messages communicated through mass media are not only tools to communicate or reflect culture, but also to create one. The history of communicating messages, ideas, or pictures started thousands of years ago (Compton, 2019). Paintings on walls with letters, images, and symbols are forms of communications in different parts of the world that are still seen until today. The Egyptian wall paintings on pyramids are a form of that communication (Taylor, 2022). The invention of paper in China in 100 B.C drove the development of mass communication. Communication through paper started to grow in Europe by the 15th century; before then, according to the Taylor (2022), different civilizations in different regions used different tools to communicate for thousands of years; this includes animal skins, leaves, stones, wood, and clay tablets.

The birth of mass media in the form of communicating to a wider audience in a more organized way took place in Europe in the 16th century. The world witnessed the establishment of the first form of newspaper in the world which was the German newspaper *The Relation*, by Johann Carlos (Unwin, 2022; Taylor, 2022; Roger, 2019). Since then, newspapers have been published in different spots in Europe and around the world. America’s first newspaper was the New England Courant, published in 1721. Newspapers played a huge role in communications during the “revolutionary war” in the United States in 1775 according to the American Library of Congress (2012).

Communications Development

After the development of newspapers, the “instant telegraph contact”, where text messages can be wired rapidly, was invented in 1835 by Samuel Morse. Four decades later, Alexander Graham Bell invented the first two-way communication tool in the 19th century by creating the telephone. At the turn of the 20th century, Guglielmo Marconi (Italy) discovered a signal coming from England 3,400 km away and the possibility of having wireless communications was available in 1901. This technology expanded to receive speech and music broadcast from

Canada for the first time by Reginald Fessenden in 1906 to other parts of the world. This was the most known media communications revolution in the history of mankind (Roger, 2019; Taylor, 2022; Skretvedt, & Sterling, 2021).

By 1920, the first radio station in the US, KDKA, was born and the content of the very first broadcast was covering the American elections (Skretvedt, & Sterling, 2021). Between 1922 and 1928, Philo Farnsworth was working on his “dream machine” that could broadcast pictures instead of just audio. Farnsworth was finally able to assemble and give demonstrations to the press showing his very first electronic television in 1928 (Gregersen, 2022). By exploring the influence of traditional media such as newspaper, radio, or television, it can be seen that they were the most influential public communications tools in the 20th century politically, economically, and socially (Gregersen, 2022; Britannica, 2022). The widespread adoption of radio and later TV, especially during global events such as world wars, and the possibility of creating local and “cross border” media communications and ‘propaganda’ gave these tools a powerful edge, mainly for governments (Adena et al., 2013; Ribeiro, 2022). Not only that, but these tools were also used to pressure regimes in other countries to influence their political orientation (Ribeiro, 2015).

4.2 Media Influence: Shaping Public Opinion

Furthermore, Manvell and Fraenkel (2010), discussed public communications tools and their social influence, especially the radio, in its golden age in the 1940s, and how it participated heavily in empowering the Nazi regime in Germany and fed its public image, especially, with the ability to enter most households with one voice, one ideology, and almost ‘brainwash’ the public (Manvell & Fraenkel, 2010, p.41). This can help one imagine the influence of modern communication tools such as the internet, television, Hollywood, digital media, Netflix, and other media tools and platforms in shaping public opinions and building perceptions of nations, characters, issues, or ideologies appearing in the media. The relationship between the audience and media has been defined by sociologists in three main different theories. The influence falls beyond business promotions, psychological, cultural, or political perspectives. Some media theories and concepts will briefly be introduced next.

Sociologist C. W. Mills wrote a book exploring the social, economic, and political influence of media in 1956. In his book *The Power Elite*, Mills argued that the army, politicians, and large businesses are the three major players who control media content. As a result, the ordinary

citizen is a powerless 'victim' to this content. On one hand the 'powerful' communicators are shaping societies in a way that suits their 'interests', and on the other, a citizen is immobilized in this one-way communication that is resulting in building public opinion, shaping/reshaping societies, and creating a culture that suits their needs. Mills (1956) also agreed that what is communicated by the minority shapes the perspective of the majority.

Despite the development of media communications and the development of social media and digital communication through the internet, which allows for some two-way communications, the power of the traditional way of communications remains dominant (Rogers, 2019). For example, despite being able to tweet an opinion about a movie that has communicated specific ideologies, the form of communication is a one-way communication by the movie, or news, or Netflix. The space of exposure of a tweet or a comment on Facebook or a YouTube video does not receive the exposure a Hollywood movie has to communicate a stereotype or a perception.

Due to its popularity and use in our daily lives, mass media can be a mental shaping tool. Media content is usually 'controlled' and filtered through different forms of censorship and content control in most societies, especially in authoritarian communities, and this process has not changed much over the past decades (Mills, 1956; Scott & Marshall, 2009). The objective of control is easy to determine: it is part of the information management process that secures the general agenda of the government or leadership. In some countries, if the communicated content is against local values, beliefs, ideologies, political, or economic interests, governments tend to control the content by censoring it (especially in dictatorships where media content is related to political freedom or democracy, it immediately gets censored by governments).

Furthermore, the revolutionary development of media communications led to creating social media platforms where content producers are the public themselves. Thus, the idea was that it is no longer a one-way communication made by the minority. The internet was believed to be a free space that would not be under any government's control or censorship. Some countries such as China decided to completely ban some applications, in order to maintain control of public opinion (Robinson, 2022) The US on the other hand banned TikTok from some devices in the country and is currently studying a "full ban" on the Chinese application due to concerns related to "security" (Berman, 2023). The irony in this example is the constant criticism by US government and US media about Chinese "dictatorship" and 'societal restrictions' against its own people, yet the US can simply conduct the same practice using "security" as a justification for the restriction. Despite being declared as a basic human right by the United Nations in 2016,

internet content is under heavy ‘restrictions’ by different countries including China, the US, and the UK (Alhassan & Duarte, 2022, p. 124).

Another example that contradicts the idea that the internet is a ‘free space’ is the censorship applied by the large corporations that own social media platforms, such as Meta, on content related to specific political orientations. Posts from Palestinian civil communities, civilians in Russia, China, and other parts of the world have been banned due to political reasons (Human Rights Watch, 2021; Al Jazeera, 2021; Biddle & Speri 2022; Jewish for Peace, 2022). International organizations such as Meta (the parent company of Facebook), Google, and other platforms seemed to follow governments’ restrictions, indeed, favoring political and economic interests over freedom of speech. “It’s always been about Geopolitics and profit for Meta” explained Biddle and Speri (2022). Hate speech has been allowed on Meta’s platforms against Palestinians and Russians (Biddle & Speri 2022; Jewish for Peace, 2022).

This means that social media platforms are no longer a place of free speech. Despite the revolution in the field of media and communications, it seems that it is still under the control of the elite or ‘minority’ as stated by Mills in 1975. Geopolitics remains a dominant pillar to practice communications and information management. Perhaps these findings can support the previous section’s conclusion about the effectiveness of communications and information management versus national political and economic interests, with the latter always weighing heavier.

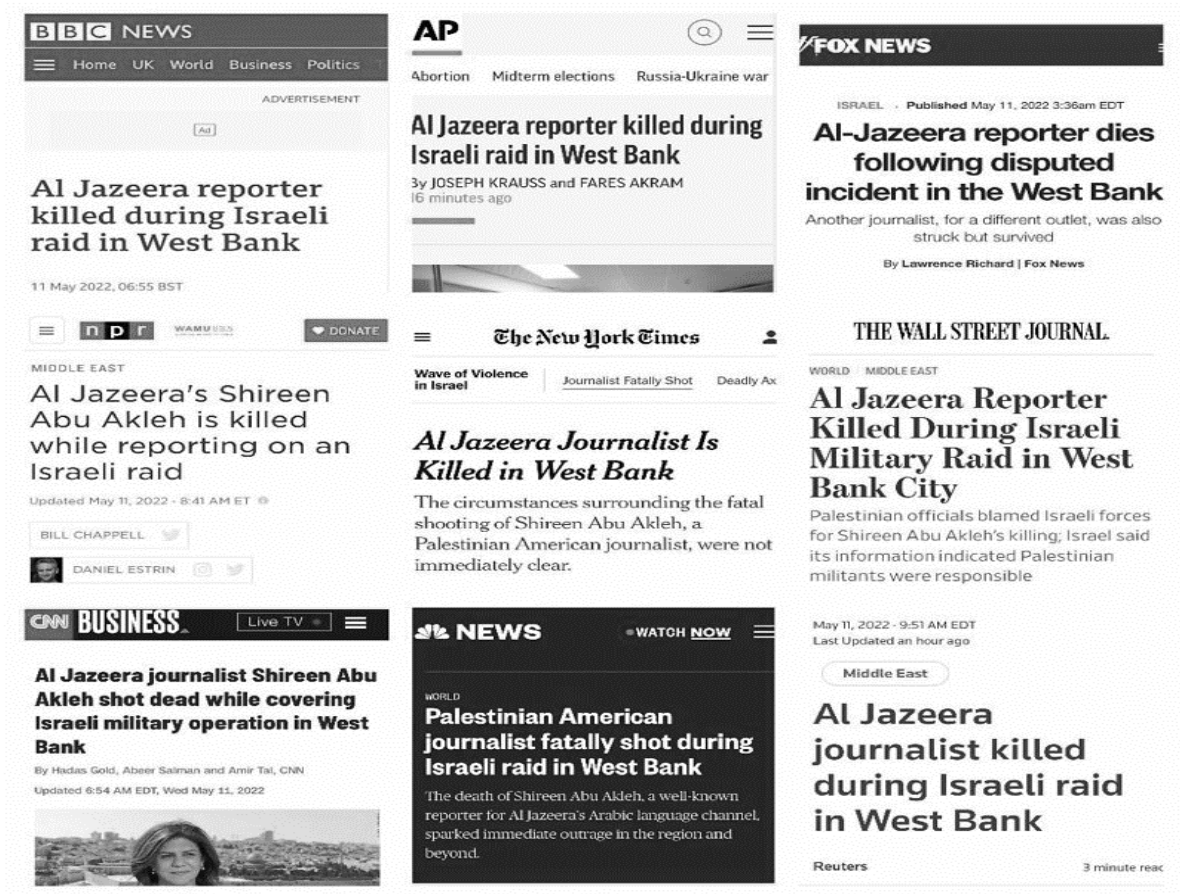
Media content has an agenda, message, and a perspective to send the audience/receiver. An important pillar in media research that shall be briefly introduced in this chapter is the media’s agenda. Framing has been linked conceptually to other “media effects models” such as priming or agenda setting (Iyenga, 1990; Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Framing will be explained below, as well as how it is used to communicate a narrative to the audience.

Framing “refers to the idea that actors like strategic communicators, journalists, but also the audience members select some aspects of a particular issue and make them salient while other aspects are ignored” (Von Sikorski & Matthes, 2020). Framing simply refers to the way a story is told, and as a result, what perception the teller creates in the recipient’s mind, regardless of the authenticity of the told version of the story. For example, in the case of the Ukraine war, the story is told differently in Ukrainian media versus how the story is told in the Russian media (Papadopoulos, 2021).

According to Nicolette Papadopoulos (2021), framing, priming, and agenda setting are “dangerous”. This is because “news is not a demonstration of reality but rather a recreated story from different angles and perspectives” (Papadopoulos, 2021).

The killing of American-Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh during an Israeli military operation in Palestine 2022 serves as a good illustration. Despite wearing a press helmet and vest, the Al Jazeera reporter was shot directly in the face. “Shireen was shot immediately by Israeli soldiers”, according to Al Jazeera, but other media outlets that covered the story referred to the incident as a “raid” that resulted in a journalist’s “death” (Mehdi, 2022). When similar events take place in different parts of the world, the news frames the messages to the audience, serving the public agenda. This results in shaping public opinion based on communicating framed information, possibly not ‘real’ information (Biddle & Speri 2022). Below is a screenshot of different headlines covering the death of the journalist in different media outlets.

Figure 4.2.1 Framing (news coverage)

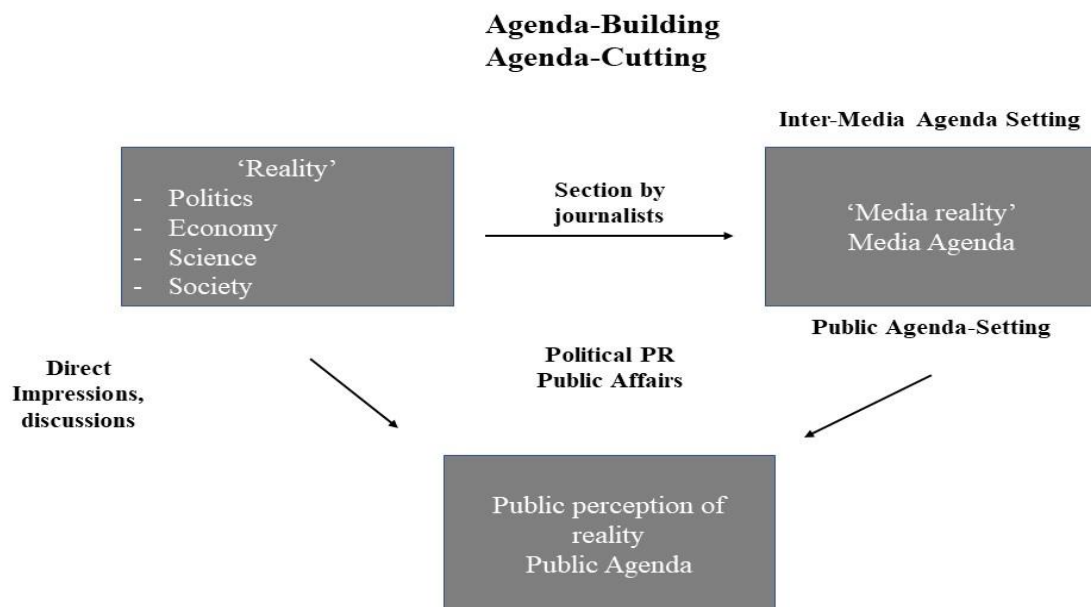


Source: Mehdi (2022).

Media framing also exists internally, depending on the channels' agendas and the political parties they follow. If a person watches news on American news channels such as CNN and FOX News, the storytelling and setting about the same event is different. This is due to the fundamental difference and drive for both channels since the first is "liberal-leaning" and the other is a "conservative-leaning" channel. This fundamental difference is not only in television, but also applicable to all media platforms and tools (Papadopoulos, 2021). In a Winter School conference titled *Researching Communication in Times of Disruption*, organized by the Catholic University in Portugal (2022), journalism professor Barbie Zelizer discussed with the audience the process of preparing the content for broadcast: "what happens in newsrooms in Philadelphia does not look the same as newsrooms in Lisbon", she stated. The difference lies in the agenda, objective, and audience in the communications.

Jan Servaes (2012) developed the process of controlling public perception shown in the figure below. It shows the process of controlling public perception through filtering data and employing the filtered information from 'reality' to make it suit the 'media's reality'. This results in employing filtered messages towards the agenda's objectives. This filtering cycle is applicable to all media broadcasts, not just TV.

Figure 4.2.2 Media's Impact on Reality



Source: Servaes (2012)

Furthermore, framing by Western media has included labelling other countries with titles that result in a negative perception as part of its foreign policy agendas (Taibbi, 2019). The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the US invasion of Iraq, as an example, drove Srinivasa Raghavan (2022) to question the credibility of Western media. “Western media's credibility has been severely eroded” due to the duplicity in coverage about the invasion of Iraq and invasion of Ukraine (Raghavan, 2022). Employing media to shape global perceptions is done by different nations, particularly major powers in the world today, such as the US, China, and Russia as highlighted in nation branding chapter. Despite being major powers economically and politically, countries such as the US, France, the UK, China, and Russia need to use the media effectively to empower their brand (Miazhevich, 2018). This brings to mind Nye’s (2019) remarks about the importance of being able to effectively communicate one side’s version of the story in order to ‘win’ in today’s global competition in multiple fields. The previous sections provide a macro-view of how some nations are using media tools to win the public and, in some cases, deceive the audience with ‘filtered’ information in order to serve the country’s overall political, economic, and social objectives.

4.3 Nation Branding in Traditional Media: The Intersection of Political and Commercial Interests

Building on what has been discussed thus far, image production and in some cases ‘perception creation’ is a core activity for significant global media organizations (De Moya & Jain, 2016). The media play a significant role in communicating a specific narrative to the audience. This is through organizing how images, ideas, and texts are constructed and communicated. The framing of the death of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in the preceding example, is a ‘technique’ used by all media platforms to consistently transmit a narrative from a particular position while pursuing a particular objective, generally the organization’s agenda. This agenda may be influenced by political or commercial goals.

Media platforms can provide a forum for nations to share their competitive advantages by leveraging the power of narrative and the ability to influence the global perception that these tools provide (De Moya & Jain, 2014). The employment of media in branding nations is the step in the process when the nations communicate with the world with the aim of conveying a positive image. From an economic communications perspective, this promotional step takes place to open ‘new spaces’ for the nation culturally, politically, and economically (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011). The intersections of multiple stakeholders and influential factors in the process pose a challenge in branding nations, particularly when it comes to collaborations with

foreign media platforms. This includes assessing both parties' political, economic, and general interests and orientations (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011; Bolin & Stahlberg, 2015). The parties involved in this collaboration can be described as follows:

- 1- **The Country:** This includes the government entities involved in branding the nation and the communication branding firm working on behalf of the government that is going to design and run promotional campaigns to support the branding strategy. This stakeholder aspires to give the country the best possible exposure in domestic and foreign media outlets and to present a positive narrative to viewers around the world.
- 2- **The Media Platform:** (For example, the BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera, or any other global platform): This stakeholder has a distinct political and economic agenda and orientation. The advertised 'client' (product, company, service, or nation) must correspond to the platform's orientation.
- 3- **The Audience:** Both domestic and international viewers of these media outlets. The ultimate recipients of the messages and narratives that media outlets construct are their audiences (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011; Bolin & Stahlberg, 2015).

Furthermore, while discussing the role and the use of media platforms in the field of nation branding and highlighting Ukraine's previous branding campaigns to attract tourists and investors, and achieve a positive global perception through the utilization of global media platforms, Bolin and Stahlberg (2015) highlighted 'media's interest' in this transaction.

Major media organizations' monetary motivations were under the limelight, especially those more established ones like the BBC and CNN. For these large corporations, content that can generate revenue is ultimately important. This point was raised in relation to the utilization of media in country branding promotions and media content. "Large-scale international media corporations such as the BBC and CNN are hardly in this business out of loyalty to the nation" Bolin and Stahlberg (2015, p. 204). They are like any other corporation acting on the international capitalist market. Like all large-scale corporations, one can naturally find a spectrum of different motives for engaging in specific branding campaigns on the level of individual staff members, but, as corporations, their ultimate goal is to create profit, not national identities" (Bolin & Stahlberg, 2015). The authors also emphasized that media organizations have goals to achieve, therefore these campaigns should fit with the institutions' ultimate orientation.

Alison Farmery, BBC Worldwide Director of Commercial Content and Delivery, explained in an interview more the about the perspective of media organizations when conducting nation branding campaigns and whether the platforms 'are open' for utilization by anyone. Farmery

confirmed that the platform chooses to work with countries that match the overall strategy of the organization. She added that they can choose not to be associated with certain countries (brands) despite the financial offer. Furthermore, from the perspective of her organization, the BBC, there is no difference if the channel is conducting a promotion for a product, company, or a nation (Bolin & Stahlberg, 2015). In other words, media platforms are offering air ‘space’ for sale therefore, the client is a customer paying for the space to promote the brand.

Qatar and BBC

In May 2022, the BBC published two promotional videos (online and on TV) about the State of Qatar (May 2, and May 23) promoting and praising the nation’s ambition, vision, diversity, culture, heritage, modernity, warm weather, developed infrastructure, and economic development (BBC, 2022). In one of the promotional videos, most of the communicated message was about highlighting the Qatari culture, food, and the role of women in Qatar’s modern society.

That campaign emphasized the development in local practices where women are pioneering in businesses. A Qatari businesswoman spoke about her experience in women’s role in Qatar’s society and the modern business world. Both videos ended with “high recommendations” to visit Qatar and extended an invitation to enjoy the positive experiences the destination has to offer (BBC, 2022). The controversy in the BBC was the articles, documentaries, and reports that the channel produced about Qatar in different occasions before and after these promotional campaigns on the same platforms. Qatar in the promotional campaign was a destination that is “highly recommended” by the BBC, a nation with diversity, modernity, and a place that is worth discovering (BBC, 2022).

When the FIFA World Cup was about to start in Doha in November 2022, all the news from the BBC about Qatar was related to criticism of the nation; including the facilities, the policies, the closed culture, the abuse of human rights, and even the “hot climate” (BBC Sport, 2022). The BBC content was diametrically opposed to that published on the same platform promoting the country a few weeks before the World Cup. In its report, *The Times of Israel* highlighted that the BBC did not only boycott the FIFA World Cup, but also dedicated the air time to condemning Qatar’s policies, culture, and the infrastructure in the nation which was built by workers who died in the process (NA, 2022).

British journalist Piers Morgan described the BBC’s ‘attack’ on Qatar with the word “hypocrisy”. Morgan stated that the BBC did not comment on the human rights abuse the British forces conducted during the invasion of Iraq when London hosted the Olympics in 2012.

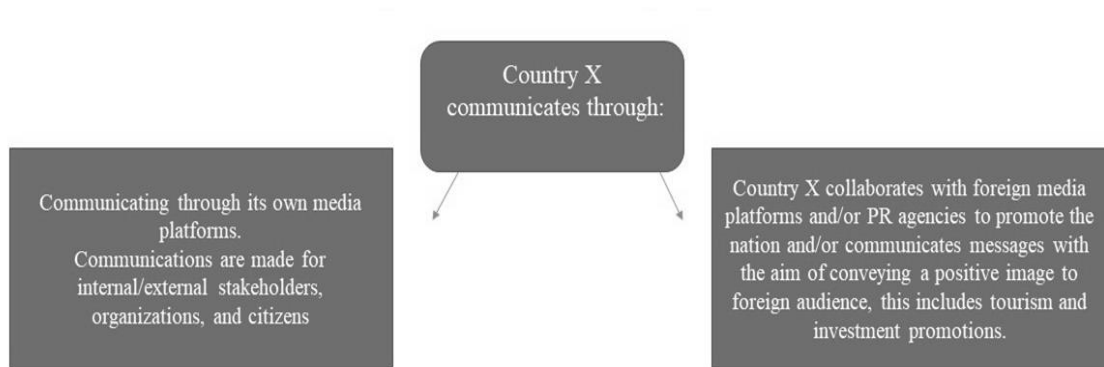
He added, the BBC did not boycott the FIFA World Cup 2018 in Russia despite Russia's human rights and political history. Morgan (2022) publicly asked the BBC on multiple media channels to "stop the hypocrisy" and not use the World Cup to communicate its political agenda.

The example of Qatar and the BBC not only confirms Bolin and Stahlberg's (2015) view of media platforms working solely to advance their agendas and meet their financial objectives, but it also contradicts statements made by Farmery about the standards the channel adheres to before being associated with any brands (Bolin & Stahlberg, 2015). If the BBC has a negative view of Qatar's brand policies, narrative, and orientation, then the channel should not have run various promotional campaigns promoting brand Qatar and inviting global audiences to visit the 'charming state'.

This confirms the statement that these media platforms are not in business to serve the nation (Bolin & Stahlberg, 2015). Despite being an influential global tool, the integrity of media orientation can be a major driver for multiple stakeholders to think of traditional media as an unreliable source of information or as a business partner, especially if the political agendas are not allied (Taibbi, 2019). Political and economic orientations and interests seem to be the key influencer in media platforms even if that leads the channel to post contradictory content. On top of its expensive cost, traditional media promotional campaigns have proven to be ineffective in some cases (Stahlberg & Bolin, 2016, p. 277).

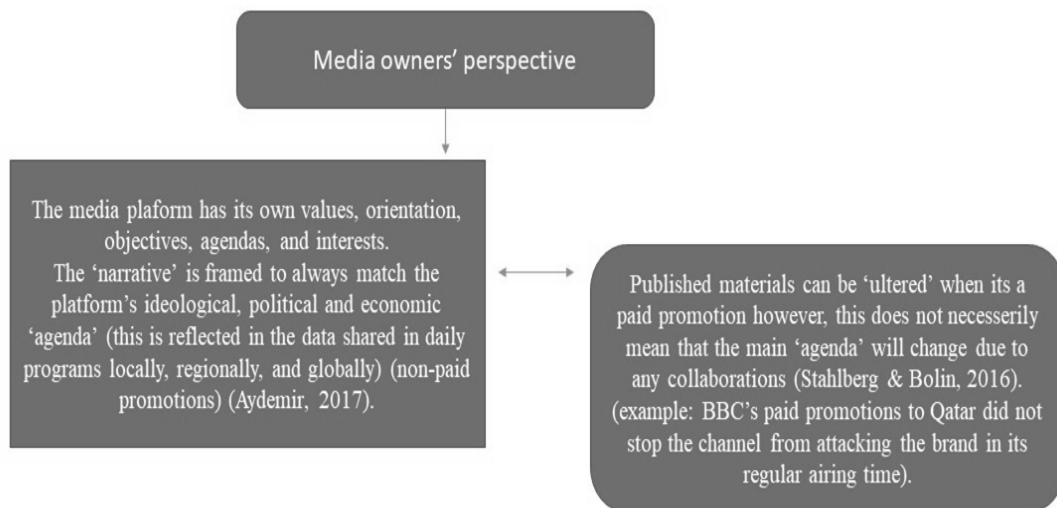
Exploring the cases of BBC and Qatar hearkens back to what was highlighted in the beginning of this chapter when referring to the way media is being employed today as a 'rewarding tool' to political allies and as a 'punishment tool' to political opponents (Aydemir, 2017, p. 80-81). The political factor seems to always be the creator of the channels' ideologies and orientation and as a result the drive for media platforms to alter their content accordingly (Aydemir, 2017, p. 80-81). This means that the interests of nations when working with foreign media can be threatened unless the political interests are aligned (Bayles, 2014). The following charts explain the interests of each stakeholder in this 'transaction' between nations (customer – Stakeholder A) promoting their brands, and media platforms (Stakeholder B).

Figure 4.3.1 Nation Branding and Media Relationship: Stakeholder A Perspective



- The main stakeholder and information ‘controller’ are the nation (or the branding agency responsible on branding the nation).
 - The objective is to utilize the media platforms to promote the nation’s interests.
- Media platforms participate in the nation’s growth when a positive message about the nation is conveyed successfully.

Figure 4.3.2 Nation Branding and Media Relationship: Stakeholder B Perspective



- The main stakeholder and information ‘controller’ are the Media platform.
- The objective is to promote the Media’s interest and conduct full implementation of all channel policies and directions to match its own political and economic orientation and objectives.
- Advertisers participate in the media’s financial growth through the financial contributions of paid promotions.

According to the preceding figures, the relationships between media platforms and countries can be positive when their beliefs, interests, and goals align. If the direction of one of these two variables differs from the other, it does not appear to be a constructive partnership over the short or long term. This was highlighted by Aydemir (2017) in terms of using media platforms such as Hollywood as soft power tools to reflect foreign policies and allyship status with other nations. Therefore, it is logical for countries (as a stakeholder that is concerned about a brand's interest in the first place) to utilize different methods of communications and media platforms in order to foster the nation's brand communications strategy.

Perhaps the association of international media with political agendas and exorbitant prices has rendered social media a practical haven for use as platforms to communicate with audiences from all over the world (Torres, 2019).

4.4 Nation Branding in Digital Media

The way global media operates has provided an opportunity for other communications platforms such as social and digital media platforms to gain influence. The Pew Research Center (2012) carried out a study looking at individuals' preferences in obtaining information from traditional media such as television, radio and official newspapers compared to obtaining information from digital and social media. This was a part of a larger comparison between traditional media and digital media platforms; 91% of users confirmed that they 'trust' information they see and read on digital media platforms more than traditional media (Purcell, Brenner, & Rainie, 2012). Furthermore, 66% found that the multiple sources of information on digital media through online searches makes the platform unbiased in comparison with traditional media (Purcell, Brenner, & Rainie, 2012). Finally, and most importantly when it comes to purchasing and selection, the users in the study confirmed that digital and online media platforms tend to be more helpful. For example, when an online user is searching for a holiday, the data will show relevant information that matches the searching criteria of the users in that particular time. The need, timing, and relevance factors are in favor of online media compared with traditional media. These findings were highlighted by Bloom Consulting (2019) to emphasize the importance for nations to have an effective digital presence especially for the purpose of tourism and investments promotions. "Marketing communication has a vital role in brand building in the market. Mass media advertising, public relations, publicity, and sales promotion – are the various communication tools that a marketer generally uses to address the communication problem which the brand faces in the market and as a part of product promotion" (Ragini, 2018). Marketing communications is not just an essential tool in brand

strategy development, it is also considered to be the relationship maintainer between organizations and the public (both current and future customers/stakeholders) (Ragini, 2018; Kotler & Keller, 2009, p. 473). In the brand building process, advertising and public relations activities take place at the end of the brand construction and brand strategy cycle (Kotler & Keller, 2009, p. 476). The same is applicable in nation brand building; once a nation has a vision, constructs its internal and external policy system to foster the vision, has the right infrastructure, and sets communications strategies, advertising and public relations come next. This is the stage where the nation communicates the internal spirit it has with the objective of stimulating interest from foreigners. Nations that aspire to ‘jump’ to the advertising stage before building their core narrative through fixing internal policies and defining their strengths (nation building stage) do not achieve the desired outcomes (Stahlberg & Bolin, 2016; Aronczyk, 2013).

Advertising is one of the most popular methods in the business communications mix. It is a method that “provides exposure to the largest, most geographically dispersed audience. Advertising costs can add up quickly with mediums like television, radio and even online advertising which can be prohibitively expensive for many businesses” (Ragini, 2018). In the modern world, there are other forms of expensive advertising, including using public figures and celebrities to represent a specific brand, the price of which can reach hundreds of millions in some cases. The most recent and relevant example of this is the signing of the Portuguese football star Cristiano Ronaldo and the Argentine football star Lionel Messi to promote the brand of KSA (Alhassan, 2023).

The ‘world’ of advertising has changed dramatically, and it is continuing to change due to rapid technological development. Despite the presence of ‘traditional’ tools of advertising such as television, radio, billboards, newspapers, and magazines, the internet and digital media have completely changed the world of advertising. There are all the possibilities of advertising through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and any other social media or digital media platforms. Furthermore, the development of advertising possibilities is growing beyond borders; it is possible today for businesses to successfully target a specific niche based on specific demographics, such as age, sex, language, psychology, and sometimes with some applications even more specifications are available through digital media (Meta, 2022).

One of the latest technologies being developed is the metaverse made by Meta (formerly known as Facebook). Meta offers customers and business owners the option to advertise services in the “meta world. Meta has a replica of real cities made in the virtual world and as a result an entire parallel universe is made with virtual participants and virtual businesses being there.

Some businesses are interested in having advertising exposure through the metaverse, and some still prefer the “traditional” meta services that include Facebook, Instagram, and other online social media platforms (Meta, 2022). The development introduced by Meta allowed hotels, cities/places, individuals, and businesses to advertise on this platform.

Destinations are brutally competing to win potential tourists, visitors, and investors. Therefore, being innovative in attracting attention can be influential in the minds of consumers, according to Kotler & Keller (2009, p. 480). Today the metaverse is the latest platform of virtual reality and probably will continue to grow to be the most innovative global advertising space soon (Ibrahim, 2022). Meta is a replica of the real world represented virtually, businesses are competing to win space in Meta and to be represented and seen by consumers in the virtual world. This is one way of keeping the connection with current or future potential customers (Meta, 2022). Today, eight major cities are fully represented on the platform, in one way or another. This shows that these nations are innovative and up to date with technological development around the world. These cities are:

- 1- London
 - 2- New York
 - 3- Tokyo
 - 4- Santa Monica
 - 5- Seoul
 - 6- Singapore
 - 7- Dubai
 - 8- Shanghai
- (Ibrahim, 2022)

According to Danial Ibrahim (2022), the presence of cities in the Metaverse is not solely related to commercial activities, but also to other concepts such as developing smart cities and testing future expansion and infrastructure planning and development. He added, “the massive hype around the Metaverse and its benefits has started generating interest among cities worldwide with cities looking to harness the potential of digital twins and its impact on city-wide planning. Several cities have already started Metaverse related initiatives by employing real-time data tracking and creating digital twins” (Ibrahim, 2022).

Online presence and social media interactions are growing on a daily basis to include voting for best destinations, feedback about place brands, questionnaires of what tourists are looking for, and other data that can enhance a destination’s competitiveness. The Emirati government

(UAE, 2022) announced that it is the first country in the world to build its online identity, with participation of citizens from all over the world to help the government select its logo. UAE was the first nation to do this in the world according to its official government website. The initiative had two objectives:

- 1- Awareness for those who did not know about the brand.
- 2- Engagement and involvement for those who are already familiar with brand UAE, such engagement can enhance their sense of belongingness and involvement with the brand (UAE, 2022).

Organizations, businesses, and countries are racing to have an online presence and online engagement in the digital platforms due to their popularity and the possibility of direct contact with the audience. After all, these platforms are representing the future of branding, advertising and communications, therefore, effective presence on these platforms is a tool of survival in our global competitive world (Torres, 2019; Meta, 2022).

Furthermore, Spain is one of the countries that has had a media presence in Hollywood, Netflix, online platforms, ongoing advertising campaigns in local, regional, and international televisions, magazines, newspapers, as well as its activities in digital and social media. In 2021, during his visit to the US, the Spanish prime minister invited Hollywood producers to have permanent locations in different cities in Spain, knowing the value of utilizing Hollywood in promoting Spanish cities as potential destinations (Keeley, 2021). These activities along with internal policy updates placed the Spain brand in a leading position in the world (Aronczyk, 2013).

Furthermore, in recent years, branding activities for places/nations have shifted to the digital realm via online platforms (Torres, 2019). According to Torres (2019), social media platforms, as well as digital media in general, will be the current and future media tools for nation/place branding (p. 124). Social and digital media platforms are extremely important in modern branding practices, particularly when it comes to communicating with large audiences from all over the world (Torres, 2019; Ibrahim, 2022).

This means that the 'barrier' of not having a powerful media tool owned by a nation's government such as Hollywood, CNN, or BBC World, is removed. Social media and digital applications have waived the costly element of appearing in traditional media tools. This

perhaps can allow countries with lower marketing budgets to still compete and communicate with the world by effectively utilizing social and digital media platforms (King, 2018).

Below is a table that compares a media representation campaign on CNN versus the social media platform Instagram.

Figure 4.4.1 Comparison of a Promotional Campaign on Traditional Media and Social Media

Media tool	Promotional Material	Target audience	Price
CNN	- 1 video promoting the destination produced by CNN production team. - Up to 15 minutes	100 million viewers	CNN: 150,000 Euros (DXMediaDirect, 2022)
Instagram	-Posting a video produced by tourism board/nation branding team. -Up to 60 minutes	100 million viewers	Instagram: 30,000 Euros (Instagram, 2022)

The comparison in the figure shows that social media platforms such as Instagram can be more effective in communicating a promotional campaign in terms of reach as well as saving almost 60% of the budget that can be spent on traditional media such as CNN channel.

Torres (2019) stated that having a “digital ‘identity’” as well as an effective strategy to communicate with the public online are essential conditions for nations (p. 124). Digital communications for nations, cities, and places are vital in today’s competition, especially in terms of branding for tourism purposes. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) (2018), digital communications is part of a major brand communications strategy designed by the administration to convey a reputable perception. Social media platforms have become one of the main pillars of place branding.

At a conference held by the International Center for Culture and Innovation on March 29, 2022, Diogo Paciencia, digital media manager at the European Travel Commission, confirmed the increasing shift to digital media in place/nation/city branding, predicting that digital activities in nation branding will take over despite the importance of traditional media. Salah Hassan of George Washington University, John Hayes of Palm Beach University, Khaled Ben Rajab of Tunisia's Ministry of Tourism, and Talal Al Maghrabi of KSA's branding team all agreed with this prediction. Social media platforms (Instagram, Snap Chat, TikTok, Facebook, as well as travel and hotel applications such as Booking) are among the current most effective tools highlighted.

An example of the power of social media that is worth mentioning in this section is how they are being used in the war between Russia and Ukraine. While witnessing the beginning of the war between Russia and Ukraine, social and digital media played a huge role in spreading news. Live videos from Ukraine of Russian attacks gave the world an instant update of what the Ukrainians have suffered. Many videos and pictures spread rapidly from Ukrainian cities, which helped in creating awareness of and sympathy from global communities for what happened in the country. Social media was a tool to communicate the Ukrainian narrative made by Ukrainians. This, according to Bloom Consulting (2022), has helped in strengthening brand Ukraine. Previously, Ukraine failed in its traditional media strategy using TV, magazines, and international newspapers and international events, such as hosting the European cup (Stahlberg & Bolin, 2016). However, social and digital media tools helped to position the country as a 'European state' despite the tragedy of the situation. Ukraine is an example of the power of digital and social media as an influential tool in branding nations according to Bloom Consulting (2022).

Furthermore, the convenience of social media platforms has made them popular tools to access. According to *World Stream*, the most popular social media platforms in 2022 were:

1. Facebook
2. YouTube
3. WhatsApp
4. Instagram
5. TikTok

(McCormick, 2022)

It is not hard to find reasons why digital media and social media platforms are popular tools for advertising in our era. Digital media usage almost doubled over the past decade while the number of traditional media users (time spent) decreased by almost 35%, with an expectation for this dynamic to continue (Statista, 2022). More statistics shown below from Global Web Index GWI (2019) show the difference in demand between traditional and social media. Figures 4.4.2 and 4.4.3 show user data of different age groups from different regions in 2019.

Figure 4.4.2 Digital vs. Traditional Media

Media behaviors
Number of hours and minutes per day typically devoted to the following

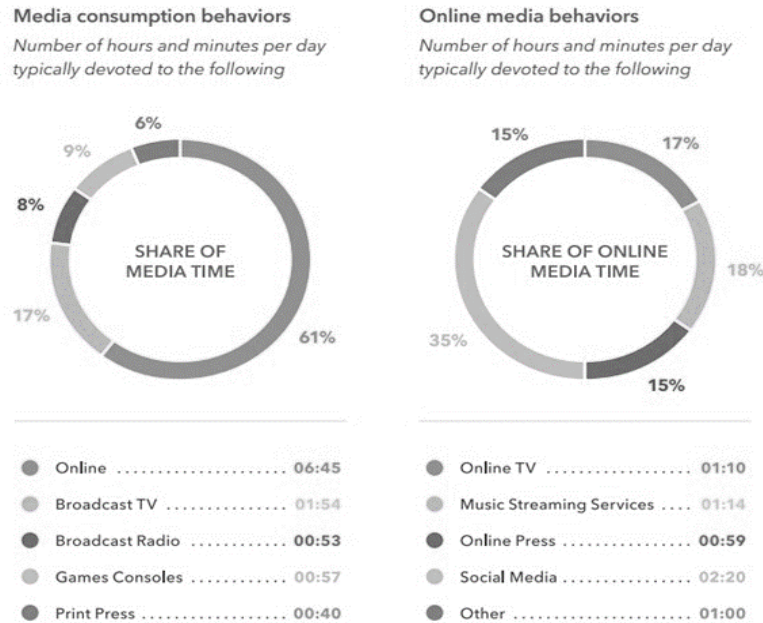
	TOTAL	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	APAC	EUROPE	LAT AM	MEA	NORTH AM
Online via PC/Laptop/Tablet	03:27	03:31	03:37	03:21	03:19	03:13	03:09	03:31	04:22	04:07	03:59
Online Mobile	03:18	04:13	03:40	02:56	02:12	01:33	03:26	02:22	04:28	03:59	02:28
Social Media	02:20	02:57	02:34	02:04	01:37	01:14	02:13	01:53	03:29	03:05	02:03
Linear TV	01:55	01:30	01:50	02:00	02:17	02:43	01:36	02:16	02:17	01:56	02:51
Music Streaming Services	01:14	01:39	01:24	01:05	00:47	00:29	01:17	00:51	01:24	01:15	01:26
Online TV	01:10	01:17	01:22	01:09	00:53	00:39	01:16	00:46	01:02	01:12	01:18
Games Consoles	01:00	01:15	01:10	00:56	00:38	00:23	01:04	00:39	01:01	01:06	01:05
Online Press	00:59	01:01	01:08	01:00	00:47	00:35	01:00	00:38	01:31	01:12	00:48
Broadcast Radio	00:54	00:38	00:54	01:02	01:06	01:06	00:44	01:11	01:06	01:02	01:13
Physical Print Press	00:43	00:46	00:47	00:43	00:35	00:30	00:49	00:28	00:35	00:42	00:35

Source: GWI (2019)

**Note: digital media tools include websites, online platforms and applications, social media tools, and other digital broadcasting platforms such as Netflix.*

Figure 4.4.3 Digital vs. Traditional Media

Digital Media vs. Traditional Media



Source: GWI (2019)

The rise and high demand of digital and social media are also believed to be a globalization trend. Social media made the world borderless in terms of social, economic, and political transactions (Mihelj & Jimenez-Martinez, 2020). Therefore, countries aspiring to communicate with the world and promote their destinations shall immediately adapt to the global trend and create an online presence through the following:

- 1- Websites
- 2- Social media platforms
- 3- Google and other search engines
- 4- Constantly post digital content to keep brand's presence

(Torres, 2019)

The importance of an effective online presence was highlighted in a study published by Bloom Consulting (2019), stating that 86% of investors learn about potential investment destinations through online data available on Google or digital and social platforms. Furthermore, according to Torres (2019), 65% of tourists learn about possible destinations and choose them based on

communications made online. Therefore, an effective online presence and utilization of these platforms is not a luxury for countries/destinations, it is a necessity to exist on the global map.

In addition to being less expensive and less politically influenced than traditional media, the aforementioned figures clearly show that social media is preferred over other traditional media platforms. Therefore, it is simple to understand the nation branding industry's growing resistance to traditional media and its preference for social media platforms when it comes to branding campaigns (Torres, 2019).

To conclude, there has already been enough data about analyzing nations' campaigns that were done through traditional media. Different examples discussed branding campaigns through traditional media such as Bolin & Miazhevich (2018), Dinnie (2016), Fan (2008), He, Wang, & Wu (2020), Keller (2003), and Reibstein (2017). Therefore, the empirical part will explore nation branding digital campaigns conducted by the selected nations (Spain and UAE). The author will also conduct a general analysis of the nations' online presence through different platforms.

The Takeaway

Earlier chapters highlighted the role of media and communications in globalization, branding, and nation branding. Media communications have the ability to form a perception that shall either attract a potential tourist, investor, or visitor, or repel a potential audience if the resulting perception is negative (Parker, 2021). While the world became a smaller village and countries are competing in different fields, the role of media and communications appear to be vital in this process (Torres, 2019; Miazhevich, 2018), especially due to the role media plays in shaping culture, knowledge, public opinion, and perceptions (Miazhevich, 2018; Nye, 2008; Surowiec, 2016).

This chapter explored through different examples that media platforms communicate information driven by political and economic agendas (Morgan, 2022). During the communication, if a nation's interest is not aligned with media platforms' agendas, it is possible that a nation's brand can be distorted by communications made by the media platforms (Bolin & Stahlberg, 2015).

The political and financial motives for media platforms obligate the platform to broadcast content that matches its own version of the narrative, even if this narrative were unrealistic or 'framed' to give a specific perception that is far from the real story. This leads the author to highlight the direct influence of political and economic interests' on nation branding

communications (Aydemir, 2017). This also leads the author to ask about the genuineness of the current perception built in audiences minds about nations' brands. The way Hollywood on one hand conveys positive messages about New York, Paris, Rome, or London, and on the other conveys negative images about China, Russia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East drives the author to question the authenticity of the content on one hand, and the results of such communications on global perceptions of nations.

It is understood from the traditional media section that nation branding persistent activities are essential to construct and communicate a positive brand, however, they are not sufficient as a sole element. A nation's brand can be communicated, modified, or affected from external stakeholders, including other nations, governments, and organizations through employing media platforms.

Furthermore, in branding concepts, advertising comes at the end of the brand building stages, and should take place only after building a reliable brand (Keller, 2003). The case appears to be the same when it comes to nation branding. Countries that jumped to the advertising stage before defining their vision, core narrative competitive edge, strategies of communications, or before matching the communicated message with the internal reality of the nation did not succeed (Bolin & Miazhevich, 2018). It can be concluded that advertising is a tool to use in nation branding, however, it is not a tool to build a brand with a positive perception.

The growth of online and digital platform users suggests that these are potentially effective communication tools for the future of nation/place branding, outperforming traditional media while also lowering financial costs. (UNECE, 2018; International Center for Culture & Innovation, 2022; Bloom, 2022; McCormick, 2022).

The takeaway from this section confirms the importance of an effective online presence, communication, and advertising activities in the digital communications age in order to be seen and reached by potential visitors, tourists, or investors (Bloom, 2019), especially after highlighting that traditional media is driven by political agendas that could clash with some brands' interests.

Thus far, the author has been able to draw out key components from each chapter that are vital for constructing nations' brands, but metaphorically, the puzzle constantly feels unfinished when viewed from a fresh perspective. Beyond marketing or creating policies, nation branding involves a series of activities. From this chapter and the ones before it, it is clear that nation branding is a process that involves both internal and external brand builders. The author recognizes that both internal and external stakeholders play a role in empowering or deterring the brand, but it is the responsibility of the country to lead the "race" in developing an

impressive internal system of policies followed by an effective communications strategy that can grow the country's global admiration. At this stage, the chapters in part I explained the concept of branding nations from multiple layers and that a nation's brand building process contains different stages, before maturing to earn the promised benefits. There is an equal importance to each of the highlighted elements in nation branding (the soul and the beauty): each complements the other. Finally, the importance of media and communications is vital in terms of brand promotion or distortion, therefore, it is logical that nations will try to utilize different communications and media platforms to consistently communicate 'their own version' of a brand narrative.

PART II – Field Work & Analysis

Chapter Five: Empirical Methodology

The use of theory in science, in order to make sense of the empirical data, is an ongoing debate in the production of knowledge (Collins & Stockton, 2018). The qualitative research methodology is one of the most popular among researchers since it allows for a wide range of approaches and tools to be used while conducting research (Collins & Stockton, 2018). Within an interpretive epistemology, the author conducted qualitative research with the objective of collecting data through interviews as well as critical discourse analysis (CDA) method for analyzing promotional digital campaigns conducted by the selected nations. These methods will help the author to analyze the answers within the theoretical framework. Interviews were done with nation branding global experts, political and economic figures, and subject-matter experts. With the data from the literature review, CDA, and the interviews, the author trusts that this segment will both assist in answering the research question and advance the state of knowledge in the field. CDA will be conducted using Fairclough's three-dimensional model to analyze digital campaigns conducted by UAE and the Kingdom of Spain to attempt to attract tourists immediately after COVID-19 first global lockdown. The author will explore the elements the countries used to communicate with potential tourists and the messages used to attract visitors. Each methodology will be explained in depth in the following sections.

5.1 The Selected Countries

This section will give a brief introduction and historical background about both nations selected to study in this research.

1- United Arab Emirates UAE (Al Imarat Al Arabia Al Mutahida)

Figure 5.1.1 Map of UAE



Source: Britannica (2022)

United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven emirates which translates to states, therefore, the full name is translated to the United Arab States. The capital of the UAE is Abu Dhabi, which is the largest state in the country; it is also the wealthiest state with oil and energy resources, something that Dubai city does not have (Crystal & Peterson, 2022). UAE is in Western Asia, in the Middle East region, the Arabic side of Asia, specifically in the region that is known as the Gulf, due to the location of these countries on the Persian Gulf. The Gulf region is an attractive region for foreigners due to its lucrative salaries (mostly tax free), and the high demand for skilled immigrants (Crystal & Peterson, 2022).

Dubai is the economic center of the country and one of the most vibrant economic hubs in the world. UAE has a total population of almost 10 million people, nearly 90% of the population are foreigners from different parts of the world, however, the highest foreign nationality that lives in the country is India (almost 39%) (Crystal & Peterson, 2022).

Historically, the Gulf region was under British rule, referred to as “under the British protection” for over 150 years between 1820 and 1971. The strong British presence in The Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (GCC) was not associated with the interest in oil. At that time the region was very poor in all types of resources; it was mostly a large plot covered with sand (Allday 2014). However, the interest of the British presence was associated with the strategic location of the UAE, linking the west with India, one of the biggest British colonies at the time. The British domination followed by the American strong presence in the region after the detection of oil created a strong ‘English’ presence in the region. English is the official second

language in the region and in UAE after Arabic. Economically this has turned the region into an ‘Americanized’ region with strong American cultural and business presence until today (Allday, 2014).

The recent development in the UAE transformed the nation into one of the most visited touristic hubs in the world, as well as a desired destination for talented immigrants and international investors. This is due to the modernity, laws, policies, and other attractions that the UAE offers (UAE, 2022).

Country’s Profile

Figure 5.1.2 UAE Profile Table

Also Known As	Trucial States • Trucial Sheikdoms • Al-Imārāt al-‘Arabiyyah al-Muttaḥidah • Trucial Oman • Trucial Coast • U.A.E.
Head Of Government	Prime Minister: Sheikh Mohammed ibn Rashid Al Maktoum
Capital	Abu Dhabi
Population	(2022 est.) 9,272,000
Currency Exchange Rate	1 USD equals 3.673 Emirati dirham
Head Of State	President: Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Form Of Government	federation of seven emirates with one advisory body (Federal National Council)
Official Language	Arabic
Official Religion	Islam
Official Name	Al-Imārāt al-‘Arabiyyah al-Muttaḥidah (United Arab Emirates)
Total Area (Sq Km)	71,024
Total Area (Sq Mi)	27,423
Monetary Unit	dirham (AED)
Population Rank	(2021) 96
Population Projection 2030	10,977,000
Density: Persons Per Sq Km	(2022) 130.5
Urban-Rural Population	Urban: (2018) 86.5% • Rural: (2018) 13.5%
Life Expectancy At Birth	Male: (2019) 77.7 years • Female: (2019) 80.4 years
Literacy: Percentage Of Population Age 15 And Over Literate	Male: (2019) 98% • Female: (2019) 97%

Source: Crystal, & Peterson (2022)

2- Kingdom of Spain

Figure 5.1.3 Map of Spain



Source: Britannica (2022)

Spain consists of 17 regions and is in southwestern Europe. The Iberian country shares the Iberian Peninsula with Portugal. Spain’s history, culture, and structure makes it one of the most touristic countries in the world (Ginés et al., 2022). “The many and varied cultures that have gone into the making of Spain—those of the Castilians, Catalonians, Lusitanians, Galicians, Basques, Romans, Arabs, Jews, and Roma (Gypsies), among other peoples—are renowned for their varied cuisines, customs, and prolific contributions to the world’s artistic heritage” (Ginés et al., 2022).

Historically Spain was part of different empires including the Roman Empire for nearly 800 years, and it was also under the Islamic Empire for another 800 years, along with Portugal until the 15th century (Ginés et al., 2022). The traces left by these empires empower the Spanish pride about the cultural variety and rich history it enjoys. Indeed, this is beneficial from a touristic perspective. In the 16th century the Spanish Empire elevated and colonized different parts of the world including some parts of Africa, the Philippines, and most of Central and South America. The Spanish Empire gave Spain a competitive edge culturally, economically, and politically. The benefit of that historical era is clear until today, as Spanish is one of the top-five most-spoken languages in the world; it is also the formal language of more than 20 countries on different continents (Ginés et al., 2022).

Spain’s culture, nature, openness, hospitality, and variety are some of its strongest attraction pillars for tourists and international visitors. The deep history of the nation became one of its strongest attractions alongside the weather and the beaches the nation has to offer (Ginés et al., 2022). According to the Bloom Consulting directory (2019/2020), Spain is one of the top three most desired destinations in the world.

Country’s Profile

Figure 5.1.4 Spain Profile Table

Also Known As	Reino de España • Kingdom of Spain • España
Head Of Government	Prime Minister: Pedro Sánchez
Capital	<u>Madrid</u>
Population	(2022 est.) 47,323,000
Currency Exchange Rate	1 USD equals 0.959 euro
Head Of State	King: <u>Felipe VI</u>
Form Of Government	constitutional monarchy with two legislative houses (Senate [266]; Congress of Deputies [350])
Official Language	Castilian Spanish ²
Official Religion	None
Official Name	Reino de España (Kingdom of Spain)
Total Area (Sq Km)	505,983
Total Area (Sq Mi)	195,361
Monetary Unit	euro (€)
Population Rank	(2021) 30
Population Projection 2030	47,083,000
Density: Persons Per Sq Km	(2022) 93.5
Urban-Rural Population	Urban: (2018) 80.3% • Rural: (2018) 19.7%
Life Expectancy At Birth	Male: (2019) 80.9 years • Female: (2019) 86.2 years
Literacy: Percentage Of Population Age 15 And Over Literate	Male: (2020) 99% • Female: (2020) 98%

Source: Ginés et al. (2022)

This study will investigate the pillars that constitute nation brand Spain and nation brand UAE (Dubai). By selecting the campaigns and conducting a general digital presence analysis, the author aims to understand the communication themes, tools, and messages the nations use. The author aims to apply both methodologies to understand how these two countries developed their brands and as a result how these countries are benefiting from having a positive perception, if any, which in turn generates financial growth. The reason for selecting Spain is that it is one of the top nation brands globally according to Brand Finance and Bloom

Consulting indexes as shown in the table in figure 5.1.5. Spain is also a highly regarded brand and mentioned as a ‘good nation branding example’ in different reviews (Aronczyk, 2013; Torres, 2019). On the other hand, UAE is a ‘young’ country that relied heavily on the marketing side of nation branding over the past 20 years, focusing on branding UAE and Dubai as a luxury, investment, and touristic destination (Al Marri, 2022; Michaelson, 2021). In terms of tourism, UAE enjoys a medium advanced position in the global ranks and is far behind Spain (Bloom, 2019). As a financial and business destination (successfully conducting international trade, launching businesses, economic operations, and attracting foreign investors), UAE is in the top 17 nations in the world, six positions behind Spain, which ranks 11th globally (Brand Finance Directory, 2021). Below are the ranks for UAE and Spain in terms of tourism, trade, and brand financial value, according to Bloom (2019) and Brand Finance Directory (2021).

Figure 5.1.5 Selected Countries Global

	Brand Finance Directory	Tourism (Bloom)	Trade (Bloom)
Spain	11	3	14
UAE	17	72	29

Spain is known to be a successful brand according to today’s global nation branding ranks and UNWTO (Aronczyk, 2013). The brand and its journey have been explored historically starting from the time it was ruled by a dictatorship until it reached today’s position where it is a European democracy with a steady and growing economy and seen as a global touristic icon (Institute for State Effectiveness, 2012). Current data shows that Spain has mainly worked on three elements to be perceived the way it is today:

- 1- Government/Leadership: the fall of Spain’s dictatorship was the beginning of rebuilding a regime focusing on building the country’s economy through creating policies that would attract talent, tourists, and international investments. Spain’s new leadership had one main objective: developing the Spanish nation through economic development (Gilmore, 2002; Aronczyk, 2013).
- 2- Resources: Spain used its nature, people, culture, sports, and history to communicate its brand (Gilmore, 2002)

- 3- Communications: Spain has always been ‘visible’ through communications and media activities conducted around the world, as well as the media representation and its initiative to be Europe’s Hollywood home (Keeley, 2021).

Over the years, UAE became a favorable destination for millions of tourists, visitors, investors, not only from the Middle East but from all over the world (Molavi, 2007). What is noticeable about the UAE’s journey, especially in the past three decades, was when they decided to grow and be a ‘global star’ through communicating with the world the vision of its second developer Mohamed Bin Rashid, UAE’s prime minister. He frequently appeared on magazine and newspaper covers alongside images of Dubai City’s explosive growth.

The city became more famous than the UAE as a whole and even more famous than entire countries across the region that were there even before the establishment of the Emirates (Balakrishnan, 2008). The fact that Spain and the UAE have a different history, culture, language, religion, regime, economy, social structure, and are on different continents, and yet both seem to be in a ‘good’ ranking could be an indicator that any nation in the world is capable of building an admirable brand.

Current data from research show that the UAE (specifically Dubai) brand was constructed through the following pillars:

- 1- Vision of its leaders: despite being a coastal village with no oil or any resources, the rulers created Dubai’s growth through the vision of its leaders to transform it to be one of the most active cities in the world in terms of commerce, trade, and tourism (Mayo et. al, 2010)
- 2- Policies: Dubai built the city around policies, making the city an open area for trade and investments (Mayo et. al, 2010; ICCI, 2022).
- 3- Media and Communications: Dubai in particular and UAE in general have been one of the most active nations in terms of advertising, promotions, and media communications. UAE employed different tools to promote the destination such as Emirates Airlines, Etihad Airways, Hollywood celebrities, athletes, Hollywood and media production, and other communication tools (Al Marri, 2022; Michaelson, 2021; Balakrishnan, 2008).

In order to understand the nations’ journeys in building their brands, what strengths they have, and what communications activities and other elements constitute their brands, this thesis will conduct the following:

1. Analyze and study data available about both nation's branding practices.
2. Analyze communications platforms, activities, marketing activities, social media, and explore different attempts of communications made by the nations in order to understand the communications strategy.
3. Conduct interviews to discuss both nation brands.
4. Conduct critical discourse analysis of digital media campaigns and material using Fairclough's model. The interesting element in conducting the analysis using Fairclough's dimensions is to explore the method of communications and social construction that both countries used in the 'new communications and media tool' in the field of nation branding, which is social media (this is explained further below).

Figure 5.1.6 Countries Comparison

	Spain	UAE
History	Considerably an old country (1492) then modern Spain (1978 with the new constitution)	A new country/nation (founded 1971)
Political system	The Kingdom of Spain is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy guided by the 1978 constitution.	Federal presidential elective constitutional monarchy (a federation of absolute monarchies).
Nation Brand financial rank	11 (Brand Finance Directory, 2021)	17 (Brand Finance Directory, 2021)
Communications (Social media, media campaigns, branding campaigns, Hollywood, international events)	Active (different nation branding activities will be explored)	Active (different nation branding activities will be explored)

Indexes Used for The Study

There are few official international classification indexes in the field of nation branding, but among the available indexes, three have been selected for the following reasons:

1. The presence of these indexes in different academic and international publications to evaluate global brands in different fields (place branding and nation branding – tourism, investments, and brand value).
2. These indexes were cited in various government reports and highlighted in reports in the United Nations and World Tourism Organizations
3. Bloom is the agency with an official rank for tourism and trade as well as other competencies for nations in the field of nation branding and is one of the main references when it comes to global announcements made by media agencies about nations, destinations, and the field of nation branding (Bloom, 2020).

Therefore, these indexes offer reliable assessment tools for this study to use. Also, the selected indexes provide an indication of the selected countries' global positions in terms of being touristic destinations and potential investments destinations. These indexes are:

- **Finance Directory:** The annual report on the most valuable and strongest nation brands October 2021.
- **Country Brand Ranking 2019 2020 (tourism edition):** Bloom Consulting is an official data partner of the World Economic Forum.
- **Country Brand Ranking 2019 2020 (trade edition):** Bloom Consulting is an official data partner of the World Economic Forum.

5.2 The Method of Interviews

One way of collecting data in this thesis will be in-depth interviews. The author performed in-depth interviews with key figures from the field to discuss, examine, and validate the current understandings of nation branding. This also included discussions about policies, procedures, operations, visions, political events, future strategies, and tools for nations. Interviews are the practice of asking questions by the interviewer and letting the interviewee speak and share experiences, opinions, thoughts, and beliefs. It is a different method than surveys or close-ended questions, or focus groups where the interviewee does not have the same 'space' or freedom to express their views, opinions, and experiences comfortably. An interview is a technique that entails "verbal communication between the researcher and the subject", interviews are frequently used in "exploratory and descriptive studies" (Mathers, Fox, & Hunn, 2000). Interviews in qualitative research keep track of people's experiences, attitudes,

sentiments, and behaviors and give the researcher a thorough but typically illustrative picture about the subject through participants' answers (Burges, 1984).

The author is mindful about the type and relevance of questions asked. This is to help gather enough data to cover the research question, theoretical background, and the aim of the research. The author is also aware that the type of question in this research must be suitable and relevant in this method to help be successful in the attempt to collect data, as "one of the most common and potentially damaging mistakes made by novice qualitative researchers is to frame their research question in a manner requiring a type of answer that qualitative research cannot provide" (King et al, 2019). The author selected interviews with the aim to comprehend, explain, and highlight opinions and experiences about nation branding through the experience of figures in the field. This is to access data from the 'real world' perspective of branding nations. Interviews will help in attaining relevant and significant data for this research, and these findings shall reduce limitations in the expansion of the application of nation branding to different governments. The interviews will cover different perspectives about the phenomenon of nation branding, questions around the concept, and the main 'constituting pillars' of nation branding found in the literature.

According to Burgess (1984), semi-structured interviews are a conversation that takes place between an interviewer and an interviewee for a "purpose". Flexibility in semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to go beyond a predicted path of information and allows more space for information to be discussed from different angles (Burges, 1984). The interview's flexible format enables the researcher to ask follow-up questions or offer encouragement if the researcher is interested in what participants are saying. The researcher also can ask more questions around the area of expertise of each individual, since the specialty and expertise of participants in nation branding is different (branding practitioners, global experts, government consultants, and authors).

This type of interviews allows professionals to have the freedom to voice their opinions and share experiences and suggestions in their own words, and this is the aim of these semi-structured interviews, while using an interpretive phenomenological analysis method, which will be explained next. Due to the nature of professionals' work, there was mostly one opportunity to interview each of them, therefore, the researcher found this methodology a useful one to ask more questions when needed to cover different aspects and pillars about the research question (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; George, 2022). In addition to the difficulty in reaching these experts, it's critical to emphasize the following benefit of doing semi-structured

interviews: By examining nation branding from three distinct approaches, the researcher intends to provide an answer to the research question. These approaches are:

- Policies (which calls for government employees)
- Marketing and commercial (which calls for marketing specialists with expertise in place/country branding)
- Political (which calls for specialists with expertise in politics for their research or job duties). In a different part, it will be described how applicants were chosen as well as specifics about their professional backgrounds.

5.3 The Analysis of the Interviews

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected as a method to analyze the collected data in the interviews. IPA is an appropriate interpretive method for this research because it is “an approach to qualitative research with an ideographic focus, which means that it aims to offer insights into how a given person, in a given context, makes sense of a given phenomenon” (Smith, 2009). The aim is to validate the current findings in this research and retrieve data through the experiences of interviewees. According to Abayomi Alase (2017), “with an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach, the advantageous elements of the study quadruple because of the bonding relationship that the approach allows for the researchers to develop with their research participants”. IPA allows researchers to understand the “innermost deliberation of the ‘lived experiences’ of research participants” (Alase, 2017). It is a ‘participant-oriented’ approach that gives a space to the interviewees (research participants) to share experiences which in turn helps the researcher in identifying variables to further identify a phenomenon (Alase, 2017).

IPA is a forward-looking research strategy that uses a “flexible” and dynamic design to comprehend people’s experiences. Despite being initially employed in medical research, according to Isaac Tuffour (2017), it “has become a dominant qualitative research methodology in many academic areas”. IPA generates a record of existed and lived knowledge in its own characteristics instead of one stated by previous theoretical presumptions; it also “recognizes that this is an interpretative endeavor” (Smith & Osborn, 2015).

The goal is to learn how participants use their personal and professional experiences to make sense of and think about the topic at hand. As a result, the IPA technique appeared to be

consistent with the research objective to “understand the meanings and experiences” of interviewees while validating current data (Smith & Osborne, 2003). It is hoped that the ‘experiences’ of professionals from the field shall offer important input, especially when comparing them to the existing theory.

In phenomenology and grounded theory, the researcher collects the views of different participants about a specific phenomenology. Nevertheless, “instead of theorizing from these views and generating a theoretical model, phenomenologists describe what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon. In this way, phenomenologists work much more from the participants’ specific statements and experiences rather than abstracting from their statements to construct a model from the researcher’s interpretations as in grounded theory” (Creswell et al., 2007). Using IPA to analyze the interviews, the author expects to understand the perception of people about nation branding through their own experiences.

Nation branding departments are mostly operated under the umbrella of either the ministry of foreign affairs, ministry of tourism, or ministry of foreign investments. The slogans for nations sitting in the top ranks in nation branding indexes or in lower ranks always seem to be around the following statements:

- Aspiring to represent the nation in the best possible way.
- Aiming for the best positions globally.
- Attaining a positive reputation among other nations.

It is important in this research to go beyond ‘controlled communications’ and seek data that will help not only in answering the research question but also in developing a realistic nation branding global manual through the practical experiences in experts in the field. This is one of the main motives for applying IPA to analyze the experiences of professionals from the field.

The interviewees will be invited to explore various aspects of their understanding of the nature of nation branding and how they ‘value’ and evaluate the phenomena. This includes the daily duties they perform at work, the resources they utilize, and their personal and professional assessments, thoughts, and previous experiences of countries’ brands. Accessing such data can provide examples from the ground on policy making, marketing, infrastructure, and other elements highlighted in the literature, as well as those missing from the literature.

The researcher aims to collect data from multiple sources using two different methods: interviews and CDA of digital media campaigns. Interviews with nation branding experts can

get the perspective of branders through their experiences and examples. CDA can provide an example of branding communications. The researcher aims to extract branding elements that are communicated by nations and understand the elements two nations use in branding campaigns aiming to create a positive perception.

The pillars to be discussed in the interviews are:

- 1- From their experiences, what are the main brand builders for nations.
- 2- Role of nations' governments in constructing a nation's brand.
- 3- Role of media and what is communicated about the brand.
- 4- Marketing and branding activities (marketing, media background, media representation, tourism and promotions efforts, events, and campaigns).
- 5- Policy making (discuss examples of countries from different regions).
- 6- Concepts related to nation branding (globalization, product of origin, tourism, history).
- 7- Political events that help or discourage nation branding efforts.
- 8- Role of politics in nation branding.
- 9- Digital media tools in promoting nations and destinations.
- 10- Limitations on the ground in branding nations.

The Recruitment and Selection of Candidates

The review of country branding literature has revealed the various angles and sections from which the phenomenon is regarded by different authors and professionals. Therefore, the author thinks that including a range of individuals from various backgrounds within the field of nation/country branding will broaden the research's inputs and provide a broader perspective.

The process of identifying, selecting, and recruiting candidates was planned according to the data that the researcher aims to obtain and possibly help in answering the research question. Since the data will be analyzed using IPA counting on people's experiences, the researcher first identified the roles, job descriptions, and fields that would fit the desired data (*defining eligibility criteria*) + (*constructing screener*) (Fessenden, 2021; Burgess, 1984). According to that it was decided that candidates who are eligible to help answer the questions should be in the following areas:

- 1- Nation branding experts, researchers, and global consultants
- 2- Ambassadors or diplomatic mission members
- 3- Tourism sector officials/professionals (European Travel Commission, UNWTO, UN).
- 4- Trade departments officials
- 5- Airlines senior members with the responsibility of place or nation branding.
- 6- Academics/scholars in the field.

As a result, the candidates in the table below were selected. The list excluded ambassadors who did not agree to participate in the research due to the sensitivity of their position and being unable to speak about other countries' brands and also being unable to speak negatively about any practice that is conducted by their own country.

Figure 5.3.1 Participants in The Interviews

	Selected candidate	Reason for selection	Approaches to cover
1	Simon Anholt	Nation branding author in the subject and field expert who has worked with 65 governments.	Policies Marketing Politics
2	Jose Filipe Torres	CEO of Bloom Consulting, one the world's most active agencies in branding nations.	Policies Marketing Politics
3	Requested to be identified as candidate A	Nation branding global expert, who worked with different governments including the USA, Canada, UAE, and Greenland.	Policies Marketing Politics
4	Diogo Paciencia	European Travel Commission digital media manager	Policies Marketing
5	Dr. Nadia Caneva	Author, lecturer, and researcher in the subject.	Policies Politics
6	Dr. Talal Al Moghrabi	KSA 2030 Nation branding team Saudi British Chamber of Commerce	Policies Marketing Politics
7	Khalid bin Rajab	Tunisian Ministry of–Tourism - Marketing	Policies Marketing Politics
8	Brian Jay de Lima Ambulo	Trade and Investments Promotions, Department of Trade and Industry, Philippines	Policies Marketing Politics
9	Nuwan Gamage	President: Nation Brand Sri Lanka	Policies Marketing Politics
10	Miguel Gallego	Spain Tourism Board (formerly) – Visit Europe Marketing Manager	Policies Marketing
11	Ilan Geva	President-Ilan & Friends, Nation/place branding expert	Policies Politics

Designing Interview Questions

The research is an invitation for governments, organizations, and professionals in different but relevant fields to view and consider a nation's brand as a tool to foster countries' potential in an era with 'tough' globalized competition. The author invited interested professionals to explore the possibility of using nations' brands to be 'an answer' or a 'key' for some nations to reach a distinction in one or more fields.

The questions were designed to cover all elements to be examined in this study, concepts related to constructing a brand, the importance of different variables, and how nations can effectively build and utilize brands in a globally competitive world.

Harvard University's *Guidelines for Developing Interview Questions* (ND, Harvard.edu) was followed. The guidelines were as follows:

1. "Write down the larger research questions of the study. Outline the broad areas of knowledge that are relevant to answering these questions" (ND, Harvard.edu). This led to covering major topics in the questionnaire that included questions about different chapters from the literature review and asking about the experiences of people and about other aspects that were not covered.

2. "Develop questions within each of these major areas, shaping them to fit particular kinds of respondents. The goal here is to tap into their experiences and expertise" (ND, Harvard.edu). As highlighted earlier about some participants being from different backgrounds, more in-depth questions were asked of participants to have more views according to their experiences, thoughts, and perspectives.

3- "Types of questions" asked varied depending on participants' response; some participants needed more encouragement to 'open up'. The researcher also had different styles of asking the same questions depending on the response level or engagement of the participant. This included: indirect questions, follow-up questions, structuring questions, probing questions, specifying questions, interpreting questions (repeating the answer of the participant) (ND, Harvard.edu).

The questions aimed to explore the 'practical' side of how nation branding activities are conducted and what actually would make a difference on the ground. Despite the heavy focus in theory on essential pillars such as policies, media, marketing, and the possibility of viewing nations such as business brands, participants were able to discuss these elements based on lived

experiences from different nations and continents. As a result, it was possible to assess the gap between the reviewed literature and participants' experiences.

Finally, the interview script had to be aligned with the research aim and research question. Therefore, the questions were designed with the aim to answer the research question by attaining data from field experts.

Interview Questions

The research question was, how can countries effectively utilize a nation's brand to foster their potential in a contemporary globalized competitive world? And in so doing, how can they achieve the referred to financial benefits in different fields, including tourism and attraction of foreign investors? Aiming to have data to answer the research question, the following interview script was created:

- From your experience, what is nation branding?
- Tell me what are the outcomes for a nation when they have a good brand?
- How can a nation achieve economic prosperity through nation branding?
- From your experience, can you name the most important components of a nation's brand?
- What are the differences between branding a consumer product and a nation?
- What is the role of marketing when it comes to building a good nation brand?
- How many countries have you worked with? What was the easiest brand to work with and build a positive nation brand, and the hardest one. Why? Explain your experience.
- What do you consider when creating/updating policies related to attracting foreigners/investors/tourists?
- Explain the influence of soft power on nations' brands?
- What is the role of media in building a global perception of a nation?
- From your experience, describe the best tools for destination promotion.
- What is the impact of political events on a nation's brand?

Specific Countries' Questions (UAE – SPAIN)

- What do you think the strengths are for these brands?
- Which country has an encouraging policy system to foreigners (foreign investors, tourists, immigrants)? Why?

- Which country is more active/appealing in terms of advertising? Why?
- What are the weaknesses/areas of improvement of brand Spain/UAE?

Interviewing Procedures

Interviews were mostly conducted through the Zoom platform as the interviewees were located on three different continents. The duration of interviews varied from 42 to 71 minutes. Some interviews suffered from weak internet connections, however, questions were asked again in order to make sure they were heard, and when answers were not clear, the candidate was asked for clarifications about the answers to make sure it was well-understood.

It is important to highlight that prior to the recording of the official discussion with all participants an introduction to the research was shared. Some diplomats from UAE, Croatia, Kuwait, and Spain agreed to be give some brief answers about the research and also asked not to have their answers recorded, therefore, they were not included in the sample. All participants knew that the interviews would be recorded. One participant who is currently a government official and a nation branding global expert agreed to have his answers recorded and used in this study, however, he asked to have his name referred to as candidate A. This was due to the sensitivity of the information shared about countries he worked with; therefore, this person will be referred to as ‘candidate A’.

Confidentiality

All participants were assured that their data will be solely used for this academic research. Participants were informed that quotes will be used in the dissertation.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the mutual relationship between cause and effect, it also means an “act of self-reference where examination or action bends back on, refers to, and affects the entity instigating the action or examination” (Ashmore, 1989). Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) described reflexivity as the ‘interpretation of interpretation’, a new layer in analysis after decoding the data. It is acknowledged that experiences, assumptions, and viewpoints of the researcher could influence or impact the outcome of how data is collected and analyzed. The following paragraph will discuss further the previous experiences of the author.

Before starting the Ph.D. program, the author worked with different governments in place and destination branding. His professional background was in place branding/promotion (the marketing and commercial approach), mainly by working with tourism boards and airline companies. While conducting the theoretical research as well as while interviewing experts, the author explored a different side of the coin in terms of discovering in depth the important roles of policies, vision, and other supporting elements such as culture, people, location, and sports, along with marketing and advertising. While the aim is to contribute new knowledge in the field, the author believes that the knowledge acquired through this research will help in answering the research question and also understanding more the role of each pillar in constituting a competitive brand and as a result utilizing this brand for a nation's economic prosperity.

Analysis

Participants were asked semi-structured questions and invited to discuss their experiences and offer their opinions about the phenomenon. The author was keen to learn about nation branding from experts from all over the world and bring to this research 'real life experience' in nation branding. Questions were built to help answer the main research question and acquire more knowledge to understand and fill the gap between literature and what happens on the ground. In the analysis of the interviews, themes as well as sub-themes were built based on the repetition of the answers from participants. While the questions were designed to answer the research question, most candidates covered topics and gave examples from outside the interview script to share their experiences and some of this data was repeated by different participants. The repetition of points by different participants allowed the author to create the sub-themes and place them together to construct an 'umbrella' theme that helped the author to address the research question.

It is worth mentioning that in most cases, candidates' answers had two or more sub-themes intersected in the same answer. For example, one would be asked about a specific pillar related to his/her job or experience and the answer would cover different sub-themes due to the intersection of sub-themes and the main subject. For example, policies, politics, and culture would be mentioned in the same answer, or media, politics, and location. As a result, the author addressed this intersection by placing sub-themes under themes where these points can be exposed clearly.

All participants share the fact that they are part of the field of nation branding, but they have experience in different sections. Some are only involved in the marketing section, others are

concerned with the whole cycle or process of nation branding, while some are authors and researchers in the field. The interview script was designed to cover all the pillars highlighted in the subject, including policies, communications and media, people, globalization, and other related political, social, and cultural elements explored in the literature review. Some participants, however, are not involved in policy making since their jobs are mainly in the communications section therefore, they did not provide any input related to the political section, and the same is applicable for people involved in politics and not communications or marketing who did not provide any input in the marketing or media tools section. This led to having some participants answer all questions and others skipping questions and speaking more in depth in their specialty area.

Transcribing the Interviews

The Zoom platform was used for all the interviews, and participants were notified that the discussions will be recorded (audio and video). Transcription of the interviews took place by using an automated transcription software named *Aviro*, available at <https://www.avrio.com/interview-transcription>. Themes were created manually by reading the transcripts and rewatching the interview videos followed by writing down the important and repeated key points highlighted by participants in order to build the themes.

5.4 Emerging Themes

After conducting and analyzing eleven interviews, the following themes and sub-themes were identified based on participants' answers repetition and highlights:

Figure 5.4.1 Emerging Themes

Theme	Subtheme
1.0 Nation's Brand Builders	1.1 Vision 1.2 Policies 1.3 Nation's role in global social, humanitarian, and environmental issues 1.4 Infrastructure 1.5 Culture and History 1.6 Role of people 1.7 Sports 1.8 Location
2.0 Communications	2.1 Internal Communications 2.2 What is mentioned in the media 2.3 Marketing and advertising 2.3.1 Social media
3.0 Nation's Brand and Politics	3.1 Internal Political Events 3.2 External Political Events 3.3 Soft power
4.0 Communicating a Country's Potential Through a Well-built Brand	A nation's brand as a competitive edge

1.0 Nation's Brand Builders

Before analyzing sub-themes, it is important to note that the participants defined nation branding differently. On the one hand the differences confirmed the conflict in literature that was explored in the first section of this thesis, and on the other, is justified due to the way the term was viewed. Professionals who are concerned about the political side of nation branding saw the practice of it as "*a form of propaganda*" as described by Prof. Nadia Kaneva, who said "*all nation branding is propaganda, but not all propaganda is nation branding*" (Question 1, answer line 10-12). Whereas Jose Filipe Torres described the practice as an activity that is ultimately concerned with "*perception*" (Question 1, answer line 3). Brand Sri Lanka President Nuwan Gamage described the practice of nation branding with the words "*respect*" and "*reputation*" (Question 1, answer line 1).

All participants who are experts in the field highlighted different elements from their experiences that come together and construct a nation's brand. Therefore, the theme was named nation branding components. When asked about the most important components of nation

brands, nation brand/place brand practitioner Diogo Paciencia named elements that were not covered in earlier literature: *“I would also say sustainability. Nowadays it’s very important to be in the order of the agenda, especially for the green transition. I think it should also stand for human rights. I think it’s super important because sometimes when the human rights element, it’s not present. It also impacts the way that people perceive your destination”* (Question 18, answer line 2-6). Sustainability is part of the government’s policies and vision of the future, human rights are also set in each nation according to the nation’s policies, political regime, and type of government, however, this element has been highlighted separately and not as a sub-sub-theme under policies in order to show the importance of such pillars as a brand building element.

The following sub-themes will explore in depth how nation branding is viewed and how a nation can construct a competitive brand to utilize it effectively in a globalized competitive world.

1.1 Vision

Vision was a component that was expected to appear due to the repetition of this element in both branding and nation branding literature. In fact, the introduction section covered the brand Spain case study that was referred to by different authors as one of the most successful nation brands and one of the primary elements of the success of that branding effort was vision. It is also a logical element to occur since the nation brand is an accumulation of activities that were conducted as part of the vision of the government as highlighted in the brand Spain case study in the literature. This sub-theme was mentioned by almost half of the participants in this study.

The role of vision in this example was highlighted separately. According to Ilan Geva, Dubai as a brand was born due to the vision of the ruler, and it is one of the main reasons Dubai exists the way it does today. Dubai would not have been the global city it is today without the vision of the ruler and his family. *“There is a fundamental difference between Dubai and many other countries. Dubai was a nonfactor 40 years ago. It was not on the map. Nobody knew what, where Dubai is. What Dubai, there was nothing. Couple of houses with some fishermen. That’s it. It wasn’t anything; that’s an advantage because you start from scratch. But they had a vision. So the family of the ruler had a vision and they implemented it”* (Question 11, answer line 16-20). Geva compared brand Italy and brand Dubai UAE that have thousands of years of difference in history, *“they have Michelangelo and Leonardo DaVinci and the Machi family and this and this and this and the other. And the emperors of Rome. I mean, it goes back*

thousands of years. Dubai didn't have that, nothing. It was a family that lived in tents on the beach and they started a vision and a dream and they made it" (Question 11, answer line 27-30). The example given by Geva can be a promising indication about the role of vision to give birth to a brand that does not have the benefit or a rich historical background. The role of vision is normally covered in literature from a brand development perspective, in the case of UAE, vision gave birth to the brand.

Khalid bin Rajab thought that vision is an essential brand trait in order to manifest the future, especially before communicating a touristic destination brand: *"the most important step is vision, is to ask yourself, what do I want? Or how do I want to be perceived? What image I want to, give away"* (Question 6, answer line 13-15). These are the types of questions that arose in the branding chapter in the brand owners' vision section, about planning the future and imagining the global positioning and finally using the right tools to manifest the vision.

Jose Filipe Torres thought that the reason why Spain and UAE (Dubai) enjoy the advanced position they are in today was due to their vision. *"So they always thought about the world, what the world, how the world sees us, how can we go to the world? How, what is our place in the world? And from one angle to another, I think this is really the vision that they both share. They were both ambitious, from a good way, from a good angle, which one they wanted to, they had vision, they wanted to go for more, and more, or in the sense of better"* (Question 20, answer line 6-11).

The vision of UAE drove the nation to be innovative even in policy making. According to Simon Anholt, an innovative idea such as ministry of the future in the UAE and the minister of the future is an admirable idea that makes the world have a positive perception about the nation. *"Minister for the future, it's a cool idea and, it gets you a certain amount of free publicity because people like to write about that. And arguably it makes people open their minds a little bit and maybe think again about what kind of country this is. If they have a minister for the future, and maybe that mindset doesn't support so very easily the, the more negative idea of what an Arab is or what the Arab world is like. Hey, they're innovative, so they must be kind of cool. They must be intelligent"* (Question 13, answer line 4-9).

According to Talal Al Moghrabi, KSA vision 2030 helped a lot in bringing different sectors together and was the reason KSA revisited the old policies and fixed them in a way that KSA was able to match neighboring competition and successfully attract investors to the nation. Al Moghrabi said, *"If we are talking about Saudi, maybe before, we have the, the Saudi vision 2030, we do not have like a clear vision, even though there is a vision, like, five years vision. But this vision is different, because it engages all the stakeholders and it becomes the owner of*

the people. So one of the things, I think one of the, the most important component is to engage all the right stakeholders to be part of it, and to try to build from that base. So, for example, it could be, revolving all the policy and the procedures because it hasn't been changed for a long time. It hasn't been agile enough, it hasn't been flexible to attract for an investor” (Question 3, answer line 1-8).

Vision can be a brand component and a constructive element that can define a nation's competitive edge such as the example of UAE highlighted by some participants. This can happen when the vision is created, and the nation takes actions to achieve the vision. According to Al Moghrabi, the difference between KSA now and the old KSA was that the vision was not clear nor implemented. Furthermore, applying a new vision means that the nation must work on its policies, as highlighted by Al Moghrabi. This leads to the second emerging sub-theme in this section: policies, an essential brand component highlighted by participants.

1.2 Policies

Following vision, most participants highlighted policies as the most important component in a nation's brand. This pillar was seen as the main reason for a country to have a competitive edge, economic growth, and soft power. According to Brian Ambulo, *“nation branding, I mean, for me, it has to do with how the country tries to represent itself, not just through, not just through aesthetics or design or creativity or, you know, face value, but actions, by its policies”* (Question 1, answer line 1-3). Furthermore, Ambulo explained that setting up encouraging policies in the trade and investment divisions in the Philippines has helped to open the nation and achieve financial growth due to its policies which placed the nation among those few that have a free-trade agreement with the EU and other global markets. Ambulo referred to policies being a brand builder in Philippines brand components: *“I guess the components are human resources, our people, our geographic location, our access, you know, to key markets and, our free trade agreements in our policies, economic, economic and foreign policies”* (Question 4, answer line 79-81).

Torres thought nation branding is constituted by different elements, however, policies can be the most important one, because through policies the country can enjoy a positive brand, but it is not through marketing or branding activities that the country will enjoy a positive brand. Torres said, *“it's not just one thing. It's a constellation of things that make, or build a perception of other country. Definitely when we say on, when we say that policies are more important, and the point there is that policies are more important than marketing, right?”*

(Question 5, answer 5, answer line 1-3). Torres added, the point of building a nation's brand is to gain a positive perception, and it does not happen through marketing: *"so the, the point there is you may have a policy that you implement in a country that is much more meaningful and much more impactful from a perception point of view that will generate much more media. Because in the end, this is all about, building an influencing perception and building it through influence, right?"* (Question 5, answer 5, answer line 8-12). Similarly, Anholt highlighted the weight of policies over marketing with the following statement: *"one single act of policy will create far more interest in attention in the media, in the social media, in the general international conversation. And any amount of communication, communication, even if you're spending hundreds of millions of dollars on it, generally gets ignored because people know what that is. They know that that's a propaganda message from a foreign government"* (Question 9, answer line 1-5). Anholt gave an example about South Africa, which conducted a global campaign that cost millions of dollars titled, "proudly South African". According to Anholt, this was a "waste of money" because such a campaign does not add any value to the brand, especially in terms of global evaluation to visit, invest, or be in the country. He added, *"On the other hand, if South Africa, ends the apartheid regime and elects Nelson Mandela as its president, and has a truth and reconciliation process, these are policies, they're real things in the real world, and all the media will talk about them. South Africa did not have to pay 1 cent to have all of that stuff promoted because it was news, and news media likes news. It doesn't charge you to talk about news. It charges you to carry propaganda"* (Question 9, answer line 12-17).

Khalid Bin Rajab stated that when it comes to brand components, policies are the most powerful "branch" for a nation's brand. According to Bin Rajab, countries gain a competitive edge through policies: *"I mean, the most powerful, branch in nation branding is, what are the policies of each country?"* (Question 6, answer line 3-4). Bin Rajab also thought that nation branding practices are tools in the government's hand that countries can benefit from to achieve economic growth: *"Policies. Well, it should be coordinated by the government to manage the country image, in order to promote the nation brand tourism, investment, and foreign relations. In this regard, nation branding is seen as a powerful tool in the hand of the government, and especially for small countries, who are eager and interested to strengthen or to promote their economic position, with the policies of the country"* (Question 8, answer line 1-6).

When discussing policies, Al Moghrabi referred to the change of policies in KSA with its new leadership and said that this gave the nation a stronger global presence and this has positively influenced the nation's soft power. Al Moghrabi mentioned an example about the US-Saudi political tension due to Saudi's decision about oil prices in 2022. Al Moghrabi recalled a recent interview of the Saudi ambassador in the US when she was asked about the US threat to reevaluate its current relationship with KSA. Al Moghrabi quoted the ambassador and stated *"she said, Saudi, the way Saudi exists five years ago, 10 years ago, is not as the same today. So, it is a very positive way to reevaluate because we are not as we used to be. So maybe, and she said, every single agreement may also not be valid today. So that, I think it is a very basic, but a very strong, canvas that Saudi today with a very strong brand, very strong policy, evolving very quick, having an impact on the world decisions, not only in oil, but in investments in the green movement in protecting the environment"* (Question 1, answer line 6-12). Finally, Al Moghrabi linked having a strong brand and good policies: *"that's like the basics, when you have a very good policy and we have a very good and strong nation brand, the people are going to trust you"* (Question 1, answer line 21-25).

Finally, when it comes to financial policies that are lenient in taxation in order to attract global investors and talents, Paciencia shared an experience about UAE, describing how the brand has successfully attracted foreigners due to its zero tax policy: *"I mean, I have, many friends that went there because they have this special regime where you are not taxed where you can live there"* (Question 23, answer line 1-3).

Policies were mentioned by many authors in nation branding literature, so it was no surprise to see this pillar emphasized in the data collection stage to construct what is believed to be the second brand pillar. Policies are linked directly and indirectly with other concepts such as human rights legislation, actions in global issues such as environmental issues, and infrastructure. This is a section that covers the government's orientation which in turn can build a perception about the nation through the actions conducted internally. For the next sub-theme, the author decided to separate the elements and not attach them directly to the policies pillar in order to highlight their influential role individually. This was also because the following elements were mentioned separately without attaching them directly to policies.

1.3 Nation's role in global social, humanitarian, and environmental issues

Countries' concerns about, roles in, and contributions to global, social, and environmental issues bring to mind the brand building fundamentals from the branding chapter in this thesis. The chapter explained that when the brand creates a connection beyond products sales, quality, or prices, clients can relate to the organization due to social, environmental, and humanitarian actions made by the brand. These actions reflect the values of both the brand and consumers. This stage was linked with brand strength, popularity, loyalty, and expansion. Relatedly, candidates highlighted elements that are essential for a brand to have a positive global perception. This includes the nation's contribution to environmental issues, being green, sustainable, human rights, and tolerance. Some candidates stated some of the elements as essential elements to construct a nation's brand. Not only were some of these elements not mentioned in the introduction, but some also did not appear in previous research about the phenomenon.

When describing what is appealing about Spain as a global brand, Ambulo admired Spain's social "equality": *"What do we like about Spain? I guess equality, you know, when it comes to, you know, LGBTQ equality, they really, one of the, you know, they ranked number one in the world, one of the top ones in the world. so there's this, openness when it comes to who you are as a person"* (Question 19, answer line 11-15).

Anholt explored such actions by governments as a way to constantly tell a new story about who the nation is as a brand: *"The story, if you like, that the country is telling about itself constantly changes. For example, Sweden, um, announced, a year or so ago that it was gonna be the first country in the world to pursue a feminist foreign policy, which is quite a brave idea, because that's an idea that, you know, will please a certain category of person around the world. Liberal left thinkers, and it will please them enormously, and it will really, really irritate everybody else. Now, that's quite brave. Sweden can get away with it because Sweden is Sweden"* (Question 8, answer line 23-30).

Furthermore, Anholt explored a different angle that reflects brand personality and as a result could affect brand equity; this angle was the nation's contribution to global issues. According to Anholt, nations that participate in solving global issues are more likely to have a positive brand exposure and have a better effect than PR campaigns. *"I keep on seeing so-called nation branding campaigns where countries are bragging about their achievements and their assets and their beautiful landscape and all the rest of it. And just like anybody else, I don't care because it doesn't benefit me.... I'm not interested in how much success a country has*

or how well governed it is. What I'm interested in is what it's done for me and the world that I live in. So, are you, Ecuador or, Kenya or Iceland, are you fighting climate change? because I'm worried about climate change. If you are, I'm interested and I wanna know about you and I wanna find out more" (Question 4, answer line 37-47).

Al Moghrabi thought that nations with global initiatives showing concerns about other nations is a positive form of "lobbying"; this lobbying has the capacity to convey a positive image about the nation. He said, *"So that also is reshaping the policy and procedure and making the right, lobbying. Yesterday I saw through the TV something related, like a new company is going to be in the financial market related to reducing the carbon on the climate change. So helping companies who want to go green, by supporting them or investing in them. So that's like the basics, when you have a very good policy and we have a very good and strong nation brand, the people are going to trust you because you are not focusing only on your country. You are taking care of the world and also the initiatives of the world"* (Question 1, answer line 18-25).

Geva, while discussing KSA's brand, mentioned that the process of constructing a brand name and a positive perception is a lengthy process. Geva explored some examples from the world and spoke about the recent changes in KSA, and that the changes happening can convey a positive perception in the long run. However, Geva highlighted the death of Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi journalist who is believed to have been killed in the embassy of KSA in Turkey. Geva thought that another similar story about KSA would mean that the brand name is "finished": *"It takes a lot of time. And there's another thing, because of what happened with Jamal Khashoggi, if they will make one more mistake like that, they're finished"* (Question 12, answer line 2-3). Therefore, despite different sorts of initiatives, plans, donations, and media activities that KSA is conducting, a mistake related to human rights can severely harm the brand, according to Geva. There are similar examples that will be shared in the political influence of a nation's brand.

The element of human rights was highlighted in the beginning of this section, recalling what Paciencia mentioned as a major pillar in constructing a brand and creating a positive perception: *"I would also say sustainability. Nowadays it's very important be in the order of the agenda, especially for the green transition. I think it should also stand for human rights. I think it's super important because sometimes when the human rights element, it's not present. It also impacts the way that people perceive your destination"* (Question 18, answer line 2-5).

It is interesting to view the influence of policy on a country's brand from a completely different perspective. While the coverage of policies in nation branding, especially the economic perspective was concerned with zero taxation policy, infrastructure, attractive regulations for talented immigrants, it was interesting to see from the ground how policies and initiatives related to human rights and environmental initiatives and other global orientations such as feminism or LGBTQ can create a specific perception about a nation and its brand equity.

The next sub-theme that was mentioned by some of the participants was the infrastructure of the country and how important that can be in conveying a specific image about the country.

1.4 Infrastructure

Infrastructure was also a pillar highlighted in the introduction, so it was not surprising to see that this element was mentioned by participants. However, it was interesting to see that some participants highlighted this element as a primary reason for admiring the United Arab Emirates brand or Dubai, to be precise. Normally infrastructure, along with nature, policies, and marketing would make the brand admirable, especially from a tourism perspective as explored in previous literature, whereas in the case of UAE it was the first point to mention and emphasize due to the "innovative", "creative", and "modernness" of UAE's infrastructure.

Discussing the element generally, Gamage identified infrastructure as among the most important components of a nation's brand. Gamage views nation branding from a perspective as a tool to have economic growth through tourism and foreign investments. According to Gamage, *"the most important component is actually you need to have a very strong government and infrastructure and the you know, moving forward strategy"* (Question 5, answer line 1-2).

Candidate A described UAE's luxury as part of the brand's strength and an appealing element in constructing UAE's brand, again the candidate emphasized the name Dubai more than UAE. *"I think, it feels like home being in the UAE. the culture, heritage aspect, the luxury, convenience, speed of service. Yeah, all of these"* (Question 17, answer line 1-3).

As part of the touristic experience and destination evaluation, Paciencia highlighted the importance of infrastructure by comparing transportation services and infrastructure between UAE and Spain and favored the UAE: *"Like that's still a way to go in Spain and for example, the railways in there are not that great. The transportation's in there. Either you have a car*

or it's very hard to go from a region to another. And I think for example, UAE, they are way more developed in infrastructure” (Question 26, answer line 4-7).

Anholt highlighted infrastructure as a supportive element for a nation to attract foreign direct investments, saying *“you need economic instruments to encourage foreign direct investment. You need to have a currency that's not too strong. You need to have good infrastructure”* (Question 5, answer line 30-33).

The introduction covered the importance of infrastructure when it comes to branding places/nations and the example of Las Vegas was repeated in terms of the importance of this pillar in constructing a positive brand. This element was repeatedly mentioned by different participants, however, when thinking about UAE in particular, infrastructure seems to be one of the brand strengths for UAE as agreed by most participants.

1.5 Culture and History

Culture and history were highlighted in different interviews as essential elements to construct a country's brand. In fact, contradictory to the case of UAE's brand strength, when all participants were asked about Spain in particular, they highlighted culture, history, heritage, and authenticity in Spain as a brand strength and a strong touristic magnet for global visitors. The below analysis shows how culture was viewed by different participants.

European Travel Commission (ETC) understood the role of culture, history, and ancestry along with creativity in creating a positive global perception, therefore, Miguel Gallego, ETC marketing manager, revealed that these elements are the main pillars of their branding strategy: *“And all our communication activities only focus on those passion points. We have three at the moment which are, made around the outers, what we call creative cities, history, ancestry. So, our ultimate goal will be that our brand, the brand Europe, is associated with these three”* (Question 1, answer line 30-33). While the focus in some regions could be the ‘newness’ of its buildings and towers, Europe understands its powerful heritage and therefore it is used to gain a competitive edge in its global branding efforts.

According to Rajab, culture is one of the strengths that brand Tunisia has, and the tourism board uses this variable to enrich the experience of visitors to Tunisia: *“I mean, the tourism is something we work very hard on it. So, in order to be able to promote the experience, how the people can enjoy our culture, our weather, our people, especially the communities, local communities that they have, attracting and showing our interesting legacy. So, this is it. I mean,*

to appreciate, to give the people to appreciate that, whenever they come to Tunisia (Question 7, answer line 10-15).

Anholt discussed the difference between pushing a nation's brand through advertising and promoting the nation through its culture. Anholt argued that culture can be a great tool to use to communicate with the world the nation and attract tourists, investors, and visitors. He stated, *"The more people know about your culture, the more likely they are to know and trust you as a country"* (Question 5, answer line 19-20). He added, *"and the more effectively and efficiently you do that, the more it will support the overall nation brand. So let's try and take one example that sums up all of those. New Zealand is a great example. So, they've been enormously effective and very imaginative and original in the way they promoted New Zealand tourism by, using movies, more than expensive advertising, but also expensive advertising to support the movies and the other stuff. They've been pretty good at cultural relations, although I don't think that they've done nearly as much of that as they could and should. Considering how interested the world is in New Zealand's culture, the Maori culture, the relationship between the indigenous and the incoming populations, there are many, many, many more good stories to be told there"* (Question 5, answer line 38-46).

Another example given by Anholt was the comparison between promoting UAE as a brand and Spain as a brand. Anholt thought that Spain has different advantages that the UAE does not have, which gives the Spanish brand more reasons to shine. *"Spain is a little bit easier. I would say number one, it's European, and I know from the data that, belonging to the European Union, being part of Europe provides any country with an immediate, massive, premium. The second thing is culture, by which I mean the, the well-known, well understood popular culture of Spanish cuisine, Spanish history, landscape, language, dress, dance, music, bullfighting, it's a rich recipe that people are very familiar with around the world, and perhaps particularly famous people, um, because most people can name, if they think about it, quite a, quite a decent handful of famous Spanish people"* (Question 12, answer line 1-9). The interesting part of this example is how important it is not only to exist or have a culture, but also to 'familiarize' the world with this culture with its elements such as language, art, cuisine, and other elements. Spain with its colonizing history has another advantage of having its language spoken in different continents which gives Spain an extra advantage to have its culture familiar to the rest of the world.

According to Al Moghrabi, the first step that KSA is taking in terms of rebranding itself, is trying to "open up" to the world and familiarize the world with the Saudi culture. Similar to

Anholt's view, Al Moghrabi also believes that cultural familiarity is one of the main keys for a brand's success. Al Moghrabi believes that his role in promoting KSA's brand is not just to advertise the nation, but to familiarize tourists and visitors with the nation's culture in order to build connections based on real understanding. *"So that means when you are open, we, my role is not to change you, but making you closer to understand us. So when you go back, you'll try to share what you have seen. So the more we are open, that means, we do not have any secrets to, to hide. And the people, when they go there, they will not say Saudi is the best, but they will find ways to, to share our beliefs"* (Question 10, answer line 31-35).

From the previous perspective, one can sense the power of culture, heritage, and history, however, the value of this is created only when its shared and made familiar to the rest of the world. Once people are educated about 'the value' of a specific culture and history, people can create a sense of belonging and borderless connection. This probably gives Europe a competitive advantage because of the ability to convey its value and as a result use this element as a tool of promotion.

Relatedly, Gamage highlighted culture as an essential brand element to promote the nation as a touristic destination. He stated, *"you can bring good cultural values into that because each and every country's cultures are different. People would like to understand different cultures, and they would like to, you know, experience different culture. That's another area, because we have to have a very good, strong culture, uh, maybe history. So those are the area that we can use for as essential part for having, good, nation branding implementation"* (Question 5, answer line 8-12).

According to Geva, some brands such as Italy or Spain, have wealth due to their history, culture, and art. Geva added, *"but again, the Spanish brand to me represents, great history it represents, variation of cultures, interesting cultures. And the last thing I think of Spain, huh? Miro. That's what I think of: art"* (Question 13, answer line 11-13). Geva discussed brand Italy as an example of how powerful the brand is due to its history, culture, and art; such a brand does not need branding. He said, *"I mean, look at Italy. Italy does not need branding. It doesn't, Italy is Italy. Why? Okay? Because they have toilets that are older than the United States. So, and they have Michael Angelo and Leonardo DaVinci and the Machi family and this and this and this and the other. And the emperors of Rome. I mean, it goes back thousands of years"* (Question 11, answer line 9-14).

Due to the 'newness' of Dubai, the innovation, the infrastructure, the signs of wealth and advancement, Ambulo described the city as "soulless" in comparison with Spain. *"On the other*

hand, of course, as I felt that it's a very artificial city. <laugh> very, it's very, it's a very artificial country. You know, it doesn't have this, I don't know, it doesn't have this soul for me. Okay. So yeah, that, Spain, has" (Question 17, answer line 7-10). The author asked the participant to elaborate on this point, but Ambulo was hesitant whether or not he should continue. However, he continued: *"soul? I don't know, Tarik, it's hard. I dunno what the soul is, I guess when you go there, because you've, everything just felt so fabricated, I guess it because every, I guess people celebrate, you know, the lavishness and the opulence of people. That's why it felt like but it's, so yeah, there's, it just, I don't know, everything felt so built and so artificial that it lacks its own soul"* (Question 17, answer line 11-20).

Similarly, Torres described the difference in the "soul" of UAE and Spain, stating, *"Spain is real, you see? And, and the Emirates are probably not so real. It was something that was fabricated to serve a purpose. And, uh, and you feel it once you're there, so it's not so authentic. So, unless you're looking for, you know, good revenue from a specific company and then you go back to where you were, you know, in Spain you feel it's more authentic. It's more that you have a future if you like, where you identify more self, you know, the places are real, they have a history, they have a legacy, they're there for a reason"* (Question 24, answer line 3-9).

In this analysis, many words were used that referred to the power of culture, history, and authenticity in a country's brand. Words such as "real" can be given to a place with culture and history, or an expression such as "Italy is Italy". On the other hand, nations that were lacking that were described as "soulless", "fabricated", and "artificial".

The role of culture, history, and art can contribute to the nation's soul, and the importance of familiarizing foreigners with local culture was a new finding in this research. Culture has been highlighted by branding experts either as an arm to construct a nation's brand or as evidence to use in media to attract foreigners. Since people are the soul of each culture the next sub-theme will explore the importance of people as a brand component pillar.

1.6 Role of People

People can play a huge role in adding value to a brand in multiple perspectives. While the highlight in literature was discussing people as an external element (the visitors), the role of people (internally) in constructing a positive brand was repeatedly mentioned by experts. Geva shared his experience about Mexico, explaining how negatively Mexico is branded in the US in movies or even through government platforms, portraying it as a dangerous destination.

Despite all that, Geva found Mexicans a strength to the brand due to their hospitality. In turn, the experiences of visitors create a counter perspective through word of mouth. *“I’m just coming back from Mexico, and I mentioned to you that, you know, the warmth of the Mexican people is something that nobody knows about unless they visit. And in my mind, they can export the warmth and the welcoming and the hospitality. Everybody thinks about Mexico. Oh my god, it’s gang wars, you know, it’s dangerous. People are telling me, Are you crazy? You’re going to Mexico? I mean, look at the, the warnings, the, the US what is it called? The State Department has a website with warnings for American citizens where to go. And I’m looking at that website and I see red don’t go. And then I’m going and I’m having the best time of my life and I’m 100% safe”* (Question 2, answer line 23-30).

Similarly, Candidate A thought that one of the best dimensions to highlight about Spain was his experience as a tourist and one of the reasons for that was the Spanish people: *“You are in Europe, but it really doesn’t feel like Europe. You know, there is a paradox about Spain. It is not as cold as London. It is warm. I don’t mean climate. I mean, you know, culture, people, yes, people of Spain are warm, welcoming to tourists and the service quality, these are the three, dimensions and the novelty, you know, it is a novel. It was a novel experience to me, you know? Very interesting. You know, I would go back definitely, as opposed to other destinations in Europe”* (Question 23, answer line 5-11).

Miguel Gallego highlighted the importance of people (citizens) in setting the house in order. Gallego believes that the ‘weight’ of people’s role is not less than the government in the mission of communicating a positive perception. *“Yeah. Well, I mean, there are many aspects involved in nation branding, So I can speak from the truth and perspective. So as I said, for us, it’s very important, um, more important, important to work with, our citizens. So with, residents, with locals, and I think they are the best ambassadors, you know, of a place. So, in our communication marketing campaign, we try to involve Europeans more and more showing their daily lives, the things that they do in their expertise. We know that the best, communication marketing that exists is, recommendations, you know, from, for instance, relatives or peer to peer non communication”* (Question 5, answer line 1-9).

Gamage highlighted the role of people in a similar way as a constructive pillar to the nation’s brand. Gamage explained that working on people and qualifying them is as important as it is to work on marketing strategy, infrastructure, and policies. Gamage mentioned India as an example to highlight the role of people in brand growth. India took advantage of its people as a primary growth source through qualifying a trained and educated workforce to successfully

build an Asian “Silicon Valley” to compete with China; in turn this project became a promising destination to foreign direct investments. He said, *“The same way I think country has to bring that kind of marketing, you know, strategy to develop the country, you have to develop you know it's people. One is you have to develop the infrastructure. Another part, you have to develop the attitude and the skill of the employee, not the employees actually your population, your people in the country. That's how India did, like this small Silicon Valley in Bangalore, because according to my understanding and reading, India got to know in back in maybe about two, maybe about one and a half decades away, so that they can fight with China in the production”* (Question 7, answer line 12-19). He gave another example related to tourism about Spain. According to Gamage, Spain is one of the most favorite destinations globally due to its people's hospitality: *“They are very music lovers are there, and, you know, people are, if you look at, if you ask from me France and, well, you know, Spain people are better because French people are little, little, arrogant. But if you look at people who are living in Spain, so they are little, you know, they treat them in very humble manner”* (Question 13, answer line 25-29).

According to Ambulo, the Philippines has six pillars to promote the nation as a destination for foreign direct investments, and the most important pillar there is the people of the Philippines due to their age, education, skills, and culture. Therefore, the Philippines is using its people as a competitive edge to attract foreign investments: *“we promote the Philippines as foreign destination or foreign investment destination. So the main component there is our workforce. I think that's what we are. Of course, we have, I guess six components as to how we, promote the Philippines. One is our people”* (Question 4, answer line 3-7).

Finally, Al Moghrabi highlighted the importance of people's behavior on a brand's reputation. Al Moghrabi believes that part of the duties of citizens is to give a positive perception about the nation especially when abroad: *“So, I think we need to be mature enough to try to help our nations to have very strong brand, because we are the ambassadors of our nations. You, myself, everybody is the ambassadors of what or how we behave when we are in our country, how we are going to behave, when we are outside.... So I am not going to deceive people because you know, I care about my identity first, then about the identity of my country”* (Question 11, answer line 44-47, 73-74).

Kaneva also thought that people play some role in conveying a perception of the nation through social interaction. *“In reality, I think the way people form opinions or perceptions of other countries, most of the time has very little to do with what the country itself is telling*

them. In today's environment, it's, I would say these impressions are much more influenced by person. If you have any personal experiences with that country or people from that country if you have visited, if you know somebody who is from there, let's say you have a friend from there that you met in college, right? You will form certain opinions about that country" (Question 1, answer line 29).

This sub-theme provides a new perspective in this research about a pillar that is not highlighted as much as policies, communications or media when exploring the phenomenon of nation branding. People are an effective player when it comes to shaping a perception of a nation. The process of branding a nation does not rely on one element, it is a combination of elements that construct one or more advantages that the nation can have, and the next stage is to communicate these advantages, share them with the world through a communication strategy that is aligned with the brand strategy.

1.7 Sports

Hosting an international sports event such as the World Cup or the Olympics was highlighted in the literature covering the beneficial status of being under the spotlight of media coverage. The interviews revealed the importance of sports to build a country's brand through international appearances, not hosting, as an element to gain a positive reputation.

This element was highlighted by bin Rajab, who thought that one of Spain's strengths is football. He gave an example of visiting Mauritania (a country with poor resources), where he was amazed by the fact that people there named all the Spanish teams and football players. Bin Rajab thought that football is a medium that Spain uses to gain popularity. *"The strengths, Yes. I think for Spain is football, as I told you, I'm not a fan, but, I see, Spain is leveraging a lot from the football teams. The pretty famous, four years ago, I saw people in Mauritania, they know the Spanish football team players names, which is amazing, incredible to me. I mean, to see people from Mauritania you know, name, the names, the Spanish football teams. I mean, it's very incredible. So I think this is the main vehicle, I mean, main, not vehicle, but, well, I know, what's the word in English? Brand, I mean, the platform, channels, vehicle"* (Question 15, answer line 1-8).

Anholt also named football as a major brand asset for Spain along with its landscape, language, culture, music and history: *"Spanish history, landscape, language, dress, dance, music, bullfighting, it's a rich recipe that people are very familiar with around the world, and perhaps particularly famous people, because most people can name, if they think about it,*

quite a decent handful of famous Spanish people. And, famous for good reasons, not for bad reasons. And sport is a very important part of it as well. A noted footballing nation, which is, which is really a valuable thing. I'd say those are, those are the three, if you like, major brand assets of Spain. None of them particularly modern” (Question 12, answer line 4-10).

Al Moghrabi linked the role of sports with soft power. Al Moghrabi also believes that sports is a tool of engagement and communications globally that is a supporting element to a nation's brand: *“So, I think the same Saudi need to, do about the soft power is not only helping others or trying to help them with the humanitarian aids, it is about how you engage with other communities, how you are going to enable them through whatever innovations we have, whatever knowledge. I think the sports is a very good thing. It's not only hosting, and changing the behaviors and penetrate, through others through the sport diplomacy, which is, part of the brand supports, but also because I think Saudi has a very good heritage of sports”* (Question 12, answer line 23-30)

Gamage thought of sports as a utility to the nation brand that highlights the country positively around the world, especially when having a good team: *“Yeah, especially if you look at you know, sport like cricket. So we are a little higher level, the cricket playing countries. We look at all the cricket playing countries. Sri Lanka has very good, you know, standing on that. And apart from that, we have one or two athletes actually, we produce recently, I actually, I recently met him personally, so his name is Yupun Abeykoon, he's actually, he lives in Italy, but he always run for Sri Lanka, right? He became, the fastest man in Asia about two months ago. So now he's actually, his dream is, So those are the little thing that we can promote, nation's brand, around the world”* (Question 12, answer line 1-9).

Again, this point could have been included as a sub-sub-theme in the cultural sub-theme however, while sports were covered in the literature from the perspective of hosting an event, the author found it important to discuss the other side of sports as a major brand asset when constructing and communicating a nation's brand and mention this sub-theme individually.

1.8 Location – Regional Reputation

Location is highlighted in most place branding cases as a supportive element, especially when it comes to promoting a touristic destination. Nation branding practice is also concerned with the nation's location in terms of ease of travel and reach, attracting investments, being geographically a link between two continents or more, such as Turkey. However, this sub-

theme explores the influence of the geographical location of a nation on its brand due to the associated image and perception of the continent.

Torres explains, *“there’s the different types of what we call touchpoints or points of contact of a country that influence, perception. So, for instance, a country that is in a specific continent, that, let’s just say continent that does not have a positive perception, having elements that stand out are really, really important. Or having touchpoint or experiences that are very different from that continent or associations to that continent. And I’m saying perceptions associations not, not reality. They are a value added to improve perception in a very simplistic way, right? But those same ingredients or touch points or experiences that you have on a continent that already has very well established, it’s a very positive perception, will not add anything to it”* (Question 4, answer line 2-12).

The dangerous element of location goes beyond the continent’s reputation; the danger occurs when the reputation of the continent or the region takes over the brand or the nation itself due to its geographical location. Anholt explained this by highlighting the example of brand Bahrain: *“Countries like Bahrain, because they don’t have a strong image of their own, they tend to suffer from what I call continent branding. What do I call it? Continent brand effect, which basically means that people may not know anything about Bahrain, but they certainly know a lot about the Middle East, as they like to call it. Right? They have all kinds of opinions about the Middle East, most of which are quite negative. We have a lot of fundamentalist activity to thank for that in recent history. But it’s a much, much older story than than Al-Qaeda. It’s, it’s an old, old story. Anti-Arabism, Orientalism, and so on and so forth. So the Middle East, West Asia, generally speaking, is, has got an image which is quite negative for the majority of people around the world. If people know nothing about Bahrain except that it’s part of that region, it automatically has a negative image”* (Question 4, answer line 68-78).

Paciencia explored this point from a different perspective, covering the role of policies and values in shaping a continent’s reputation and as a result the positive effect of that on tourism: *“I mean, it’s about standing for our values and the values of your nation, and again, the unique factor that makes you different from your competitors. And then in the end, offer something or try to wrap up, a kind of like, not a package, but try to sell this image that we are a continent that offers this, this and that. And I think that’s why so many people travel to Europe”* (Question 20, answer line 1-5).

To maintain a positive perception about the continent as a whole, Gallego clarified that at the European Travel Commission there is ongoing research and feedback activities conducted in

different markets. This may give a competitive advantage to the continent since there are no other activities conducted by other continents or regions. He said, *“we are working on specific, things or passion points as we call them. So, as part of the work of the European Travel Commission, as I mentioned before, we do a lot of research. So we have investigating in different markets, in North America, China, South America. What was the, the perceptions and images that, people had of Europe, right now? Because eventually the brand is what's in the mind of the consumers. So we need to understand, how they saw the, the continent. And yeah, we did a lot of research basically used in, ethnographic studies, based on what people are sharing content, sharing online about Europe, what kind of reviews they write, or what kind of images they post, what kind of comments they, they leave on, on travel blogs or website, electric advisor and so on”* (Question 1, answer line 15-24).

Gallego also combined the sub-themes of location and the human rights element in one statement when he was asked about the weaknesses/area of improvement in brand UAE: *“From the negative point of view, again, I guess it's the same that applies to the entire, region, especially when compared to, Western society. So I still perceive as more, conservative in some aspects or maybe not being fully, respecting, basic human rights, with, there are differences in the region, of course, they're not all the same, other regions, other, some countries have already make a, progress, let's say, according to Western standards. That's, that's probably, I think it's still their main weakness”* (Question 20, answer line 22-28).

Gallego gave an example about another nation in the region, KSA. According to him, KSA has been fairly active in promoting a new vision, tourism growth, media activities to create knowledge about the nation and invite the world to visit. This was a positive initiative, he said. However, considering the history of the nation and the region in terms of human rights, the nation has a long path to go to make sure there is a new perception created based on actions and not just campaigns: *“This has nothing to do with tourism. It has more to do with other policies in general. You know, just how you treat human, human, respecting human rights and some basic, principles that, unfortunately not all nations in the area, are following at the moment. I said I'm not an expert, <laugh>, I, I've never been there. But in my conversations, with perception with the sectors for choosing specifically, there are many issues for now ... And, and some people still are reluctant to, to go there, until other major issues, are solved”* (Question 16, answer line 23-30).

The above findings provide further points to consider when exploring influential elements that go beyond the general pillars that can constitute a brand and its equity. Nation branding is indeed a lengthy process, and its rewards and perception are a result of accumulations of events and actions. However, this section brought to the table elements beyond the ‘tangible’ or ‘intangible’ elements that can somehow be worked on if it was related to policies, communications, or other perspectives that are within the nation. The combination of continental reputation and elements such as human rights weigh more than some brand owners think.

2.0 Communications

The second emerging theme from the interviews is the pillar of communications. Communications were highlighted in the introduction section through media, media coverage, media promotions, PR, and international events to communicate the brand. The interviews highlighted a new pillar to explore, which is internal communications. The role of communications between government sectors and sometimes private and government sectors is not usually an element that is covered in literature related to nation branding. The focus is usually on external communications between the nation and the world. External communications were also mentioned in the interviews. Expectedly, other sub-themes such as media, marketing, and advertising as well as social media were mentioned as tools of communications in branding nations.

2.1 Internal Communications

Collaborating internally to achieve the state’s planned vision, followed by designing the suitable policies, and creating an internal bridge between different stakeholders was highlighted in the cases of Spain and Las Vegas. This step takes place before communicating with the world what the orientation of the country is. Such collaboration can help cities to provide locals and foreigners better services, infrastructure, or places to live in.

When Sri Lanka’s brand president was asked about the role of communications and what strategy he is planning to follow to launch the brand globally, Gamage described the importance of internal communications before conducting any external communications. According to Gamage, the house has to be put in order before conducting any communications, this includes collaborating with other stakeholders, and educating the nation (organizations and people) about the value of nation branding and the benefit of being perceived positively: “*We*

have to give an understanding and, you know, better learning about nation branding to the people who are living in the Sri Lanka, especially public sector, private sector, as well as NGOs and all other, uh, stakeholders. We just wanted to give an understanding about what are the benefits. So I'm doing that, that communication part, actually, not the communication out from the country, but it's the kind of internal communication now I'm doing. So educating our people, What are the advantages, uh, in nation branding? So to communicate to the outside, actually, we have to keep, uh, you know, prepare our house first” (Question 9, answer line 3-8)

Al Moghrabi from brand KSA highlighted the role of engaging different stakeholders internally through the new 2030 vision of KSA. This allowed for revisiting policies and updating local regulations to match the vision of the country and its target global positioning: *“This vision is different, because it engages all the stakeholders, and it becomes the owner of the people. So, one of the things, I think one of the, the most important component is to engage all the right stakeholders to be part of it, and to try to build from that base. So, for example, it could be revolving all the policy and the procedures because it hasn't been changed for a long time. It hasn't been agile enough; it hasn't been flexible to attract foreign investors. So, one of the components is always to try to revisit and revise the policy and procedures when it comes to all the different components, if it's like health, economic, all those type of things” (Question 3, answer line 3-10).*

Some political issues that will be covered in a separate sub-theme along with unorganized internal communications that are not aligned with the nation's vision can harm the nation's interest when it comes to global branding.

Paciencia highlighted these miscommunications internally between Madrid and Barcelona which caused confusion in external communications due to political conflicts: *“Catalonia doesn't have the same interest as Madrid. And then it's very hard to conjugate this because even in a political way, you already know that it's fragile. So that's why they don't, they could do better, but they cannot do better because also the regions don't work together” (Question 25, answer line 3-6).* Paciencia was asked if further collaboration can be profitable for the brand, and he answered, *“For sure. Because if you don't want to, if you don't work together, if you don't sit down and just talk and see what are the strengths, what can we promote together, what are, so if I'm going to Madrid and then going to Barcelona, what does Madrid offers me with Barcelona and how can I go from here to there? Like that's still a way to go in Spain” (Question 26, answer line 1-4).*

According to Gallego, it is the responsibility of an internal body to organize all internal communications towards one goal and one vision: *“So all bodies quite involved should always be working towards the same direction and each thing in the specific field. So, with Spain, with just in anything related to attracting visitors, the other bodies that also see is responsible for incentivizing the economy and businesses. They should work also they do their work in the specific area, but following that common goal* (Question 9, answer line 6-11). Gallego drew a connection between the importance of unified communications and achieving the brand objective. He added, *“so yeah, I think it can, they shouldn’t, the fact that different bodies should not necessarily be negative as long as there is a clear direction, which is probably that what Marca España in this case should do and then making sure that this is properly communicated and that everyone that has a role in brand destination are working on following the same, the same guidelines. If messages start to be slightly different, then this, of course would play conflict among the consumers and it risks”* (Question 9, answer line 11’16).

Candidate A shared his experience while working with one of the countries that suffered from a lack of internal communication on top of severe competition, similar to the earlier example, which in this case turned out to be damaging to the brand. He said, *“that example, very heavy-handed government. And even within the government entities, the heads of these com gov. I don’t wanna name the positions. Cause that is gonna give a lot about the destination. The heads of these governments, entities are competing against each other. Surely, it’s a throat cutting thing”* (Question 9, answer line 1-5). Candidate A continued, *“and that is why I reaffirm that putting the house and order is very important part, first step. And that is a proof of the lack of coherence in the coordinated efforts related to the brand. So, you have not only siloed efforts, but you have competition over resources within these silos. And these silos are transmitting different messages about the brand”* (Question 9, answer line 13-18).

Similarly, Geva shared his experience working with the government of Croatia to promote the nation as a touristic destination. Geva explained a point that has a mixture of three elements that lead the project to fail: lack of vision, miscommunications, and local competition, since the vision was not clear or controlled by a governing body. He explained that Croatia is one of the most beautiful countries in the world and has every reason to succeed as a global brand. However, Geva said, *“here’s the problem in Croatia, Croatia is a country there is very small. They have less than 4 million people and they have 250 local tourism boards. They all compete with each other that none of them want to put resources together to let’s say, build something regional. No, you have these people, you know, that are old-fashioned. They’re,*

they're not forward thinking. And they think that, No, my village is the most important thing in Croatia. It's the most beautiful place in Croatia. And I'm gonna do brochures or buy place and I will spend all my money and I, and these brochures will be in all the hotels and waste of time (Question 7, answer line 6-12). Geva was asked whether local competition was a reason for this effort to fail and he answered, *"Was a reason. Competition and, and narrow mindedness right there"* (Question 8, answer line 1).

The nation branding literature mostly covers the external part of communications; it is a logical concern since the 'global perception' is built externally not internally. However, the earlier examples highlighted the role and the importance of internal communications. If the country creates a promising vision and does not follow a clear internal communications strategy, stakeholders can surely have a destructive role in the country's efforts to advance its name internationally. A governing body to implement the vision internally is as important as it is to have a governing body to manage and control external communications.

2.2 What Is Mentioned in the Media

Not even one participant hesitated to highlight the importance of media as an effective communications pillar in building global perception when it comes to nations. This finding is not new, as all the literature on the subject highlighted the vital role of media in branding nations. Participants were asked more in depth about framing, misrepresentation in media, and new ideas and solutions for misrepresentations in media, especially when it comes to Hollywood or news misrepresentation due to political rivalry, economic competition, or any other reason.

Candidate A spoke about the importance of putting the house in order and having a positive dialogue with the media. *"I think building dialogue with media and putting your house in order. <laugh> as simple as that. If you have a problem, then you have a problem, you want to cover up for your problem, you know, you pay a lot to cover up. And I don't know if it's gonna, your efforts will be successful. Why don't you tackle the issue in the first place?"* (Question 20, answer line 1-5). However, he was asked about the rivalry between nations and how framing could be used due to political, economic, or social gains, such as the competition between the US and China and Candidate A answered *"Political upheaval, and have the nation brand, resolve some of these upheavals, right? Yes. Okay. I think, uh, if it's media power game, then try to put powerful media behind you"* (Question 21, answer line 1-3).

When Torres was asked the same question and was given the same example he answered, "play the game". Torres affirmed that it is important to understand the role of media and Hollywood

in creating global perceptions, however, the US brand is not only a result of its media efforts-- it is a fraction of different efforts in multiple areas. Torres thought that a solution to stand up against misrepresentation is to keep up to date with powerful media platforms and use them in the country's favor: *"you have to understand what are the new drivers, What is the new Hollywood and other things that help to build that perception. But definitely movies, play an important role. And I think now going into that section, you look into, for instance, into series, into other platforms that provide like Amazon, like Netflix, so on that, there's, it gives you more opportunity to go into that field"* (Question 12, answer line 17-20).

Anholt gave an example about KSA, which does not enjoy a positive global perception. According to Anholt, part of this image is due to media representation, and it is a harmful element for the nation. He said, *"This is the real challenge and it's a challenge particularly for, countries like Saudi Arabia, which have, a very negative image because the, problem for them, is it's not simply a matter that they don't do enough good stuff, and therefore people think they're bad. The problem is that the negative image means that even when they do good stuff, it will be either, as you say, ignored or else interpreted in a negative light, right?"* (Question 9, answer line 1-7).

Anholt emphasized the importance of a nation's positive contribution to the planet through policies, contributions, and actions. It is a process that takes time and surely over time with different positive contributions, people can develop a positive perception of a nation, even if misrepresented in the media. Anholt thought that the appearance of stereotypes and misrepresentation in the media was a business strategy to make money: *"So governments need to realize that there are no shortcuts here. You're gonna have to do an awful lot of very good things before, gradually, gradually people start to change their minds. And the role of the media actually creates, even more lag, even more inertia in this system for the simple reason that the job of the media is not to change people's perceptions. The job of the media is to echo people's prejudices. That's how it makes money. Most newspapers, most websites, all of the organs of traditional and modern media that I can think of, almost bar a tiny handful, the way they make their money is by, reflecting people's prejudices back on"* (Question 9, answer line 12-19). Media framing was also highlighted by Kaneva when asked about "brave like Ukraine". Kaneva was asked about the role of media in framing the Ukrainian campaign, and she explained, *"And that's how persuasion often works, right? You find something that people already believe and then you amplify and give it more space and just keep repeating it, repeating it, repeating it. So if, right, if there was some kind of international news narrative about let's say, Palestinians, resisting Israeli occupation, along the same lines, we probably*

could do the campaign about the brave, the brave Palestinians. And in fact, I think some people in the world today do look at Palestinians in that way, right?” (Question 9, answer line 14-19).

A discussion about media framing highlighted the fact that framing in media communications or branding nations takes place according to the agenda to praise or criticize a nation such as the examples of KSA mentioned by Anholt, and Ukraine mentioned by Kaneva. Also, as Anholt mentioned, this is a profitable practice for media outlets.

Al Moghrabi proposed a solution that could combat media misrepresentation. According to Al Moghrabi, any country can beat stereotypes through actions and policies in the nation. The more the country can do, the more the country will speak for itself through its contribution to the world regardless of what the media says. *“And as I said in the beginning, by creating the buzz and making them talk about the belief or the unbelievable things that Saudi is considering for the futures. And I think the news the line, the project, the line, by the way, last week, they already have started their constructions and, the media, hopefully the global media will talk about it. They see projects, today, they have changed the name from, Al to the, the International Red Sea, company, where they want to do giga projects with global conservatives, taking care of their environment because of their projects now in the Red Sea is being, very concerned about the, the climates and the, the conservatives. So they want to also, do the same projects in other, countries”* (Question 11, answer line 10-20).

According to Rajab, countries that feel misrepresented in Hollywood platforms can have their own communications platform and provide the audience with more sources to view and have a perception. *“you know, Tarik that, that China, for example, China has, its own media outlet, CGNN, China Global national network, Russia, the same has its own media outlet. Turkey also has its media outlet. So they tried to combat the, the influence this powerful media by trying create another ... in this case, they would have two sources or three sources”* (Question 13, answer line 14-19).

Participants agreed that the media’s influence is important, and that some destinations, nations, and countries have enjoyed positive representation in the media and in Hollywood movies such as Paris, Rome, and Barcelona. Other nations or regions such as China, Russia, Africa, and the Middle East have been misrepresented or represented in a negative way. However, whether the representation was positive or negative, nation branding experts believe that an effective pillar to use is being open with the world, communicating more about the nations, its culture and policies, being an effective global member by participating in solving global challenges and issues such as climate change, ‘putting the house in order’, and simply being a nation to lead

by example. Others believe that utilizing powerful media platforms can be a solution or a way to “play the game” and create a balance in shared information. Again, another conclusion from this theme is that a nation’s brand is not made by media despite its enormous power.

2.3 Marketing and Advertising

Most participants agreed that marketing and advertising is an important pillar in communicating any brand, but especially when it comes to promoting a ‘product’ such as holidays or investments opportunities. However, all participants agreed that marketing, advertising, and any other communications activity cannot deliver any positive result to a country’s brand if the “house is not in order”. This means that a nation with a negative perception of its violations of human rights, poor policies, and any other action that could cause the nation to be perceived negatively cannot simply be changed due to advertising or marketing. The branding chapter explored marketing followed by advertising as ways to communicate and advertise the organization’s products, values, and achievements.

This means that advertising or marketing activities should be conducted to communicate the nation’s competitive edge or products. Ilan Geva highlighted the importance of country marketing activities through the following statement *“if you don't do marketing, you are dead you don't exist”* (Question 5, answer line 1).

When Paciencia, who is a social media manager, was asked about whether the importance in branding a destination relies in policies or advertising, he answered, *“Policies are always the way to make changes, then advertising comes next”* (Question 27, answer line 1).

When asked about the importance of marketing in nation branding, Anholt said that marketing is a tremendously important tool when it’s used to sell products and services made by the country. However, advertising or marketing is not an activity to brand nations. Anholt discussed the difference and the purpose of using marketing in nation branding. He explained that advertising is a perfect tool to sell “a holiday pack”: *“so when you’re selling the products and services of the country, that’s an important component of building its image. It’s a very slow process, but it’s an essential process. So we saw in the case of the Dominican Republic, you could equally well speak of, Jamaica or almost anywhere else you can think of. That’s primarily a tourist destination”* (Question 5, answer line 3-5).

Torres saw marketing and advertising as a vehicle to benefit from the existing perception rather than to change it, *“and what we want to say is when you do a marketing campaign about a nation, it’s not to change a perception, but it’s to benefit from that perception, right? So, and what we say is, if a country or a city promotes the country for tourism, for investment, what*

have you, the return it has as a nation, or when I say return is either more investment or more traction is higher. You have a higher return, if you have a better perception. So it's two different things. One thing is working on the perception so that later on when you work on the marketing and the promotion, the conversion is higher and more efficient. So the better the perception, the better the conversion” (Question 8, answer line 26-34).

Al Moghrabi invited people to understand the deep role of marketing in branding nations. According to him, marketing activities include market research, data collection, understanding markets and segmentation, and finding the best way to communicate the vision and attract people as a result of understanding the market. This means that the role of marketing is underestimated when it is only thought of as an advertising activity in nation branding: *“Everybody is talking about marketing only as advertising or as sales. But if you talk about the knowledge and size of marketing, that's, I mean, it comes before you start your products, before the idea, by understanding the behaviors and of the people what behavior you want to change, how you are going to make forward how you are going to change certain habits how you are going to create the new habits like Apple done through their products. It comes like how you are going to communicate with people, how you are going to get them engaged with your product and services or nation”* (Question 5, answer line 1-8).

He added, *“So that is the way I see marketing is very important, because you are going to understand how is the people in India, Pakistan, China, Japan, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, America, thinking about the Saudis, and you are going to communicate with those people in a different way, attracting them in a different way. Not one message fits all”* (Question 5, answer line 9-12).

In the same way, Ambulo discussed the importance of marketing brand Philippines from the perspective of marketing's role in market research and analysis. According to Ambulo, the role of marketing is not just advertising; as he explained, before advertising and proposing the Philippines department of trade and investment the team has to be aware of the local, regional, and global markets' updates since we live in a globalized economy where markets are connected: *“You'd still look into the what's happening in the world. Yeah, yeah, go ahead. Well, anyway, so what we do is not just, I mean, not just revisit, but see what, what is the, how it feels like at that moment? Like, what is the world economy at the moment? What is the trajectory? What is, you know, how it's working at the moment? So most, I mean, 2020 is about, you know, financial crisis, or inflation in the West. And something that Philippines would do is it would envision itself, or it would place itself as a resilient and shockproof*

country against these economic factors. Because we are, I mean, of course, as we are very much connected with the whole world trade” (Question 7, answer line 2-8).

Other participants highlighted other marketing campaigns and ideas, such as New Zealand appearing in Hollywood and the touristic campaigns of Paris, London, Madrid, and other cities. However, this was largely a repetition of what was mentioned in the literature review.

An important point to highlight is that it is fair to say that marketing, advertising, branding terms are one reason for the misconception of the term nation branding as a practice or phenomenon; not that the concept is a misnomer in terms of practice but rather in terms of name. Most experts in the field highlighted many essential points in building a country’s brand that exceed ‘branding’ in importance. Also, despite being an essential tool for destination branding or marketing, especially when promoting a “product” such as a touristic destination or a specific investment opportunity, the ‘branding’ part in nations only takes place once the nation is ready to be branded, not the other way around, as believed by some.

The inventor of the term, Anholt informed the interviewer (satirically) that he wishes to do a product recall, but it is too late now due to the misconception that took place: *“We really do have to try and define what we mean by brand and branding, because, as you know, and as I know, these words are used in a very loose way. Almost everybody who uses them means something slightly different. I’m usually accused of being the first person to coin this term nation brand, and I’ve frequently wished I hadn’t. I would like to issue a product recall, but it’s a bit too late for that” (Question 1, answer line 2-6).*

The takeaway from this sub-theme is that marketing as a practice is essential in nation branding, not only the advertising part of it but also the intelligence part to feed brand managers with information about competitions, resources, and help to align the vision with the tools to be used for promotion. Advertising seems to give a result for nations however, mostly, it only works if the nation is truly communicating its special competitive edge through campaigns. Also, mostly, campaigns will fail if the country fails in structuring its brand.

2.3.1 Social Media

In the literature review, the revolutionary development of communications tools, digital media, and social media was discussed. Thus it was not surprising to hear from experts that social media platforms are influential tools when it comes to branding destinations. European Travel Commission marketing manager Gallego explained that they promote destinations through different tools including traditional and digital media. He described the ease of use of social

media and digital marketing to target customers, especially with the tools that allow for targeting specific groups in different parts of the world. According to Gallego, *“so there are many different tactics, that many, destinations are following to convey their, their message. But nowadays, I would say 90% is done online* (Question 7, answer line 12-14).

Rajab confirmed that the Tunisian tourism board relies mainly on social media, for similar reasons highlighted by Gallego. Rajab stated *“It’s a cost-effective channel, which, I mean, you can reach the audience wherever they are. It’s easy to get in touch can, we can, for example, we can target, people in Chile or Paraguay, if you want. It’s easy. I mean, all we have to do is to have a strategy, and equip your platform or your digital platform with relevant content, and then you, you have the audience right away. So, it’s a cost effective and, I mean, easy, very easy”* (Question 9, answer line 1-6).

When asked if social and digital media are effective tools for nation branding, candidate A explained that selecting the tools is not the issue when communicating any campaign, what is more important is the content: *“I never start thinking of tools. That is the biggest mistake that practitioners have the champion tool, and they just, to me, content is the king. What is the content? And based on the content, then I can design the tools. And that is why a lot of campaigns end up in failures. 80 to 90% failures in terms of new campaigns, success rates. And the reason is we lost control over the content because we got sucked into the tools. Is the digital platform appropriate? Well, it depends on the content”* (Question 15, answer line 1-6). Gallego also highlighted the importance of relevant content. *“So, creating, yeah, perfect, relevant content or on different formats. Video now is key, I would say. And then different channels that you used to distribute that content”* (Question 7, answer line 9-14).

When asked if social media will be the future of nation branding, Torres said that social media tools are the best branding tools of today already: *“It’s more than the future, is already what it is. The question is that nation branding industry is not paying the necessary attention it should, In the end, it’s like you say, like, it’s a platform. It’s not just a platform. It’s the most, I would say influential means, or the most effective mean to create an influence and an impact in the short and medium term for countries, regions, and cities”* (Question 13, answer line 1-6).

Ambulo discussed a dark side of social media, raising a point that has been discussed in the literature review regarding how social media platforms are influenced by geopolitics. Ambulo agreed that social media platforms are useful: *“a short answer is yes, of course, but then again, it’s not black and white, right?”*. He continued, *“Like, for example, like, so I mean, social media is pretty much, you know, it’s also not the place where there is equal*

opportunities for everyone, right? <laugh>. Like, I mean, of course, like the, you know, algorithms and it, I mean, I think there are studies, there are studies by a by a former Google employee that, you know, that social media or artificial intelligence are internally inherently racist, actually. So there, so we couldn't say that social media is this clean slate where everyone gets, you know, an equal piece of the pie. But it, it also pertains to social media is just powerful if you're powerful enough outside of social media (Question 12, answer line 1-10). The concern about the freedom of media, social media, and how liberal and 'agenda free' these platforms are, is not an original finding. However, the fact that social media cannot build a brand as highlighted by Ambulo confirms the finding that one cannot build a brand through media or social media unless the brand is 'strong' due to its constituent elements.

3.0 Nation Branding and Politics

In the literature review, different examples that linked nation branding and politics, public diplomacy, and soft power were explored. Different political variables were believed to have an influence on a brand, including political events, rivalry, and allies. These elements were a source of influence on the nation's brand. Participants also highlighted the influential role of politics on branding nations from two directions and perspectives: internal political events and external political events. The following section will explore both internal and external events in nations and how they can impact a brand.

3.1 Internal Political Events

Some examples given by participants highlighted the role of political events taking place in the nation and the effect of that on the nation's image and global perception. Candidate A described an event that took place in New Zealand, when a terrorist attacked a mosque and killed most people that were in the mosque praying. Candidate A said, *"I think the prime ministers of New Zealand have done a remarkable job, and that is where soft power reinforces the nation brand because it's a two-way street. So, this is her house soft power lit the Islamic world to look the other way in the mosque incident. So, remarkable. No, remarkable, I think the, political leadership, has to look after when it comes to soft power diplomacy and cruising the brand in the right direction"* (Question 17, answer line 6-11).

Furthermore, some political events take place internally due to presidential elections or a political decision. However, it does impact the country and how its image is perceived

externally. The US and the UK were two examples given by Anholt to discuss this. *“I mean, Trump’s presidency has damaged the image of America by an incalculable amount. It’s simply no longer as universally admired or trusted as it was before. And that was 300 years of hard work basically, in the trash can. Britain with Brexit, a somewhat similar story, because it’s perceived perhaps correctly as Britain just turning its back on the international community and saying, you know, we don’t care”* (Question 11, answer line 33-37).

A second example was mentioned by Paciencia, who described the internal political conflict in Spain between Madrid and Catalonia. According to Paciencia, this conflict is causing harm to the nation’s brand: *“They cannot promote themselves as a nation because Catalonia or Catalonia doesn’t have the same interest as Madrid. And then it’s very hard to conjugate this because even in a political way, you already know that it’s fragile. So that’s why they don’t, they could do better”* (Question 25, answer line 3-5).

Another important pillar in politics is the stability of governments and political stability overall in the country. Gamage described the difficulty for brand Sri Lanka to conduct any activity at this stage since there is no president or government in the country after the escape of the former president due to economic collapse in the nation: *“And second thing, political stability actually. And, so that’s actually paramount important in this we have to have a very good political system or maybe, the government here to, you know, facilitate those things”*. Gamage believes that the importance in a present government lies in its ability to guide the brand vision and strategy (Question 8, answer line 16-18).

Furthermore, both Geva and Anholt highlighted the same reason when asked about what could lead a nation branding attempt to fail. They described how changes in governments and politicians destroy all the efforts, strategies, and plans made with the former governments because the new politicians want to have their ideas and vision implemented rather than the former government’s visions and/or projects. Anholt said, *“And this is a, this kind of hiatus is a huge problem for long term, concepts. And like the overall image of the country, it’s standing in the world because that takes generations to build and generations to change direction. And if you are gonna change the strategy, every time a new president comes in, you will never succeed. So for that reason, and that reason alone, the majority of countries I would not regard as being successful case studies”* (Question 7, answer line 12-17). Geva said that his only condition to work with nations is that it should be away from politicians and projects should be conducted independently: *“Because in most countries that have this kind of habit of deciding one day that, oh, we need to brand our nation or our city or whatever*

destination it's given two politicians and in most of those countries, because it is a democracy. Those people go away who year, later, seven years later, and then the new people who come in say, Oh, we need to rebrand our country so you don't achieve anything" (Question 4, answer line 2-6).

The relevant intersection between multiple factors makes it hard to avoid repetition in some points. This analysis aimed to deconstruct as much as possible the intersecting concepts to find the variables used to either construct or influence a nation's brand. This is to be able to answer the research question about whether or not a nation is able to use its brand as a communications strategy in a globally competitive world, and if so, what is the path to achieve that. In this sub-theme, the internal conflicts were already highlighted in either internal communications or policies. A solution for that was suggested by Gallego, who proposed having a body to control the vision, objectives, and communications independently of any other event, such as with Marca España. However, an independent element that was highlighted by both Anholt and Geva about how elections can destroy the work conducted by nation branding experts just due to the fact that the project was initiated by the previous government is found to be a destructive element in the process of building a brand especially as it is already understood that building and maintaining a positive brand image is a lengthy process and therefore the nation branding projects and plans should not be affected by internal elections or changes in political bodies and should be performed independently. Perhaps not too independently in a way that does not match the situations the country is going through such as Sri Lanka's regime collapse. Indeed, the nation branding body in the nation should be up to date with the nation's journey politically, socially, and economically, to be able in turn to use these elements to feed the brand's growth.

3.2 External Political Events

While policies were mentioned as a pillar that can construct a nation's brand, they can also destroy a brand, especially due to external political events. Gallego gave an example about Russia and how its policies caused harm to the brand and its global perception: *"Yes, I think there are. So politics, they should set the, the tone for building the positive and managing the image of destination that's done through this, like market span that I mentioned before. But policies can also very quickly, destroy all the positive work that takes very, a lot of years to build. And this is very often linked politics. An example I can get in, for example, is right now is Russia. No one, I guess apart from the fact that you, there are no flights or something like that, probably no one wants to go there at the moment, because of the world that Ukraine, so*

before, they decided to invade, Ukraine, I mean, I'm not sure about the brand perception that they had, but probably was not as negative as it has been right now” (Question 15, answer line 1-10).

The same example was given by Torres but in terms of what happened to brand Ukraine due to the war. Torres gave different examples of how the world sees the bravery of Ukraine and how resourceful it is as a country. The discussion was an elaboration about the role of media and social media in covering news from different perspectives. Torres also brought up an example of how before the war brand Ukraine was not even close to how admired it is today. One of the reasons was the political leadership, the people of Ukraine, and the way social media platforms were utilized to shape global perception through a political incident. He said, *“It's completely different, completely different And not because of sympathy, that because of admiration and because of, and so people relate to that and people admire that. And what they've done and what they stood for, and that they built it in a in six months, in two months, this has made what Ukraine would probably would need to take 10 to 15 years to build as a nation brand. So that's the only positive thing, if you like, about this” (Question 17, answer line 7-12).*

Gallego also gave Trump as an example in terms of how his presence in the US administration would be a factor that harmed the country's image and ability to attract tourists: *“So things like this, even take United States, with Trump, for example. Although this, I hear a lot of people were thinking that this would impact a lot the, the interest of, um, people willing to visit the country” (Question 15, answer line 11-13).*

In a globalized world, political events or decisions that take place in countries, especially when it is a key player in the international community, can affect the perception of the nation. This is not only due to intersecting interests with other nations as we are in a connected world, but also, on a general social level. Anholt's example of Brexit, apart from its political and economic outcomes to Europe, reveals an intersection between the international community's feedback and the pillar highlighted in chapter one about how much the nation cares for others and not just itself. Similarly, Trump's actions towards the world were highlighted in almost all references, discussing how they would negatively affect the nation's global perception and brand equity.

3.3 Soft Power

Some participants referred to soft power as similar to nation branding, stating it is a similar concept with a different title. The independence of the concept was also vague in the literature review, therefore, it was not surprising to see participants viewing it as part of nation branding.

When Anholt was praising brand Spain, he thought that the brand was so good that the brand itself can be the source of brand promotion and soft power (combined): *“You know, I think that Spain is probably in that handful of countries whose images are so good and so positive that the question for them has surely got to be how can we use this soft power, this good image to do some good in the world? And then maybe as a result of that, earn an even more gratitude from people rather than how can we improve it”* (Question 17, answer line 5-9). Interestingly, Anholt thought of a cause-and-effect relationship between a nation having a positive perception and enjoying a powerful brand and soft power (result). This perhaps could show that soft power does not construct the nation’s brand, it is the other way around.

Candidate A disentangled the three concepts, as he thought that policy is an essential pillar and source of a good nation’s brand, and a nation’s brand is the source of soft power, which in turn facilitates political relations to the nation. He said, *“So policy is very important. And, need to also be mindful that the nation brand is a soft power or a source of a soft power for the country that enables, relationship nation to nation relationship and international outlook of the nation, and not just tangibility that are related to the influx of tourists and influx of foreign direct investment”* (Question 12, answer line 8-12).

Another participant who viewed the concept in the same way was Ambulo, who said, *“I guess one feeds off the other. I feel that nation branding is another source of soft power, I think, because, you know, it gets, I guess once you, for example, you already activated this nation branding and it’s already, it’s already gathering a lot of like familiarity and recall, then that’s the time when you start harnessing your, you know, benefiting, basically harnessing, all those wins”* (Question 13, answer line 6-10).

Ambulo gave the example of South Korea and the “Korean pop, drama, and K everything” as a result of nation branding and soft power growth: *“And then that’s when other aspects of soft power can come in. And, you know, for example, like Korea, right? Of course, Korea and this, their whole, K-everything. So K-drama, K, K-pop, K, K, skincare, K, everything. So, now, I mean, of course this took like years. This took like probably 20, 30 years along the line when they started, you know, having this, this branding, and now they’re basically*

harnessing it and everyone has this familiarity in this recall. So now, for example, Korea can go to, Portugal and open up this, I don't know, like K-pop festival, like even there's even one club here that had a K-pop, K-pop night, like last week. So that's when you know that your branding and, you know, soft power is working" (Question 13, answer line 13-21).

Al Moghrabi described the activities and desired outcome of soft power as falling under the main vision and strategy the nation has to brand itself positively, however, all efforts should be in one direction and under one goal, which is gaining positive perception. The example given by Al Moghrabi was part of his discussion of Saudi's efforts to think about other nations and their needs and be an effective member in the world community: *"Saudi, maybe they did not have a clear strategy for this, but now with the King Salman Foundation, and how, for example, all the donations, the four, 400 million to Ukraine is going to be under the King Salman Foundation. So they are using that very strong, soft power to go around the world by building schools. But it depends on each, uh, country needs. Muslims or non-Muslims. They have been in Argentina, Brazil, all over the world, also the Muslim World League"* (Question 11, answer line 2-9).

Kaneva had a completely different perception about soft power, like what Ying Fan's (2008) example highlighted in the literature review. Kaneva thought that the concept is unclear, and that it is a concept with elements that are mostly applicable and designed to the US, therefore, it does not have the validity to fit elsewhere, therefore, it cannot be generalized. She said, *"I personally, do not find the concept of soft power to be very helpful. You know, as an academic, I have never used it in any of my analyses of nation branding, because to me it's a concept that's very, US centric. And so even if in its original formulation, even if it explains something about the US' influence in the world, which even that I think is questionable, but let's say in the beginning it was conceived as a concept that put, explain something about the influence of the US in the world. Since then, it's been sort of co-opted, adopted to talk about international influence more generally. But most other countries are completely different from the US, right?"* (Question 7, answer line 2-9).

Finally, Torres did not differentiate between soft power and nation branding, he believes that both are a result of a nation's brand: *"Some say it's the same word, some say it's of this. Some say it's, it's something that comes as a consequence. I think in the end, nation branding or, or soft power has to do is, is a consequence of the nation brand. Or if you want, it's the same thing. I would say it's the same thing sometimes"* (Question 13, answer line 1-4).

The emergence of this third theme through interviews was not surprising. In some previous cases, nation branding was thought to be a practice where a nation's brand derives from advertising, and in the marketing section, it was discovered that it is the other way around. Secondly, the relationship between a nation brand and soft power was explored, and participants thought that soft power is a result of a good nation brand and not the other way around. Therefore, answering the research question falls in the next and final theme, which is once the brand of a nation is constructed correctly with the elements highlighted in the first theme, then it will be the source or 'central processing unit' that can feed other relevant concepts politically, socially, and economically.

4.0 A Nation's Brand as a Competitive Edge

In this theme, participants directly answered the research question by stating that a well-built brand can be utilized to promote a country's potential in multiple fields. A well-built brand can be employed as a communications notion, a tool to foster the country's competitive edge, a revenue-maker that the nation can utilize economically, and a political soft power arm, all combined.

In the discussion about the importance of marketing as an activity to create a positive global perception, Torres explained, "*We're not saying that marketing is not important, and it's not even important for branding, but you don't build a country brand with a country marketing. You build a country marketing, if you like, with a country brand or a nation brand*" (Question 5, answer line 5-7).

When asked about the type of communications and marketing the Spain needs to do in order to reach a wider range of audiences, Anholt explained that brand Spain and its perception is so well built that Spain can use it towards soft power, saying, "*you know, what is so much better about Spain that people don't already know or don't already believe? You know, I think that Spain is probably in that handful of countries whose images are so good and so positive that the question for them has surely got to be how can we use this soft power, this good image, to do some good in the world? And then maybe as a result of that, earn an even more gratitude from people rather than how can we improve it, improve it?*" (Question 17, answer line 4-8). This highlights an important finding that once a brand is well built it becomes a source to foster the nation's interests by utilizing the positive image the brand has.

When asked the same question about what countries should do to communicate better and promote themselves better, Geva answered by making an indirect comparison between Italy and UAE, stating that Italy has such a powerful brand that branding communications activities are unnecessary as referred to his answer earlier *“Italy is Italy”* (Question 11, answer line 9). A similar statement was made by Anholt when discussing an ‘arguable’ policy related to feminism announced by Sweden; Anholt’s comment could highlight the ‘weight’ of a nation’s brand: *“Sweden can get away with it because Sweden is Sweden”* (Question 8, answer line 29).

According to Candidate A, when asked if a nation can use its brand as a communications strategy, this is possible only if the brand is well-built: *“I think, to demonstrate your competitive edge or competitive advantage, you need to do all of the above that I mentioned, you know, from question one, two, and three. Yeah, put your house in order, have a leadership commitment, have a strong private public sector partnership, and have defined goals and objectives, and know who your competitors are. And define your competitors in a broad sense”* (Question 12, answer line 1-6).

Moghrabi explained that the nation’s brand can be a communications strategy or notion once “the hard work is done first”: *“It’s a very, it’s a very simple answer, but the prerequisite is very hard work”* (Question 16, answer line 1). He added, *“you need to do a lot of hard work to bring that brand image of your country. So that will make it easier for productions, for your investors, local investors, international investors, to be proud to come and invest in your country, and also to have factories in your country and export from your country because you have a brand image”* (Question 16, answer line 17-20).

While conducting the empirical research, different variables were highlighted by global branding experts as brand constructive pillars, some of which were not highlighted in the literature review, such as involving people in both branding strategy and the role of people in conveying a positive perception about the nation internally and externally. The role of communications was highlighted in the literature; however, the focus was on external communications (media and advertising). The findings in this theme on the one hand gave a clear and direct answer to the research question, and on the other, brought to mind the outcomes of successfully constructing a brand from the branding chapter, which stated that once built successfully with a clear vision, strategy, and communications, a brand can enjoy equity, loyalty, and reputation and the brand itself can become a selling factor due to its competitive

edge. The author sees the findings in this theme as a logical outcome following the preceding themes as well as the literature review.

While the irrelevance in literature when comparing a consumer product brand, or a company brand to a nation brand has already been highlighted, it is worth mentioning that the commonality exists in the 'cycle of branding itself': vision, plan, strategy, market research, communications, evaluation (Keller, 2013). The author connects the benefits to brand owners once they have successfully achieved a positive perception, as highlighted in the branding chapter, to nation branding global experts explaining that once a nation enjoys a positive perception, the name can be used as a communications tool or strategy.

5.5 Key Highlights from Interviews

It is worth mentioning that the author removed theme five, which was regarding participants' opinions about positive outcomes once a nation is perceived positively on a global scale. These benefits were all highlighted in the literature review section, therefore, the author thought that this theme would be a complete replica of nation branding chapter in the literature review, which highlighted political, economic, and social gains for a nation once it successfully achieves a positive brand. Some benefits highlighted by participants included:

- A- Positive economic outcomes from tourists, investors, and the nation will be a desirable destination for talented workers.
- B- Economic growth due to positive policies and international relations which can enhance exporting products made in the nation with positive reputation.
- C- Positive nation brands can be used for economic sustainability.
- D- Social growth and prosperity due to economic growth.
- E- Soft power and political growth.
- Different nation branding global practitioners from different parts of the world gave Germany and Japan as examples when discussing technology and engineering advancement.
- Some participants praised different nations due to different reasons such as Switzerland due to its "Swisstainable" strategy. Others highlighted Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Canada, Peru, Singapore, Malaysia, and India when giving examples of positive nations. Germany and Japan were the only two consistent examples highlighted by different participants, who linked them to the same positive perception (innovation and technological advancement).
- Negative examples have included China (low quality products), Russia (due to the war in Ukraine), US (invasion of Iraq), and also Spain losing part of its brand appeal due to its political position in supporting the US invasion of Iraq.

5.6 The Use of Social Media in Nation Branding

Social media platforms are widely used for various branding activities in the modern era, including nation branding (Torres, 2019). This is due to the ease with which social media platforms can "cross international borders and foster friendly relationships" (Jong, 2019) with foreign audiences. The difference between the use of social media platforms and

traditional media platforms is that the nation can have its own channel and can control what content is available on its webpage, social media accounts, and mobile applications. Mainly, nations on social media platforms are represented by tourism boards, embassies, and economic entities (Jong, 2019). Furthermore, social media platforms are utilized by countries to express different elements they use for branding and communications with foreign audiences. Different elements can be expressed on these platforms depending on the strategy they follow. In a study conducted about foreign government social media platforms in Seoul, Kim Jong (2019), extracted elements communicated by different nations in promotional and informational content. Jong (2019) found that India, for example, highlighted business opportunities as the nation is seeking global investors, while Japan's communications on social media highlighted culture. Technology was the communications theme of Switzerland, and Germany's posts were related to history. According to Jong (2019), communications elements of nations reflect the nation branding communications strategy to match the vision of the country. The elements extracted can also represent the competitive edge the nation is trying to communicate with the public with the objectives of receiving the attention of tourists, visitors, or investors.

As previously stated, the next section will describe the study and analysis of two media campaigns launched and promoted on social and digital media platforms by Spain and UAE (Dubai). This analysis will examine the content of the messages and attempt to extract the communications elements used by nations to promote their brand and impress foreign audiences.

5.7 Social Media Presence for Brands Spain and UAE (Dubai)

1- Instagram



Before conducting the analysis of the selected campaigns, an introduction to communications activities will be explored. According to Data portal (2022), the number of Instagram users grew in 2022 to reach 1.44 billion. The author intends to explore both nations' presence on the platform and compare data related to activity, presence, content, and other elements, such as the sub-brands presence on the accounts. The Spanish account on Instagram is an active account with 857,000 followers and more than 5,030 posts as of December 2022. UAE's nation brand account is available on Instagram, but activity of posting stopped in February 2022. The account has 49,100 followers on the platform. As a result, the author decided to proceed in this comparison using the Visit Dubai Instagram account, which has 2.7 million followers as of

December 2022. Historically, Spain’s presence on social media has been through brand Spain while in the UAE it was Dubai.

Note: Since the UAE official account is no longer active, the comparison will be conducted between visit Dubai and Spain. The aim is to study communications to promote both destinations to foreign audiences. Both accounts contain informational, educational, and promotional content about the nation, nature, culture, infrastructure, activities, and events in the nations. The objective appears to be tourism attraction and pursuing public admiration.

Below is a comparison of both brands defined by different elements, created by the author:

Figure 5.7.1 Brand Elements

Variable	Spain	UAE
Logo used	 <p>(Spain, 2020)</p>	 <p>(Visit Dubai, 2020)</p>
Profile picture	Spain’s tourism logo, made by Joan Miro. Spain was the first nation to have a logo for its tourism (Torres, 2019)	Dubai logo that reads in English (blue font) and Arabic (purple font).
Activity status	Brand Spain posts are active on a nearly daily basis. 5150 posts (10-12-2022)	Visit Dubai account is active on a daily basis. 3999 posts (10-12-2022)
Focus	Brand Spain posts cover most Spanish territories and cities.	The Visit Dubai account works on promoting Dubai solely.
Account’s theme elements	Culture, history, authenticity, and nature.	Luxury, modernity, culture, openness, and developed infrastructure.

Finding Information About the Brand on Google

When searching for Brand Spain or visit Spain or Spain Tourism on Google, the first option appearing is the Spanish official site www.Spain.com. When searching for the same categories on the UAE, Emirates airlines website appears first, followed by promotional websites about visit Dubai, then the UAE official brand page www.U.AE appears.

As highlighted above in the table, brand UAE does not enjoy the same brand ‘power’ as Dubai. In fact, some people still cannot identify UAE but can easily identify Dubai. On Google search, there are different inquiries from the public asking about the difference between Dubai and UAE in online forums such as quora.com. On Google search, there are frequently asked questions about UAE that include “is Dubai the capital of UAE?”, “what is the capital of Dubai?”, and other questions that show the strength of the sub-brand over the mother brand. Therefore, to conduct a valid tourism communications comparison the author will proceed with the comparison between the platforms of Dubai and Spain.

YouTube Presence

The channels of both brands are available on YouTube and are active on a daily basis. The videos on YouTube are the official campaign videos to promote both destinations.

@spain page has 21.5K subscribers and 923 published videos. The channel has been active for fifteen years (Spain, 2023).

@Visit Dubai page has 467K subscribers and 170 published videos. The channel has been active for eight years (Visit Dubai, 2023).

This data indicates that that both countries are active in communicating through digital media, on YouTube in particular.

5.8 The Method of Critical Discourse Analysis

As highlighted in previous chapters, one of the most important phases of branding nations is communications. This takes place after having a vision of where the country would like to be positioned, followed by designing encouraging policies, and finally communicating the country’s ‘reality’ to achieve the world’s admiration. In this stage of the brand strategy, nation branding practitioners communicate the competitive edge of the country. ‘The nation’s charm’

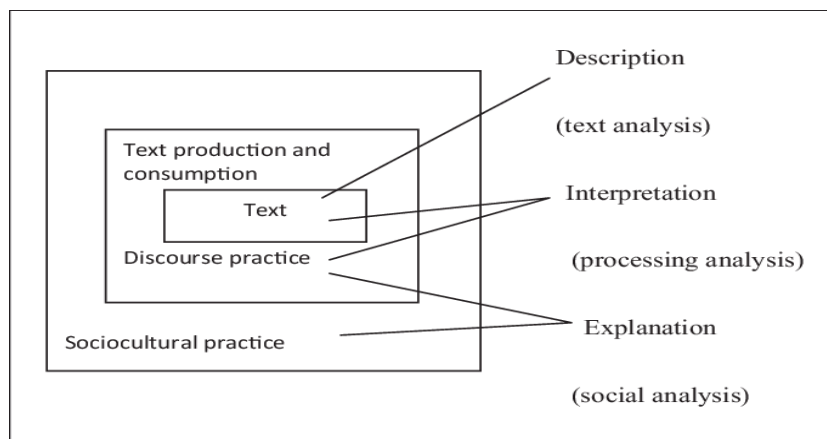
can be sold through successful communications. Both nations (Spain and UAE) use a variety of communications and marketing tools, including social media platforms.

The branding chapter also highlighted that advertising has a powerful social influence. People interested in travel and tourism have heard or seen at some stage a communication message about Spain or UAE. This is due to the widespread activities conducted by these two destinations, especially when it comes to global promotion. Each destination communicates a promise, a theme, or a manifestation of the visit. This communication is conveyed through messages constructed by elements that try to convey a specific perception; these elements could be infrastructure, nature, culture, authenticity, modernity, safety, individuality, or luxury. The only way to know if this communication is authentic is by visiting the place. According to Bushra Rashid (2020), “advertising is considered as a form of media discourse in the sense that it influences the structure of language, the modality of lifestyle, and also the content of daily life communicative exchanges. Advertisements are on the top of media discourses in terms of using manipulative language and hidden ideologies”. Advertising, especially commercial advertising, is seen as a discourse based on the idea that the communication itself is created with a persuasion target (Rashid, 2020).

Fairclough (2001) thought that CDA is an analytical framework for examining how language (text), ideology, images, and power interact (discursive practice + social practice) (Hadisantosa, 2018). This means that there is an assumption that the three dimensions are related (Rashid, 2020). Furthermore, CDA can be used beyond analyzing verbal or written communications to cover other dimensions such as images, footage, sounds, and non-verbal communications. Meanings, perceptions, and interpretations can be explored through CDA, according to Van Dijk (1995). Advertising is an influential tool in nation branding. When consistent communication takes place verbally, and visually, it should have an influence on viewers (Hadisantosa, 2018). In the following section, the communications attempts by brand Spain and brand UAE to construct an encouraging image about the best destination for viewers will be analyzed. The goal of CDA is to understand how people use or communicate through language (discourse) and how it affects them: “the enterprise of Discourse Analysis is to uncover the regularities of language that surpass the sentence--the traditional ‘highest’ unit of description--and that encompass the context of its use” (Drid, 2010). Discourse analysis as a second tool for data analysis in this research will help access more data about country branding from a communications perspective and potentially evaluate the efforts conducted in terms of branding.

The findings of both methods can also be explored through the equation of (what has been done) + (where is the brand now) + (where does the brand want to go) = (potential future brand equity). While this thesis shall be a potential basis for establishing a nation branding manual, it is important that the methods and analysis of findings participate in reflecting a ‘reality’ to evaluate the ‘gap’ between theory and what happens on the ground, especially, with the existing theoretical misconception about the subject.

Figure 5.8.1 Fairclough’s Three-Dimensional Framework



Source: Fairclough (2001)

The framework developed by Norman Fairclough is intended to assist researchers in trying to analyze a subject’s discourse but also producing and disseminating critical knowledge. “This framework consisted of analysis from 3 focal points; Text (words, text, images, video, audio), Discursive practice and Social practice” (Hamiddin, 2014). By applying this model, the author seeks to examine how discourse in advertising campaigns used (in this case nation branding) construction of meanings.

Fairclough’s three-dimensional model can be summarized as follows:

- 1- **Text:** the first dimension, it can refer to speech, writings (words), visual communication (photo, video, audio), or any exchange or form of communication (Fairclough, 2001; Flixabout, 2022).
- 2- **Discursive practice:** the second dimension, it refers to the constitution of text, language, (direct/indirect) messages in communications (Fairclough, 2001; Flixabout, 2022).

- 3- **Social practice:** the third dimension, it is the broadest, and it refers to standards of societies and social structure and social norms. In this dimension it is important to understand the cultural and social structure of societies. Societies from different cultures/structures have different norms (Fairclough, 2001; Flixabout, 2022).

Campaigns promoting specific destinations or countries use unique language in advertisements to create a positive impression (Kaur, Arumugam, & Yunus, 2013). Furthermore, according to Lestari (2020), analyzing advertising communications through Fairclough's three dimensions helps researchers understand psychological effects, manipulation attempts, and power exercised by advertisers through different communication elements.

The following analysis aims to understand and explore two campaigns, one each launched by the governments of Dubai and Spain to attract tourists after the lockdown period during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Both destinations rely heavily on tourism, but because of COVID-19, the lockdown caused a loss of 70% of tourism annual revenues in 2020 in Spain, and the number of tourists dropped from 83 million tourists in 2019 to 36.4 million in 2020 (Visit Spain, 2020; Lopez, 2022). According to the government of Dubai tourism report 2020-2021, the number of tourists dropped from 16.7 million in 2019 to 5.51 million in 2020 (Dubai Tourism, 2022).

Behind each video campaign (discourse) there were messages through words, figures, sounds, melodies, and images to convey a perception about the nation, as a result, create an influence to attract visitors through the communicated messages. This analysis uses Fairclough's model to analyze the campaigns through the following dimensions: text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice. The first video campaign was launched by Spain's official social media platforms and published on June 22, 2020 on YouTube with the title "*Top 10 reasons to travel to Spain. Spain Awaits You*" (Spain, 2020). The video has 5,000 views on YouTube (while conducting the research in December 2022). The second video was launched by Visit Dubai's official social media platforms and published on July 7, 2020 on YouTube with the title "*Ready when you are – Visit Dubai*" (Visit Dubai, 2020). It has since accumulated more than 16,000,000 views (while conducting the research in December 2022).

Link to Spain's video campaign: [\(1\) Top 10 reasons to travel to Spain. Spain Awaits You-- YouTube](#)

Link to Dubai's video campaign: [\(1\) Ready When You Are | Visit Dubai-- YouTube](#)

5.9 Results and Discussion

Figure 5.9.1 Communications Elements

	Visit Spain	Visit Dubai
Video Caption:	“Top 10 reasons to travel to Spain. Spain Awaits You”	“Ready when you are – Visit Dubai”
Text in video	Explicit reasons to encourage visitors to visit Spain: 1- Weather 2- Food 3- Culture 4- History 5- Nature and Landscape 6- Hospitality 7- Shopping 8- Sport 9- Quality 10- Infrastructure	“We made you a promise that we will see you soon, that time has come”. “We are ready to welcome you with open doors, to share your journey of discovery, making your wellbeing, our priority”. “and today we make you a new promise, that Dubai, our home, is ready for you to visit again”
Text explaining segmentation	“A country that celebrates variety, for all ages, tastes, and budgets”. Strong social message is represented with the word “variety”.	
Informational text + convincing strategy	“This is precisely why in 2019, we had over 83 million visitors to our country”. “More than simply 10 reasons, there are 83 million reasons to return to Spain with total peace of mind”. Welcoming people back to Spain with “total peace of mind” to assure safety.	“We promised to make it extraordinary, now we promise to make it so much more”. “We are ready when you are”
Hashtag	#Spainawaitsyou	#Staysafe #visitDubai
Video duration	45 seconds	59 seconds

Fairclough Dimensions: Dimension One – Text

1- Spain

According to Fairclough (2001), text can be words, speech, video/audio, or all three combined. The actual text (words) appeared in the video stated explicitly reasons (selling points) to visit Spain. They directly highlighted the elements that may encourage visitors to visit Spain: Weather, Food, Culture, History, Nature and Landscape, Hospitality, Shopping, Sport, Quality, and Infrastructure. The words communicate reasons for people to visit the nation.

The ad is communicated as a letter to the audience. No voiceover was used, the video features bright pictures showcasing vibrant activities, happy music (positive/cheerful melody) and the text messages on each scene. The text worked as an invitation through logical reasoning. Also, all the reasons were written in bold to convey confidence in the message (assertiveness).

No specific celebrity was representing Spain in this campaign. The ad was made with different actors from different backgrounds, colors, races, and ages. This communicates ‘variety’ and that everyone is welcomed in the country. Women and men appeared in different scenes: in adventures scenes, relaxing beach scenes, restaurants scenes, nature, sports events, heritage settings, and historic buildings, as well as city scenes. This represents the variety of activities of what the nation has to offer, serving different goals of people experiencing Spain with different budgets.

Representation elements communicated by Spain included:

- 1- Authenticity and heritage
- 2- Infrastructure
- 3- Nature
- 4- Hospitality and friendliness of people
- 5- Variety

This ad is made to act as a positive communications discourse to convey a positive perception about the nation and attract people who are interested in tourism about what Spain has to offer to its visitors. The ad is mainly communicating to adults of all races and all ages. The campaign is launched and communicated through social media platforms which gives access to the video from people from all over the world at any time. The video is made with English titles to target international communities.

Dimension Two - Discourse Practice

According to Fairclough (2001) this dimension highlights the importance of how the messages were composed since the way the messages are communicated can change the view of the recipient of that message. In Fairclough’s analysis he assumes that language/discourse can help to create change in people’s perception, this dimension looks at the constitution and formation of texts/messages to create this influence. Spain through this video communicated values, attitudes, norms, and promises that are solely for the purpose of being impressive. This analysis explains how the campaign is communicating a specific effect for both the maker/brand owner and the consumers.

Brand Owner’s Communicated Elements in the Video

Figure 5.9.2 Spain’s Communicated Elements (including video screenshots)

<p>The form of communication: Video</p>	<p>The video contains text ‘selling the destination’, accompanied by pictures that communicate happiness on the beach, in the city, smiles, food and wine, people of all ages having a great experience, infrastructure that gives assurance of comfortableness in the stay and in commuting.</p> <div> </div> <p>Despite being in the COVID-19 era, some pictures showed safety during activities such as space between people on the beach and uncrowded places in general.</p>
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Other places that are usually crowded, such as train stations, markets, or museums were shown in the video with almost no one there (except an employee welcoming the visitor). This can be a notion to communicate (social distancing).



Selling Elements to Consumers in the Video

The form of communication: Video

While people have been in lockdown for months, the advertiser tried to communicate ‘back to normal’ images for people. Family and individual activities along with an active social life were communicated in the video with different elements:

- 1- Sunny days, people being on the beach.
- 2- Friends going shopping in the market.



- 3- Families and friends going to restaurants and attending events.
- 4- Foreigners were exposed to different types of landscapes, nature, and infrastructure that the country has to offer.

5- Multiple scenes show visitors being happy, smiling, satisfied, and enjoying their time in Spain.



From a discursive practice analytical view, the brand is communicating through these campaigns threads to show that the brand does not exist for its own sake, it is existing to give joy and happiness to its visitors.

This was also highlighted in the text messages by saying that visitors in the past (83 million people) visited Spain and they were happy, as a result, this is an invitation extended to those who have not visited the nation yet to visit, and the ones who visited Spain to return again to their 'happy place'.

Dimension Three – Sociocultural Practice

According to Fairclough's model (2001), social practices should look at the norms and conditions made by the brand owner. The campaign aims to promote Spain as a destination that supposedly has all the elements that tourists seek during their travel. The communication has an emphasis on "reasons to visit the country" conveying a perception that the tourist is the 'beneficiary' in this transaction, not the other way around. Despite the economic gains a nation could enjoy by receiving tourists, the campaign focused on feeding the satisfaction and need for travel of people, especially after a global lockdown.

From a sociocultural perspective, the communication highlighted elements including:

- 1- The possibility of having family activities outdoors.
- 2- Liberty of moving around.
- 3- Sunny days and open-air activities (even the shopping experience was shown in outdoor shops, not malls or indoor shops to trigger psychological element of not needing to be indoor anymore while in Spain).

- 4- Different age groups represented in different scenes doing different activities show endless opportunities for people to do different things, again highlighting the ‘liberty’ given by Spain to its visitors.
- 5- The sociocultural key in this communication is around the elements of variety, safety, and liberty of choice to do what you as a visitor want to do.

Dimension One – Text

2- UAE Visit Dubai

The video starts with a powerful, formal, and serious melody referring to the beginning of intense action content. A male voiceover actor states, “we made you a promise that we would see you soon”, with background images showing different places with modern, innovative, and developed infrastructure and skyscrapers, along with images of beaches that are not so crowded. The voice continues “that time has come”, “we are ready to welcome you with open doors”. The discourse communicates the following:

- 1- The title of the video (text) “ready when you are”, shows that importance and the priority is given to the convenience of the client, affirming the general promise made by Dubai to its people, which is ‘luxury’.
- 2- The city is addressing the tourist or visitor directly, saying “we made you a promise”, the second element is the standard of the city of keeping that promise and showing the importance of clients being available to serve the visitors while keeping the highest level of standards.
- 3- “Dubai is ready to welcome you again”, “we promised to make it extraordinary”, “now we promise it will be so much more”, “we are ready when you are”, communicates setting the highest standards and exceeding expectations even beyond extraordinary. The communication is setting the highest standards for its visitors.

Despite having a male voiceover addressing clients, no specific celebrity was representing Dubai in this campaign in terms of solo physical appearance. The ad was made by including different actors from different backgrounds, colors, races, and ages. However, most of the scenes highlighted people with white skin (European looking), which potentially means that this message is directed to this specific segment of customers. The communication of ‘variety’

was not as salient as it was in the Spanish commercial. The place was branded through images reflecting nature, sun, palm trees, desert, and advanced modern city infrastructure.

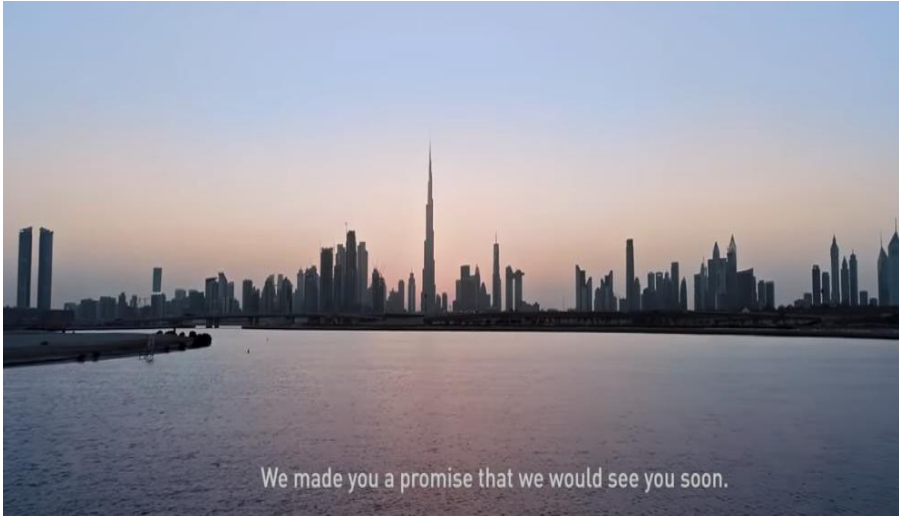
This ad is made to act as a positive communications discourse to convey a positive perception about the nation and educate people who are interested in tourism about what Dubai has to offer to its visitors. The ad is mainly communicating with adults of all races and all ages. The campaign is launched and communicated through social media platforms which give access to the video from people from all over the world at any time. The video is made with English audio and titles to target international communities.

Dimension Two – Discourse Practice

Again, the values, attitudes, and promises that the sender conveys are solely for the purpose of influence. This analysis explains how the campaign is communicating a specific effect for both the maker or brand owner and the consumers.

Brand Owner’s Communicated Elements in the Video

Figure 5.9.3 Dubai’s Communicated Elements (including video screenshots)

<p>The form of communication: Video</p>	<p>The video campaign contains text ‘selling the destination’, accompanied by pictures that communicate adventure, luxury, service, in different places in the city of Dubai.</p>  <p>There are different smiles in the video showing customers happy and having joyful experiences (on a boat ride or a camel trip in the desert) however, more smiles in more scenes were coming from employees and staff in the city</p>
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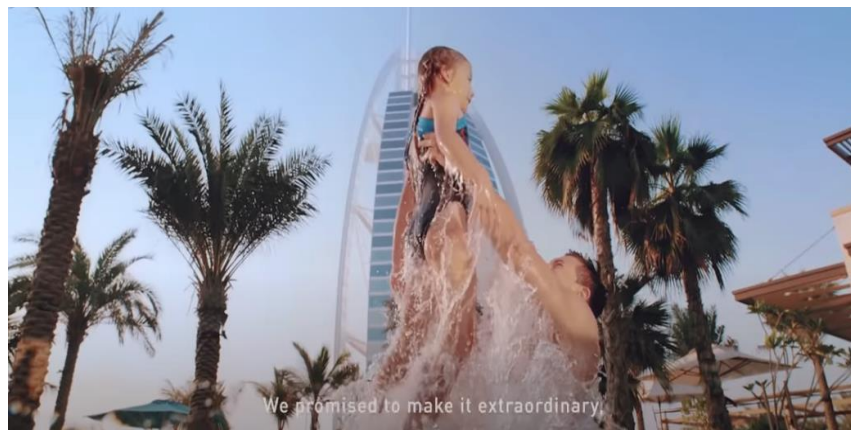
(looking at the camera in the eyes of the potential customer) to welcome the people, giving an indication of sense of high respect and welcoming to those ‘special and important clients’ visiting Dubai.



Selling Elements to Consumers in the Video

The form of communications: Video

While people have been in lockdown for months, the advertiser tried to communicate ‘back to normal’ images for people. In Dubai, people are no longer required to be indoors.



- 6- Families and friends are doing different types of activities outdoors.
- 7- Foreigners were exposed to different types of landscape, nature, and infrastructure that the country has to offer.

8- Multiple scenes exposed experiences that visitors can do such as being free by jumping from a plane (skydiving, surfing, mountain biking, safari riding, or even going to water parks).



From a discursive practice analytical view, the brand is communicating through this campaign to confirm that the brand is offering luxury, care, and adventure. The phrases and words used such as “we promised”, “we are ready to welcome you”, “making your wellbeing our priority”, “our home is ready for you to visit again”, “we promised to make it extraordinary”. Phrases that highlight and promise superiority to that VIP customer visiting Dubai.



Dimension Three - Sociocultural practice

Fairclough’s model (2001) aims to look at the norms and conditions made by the brand owner through social practices, the video portrayed Dubai as a destination that supposedly has all the elements that tourists seek during their travel. There is an emphasis on hospitality, “you” (the visitor - the customer), conveying a perception that the tourists’ needs will be met. The use of the words “welcome” and “ready for you” also highlight hospitality.

The transaction in this campaign is the royal treatment in Dubai. From a sociocultural perspective, the communication highlighted elements including:

- 1- the outstanding hospitality in the destination
- 2- The possibility of having family activities outdoors.
- 3- Freedom to move around.
- 4- Sunny days and open-air vibes, most scenes were shot in wide-angle scenes showing all open doors facilities and activities that can be done by visitors.
- 5- Different age groups represented in different scenes doing different activities show endless opportunities for people to do different things, again highlighting the freedom. The video communicated in different scenes different activities that included surfing, mountain biking, skydiving, and bungee jumping, all these elements were used to assert freedom and liberty after a long period of lockdown.
- 6- Despite a special highlight about the variety, the sociocultural/social practice key (Fairclough's key dimension) in this communication is individuality, exclusiveness, royal treatment of tourists, in other words, Dubai's tourists are VIPs. The 'norms' explored in the campaign revolve around luxury. This means that either Dubai fails to communicate to the 'variety' public audience or Dubai is targeting a specific audience as highlighted in the branding chapter when brand owners such as Rolex, Ferrari, or Louis Vuitton target a specific niche. Therefore, the comparison between Dubai and Spain in number of tourists is not important because Dubai tourism can argue that their objective is quality (the rich) not quantity (the total number of tourists), and this is part of the branding strategy.

Conclusion

Through Fairclough's (2001) three dimensional model, text (speech, writing, images, or a mix), discursive practice (production of text or constitution of text), and social practice (standards of societies, social structures, norms), the author explored two different campaigns communicated by brand Spain and brand UAE (visit Dubai) to identify the key messages, themes, and social practices communicated in these campaigns. The period of the campaigns was right after the end of the first lockdown that was enforced around the world due to COVID-19. The campaigns were launched in June and July 2020 and aimed to attract tourists for the remaining period of 2020 (saving the season). Spain's communication explicitly highlighted reasons for tourists to

visit or revisit the Iberian destination through the elements of culture, authenticity, sports, people, nature, infrastructure, and hospitality. The focus of Spain’s campaign was happiness and liberty; Spain through this campaign highlighted reasons for the clients to be in the place that will make them feel ‘happy’. Dubai, on the other hand, promoted its destination by highlighting different elements including nature, infrastructure, luxury, adventure, and exclusivity for visitors. Dubai’s communication is driven by royalty, higher expectations, and glamour. Both campaigns aim to attract foreigners to visit the nation.

Despite the attempt by both nations to convey a positive perception and ‘sell’ the destinations through the campaigns, the researcher highlighted some elements that can be improved using the same model of analyzing the campaigns.

Campaign Criticism through Fairclough’s model

Figure 5.9.4 Campaign Criticism Table

	Spain	Dubai UAE
Representation	Men and women are equally represented. Equal in terms of the role representation, both men and women are equally welcomed, portrayed as equally free, safe, and happy.	
	No black people appeared in the advertisement neither as hosts nor tourists which exclude black tourists from the invitation to the nation. Muslim tourists represent 10% of the total number of visitors to Spain, mostly Muslim visitors are from UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Morocco, and other Arabic and Muslim countries (Walker, 2019). No Muslim tourists were represented in the ad. There was one example of an Asian lady that communicates with tourists from Asia.	No black people appeared in the advertisement neither as hosts nor tourists, which exclude black tourists from the invitation to the nation. The advertisement tried to create a welcoming message but also failed to invite all categories of tourists, probably due to the niche that the nation is targeting.

	<p>Kids appeared in the campaign in one scene which does not show many activities directed for kids.</p> <p>The advertisement tried to communicate variety but failed in inclusion.</p>	
Discursive Practice	<p>The constitution of text by Spain was simple, but the simplicity perhaps was overdone, the happy vibe, the melody, the type of communication with text on screen without a voiceover perhaps reduced the power of communication.</p>	<p>Unless the UAE is purely recruiting tourists based on supposed quality (rich), not quantity (public), then the commercial did not meet the requirements of simplicity of attracting more middle-class tourists.</p>
Social Practice	<p>Spain was clear about available options and social norms in the communications. However, some activities were undoable during the commercial such as parties in bars or attending games in football stadiums.</p>	<p>The campaign communicated modernity, luxury, skyscrapers, in the majority of the video. There was a lack of culture in communication. One scene showed camel riding, and another showed an eagle, which is part of the Emirati hunting culture. However, there was so much modernity and luxury (hotels, towers, skyscrapers, modern facilities), that if the video were played without mentioning Dubai, the video could be from Singapore, Hong Kong, or Australia. There is a lack of identity and cultural communication in the campaign. As highlighted in the analysis of interviews, the “soul” element is missing.</p>

Despite showing the latest, newest, most advanced infrastructure in the world, Dubai is failing to compete with the authentic, historic, and romantic Spain in terms of global rank and number of tourists. Both advertisers are selling and both advertisers are not failing to impress foreigners, however, depending on UAE’s ambition on the global positioning chart and ranks, Spain is managing to trigger tourists’ emotions and attract three times more tourists. This is one way of looking at it, another way is by considering that perhaps the strategy of Dubai is constructed to attract fewer tourists, but earn more through providing luxurious services which could mean that the Emirates is seeking wealthy tourists in particular, not all tourists.

The following chapter will discuss the intersected findings from the research journey about nation branding from theory to practice. Both methodologies used in this chapter gave more insight into data about the subject from a communications perspective in terms of the intersection between communicators, communication elements, and the conveyed perception.

Chapter Six: Analysis & Reflection

This research aimed to explore the phenomenon of nation branding in a novel way. The author aspired to explore how countries can effectively utilize nations' brands in a contemporary, globalized and competitive world. The author aimed to answer the research question by exploring and analyzing current theories about country branding, reviewing previous studies carried out, and their findings, as well as analyzing examples of successful brands following the global ranks that are used in evaluating nations' brands such as Brand Directory, Bloom, and Anholt-Ipsos. The author sought to integrate those findings and point out new ones, contributing new knowledge to the field. Findings of current theories were considered, such as the importance of policies, internal practices, government regulations, strategies, vision, media representation, as well as current and past communications representations of nations. Current theories in country branding link good nation brands with positive economic, political, and social outcomes, and as a result the author asked how countries can effectively utilize their brands to foster their potential in a contemporary globalized competitive world. Furthermore, the author aimed to utilize the findings to suggest an international nation branding manual with a suggested communications strategy for countries that aim to improve a nation's brand value and perception.

This research began by investigating previous literature on the topic. Relevant chapters were identified to explore that would build better knowledge about the subject as a whole, as well as attain the necessary theoretical knowledge to help answer the research question, followed by the application of two research methodologies:

- 1- Interviews with nation branding global experts, tourism experts, and researchers and authors.
- 2- Critical discourse analysis applied to two tourism campaigns promoted through digital and social media platforms.

Consequently, the reflection will include two sections, divided as follows:

- 1- Discussion of the combination of literature review findings and empirical research findings.
- 2- Nation branding Manual.

6.1 Theoretical Framework and Empirical Discussion

In this section, the full cycle of data will be presented, combining findings from the literature review section and empirical section. This will lay the foundation for the conclusion of this research. The findings discussed in this section are directly related to the research aim and the purpose of the study.

First, it will be helpful to restate the findings from the empirical section and the empirical data collected to answer the research question. The data acquired through the interviews with nation branding experts led to identifying four themes that can help answer the research question.

These themes were:

- 1- Nation's brand builders – sub themes: vision; policies; nation's role in global social, environmental, and humanitarian issues; infrastructure; culture and history; role of people; sports; and location.
- 2- Communications – sub themes: internal communications; what is mentioned in the media; marketing and advertising; and social media.
- 3- Nation's brand politics – sub themes: internal political events; external political events; soft power.
- 4- Nation's growth through a well-built brand – sub-theme: the nation's brand as a competitive edge.

New elements were brought into the picture, complementing knowledge attained in the review of literature. For instance, internal communications and the methods of how the house must be 'in order' in terms of internal collaborations revealed a new perspective of communications that was not evident in the literature. Furthermore, the role of people was highlighted from different angles. First, as a major contact point when receiving tourists, investors, and visitors and the importance of the way the interaction takes place. Second, the role of people when representing the nation abroad and what perspective they give on their country. In fact, when asked about the most important component in a nation's brand, one participant, Ilan Geva, ranked people's behavior as the most important pillar to construct a positive brand: "*The behavior of its people. that's it*" (Question 3, line 1). This provided a new perspective about important elements in having a 'well-built' brand that were not discovered in the literature review.

The orientation of the country through its policies towards social, cultural, and humanitarian cases can empower the brand. Topics such as human rights, democracy, liberty, tolerance, LGBTQ rights, feminism, as well as how the nation contributes to global wellness are other elements that have weight in creating a positive perception and in constructing a positive brand.

Finally, the concluding theme answered the research question by showing that nations can promote the country through having, building, or constructing a “good brand”, nations do not earn a positive perception only through marketing.

The results of the second methodology, CDA utilizing Fairclough's three-dimensional model (2001), allowed for the identification of the aspects and themes that each nation attempted to exploit in order to draw in foreigners. The time of the advertisements was immediately following the conclusion of the first global shutdown that COVID-19 had imposed. Both destinations aimed to draw tourists during the remaining season of 2020.

Spain tried to impress the audience with a ‘happiness’ theme using different elements such as culture, history, authenticity, sports, people, nature, infrastructure, and hospitality.

The theme for Dubai on the other hand was built around nature, infrastructure, luxury, adventure, and exclusivity for visitors. The theme communicated glamour and exclusivity. The author suggested that despite the difference in global ranks between UAE (Dubai) and Spain, this does not necessarily mean that Spain is ahead of Dubai. While analyzing the communicated themes, the author proposed that Dubai is targeting a particular niche of tourists, investors, or visitors, whereas Spain is targeting a broader audience. Framing the findings from the perspective of answering the research question, the data suggest that whether the aim is a particular niche or a more general audience, the attraction variable can only be countable when the brand is well-built.

The data suggests that countries can effectively utilize nations’ brands in a contemporary globalized competitive world through constructing a sound brand by applying the elements in the themes and communicating the advantages that the nation has to offer. In other words, the nation must communicate the reasons why the world should interact and be attracted to that nation, whether because of a unique tourism experience, a safe investment haven, or a forward-looking destination for talented immigrants (Bolin & Miazhevich, 2018). The utilization ultimately takes place when the brand itself promotes the nation, not when the nation promotes the brand through marketing and advertising. The results also lead the author to propose that nations can be effective in communicating a brand, especially in tourism, when they can emotionally trigger potential audiences, building this proposal on the previous theory of Lovemarks proposed by Robert (2004). In the following section, the author will establish where the data fits within the literature findings.

By introducing and discussing different angles of globalization in literature, the author tried to find the intersections between variables that are related to branding nations in a globalized

competitive world. *Economic globalization* in trade, tourism, and foreign investments; *cultural globalization* in ideas, beliefs, and identities which could bring people together through shared thoughts, passions, religion, sports, language or a practice; and *political globalization* in international organizations, interests, orientations, allyship (based on religion, culture, geography, or race) provided a macro view about the intersections between the concepts as it is believed that one feeds the other (Torres, 2019).

Recalling Hepler's (2022) thought about the role of cultural globalization in branding nations, "the process of cultural globalization has significant effects on international relations and interactions between different cultures in the same country", the example of utilizing media, social media, and events in communicating Brazil's culture (core narrative), music, and hospitality in promoting the nation abroad was highlighted by Mariutti and Medeiros (2018) and Marsh (2016). The global image of specific cultures can effectively make an impression or a notion about the country (Marsh, 2016). Language, on the other hand, was highlighted as a key notion in promoting the nation (Kouqza & Al-Afif, 2009). Today Spanish language is the official language in nearly 20 countries, and is spoken by over 500 million people around the world (Sala & Posner, 2022). According to a study conducted by Kouqza and Al-Afif (2009), the spread of Spanish language is a win-win situation for people who are learning the language on one hand, and the Kingdom of Spain on the other, which can promote its own culture, values, and ideologies.

Empirically this was highlighted by multiple branding experts from the angle of familiarity. Anholt described cultural familiarity as an effective pillar in empowering the brand: "*the well-known, well understood popular culture of Spanish cuisine, Spanish history, landscape, language, dress, dance, music... it's a rich recipe that people are very familiar with around the world*" (Question 12, answer line 1-9). Al Moghrabi also highlighted this point, specifying that opening up to the world is a strategy that Saudi Arabia is using today, since the world is mostly familiar with negative elements about the Middle East: "*when you are open, my role is not to change you, but making you closer to understand us*" (Question 10, answer line 31-35). Bin Rajab thought that one of Spain's brand strengths was football, which is a cultural variable communicated by Spain to brand its nation abroad. This was also highlighted by Torres in his book *Nation Brand Builders* (2019). Bin Rajab gave an example of visiting Mauritania, and being amazed by the fact that people there named all the Spanish teams and football players. Equally, Anholt named football as a major brand asset for Spain, along with its landscape,

language, culture, music and history (Question 12, answer line 4-10), as did Al Maghrabi (Question 12, answer line 23-30).

It has already been noted that in a globalized competitive world, the competition is severe. From an economic perspective, nations are competing as companies (Churchwell, 2004). When it comes to branding nations, the competition is clear in the fields of export, tourism, foreign direct investments, and in attracting global talent. Elements of promoting nations vary from one country to another, depending on the communicated competitive edge (Hassan & Mahrous, 2019). While some countries rely on cultural, historical, and natural resources, the key finding is familiarizing the public with these elements and attaining global admiration in order to utilize these elements in promoting the destination.

From the branding chapter, the importance of both the soul (vision, planning, policies, quality, structure) on one hand and the beautiful face (branding strategy, messaging strategy, communications) were discussed, alongside the process of building a brand, maturing, and matching the message communicated with the reality of the communicator. After all, the goal of this process is to communicate and implant positive perceptions or feelings in the audience through successful brand management practice and communications strategies. This was an identical concept to nation branding research conducted by Stahlberg and Bolin (2016), Aronczyk (2013), and Dinnie (2013). The idea here is not only whether or not the importance is relying upon the soul or the face, but also what makes the soul 'healthy' and what makes the face 'beautiful'.

It was highlighted that a brand simply reflects the vision, culture, and values of brand owners. These brands can be individuals, products, companies, events, organizations, or countries (Moore & Reid, 2008). The objective of branding is that when a brand stands out due to its individuality and exceptionality, the value of the brand rises to bring growth and prosperity to the brand developer or owner (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015). Keller (2003) concluded that one of the most valuable assets for organizations is the brand name, and what impressions, emotions, and perceptions are associated with the brand; these elements are built through the brand narrative. The brand narrative reflects its vision, values, and standards, this can be a relationship builder with audiences if they can relate to the narrative (Dall'Olmo & de Chernatony, 2000, p. 137). Keller's (2001) brand equity model CBBE showed different elements that explain the process of building and growing a brand, which are *Identity, Meaning, Response, and Relationship*.

Identity: A communication made by the brand owner to explain what the brand is about. Identity defines the brand's core values and perception. **Meaning:** Brand meaning goes deeper than product quality and price. The meaning refers to the shared values and ideologies with the brand such as Ben and Jerry's (2021) decision to stop selling products in Palestinian territories occupied by Israelis forces and McDonald's (2022) decision to stop its operations in Russia due to the invasion of Ukraine. In other words, it is the actions that brands take to show their core identity, values, and narrative. In nation branding this was discussed in the theme of nations' actions through policies, equality, and respect for human rights. When describing what is appealing about Spain as a global brand, Ambulo mentioned Spain's social "equality": *I guess equality, when it comes to LGBTQ equality ... they ranked number one in the world* (Question 19, answer line 11-15). Anholt stated that interest in the nation begins when the nation takes action to benefit the world when he said, *"What I'm interested in is what it's done for me and the world that I live in"* (Question 4, answer line 37-47).

The element of human rights was highlighted by Paciencia as a brand narrative that influences its likeability: *"when the human rights element is not present it impacts the way that people perceive your destination"* (Question 18, answer line 2-5).

The other two elements in Keller's (2001) brand equity model are response and relationship. Response explores the actions made by the client once the transaction is made and aims to understand if the quality standards met the expectations of the client. The relationship is the stage where the bond is created between the client and the brand owner. If the relationship is a positive one, loyal and happy customers will be willing to make further purchases of the brand (Keller, 2001; CFI, 2022). It is important to note that these pillars are sequential, meaning that the preceding pillar influences the following one. This recalls UNWTO Director Alessandra Priante's comment that one satisfied tourist with a positive experience with a destination can generate up to seven new tourists (Alhassan, 2022). These elements are reflected in tourists', investors', and visitors' feedback about the nation. Part of this experience is generated through the role of people and infrastructure. This is the stage where the 'customer' has already conducted a transaction with the brand. Candidate A shared his experience and proposed loyalty to return to the destination due to the experience with people (dealing with the brand): *"people of Spain are warm, welcoming to tourists and the service quality, these are the three dimensions ... I would go back definitely"* (Question 23, answer line 5-11).

Similarly, Gallego expressed the importance of people in building loyalty: *"locals, and I think they are the best ambassadors of a place"* (Question 5, answer line 1-9).

Going in this direction started to build an understanding to the following proposal: first, the concepts of inception and conception must be understood. In other words, what comes first in nation branding? Do branding and marketing build a positive image? Or is having a well-built brand followed by introducing it to the world can generate a positive image? Through this research, it is evident that both elements are vital, however, constructing a reliable brand comes first, followed by effective communications.

This research is not the first to propose such a notion, especially when analyzing the data and theories from the branding chapter, such as Keller's (2001) brand equity model, and Aaker's (1991) brand recognition model. The author suggests that the branding cycle, no matter what the brand is—an individual, product, company, or nation—is identical when it comes to the process of brand building (vision, policies, objectives, identity), followed by the process of maturing and positioning, and followed by communications models of branding, advertising, and communications proposed by Jones (2010), Alizadeh et al. (2014), Keller (2013), and Frederiksen (2022). This key finding helped to first understand the face or soul concept (inception and conception) in nation branding, by comparing the nation brand's life cycle proposed by Torres (2019), Anholt (2011, 2013, 2021), and Ståhlberg and Bolin (2016).

Furthermore, the results from the interviews and critical discourse analysis, by highlighting the elements used in communications campaigns, suggest that the theory in branding highlighted by Roberts (2004) of "Lovemarks" as well as Keller's (2001) branding model that highlight the importance of emotional admiration are applicable and in fact realistic for nation branding communications, especially when it comes to tourism. The campaigns highlighted in CDA using Fairclough's dimensions showed elements that are clearly aiming for emotional stimulation and seeking to generate emotional admiration. The themes identified from the interviews also suggest that successful nation branding is based on the level of success for the nation to be 'loved' by global audiences. This means that a nation's brand pillars highlighted earlier, such as policies, cultural elements, history, football, music, arts, familiarities, infrastructure, and other elements are effective when they can emotionally stimulate a viewer. For example, if someone decides not to visit Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Russia, or Ukraine, it may be due to the negative associated emotions with those brands, perhaps one of these emotions is fear, which is an opposing feeling to love. On the other hand, people visit Rome, Barcelona, Miami, Maldives, or other destinations due to the emotional admiration and 'romance' that they feel for these destinations and their brands. This admiration and 'love' are built due to two factors:

- 1- Through having a brand that is well-built (pillars suggested in the concluded themes), i.e., ‘having a healthy soul’.
- 2- Through the effective communication about these brands’ pillars that can successfully develop positive emotions, feelings, and perceptions through (media, advertising, PR, and word of mouth), i.e., ‘communicating the beauty of the nation’.

The author proposes that there are two steps to be the benchmark in nation branding. First is the brand construction, such as vision, policies, infrastructure, culture and history, hospitality and welcoming people, human rights, LGBTQ friendliness, and having one or more pillar reliable enough to be utilized as a competitive edge. After completing stage one of having a well-built brand, stage two is effective communication. The author suggests an updated theory of Lovemarks that can be highlighted as “nation lovemarks” based on the findings and building on the data taken from Kahneman (2002) and Robert’s (2004) Lovemarks concept.

This suggestion is backed up by some of the nation branding experts and the discussion about the attempts of emotional marketing. Gallego, Marketing Manager at the European Travel Commission, revealed that emotional stimulation elements are the main pillars of their branding strategy: *“our communication activities only focus on those passion points”* (Question 1, answer line 30-33).

Torres described his admiration and preference for Spain over Dubai due to the Spanish “soul”. *“Spain is real ... in Spain you feel it’s more authentic”* (Question 24, answer line 3-9).

Geva found the Mexican people a strengthening pillar of the brand due to their hospitality, which in turn developed emotional admiration for the brand: *“the warmth of the Mexican people ... they can export the warmth and the welcoming and the hospitality”* (Question 2, 23-30). Regardless of the reason for admiring or being emotionally attracted to the nation (nature, people, culture, history, modernity, or economy), this theory proposes that once one or more of the brand elements triggers an emotional attraction from the audience, the brand will attract a tourist, an investor, or talented immigrants. An example is how some tourists avoid going to North due not only due to lack of brand strength and personal security, but also due to the negative associations of this brand in the minds of the global audience and in turn the negative emotions towards the brand (feelings opposite to love and attraction). Finally, the examples highlighted earlier about Trump and Putin in both literature and the empirical sections and the outcome of the association with the countries’ brands can also support this suggestion. The feelings most people have about these political figures are associated with

negativity, which in turn generates negative perception about the person and the associated brands (Torres, 2019).

This proposal suggests that the lovemarks theory, from a communicational economic perspective is relevant in nation branding and the concept of lovemarks can be expanded to nations lovemarks by using the pillars developed in this research and effectively communicating these pillars in order to successfully trigger positive feelings, in turn, the nation can effectively utilize this perception in a globalized competitive world. The effect of the “romance” in place branding was highlighted when discussing romantic destinations and the influence on audiences when being promoted as romantic destinations on Hollywood such as Rome and Paris (Handley, 2022; Handley, 2022).

However, this thesis proposes a theory of place and nation branding that is based on emotional manifestation as a communications brand strategy. Nation branders should seek ways to make the audience fall in love with the nation, either due to loving the national football team, the beaches of the nation, the fairness in the society and policies, or the food, history, and culture. By contrasting these findings with the proposal here, a complex web of motives can be seen that can drive someone to visit a place, whether religious, pleasure, historical, or nature, it is related to an emotional drive, as stated by Robert (2004; 2013). Media platforms are the tools used to communicate a narrative, whether this narrative is in favor or against a specific brand, as highlighted in the media chapter that media platforms are employed to create public opinion, public perception, and knowledge (Miazhevich, 2018).

It is worth recalling the use of Hollywood in punishing or rewarding other nations according to US foreign policy (Aydemir, 2017; Bayles, 2014) and the BBC framing of Qatar during the FIFA World Cup 2022 (BBC, 2022). Negative reporting, representation, or framing are capable of invoking negative emotions in the minds of viewers and driving them away from being associated with the brand due to the influence of media (De Moya & Jain, 2016). The solutions proposed in the empirical part discussed the importance of putting the house in order, focusing on the nation from within, creating a dialogue with the media, and utilizing different tools to promote the brand and communicate a positive narrative.

Candidate A spoke about the importance of putting the house in order and having a positive dialogue with the media and if possible, have global media “behind you”. *“Building dialogue with media and putting your house in order, as simple as that”* (Question 20, answer line 1-5). He added, *“if it’s media power game, then try to put powerful media behind you”* (Question 21, answer line 1-3).

Torres highlighted the role of collaborating with different media platforms: *“understand what the new drivers are ... look into other platforms that provide like Amazon, like Netflix, so on that gives you more opportunity to go into that field”* (Question 12, answer line 17-20). Anholt gave an example about Saudi Arabia which does not enjoy a positive global perception due to global media framing: *“this is the real challenge and it's a challenge, particularly for countries like Saudi Arabia, which have a very negative image because the problem for them, is it's not simply a matter that they don't do enough good stuff, and therefore people think they're bad. The problem is that the negative image means that even when they do good stuff, it will be either, as you say, ignored or else interpreted in a negative light, right?”* (Question 9, answer line 1-7).

Anholt emphasized the importance of the nation's positive contribution to the planet through policies, contributions, and actions. It is a process that takes time, and surely with different positive contributions people around the world will have a good perception of the nation, even if misrepresented in the media. Anholt thought that the media's stereotyping and misrepresentation is a business strategy to make money: *“the job of the media is not to change people's perceptions, the job of the media is to echo people's prejudices. That's how it makes money”* (Question 9, answer line 12-19). Media framing was also highlighted by Kaneva when asked about “brave like Ukraine” campaign, she explained, *“And that's how persuasion often works, right? You find something that people already believe and then you amplify and give it more space and just keep repeating it”* (Question 9, answer line 14-19).

Al Moghrabi proposed a solution that could combat media misrepresentation. According to Al Moghrabi, any country can beat stereotypes through actions and policies. The more the country can do, the more the country will speak for itself through its contributions, regardless of what the media says: *“by creating the buzz and making them talk about the belief or the unbelievable things that Saudi is considering for the future”* (Question 11, answer line 10-20). Same solution was proposed by Anholt, according to Anholt, actions of nations create better perceptions on the long run (Question 4, answer line 37-47).

Since it was proposed earlier that a key factor in the process of brand attraction is emotional status towards the brand, it is relevant to highlight again the vital role of the media. This research is not the first one proposing this finding, however, the findings of this thesis suggest that communicating a nation's brand in this era through variety of available options can help to reduce any distortion attempts by global media platforms driven by political agendas. Hollywood, global media platforms, and news agencies are no longer the main global

communications tools that shape public opinion. Therefore, the data supports our suggestion that brand perception management can be easier when leveraging the variety of available communications channels.

Furthermore, from a communication angle in nation branding the findings oppose Anholt's view about the use of branding activities in terms of marketing, advertising, communications, PR, and media promotions (2006; 2011; 2012; 2021). It was explored how media practice is driven by political and economic interests, not reflecting reality. It was also explored how framing is capable of distorting a brand's image through negative reporting. Media, PR, and advertising activities are identified as key factors in the process of nation branding, however, only if the first finding proposed is granted, which is building a reliable brand. Anholt himself highlighted in the interview (quote above) that Saudi Arabia is suffering negative representation in the media. The discussion in the interview covered what is beyond negative reporting, and the fact that KSA appears on the global news only when something negative takes place in or about the country. However, even when the country takes constructive steps, such as participating in global warming solutions, funding global projects, donating to Ukraine, or any other positive step (positive policies), it is ignored by the global media. Therefore, and based on the findings, it is logical to propose that nations must combat negative media representation not only through brand construction but also through marketing, media, and communication.

This thesis suggests that the activity of branding, advertising, and promotions must be done by different nations. This is due to the fact that media reporting is biased. Therefore, it is the role of the nation to communicate its narrative and reality constantly using different communications channels. The author recalls Ilan Geva's statement that a country that lacks marketing or communication is "dead" (Question 5, answer line 1).

While Anholt highlighted on multiple occasions (2006; 2011; 2012; 2021) and in the interview for this thesis that branding, marketing, and/or advertising are not effective in building a brand, the author proposes that these activities are essential in building a brand, but can backfire if the brand is not well-built and this was explored by Stahlberg and Bolin (2016) in the case of Ukraine.

However, in an age where media is controlled and driven by political and economic interests and using this powerful communication tool to deliver specific agendas, even if this leads to distort a nation's brand perception, the author suggests that it is the nation's role to practice effective communications through the multiple channels available today (TV, digital platforms,

PR, Events, and public diplomacy and cultural relations) including advertising, also, as highlighted by Torres (quote above).

The role of media in shaping public opinion and building perceptions in societies has already been explored (De Moya & Jain, 2016). A nation must practice its 'right' in representing itself through suitable tools that are able to deliver to the public its own version of brand narrative. Finally, it is relevant to discuss the findings about the subject of soft power and public diplomacy, in other words, the political face of nation branding. An identical debate about the essence of soft power and public diplomacy from the perspective of Fan (2008) and Nye (2004) appeared in the empirical part when discussing the concept with participants. Kaneva had a different perception of soft power; similar to Fan (2008), Kaneva thought that the concept is unclear. Secondly, it is a concept with elements that are mostly applicable to and designed for the US, therefore, it does not have validity to be applied elsewhere, and therefore, it cannot be generalized. She named it "*a concept that's very US centric*" (Question 7, answer line 2- 9). The data in both the literature and the empirical research support the view of Fan (2008) in terms of the insignificance of soft power and public diplomacy without hard power and particularly economic power.

Nation branding from an economic communication perspective is realistically an applicable concept with tangible results; the 'tangibility' was tested in previous research in nation branding and the associated benefits of having a positive nation brand. When it comes to soft power concept, however, the author proposes that the concept does not have tangible results unless associated with hard power, economic power, or mutual interests. The example highlighted in this research about the invasion of Kuwait and the international community's reaction to liberate Kuwait, which generated financial revenue for participants in this operation showed that hard power, economic power, political motives, and financial interests are the main drivers for countries to conduct 'big moves' (Taqi, 2019), rather than soft power or public diplomacy. The nation branding chapter concluded that nation branding is possible because branding activities aiming to promote investments or destinations or immigration harbors for talented immigrants are directed towards individuals. Once the individual is 'triggered', the decision can easily be made. However, in public diplomacy, the relationship is between countries, and the priorities with countries are managed by political and economic agendas, allyships, and strategies (Fan, 2008; Taqi, 2019). Therefore, conducting cultural activities by a country shall not 'trigger' another nation to go to war and defend another due to its positive soft power or public diplomacy activities, unless it was under the key political agenda. In fact,

the case of Ukraine can be used to show the political influence on nation branding. Ukraine tried for over a decade to brand itself as a 'European state', but these attempts were not successful due to failures in the internal brand building process (Stahlberg & Bolin, 2016). However, after being invaded by Russia, and due to complicated political agendas, brand Ukraine was empowered through global media activities that made the brand in the center of the world's attention. Bloom (2022) highlighted that the gains of brand Ukraine were enormous. Ukraine became a European (loved) brand; this 'transition' took place due to political agendas and not due to Ukraine's nation branding activities.

The emotional news coverage showing refugees and drawing the world's emotional attention to the crisis followed by repeating to the audience that this is a 'European' state under (Russian) attack perhaps supported this transition. This also suggests the importance of using 'nations lovemarks' as a strategy in branding nations. The framing was emotionally effective to gain the world's compassion. This framing, however, did not take place during a similar action, which was the US invasion of Iraq, due to clear differences in agendas and orientations about covering the 'invasion' by global media platforms. As a result, both invasions had different 'narratives' in global media platforms. The data above also showed us that a nation's brand can be influenced by political agendas and activities, however, nation branding, public diplomacy, and soft power are not effective enough to influence political agendas.

Finally, discussing the media's role in branding nations, Kaneva's example about "media's amplification" (quote above) can be a justification for the negative perception about some parts of the world such as the Middle East's image in Western media. This also suggests that maybe the way global media frames nations are done on purpose. This way of communication can sustain the global interest in nations that are consistently promoted in a positive way, such as the Western world. This type of communication can maintain the interest of tourists, investors, and talented immigrants.

Throughout the chapters the author searched for sole elements to be the main nation brand builders. The author found that policies, regulations, and leadership are vital elements to construct a nation's brand, however, without the role of media, marketing, and communications, policies cannot be a sole reliable brand builder. Marketing, branding, and communications are the same; despite their importance, they are insufficient on their own in constructing and effectively communicating a positive brand. The findings from this thesis have shown that for a country's brand to be effective, the nation branding process must be ongoing. This ongoing process includes actions and

communications which rely on and benefit from the coherence of all internal brand builders identified in the interviews, along with ongoing and effective communication that can successfully gain audiences' admiration, in other words, positive contributions of internal and external stakeholders towards sustaining and empowering the brand.

To conclude, this work suggests that nation branding is a 'larger process' than what generally is described in literature aided from policies, marketing, and/or political perspectives. The process of effective nation branding is an ongoing set of activities that involves internal stakeholders from the country, such as leadership (government), the private sector, and the people of the country.

In this process, the nation should have control of its brand building, brand communications, and nation branding process. The process of nation branding metaphorically is analogous to a domino effect, where one or a combination of elements can drive the brand to build up and thrive in a globalized competitive world if the resulting perception is positive or have the opposite effect if the resulting perception is negative.

A nation's brand stakeholders are internal and external key players. External stakeholders include foreign governments, international organizations, media platforms, and foreign citizens. Media activities happen to be a major stakeholder in communicating a brand's narrative and creating a perception. A challenging part is that global media platforms are managed, fed, and driven by political and economic interests and agendas (foreign governments' and organizations'). When these interests are not aligned with the nation's interests, the brand's narrative can be distorted due to global media misrepresentation which in turn can negatively affect brand's global perception. Media platforms appear to be somehow rewarding or punishing mechanism to nations, depending on the regional political agendas and orientations.

As a result, the country can be the sole stakeholder in its country branding process and a major stakeholder in its 'brand'. Negative interventions from external stakeholders can be minimized when the process of nation branding is competitive. The process of nation branding (brand building activities + effective communications activities) should be an ongoing process, in order for the brand to maintain its competitiveness.

Therefore, in order for a nation to foster its potential through utilizing its brand in a globalized competitive world, the nation must determine and be in charge of the elements that are within the nation's control. This includes constructing (and constantly updating)

a brand that is built through key pillars such as vision, policies (including internal policies, human rights, LGBTQ), culture, history, people, sports, and being an effective global player in global issues. This should be followed, as this research documents, by effective internal and external communication strategies that use a variety of communicational tools to continuously promote the brand narrative and garner global attention and admiration.

While in the literature the debate was whether or not a brand can be built through marketing (beautiful face), or policies (the soul), these findings lead the author to submit that both pillars are equally essential. Advertising is a relevant factor in the process of nation branding, especially since this research found that global media coverage is biased. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the nation to be an ‘extrovert’ communicator using not only advertising, but a variety of communication tools to effectively communicate its own narrative.

To conclude, a clear line must be drawn between nation branding and a nation’s brand. It is logical to state that the nation branding process is the responsibility of the country. A nation’s brand is an asset that can be influenced by external factors, such as politics and economic interests namely through the ‘harming’ or ‘empowering’ of the global media platforms. This work drives the author to claim that political and economic regional interests play a leading role in influencing nations’ brands. That statement does not go the other way around, this means that politics can influence nations’ brands, but ‘nation branding’ is not effective enough to influence regional politics or political interests.

6.2 Beyond Current Knowledge

This research uncovered different intersections between nation branding and other variables. Nation branding as a process can be managed and ‘owned’ by a country, however, a nation’s brand can be influenced by different internal and external factors, including politics, media, and economic interests. Therefore, it is relevant to suggest further work be done about the influence of political interest on nation branding practice. This is simply because different nations’ brands get distorted simply for not being political allies of the US or the West for example.

6.3 Towards a Nation Branding Manual

This research has already concluded that for nations to effectively utilize nations' brands in a contemporary globalized competitive world, nations must effectively communicate a well-built brand with a unique and competitive edge using a variety of global communications tools. Communicating the brand effectively will allow the audiences to identify the brand through its unique charisma.

For this to happen, governments must conduct the following steps:

- 1- Build a competitive brand with a core narrative - authentic Nation Brand Identity (NBI) along with defined objectives (Step 1). This takes place after the nation's resources, capabilities, and potential are measured, assessed, and unified to be employed in constructing the nation's brand through the nation's future vision.
- 2- Communicate the brand essence effectively (effectiveness relies on content + channels) to attract tourists, investors, international talent, and/or visitors.

Below is the cycle of creating a competitive brand that allows a nation to utilize it as a competitive communications arm to promote the country's potential in a globalized competitive world.

1- Nation Brand Building (Building a Competitive Brand)

- A- Vision is a key factor that was highlighted in both literature and interviews. Having a clearly defined Nation Brand Vision (NBV) (such as a timed vision, 2030, 2040, etc.) by leadership is a key step in constructing a competitive brand. Vision is the compass that guides a country's global positioning from the current one to the desired one.
- B- A vision must manifest the nation's potential future, for example, being an attractive tourism destination, or export or investments haven, or industrialization or trade hub, etc. Once this framework is manifested by the vision, the roadmap to construct the brand pillars shall be clearer.
- C- Inclusion of NBV as a part of the country's economic vision, for example 2030, 2033, 2040 announced global economic visions. This was not highlighted in either the literature or the interviews. KSA brand member Al Moghrabi highlighted that KSA is utilizing nation branding activities to reach KSA's 2030 vision, however, this process is not officially conducted as part of the nation's vision. So far, according to the

empirical and literature review, no country placed country branding officially as an effective pillar to foster its economic vision.

- D- Nation Brand Narrative (NBN) is the way the nation wants to be identified on the global stage (nation's passport). It includes political, cultural, social, religious orientation, policies, internal regulations such as taxes and laws (ending or keeping death penalties, for example), equality, human rights, social trends, LGBTQ rights, animal rights, integration, tolerance, and openness. NBN should be the theme that is built around NBV. NBN is the way locals and foreigners can identify and relate to the nation through its actions and contributions inside the country's borders and also outside as a member of international community. International contributions are in the areas of international issues and global trends such as global warming, pandemics, social issues (hosting refugees), political issues, supporting countries in need (such as during wars, epidemics, natural disasters), and aid (in the form of education, medicine, food, and other forms of aid). The original element in the research was how much NBN can be a motive for visitors to love the nation and decide to be associated with the country. Some participants, such as Paciencia, Anholt, Torres, and Gallego, believed that UAE (Dubai), KSA, Qatar, and other countries in the region can be associated with better perceptions if the region were associated with positive human rights practices and inclusion of different segments in society, including recognition of LGBTQ rights. This was also highlighted by participants Paciencia and Ambulo.
- E- Inclusion is a vital element in NBN that enhances global perception and, as a result, a nation's brand equity.
- F- NBN should set the standard for the types of images and associations that will come with the brand. As a result, NBN should be a constitutive element in brand communications.

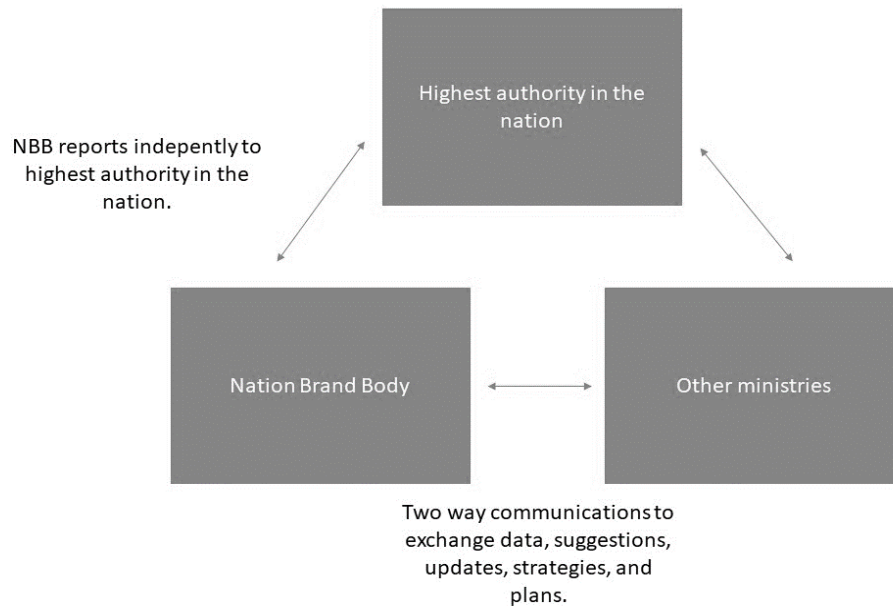
2- Internal Communications

- A- The country's road map for internal collaborations politically, socially, and economically shall be extracted from NBN and NBV.
- B- An independent Nation Branding Body (NBB) reporting to the highest authority in the nation is favorable for the nation branding process to complete its life cycle without any interruption due to political and social changes in the country. An

independent NBB will prevent the branding process from any distractions due to elections or administrative restructuring. Interruptions in brand building projects due to political changes were highlighted by nation branding experts.

- C- NBB must run an internal campaign through media and communications platforms to announce to the citizens the targeted NBV to make sure there is inclusion of citizens, private, and government sectors.
- D- NBB is set to eliminate any state competitions (internal competition between cities) – unless it is part of the NBV.
- E- NBB shall operate in collaboration with other internal divisions and ministries to be up to date with infrastructure, services, regulations, and policies in the country. This will help NBB to be up to date with the nation’s development and therefore, reflect and communicate these updates with foreign audiences. This can include the development of free zones for trade, new developments, project tenders for local and foreign investors, and touristic development areas.
- F- Develop two-way communication between NBB and other entities, where NBB will request updates based on data and global social, economic, or political trends.
- G- NBB can be constituted by professionals from different backgrounds to attain the needed knowledge/skills to support achieving NBV. This can include:
 - 1- Foreign affairs members – (for public diplomacy).
 - 2- Chamber of commerce/ministry of economics/trade members (for investment and planning).
 - 3- Ministry of Tourism members and a nation branding global firm (for international strategy and place promotion).
 - 4- Legal professionals/consultants (for local laws regulations reviewing)
 - 5- Academics (for research)
 - 6- Media and production professionals

Figure 6.3.1 Nation Branding Body Communications Mechanism in The Nation



3- External Communications

- A- Create a Nation’s Brand Communications Identity (NBCI). NBCI represents the essence of the nation, it is a communications reflection of the NBN and NBV. NBCI does not have to be a logo or any symbolic form. NBCI is the theme that the nation appears to the world with (passport photo; photo representing the description in NBN). NBCI should be unified when operating in events, media, digital media, or any other form of communication. A nation’s “digital identity” as referred to by Torres (2019) should be a unified identity on all digital platforms.
- B- An example of NBCI is the mixture of elements identified in the CDA analysis of the campaign conducted by Spain. Spain, throughout their social media, digital media, and traditional media, have a communication theme that always includes Spanish culture, authenticity, history, hospitality, liberty, and nature. The rest of NBCI is reflected in Spain’s communications that show LGBTQ freedom, equality, human rights initiatives for the nation, and other elements that Spain communicates as part of its NBN through external communications.
- C- Creating a Nation Branding Communications Strategy (NBCS): NBCS will be created and operated by the NBB marketing and communications team. NBCS is the vehicle to

communicate the nation's essence (NBCI) to the world. This is a practice that takes place while promoting countries in campaigns.

- D- Monitor the nation's presence in different media platforms.
- E- Create a direct liaison between the ministry of foreign affairs and NBB through public diplomacy activities to brand the nation through diplomatic representation and promote the nation's tourism and investment, conduct cultural activities, and conduct positive media presence in the mission's location.

4- Advertising and Promotion

- A- Utilize NBCI in all advertising and communications campaigns in digital, traditional, and any form of promotional campaigns.
- B- Creativity, authenticity, and constant presence is a key force in country promotion. The utilization of any element in the country to promote and advertise the nation is a key step in the process of promotion. This includes:
 - 1- Culture, history, and celebrities of the nation. Cristiano Ronaldo is the face of Portugal and now KSA (Alhassan, 2023).
 - 2- Airline companies to promote the nation (for example Fly Emirates, Qatar Airways, Etihad Airways).
 - 3- Sports teams: teams in different sports and football in particular is a way to communicate with the masses through sports (see, e.g., Paris Saint German team advertises Visit Rwanda; Atletico Madrid team advertised Visit Azerbaijan, etc.).
 - 4- When creating visual commercials, campaigns, and production about the nation through movies, digital and social media, the application of Roberts' (2004) Lovemarks concept must be taken into consideration. Top destinations such as Paris, Rome, and Spain, have a proven history of being promoted through the Lovemarks concept. Previous communications made about these destinations were mostly associated with emotions, especially in Hollywood.
 - 5- Advertise the nation through products (for example Japan places its flag on some of its products to promote the nation as a whole).
 - 6- Hosting international events: it is a very practical way of attracting foreigners to explore the nation's touristic and investment environment. Word of mouth about a

positive visiting experience can generate positive publicity to the nation (ICCI, 2022).

- 7- Utilization of technology: in the 2023 Fitur Exhibition in Madrid (the biggest place branding exhibition in the world) different nations included VR technology that was highlighted in the literature to give a live experience for visitors to the booth and attract them to the destination.
- 8- Utilization of social, political, and economic activities to promote the nation. The Indian booth at the Fitur 2023 exhibition had a yogi practicing yoga live. This was a promotion for the nation through a cultural element, part of India's NBI. Other countries shared food, wine, music, and other elements that are part of their brand narrative and identity.

6.4 Reflection - Place Promotion Exhibition

As a type of observation about what happens 'on the ground' when it comes to branding nations and destinations and after completing the theoretical and empirical research, the author visited the largest economic tourism conference/exhibition in the world for place promotion/place branding/country branding, the Spanish exhibition Fitur. Sponsored by Guatemala in collaboration with United Nations World Tourism Organization, Madrid hosted the biggest tourism exhibition in the world between January 18th and January 23rd, 2023 (Ifema, 2023). The exhibition featured 150 countries competing in presenting the 'beauty' of their nations to attract tourists, visitors, and investors. The official webpage of Fitur announced that the exhibition has "brought together 8,500 organizations" and was visited by almost 230,000 visitors from all over the world (Ifema, 2023). Fitur is also highlighted by UNWTO as one of the most well-established tourism exhibitions in the world (Ifema, 2023). During the exhibition, visiting different booths to discuss with tourism boards their promotional efforts, the author recalled Vietor's quotation from Harvard Business School describing countries' competition today as "companies" (Churchwell, 2004).

After visiting and speaking with representatives of eighty countries from different parts of the world the author also visited some organizations that participated in the exhibition to demonstrate new technologies that help countries promote their destinations that were highlighted earlier in literature such as VR technologies, as well as other artificial intelligence software and technologies that can be used in place branding and place promotion.

Countries from all over the world took part in this international exhibition promoting touristic spots as ‘products’ to offer to foreigners. No matter what political, historical, cultural, economic, ethnic or social background countries have, they all presented a ‘product’ that they think will impress and sell. Whether it is nature, infrastructure, yoga, food, hotels, sports or any other ‘promotional items’ that a nation uses to impress the audience, the exhibition was not different to any commercial exhibition that has companies competing to sell products.

There are countries that did not take place or participate in the exhibition, such as Kuwait, which is a country that does not count on tourism as part of its national economic revenue sources (World Data, 2022). This and previous findings in this research lead to the conclusion that countries that participated in the exhibition count on place promotion as an essential tool for national revenue and economic growth. This is not a new finding; it is a continuous observation about the importance of nation branding. It is also a confirmation about the importance of the earlier highlighted findings in terms of constructing a sound brand and in turn utilizing this brand to foster the nation’s potential.

Guatemala was the main sponsor of Fitur, and similar to other booths (especially the Latin American countries), food, drinks, music, art, and other promotional items and materials were used and given to visitors as part of the attempt by promoters to attain visitors’ admiration and adoration. Food, music, and local alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks were given to booth visitors as a gesture of hospitality and as attraction tools to provide a micro vibe about the experience of that country. This highlights the findings in the empirical part about employing a nation’s resources in constructing the brand and promoting the nation. Regardless of what are the other elements that constituted the nation’s brand, the idea of nation branding from the practical side is simply to communicate a positive image, build a positive interaction, and sell. All nations were featured as ‘Utopias’ in Fitur 2023, at least except for Russia and Ukraine, which were absent from Fitur.

This confirms on one hand the importance of communications and presence in the international media, PR, and the recruitment process of visitors. This however, confirmed the conclusion that was stated earlier about the importance of the nation branding process of building and sustaining a brand that fosters a country’s potential. As highlighted earlier in a meeting with UNWTO Director Priante who said that one tourist/visitor can attract seven tourists when they share a positive experience about the brand (ICCI, 2022), if visitors to Fitur went to the biggest exhibitor in the event, which was Guatemala in 2023, and decided to visit the nation and they were to find the nation lacking in the areas of security, infrastructure, policies (related to human

rights, equality, safety, racism, LGBTQ people), welcoming people (citizens), or a supportive environment to create a positive experience for these visitors, it would break the cycle of attraction for future visitors due to the negative experience of the first group. The opposite situation will occur if the experience is positive, meaning that a successful promotion and a successful tourist experience due to the way the country is, and with a well-built brand, will lead to a successful transaction.

Conclusion

This research began with the aim to explore how countries can effectively utilize their brands to foster their potential in a contemporary globalized competitive world, and, in so doing, how they can potentially attain the usually referred to benefits, such as the attraction of foreign direct investments and growth of tourism. In order to answer the research question, relevant concepts in literature were explored, including globalization, branding, media and communications, as well as reviewing previous and current theories and concepts about the phenomenon of nation branding. Nation branding has been debated in the literature in terms of whether a nation can rely on policies (the soul) or marketing (the beautiful face) in branding itself to receive a positive global perception. The takeaways from each chapter were used to develop questions in the interviews that can help answer the research question. The literature review revealed the importance of utilizing the reality of globalization by employing the country's resources such as policies, nature, history, language, culture, economy, religion, and industrialization in creating and communicating the nation's competitive edge or uniqueness. Branding literature gave an indication that branding a product, an organization, an individual, an event, and a nation all share a common ground of brand building (vision), brand narrative (identity), brand maturity (performance), and finally brand communications (media and communications). This led to the conclusion that branding is an ongoing process, and in this process, a brand owner constantly gives the audience reasons to be associated with the brand. When it comes to nations, the goal in branding is to build and maintain a positive perception. The positive perception that a nation has can be a motive for a tourist, investor, visitor, or a talented immigrant to be associated with the nation. Furthermore, by exploring media and communication concepts and theories, it was possible to see the important role global media platforms play in creating cultures, perceptions, and public knowledge, and as a result forming impressions, feeling, and emotions about products, services, organizations, or nations. The challenging part is that media is driven by political and economic interests, which makes it an unreliable source when it comes to communicating real perceptions about nations' brands. Countries' brands can simply get distorted due to political or economic conflict with global media platforms or their governments. This highlights the role of politics in nation branding.

In the literature, the political face of nation branding is addressed through soft power and public diplomacy. By exploring literature about the concepts, an initial understanding was built that soft power and public diplomacy can foster a country's potential when it comes to economic, social, or cultural outcomes but not in 'serious' situations, such as wars between countries. It

is clear that soft power and public diplomacy can be influential through hard power and economic power.

After completing the literature review section, empirical research was conducted using two different methods. The first method was interviews with eleven nation branding global experts selected to help answer the research question based on their practical experience and expertise in the field of nation branding from different parts of the world. The second method was critical discourse analysis of two digital campaigns conducted by the kingdom of Spain and United Arabi Emirates (Dubai) to understand the communications strategies and elements to promote the nations and attract foreigners. The information attained from both methods complemented the literature review and pointed to an answer to the research question.

In answering our research question, the author first proposes that nation branding is a larger process than what generally is described in literature. A differentiation must be made between nation branding and a nation's brand. Nation branding is a lengthy and ongoing process that is owned and operated by the nation where they are the sole stakeholders of this process. A nation's brand, however, is mostly a result of the nation branding process, but it is also influenced by foreign stakeholders, such as global media platforms, foreign governments, international organizations, and foreign citizens. Global media platforms can influence the brand positively or negatively depending on the regional or global political interests and agendas. An example of this is how brand Ukraine achieved its nation branding objectives through global political influence and agendas, but not through nation branding activities that have been conducted for years.

In the conclusion of each chapter and during the research, questions were raised about the major pillars that can constitute a positive brand, which helps the nation to utilize this brand and foster its potential. Through the approaches discussed in nation branding, such as policies approach (the soul), it was possible to see that policies are important to constructing a positive brand, however, as a pillar on its own it becomes insufficient. The marketing and communications approach (the beautiful face) was also discussed, as well as the vital role of communications in constructing and communicating a positive brand. However, again, on its own as a pillar it is insufficient. For a nation's brand to be effective, the nation branding process should be an ongoing process of actions and communication which relies on and benefits from the coherence of the up-to-date and constructive policies of the nation (a healthy soul), effective marketing and communications that support communicating and impressing global audiences (beautiful face), and the positive contribution by internal and external stakeholders towards empowering and sustaining the brand.

The author proposes that for a nation to foster its potential through its brand, it must sustain a well-built brand through the pillars of vision, sound policy, the nation's role and contributions in social, humanitarian, and environmental global issues, infrastructure, culture, history, people, sports, and location. This is followed by effective communications both internally and externally--internally through informing all stakeholders about the nation's vision and objectives, and unifying its resources towards the aimed ambitions, and externally through employing a variety of communication tools and strategies to effectively communicate and attract global audiences. The importance of employing a variety of tools is with the objective of minimizing any distortion from global media platforms due to political or economic motivations.

Limitations

- 1- This research relies on an interpretive epistemology; it assumes that knowledge and human experiences are subjective. Within this context the author is unable to reach definitive rules or recipes for the phenomenon, therefore, the author tried to find meanings, patterns of behavior, models of success, guideline for actions, and critical issues that might help to understand the phenomenon better.

- 2- While any type of study faces limitations, some of limitations faced in this research were that while conducting interviews, ambassadors refused to have their data recorded or written, or to associate their names with the answers. This led to excluding them from the sample. They justified their requests with the "political sensitivity" that might occur if they speak about other nations' brands.

- 3- One way to validate the suggestions about the role of politics in nation branding is through speaking with both governments' leaders, which was not possible. Also, to discuss the proposal about how media is misrepresenting some nations and is playing a role in distorting nation's brands, the author thought that an interaction with a larger group from the public should take place, such as through interviews or surveys, to ask about their current perceptions about specific brands and how they attained this perception. However, due to logistical and budget restrictions, it was not possible to do that in this PhD research.

- 4- Nation branding is an ongoing process, a competitive one, as such, it is a moving phenomenon and some of its elements or aspects can, and are expected to, change over time.

Future studies

Some nation branding indexes such as Bloom and Anholt-Ipsos measure nations' ranks through multiple competencies, including the number of tourists who have visited the destination, the amount invested in foreign nations, surveys, and other data collected from local and international organizations. Based on the findings of this research, the author believes that surveying large numbers of participants from all over the world about the source of the current perception they have and how 'true' that perception is can entirely change the meaning of nation branding and nation brands, especially by understanding the extent to which different perceptions are instilled in global audiences' minds, driven by political agendas not reflecting reality.

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Appendices

Interviews transcripts of the following participants:

	Selected candidate	Reason for selection	Approaches to cover
1	Simon Anholt	Nation branding iconic author in the subject and field expert who worked with 65 governments.	Policies Marketing Politics
2	Jose Filipe Torres	CEO of Bloom consulting one the world's most active agencies in branding nations.	Policies Marketing Politics
3	Requested to be identified as candidate A	Nation branding global expert, who worked with different governments including USA, Canada, UAE, and Greenland.	Policies Marketing Politics
4	Diogo Paciencia	European Travel Commission – Digital Media Manager.	Policies Marketing
5	Dr. Nadia Caneva	Author, lecturer, and researcher.	Policies Politics
6	Dr. Talal Al Moghrabi	KSA 2030 Nation branding team Saudi British Chamber of Commerce	Policies Marketing Politics
7	Khalid bin Rajab	Tunisian Ministry of Tourism – Marketing	Policies Marketing Politics
8	Brian Jay de Lima Ambulo	Trade and Investments Promotions -Department of Trade and Industry – Philippines	Policies Marketing Politics
9	Nuwan Gamage	President: Nation Brand Sri Lanka	Policies Marketing Politics
10	Miguel Gallego	Spain Tourism Board (formerly) – Visit Europe Marketing Manager	Policies Marketing
11	Ilan Geva	President-Ilan & Friends – Nation/place branding expert	Policies Politics

Interview with: Simon Anholt – Nation branding author, researcher, and expert

S

Speaker 1 (Tarik Alhassan – Interviewer)

Q1 so good to have you. And, uh, we're gonna start the questions asking you with, uh, from your experience, can you tell me what are the outcomes for a nation when they have a good brand?

S

Speaker 2 (Simon Anholt)

Um, okay, we need to do a lot of unpicking here. Okay. Um, I think first of all, um, although it's tedious, um, we really do have to try and define what we mean by brand and branding, uh, because, uh, as you know, and as I know, these words are used in a very loose way. Um, and almost everybody who uses them means something slightly different. Um, I'm usually accused of being the first person to coin this term nation brand, and I've frequently wished I hadn't. Um, I would like to issue a product recall, but it's a bit too late for that. Um, it's like when somebody sells you a vacuum cleaner and you discover it's dangerous afterwards. Uh, it's pretty much the same with this. Um, what I meant, uh, was, um, brand in the sense of, uh, image or good name, right? So in commercial terms, we would say, we would say brand image.

S

Speaker 2

So in other words, um, how do people unprompted, um, perceive your country, city product, whatever it is. And so there's no implication there that there's any technique or approach, no mention of anything to do, uh, to, to fix it, to make it better, to make it worse, to change it, to manipulate it. It's simply an observation. Um, a passive, if you like, academic observation. The places have got images, and those images are very important to them. And most of the, my early arguments on the subject were about the importance of a good image. Um, and we all know what those are, but it's always worth repeating them. Um, if a country has a good image, a powerful positive image, it will find it easier to get foreign investment. It'll find it easier to get tourists, it'll find it easier to attract talent. Um, and, uh, funding foreign income from all sources and its own people will find it easier, uh, to move abroad, to get good jobs, to study in other cities around the world, and so on and so on.

S

Speaker 2

So, in one sense, it's almost easier to say what a country's image does not affect than to say what it does affect, um, because it affects almost everything. And one can go to quite interesting extremes. Here. You can argue that a country's image, uh, is a security issue. If a country has a good, powerful, positive image and everybody thinks they like it, it's much more likely to be defended if it's attacked by other countries, because the leaders of the countries defending it know that there are people like the idea of that country. So, for example, um, when, uh, Boris Johnson, the, um, I can't remember whether he was the last or the last, but one last, but two, uh, British Prime Minister, we have one every week at the moment. It's an experiment we're trying in politics. Um, when he was Prime Minister, and he's a, he's a noted nationalist.

S

Speaker 2

Um, and in many respects, one of the architects of Brexit, which was very much a nationalistic anti international, um, phenomenon, he was the one who immediately, without any hesitation at all, offered to grant passports to a large number of Hong Kongers when their liberties were being threatened by the Chinese Communist Party in Beijing. Now, why? Because he knows, perhaps it's instinctive, and perhaps it's based on research, who can say, but he knows that the British people like Hong Kong and they like the Hong Kongers. In other words, it's got a good brand in the UK because of our, uh, shared history. And so if he'd not helped those Hong Kongers whose liberties were being threatened, then his own voters would've been angry with him. On the other hand, you take Ukraine, um, and at the beginning, um, most politicians tried to ignore it because they knew, or they sensed that their populations didn't know about Ukraine and didn't care about it. And in fact, most of the research I've done on the image of Ukraine suggests that it did, at least before the conflict, have a very weak image. Um, in fact, a lot of people around the world said, Oh, I thought it was part of the Soviet Union. Anyway, which shows you the level we're dealing with. So, okay. Um, this answer is much too long for the question <laugh>.

S

Speaker 1 Q2

Q2 We're gonna talk about Ukraine. Uh, it's, it's, it's, it's part of the things, but, but yeah. Thank you. Uh, I, I don't want to, uh, interrupt, but, uh, but thank you. I'm gonna jump to the, uh, second question. And, uh, now economically speaking, uh, once a nation has a good, uh, brand, uh, so how can a nation achieve economic sustainability through being perceived positively?

S

Speaker 2

Uh, well, I think, I think that's almost automatic. If a country does have a powerful and positive brand image, let's call it that, for the avoidance of, of ambiguity, um, then, uh, other things being equal that will make it easier for that nation to trade profitably and to engage profitably. So there's nothing particular you have to do really, except to continue to deserve that good image. So if you are Switzerland, um, you have a good image. Everybody thinks Switzerland is great. Switzerland benefits hugely from this positive image in every imaginable area. And so it doesn't really have to do anything except continue to deserve that good image. And what does that mean? That means understanding how you are perceived very clearly by different groups in different countries around the world, and understanding what kinds of behavior will sustain and support and preserve that image, and what kinds of things will do the opposite.

S

Speaker 2

And basically behaving like yourself, that's all you really have to do. Um, it, it was, um, it was just by chance that I mentioned Switzerland, but actually, um, the, the Swiss government for many, many years now has had a strong feeling that it needs to actually, um, proactively protect its brand image, um, to the extent that the, uh, the Swiss national symbol, the, the, the, uh, the cross, um, is protected by law. And the Swiss government actually spends quite a lot of money pursuing, uh, companies and organizations and even individuals around the world who pretend, uh, to be making fake Swiss products and so on and so forth. And they're very, very, uh, tough about how they protect that mark is, is that the right thing to do? Well, I guess if you could afford it, which Switzerland can, um, it keeps lawyers in work, which they don't need because they're always gonna be in work, whatever happens.

S

Speaker 2

Um, does it really do anything to preserve the quality of the image of Switzerland? Or to put it another way, would the, would the quality of the image of Switzerland decline if they didn't do that? I don't think so. I think the image of Switzerland has probably taken about 500 years to create, and it's on a very, very solid footing, and it's based on reality. And I don't think that you can damage it really, just because some company in, uh, China decides to make a rip off pen knife and claim that it's Swiss when it's not. Okay.

S

Speaker 1 Q3

Uh, from your experience, Simon, can you name the most important components of a brand image?

S

Speaker 2

I'm not sure really. I, um, it's very hard to say when, when I measure countries images, uh, in my annual survey, which is currently called the Anholt-ipsos Nation Brands Index, we use, um, a device which I invented back in the 1990s called the Nation Brand Hexagon, which is just a sort of aid to re remembering, uh, the areas in which nations tend to form their images. So there are six points to this hexagon, as hexagons always do, have six points. Um, uh, one is, is governance. So what do your perceptions about how the country's governed? One is culture, one is people, one is products and services and, and so forth. Tourism has its own sector because the tourism, the tourist board is quite a, an important purveyor of country image. Um, it's really difficult to say which ones are more important than others.

S

Speaker 2

Generally speaking, I regard a, a robust and sustainable country image as being one that ticks boxes on as many as possible of those six, uh, areas. So if you look at the opposite case, um, you look at a country like, uh, I don't know, for example, the Dominican Republic, um, that has a very good positive, powerful tourism image. Um, it's known to be a fabulous destination for, for, for holidays. The other five points of the hexagon are generally quite weak. Um, and that's not because it's a, uh, it's a bad country, it's just cuz people don't really know very much about it. It's not a major player in international affairs. It's somewhat marginal and quite small. So that for me is a vulnerable brand, um, because it depends on one sector. And tourism is notoriously unpredictable as an industry. It's cyclical and it makes the Dominican Republic's good name a very vulnerable thing cuz it's only standing on one leg. So, to answer your question, I think the, the, the best ingredient, uh, the best component, uh, for a powerful and positive national image, uh, is as many as possible. America is the best example. I mean, everybody in the world knows or thinks they know thousands of things about America. And that's why even though the United States has been trying for the last 300 years to damage its international image, it hasn't really succeeded. Well, it took Trump, uh, to <laugh>. Trump is a kind of genius when it comes to that sort of thing.

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Speaker 1 Q4

Thank you. Uh, from your example, Simon, you've mentioned the Dominican Republic, you mentioned Switzerland. So there are countries that were able to convey a specific, uh, perception and it's everlasting. If, if we can call it, uh, unless something like, you know, Trump would come along. Uh, what would the nation that is starting a brand or trying to communicate, let's say Saudi Arabia, let's say Kuwait, let's say Bahrain, uh, Qatar had its share. They tried the attempt through the World Cup, and if a country is trying to give birth to their brand image, and let's say it's distorted, it's not, you know, coming from a good background, what would be the best-case scenario for a nation like that?

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Speaker 2

Um, let me first of all just challenge two assumptions, which I think I detected in your question. Um, you, you said that the Dominican Republic, Switzer, Switzerland, um, the, these are, these are countries which have successfully, uh, created or communicated their brand. Um, I don't know if that's necessarily the, the truth. I don't know if that's really the way that it happens. Um, Switzerland, really, it's, it's good image is not the result of it doing a good job of communicating it's achievements or its assets. Countries in their natural state don't communicate to the, to the world. They, that's not their purpose. It's not their function, and they don't have a means for doing that. They just are, they govern themselves. They inhabit a role in the international community and they are therefore judged by their behavior. And if a country like Switzerland generally harms nobody and helps the international community and is a, a good friend and a good ally, and in the case of Switzerland, very importantly, a neutral player in the international community, by a natural process, it will earn itself a good reputation over a long period.

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Speaker 2

14 So I would really be cautious of assuming that just because a country has a positive image, that it's somehow done that deliberately. It's just probably because it's been a good country. Dominican Republic is a little bit different because as I said, um, the only significant part of its image is tourism. And tourism of course is deliberately communicated. So, uh, the Dominican Republic has done a good job of promoting its tourism assets. Um, but, and if it hadn't done such a good job, it wouldn't be such a popular tourist destination. But, uh, I just wanted to say that one cannot assume that a good image is the result of a deliberate effort nine times out of 10. It's just the way things are. Oh wow. Um, so, um, you also said, uh, it lasts forever. Um, not quite true, not quite true. Um, partly because there's, uh, there's turnover in the global audience.

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Speaker 2

So each new generation growing up isn't necessarily taught history and geography and international politics in the same way as the previous generation. So whilst, um, in the 19th century, every child growing up anywhere in the world would be taught all about Britain and would be trained to respect and admire Britain, in most cases, that's no longer the case because Britain is no longer such a major player. So the current generation of kids growing up in China, um, probably aren't too sure what Britain is. Um, and therefore, uh, Britain's good image in China is not forever. Um, and as I often say, you don't own your image, you just rent it and you have to continue to pay the rent. Now that's maybe an unfortunate expression because it sounds as if I'm saying you have to keep on promoting. I don't think the promotion is the answer. (

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Speaker 2

I don't believe that it works except for tourism. Um, but I do think that it is necessary for countries to continue to behave in such a way that people around the world continue to be aware of them and continue to feel glad that they exist. And that's really the key phrase. Um, what I mean by a good nation's image, a strong national standing is a country that has earned the admiration of numerous people outside its own borders who feel glad that that country exists. And that's got really nothing to do with its assets and its achievements because those assets and achievements by definition are not interesting to anybody who doesn't live in that country. Right? I keep on seeing so-called nation branding campaigns where countries are

bragging about their achievements and their assets and their beautiful landscape and all the rest of it. And just like anybody else, I don't care because it doesn't benefit me. (40)

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Speaker 2

I don't live there. If anything, it's gonna make me feel jealous and angry because my own country isn't so cool. You know, I'm not interested in how much success a country has or how well governed it is. What I'm interested in is what it's done for me and the world that I live in. So are you, um, Ecuador or, or Kenya or Iceland, are you fighting climate change? Cuz I'm worried about climate change. If you are, I'm interested and I wanna know about you and I wanna find out more. If you're not, I don't give a damn how successful or happy or progressive or productive your population is. So, to finish answering your question, I'm sorry, your questions are too interesting. We're never gonna get through this in less than half <laugh>. Um, the, the, uh, so you, you said what about countries that have to create their image from scratch? (49)

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Speaker 2

Again, let me challenge you there because you said Saudi Arabia. Well, I don't think Saudi Arabia does have to create its image from scratch. It already has a very, very powerful image, obviously in the Muslim world because it's the guardian of the two early shrines. Uh, but but also because, um, it's a very powerful Arab country and who around the world is not aware of a very powerful Arab country, but also outside the Muslim world. Um, Saudi Arabia has a massive image, um, partly because it's so little understood because it's been closed for so long. People dunno anything about it. And cause of the way that human consciousness and the human imagination works, that gives it a bigger image, not a smaller image, because there's so much there that people might guess or imagine or probably fear because all they know about Saudi Arabia is all they hear about Saudi Arabia, which is negative stuff.

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Speaker 2

60 So Saudi Arabia is saddled with a very, very strongly negative, but extremely powerful image. And changing that is a very, very different proposition to, for example, Bahrain, which is a very, uh, uh, relatively unknown country. It's a country that most people outside West Asia may not even have heard of, let alone know anything about. And so that, I dunno which one is more difficult, quite honestly. Is it harder to reverse a massively powerful and negative image? Or is it harder to create one from scratch? Bearing in mind that there are over 200 countries in the world already, which we all have to think about all the time, and it's a real effort. That's a lot of countries. Have we got room in our minds for one more final point I'd like to make about that? Countries like Bahrain, because they don't have a strong image of their own, they tend to suffer from what I call continent branding.

Um, uh, what do I call it? Uh, continent brand effect, which basically means that people may not know anything about Bahrain, but they certainly know a lot about the Middle East, as they like to call it. Right? Um, they have all kinds of opinions about the Middle East, most of which are quite negative. Um, and, um, uh, we, we have a lot of fundamentalist activity to thank for that in recent history. Um, but it's a much, much older story than than Al-Qaeda. It's, it's an old, old story. Um, anti arabism, Orientalism, um, and so on and so forth. So the Middle East, West Asia, generally speaking, is, has got an image which is quite negative for the majority of people around the world. If people know nothing about Bahrain except that it's part of that region, it automatically has a negative image. Um, now again, is that easier to shift than Saudi Arabia's, which is very personal to Saudi Arabia? I don't know. Impossible question to answer.

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Speaker 1 Question 5

Thank you. Um, what is the role of marketing when it comes to building a brand image?

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Speaker 2

I think marketing is a tremendously important tool when you're selling something. Um, so when you're selling the products and services of the country, that's an important component of building its image. It's a very slow process, but it's an essential process. So we saw in the case of the Dominican Republic, you could equally well speak of, uh, Jamaica or, or, or, or almost anywhere else you can think of. That's primarily a tourist destination. As I said, that's created through tourism promotion, which is a marketing activity. And that works because you are selling a product. You've got a product here, which is called, uh, a beach vacation in, uh, the Dominican Republic. And marketing is the perfect tool for promoting that and for selling more of it. And marketing is a, is is a very, tourism marketing is a very straightforward business. You've got a fabulous destination, you've got a fabulous package.

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Speaker 2

You've got an audience who are looking to buy a, a vacation. You just buy some media and you communicate with them and you say, Here it is. This is the perfect holiday for you. And if you've done your targeting right, and if you've done your creative work well, and you've spent enough money on it, it's pretty expensive to do effective marketing, especially internationally. Then you will get more tourists. And if they have a good time, they will come back and they will tell other people. And so you have a growing industry. It really is basically as simple as that, no matter how much people may try to complicate it. Marketing is useful to a slightly more limited extent when you're talking about cultural relations. I think one has to be careful about that. Cultural relations is incredibly important. The more people know about your culture, the more likely they are to know and trust you as a country.

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Speaker 2

So from that respect, it's hugely important. But on the other hand, it's not a product for sale. And if you spend too much money on media, just trying to push your culture on other people that can have a negative, uh, reaction. Um, culture is best when it's shared, when people exchange cultural experiences. So it has to be done with a much lighter touch, a little bit of marketing for sure, but not primarily a marketing activity. It's more of a, it's, it's, uh, a little bit more like, um, like public diplomacy than, than marketing. Um, for an investment promotion, it is a promotional activity, but not strictly speaking, mass marketing, because it's not a mass audience, it's a very small number of very carefully selected individuals and corporations. And mass marketing is not the best, most cost effective way of targeting them. Um, you need economic instruments to encourage foreign direct investment. Um, you need, uh, to have a currency that's not too strong. Uh, you need to have good infrastructure. You need to have a highly educated labor force. You need to have good stories of successful investors in the past. None of this has got very much to do with marketing, but at the end of it, if you've got good stories to tell, it's worth telling those stories. But I think it's going to be more one to one marketing than advertising or, or mass marketing. Um, and then finally, of course, the, the, when you are, when you're talking about promoting the products of a country, agricultural products, wine, grapes, oranges, whatever it is, then of course marketing, marketing, marketing. Cuz you are selling products to consumers. And the more effectively and efficiently you do that, the more it will support the overall nation brand. So let's try and take one example that sums up all of those.

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Speaker 2

Uh, New Zealand is a great example. So, um, they've been enormously effective and very imaginative and original in the way they promoted New Zealand tourism by, um, using movies, uh, more than expensive advertising, but also expensive advertising to support the movies and the other stuff. They've been pretty good at cultural relations, although I don't think that they've done nearly as much of that as they could and should. Considering how interested the world is in New Zealand's culture, the Maori culture, the relationship between the indigenous and the incoming populations, there are many, many, many more good stories to be told there. They handle it quite well domestically, but we don't get to see much of it internationally. Um, and then finally the produces the, the, the promotion of New Zealand Kiwi fruit, uh, New Zealand Lamb, New Zealand wine, all of those products where, um, government, sometimes government, sometimes, uh, private actors step in and support the export efforts of individual, um, producers who would not be able to do international marketing on their own. They do it collectively. They have a common brand, it's enormously effective. All of those things together and a bunch of other stuff as well. Over the years has made New Zealand a more and more admired and popular country. In other words, he's done a good job of branding itself.

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Speaker 1

Thank you. Um, how many countries have you worked with Simon?

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Speaker 2

Um, well, um, 60 something. 60 between 63 and 65. Some of them don't really count.

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Speaker 1 Q6

Okay. Um, the reason why I'm asking you is that I wanna know, and I I I hope that you can mention the name of the country, but if you can't, it's okay. I understand. What was the easiest brand to work with and be able to communicate a positive global perception? And what was the hardest and why?

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Speaker 2

I'll tell you about two very easy ones. Um, or at least the solution when it came seemed like a very simple solution. Um, the first one was Latvia. Um, this is going back quite a few years. And I started off by doing what I always do when I go to a new country, which is to travel around the country, talking to as many different people as I possibly can from all levels of society, wherever I went in Latvia. And I talked about this idea of Latvia raising its profile internationally, in order for it to get more trade, more engagement with the international community. I got a really, really negative response from people. Everybody I spoke to said, We don't want that. We don't wanna be famous, we wanna be left alone <laugh>. Um, and, and I can understand that because, um, Latvia had not really had self-rule for any substantial period during its, uh, history, um, for over the previous, uh, 200 years.

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Speaker 2

Um, it had been the play thing of great malignant powers over and over again, the Nazis, the communists, and so on and so forth. And then finally, um, they, they got their freedom and their independence, and they joined a European Union, and they just wanted to enjoy being Latvia. Um, and they, most people, uh, certainly outside the capital Riga, just didn't want the idea of lots of foreigners trampling over their soil, because every time that's happened in the past, it's been bad news. So I really understand that, and I tested this hypothesis over and over and over again over many months, and came to the conclusion that they didn't want it. And

if they don't want it, you can't do it. Um, because the image of Lavia belongs to the Lavia and it doesn't belong to the government. Um, and woe beside you as a government, if you try and do something like this without the consent of your population, democracy or not, democracy makes no difference.

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Speaker 2

The population owned the image, They benefit from the image. If it's good, they suffer from the image. If it's bad, it's, it's deeply connected to them. So the recommendation I made to the Laban government in the end was, don't do it. Um, just, just drop the idea. If you wanna promote rga, that's different because rga, like a lot of capital cities, is much more cosmopolitan than the, than the countryside, than the smaller towns, than the hinterland. And, um, the inhabitants of RGA responded very differently in interviews. They were quite keen on it. So basically my recommendation was just, just shut off this program and switch your attention to RGA and try to find ways of positioning RGA as a, as a new Scandinavian capital, because that's really what it is. Um, and that will be supported by the, the population. The other easy one was actually not a million miles away from, from Latvia, the Farrow Islands, um, a very, um, small semi-independent country in the, in the North Atlantic Ocean, um, semi-independent because it's an overseas territory of, of, of the Danish state.

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Speaker 2

And, um, they were very, very keen to raise their profile to become globally famous. And this is very difficult because they're so small, um, and they have so little hard power, tiny population, uh, tiny economy, tiny land area. Um, but the one thing that they have got, which is just beyond any shadow of doubt, is the most astonishing landscape. Um, and from the day I got off the plane, my jaw dropped, and it didn't go back up again until I fell asleep at night. Um, it's the most, most astonishing landscape you've ever seen in your life. If you could imagine the Grand Canyon in Arizona, spray painted green, turned upside down and put in the Atlantic Ocean, then you'd, you'd sort of get a sense of what the barrows looks like. Um, and so my advice to them, again, after much, much, uh, discussion and debate with people all around the country was, um, just promote tourism. Mm-hmm. Just don't, don't worry about the brand image of the country that will come later. You're so unknown as anything, Um, else, cultural, political, historical, forget it. Just go for, for for tourism. And they did. And it's being hugely successful for them. And this tiny, tiny country now has, it almost has an over tourism problem at certain times of the year. Um, and my one mistake was not to warn them of that right to the beginning.

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Speaker 1 Q7

So, um, in terms of the heart or, or a case that didn't work, would it be Latvia because of the people, or would it be meant, meant? Sorry.

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Speaker 2

I think Lavia did work. Um, I think they got the right answer and they, and they pursued the right direction. The, the, the ones that, that haven't worked, Um, let me be honest, I think it's probably the majority. Um, and it's not because I screwed up. Uh, it's not because I gave them the wrong advice, it's because they didn't take it. Um, and pretty much every one of the 63 or 64 countries that I've worked for, I can point to examples of specific policies or activities that I've recommended and which they have done. And I'm awfully proud of that, and I hope they're proud of it too. But the number of countries I can point to and say they actually strategically shifted as a result of the strategic shift that I'm recommending. That's quite a

small handful. That's less than 10. Um, the vast majority, um, basically elections get in the way.

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Speaker 2

Um, because almost all the countries I've ever worked for are, um, democratic countries and they have elections. We won't go into the politics of that or the, or the, the, the political and ethics of it. But the reality of the matter is that every time the government changes, the incoming government feels that it has a duty to tear up everything that the previous government did and startle over again. And this is a, this kind of hiatus is a huge problem for long term, um, concepts. And like the overall image of the country, it's standing in the world because that takes generations to build and generations to change direction. And if you are gonna change the, the strategy, every time a new president comes in, you will never succeed. So for that reason, and that reason alone, the majority of countries I would not regard as being successful case studies.

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Speaker 1 Q8

Q8 So being unsuccessful is due to policies that needed to be changed for the country to have better perception. And this didn't take place. So just, just to, to communicate clearly. I'm focusing on, uh, clearly I'm not, you know, uh, saying that it worked or it didn't work because of you or the country. But for example, if we take a nation X and you say, Hey, you know, you don't have any policy to welcome foreign direct investment, and it always states that you need a local partner like Kuwait, for example. A foreigner cannot launch a business, so you need to change this. And then, okay, it did. And then more investors came from overseas. So it was related to policy. Your solution with Fado, for example, was to work on marketing and promote the country as a tourist destination. So the, the, the, just the bottom line that would make a case successful or unsuccessful would be related to policy or to marketing more,

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Speaker 2

But definitely towards policy, because one single act of policy will create far more interest in attention in the media, in the social media, in the general international conversation. And any amount of communication, communication, even if you're spending hundreds of millions of dollars on it, um, generally gets ignored because people, people know what that is. They know that that's a propaganda message from a foreign government, and they know that it doesn't relate to them. It doesn't relate to their lives. I mean, I'm gonna look at a Nike ad because maybe that's gonna be my shoe, right? But if I see a message from the, from the, uh, the, the government of, of, uh, South Africa saying, we are proudly South African, I just ignore it because it's got nothing to do with me at all. Um, unless I happen to be planning to go on holiday to South Africa at that very moment.

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Speaker 2

But even then, you know, the fact that South Africans are proudly South African, it's not gonna affect my holiday making decision. So, so the marketing in terms of its impact on the image of the country is, is, is, is entirely worthless. It's a complete waste of money. On the other hand, um, if South Africa, um, uh, ends the apartheid regime and Alex Nelson Mandela is its president, um, and has a truth and reconciliation process, These are policies, they're real things in the real world, and all the media will talk about them. South Africa did not have to pay 1 cent to have all of that stuff promoted because it was news, and news media likes news. It doesn't charge you to to talk about news. It charges you to carry propaganda. Um, so, uh, it, it, it's definitely about policies. And in terms of whether that works or not, it has got a certain amount to do with consistency.

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Speaker 2

So, generally speaking, as I say, the problem has not been that countries refuse to adopt the policies or the projects that I recommend. The problem has generally been that they're un that they, they do adopt them, but they don't stick with them, um, because a new government comes in and then they change all over again. So the, uh, the, the, the story, if you like, that the country is telling about itself constantly changes. Um, for example, uh, Sweden, um, announced, uh, a year or so ago that it was gonna be the first country in the world to pursue a feminist foreign policy, um, which is quite a brave idea, um, because that's an idea that, you know, will please a certain category of person around the world. Liberal left thinkers, and it will please them enormously, and it will really, really irritate everybody else.

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Speaker 2

Now, that's quite brave. Um, Sweden can get away with it because Sweden is Sweden. I wonder if they actually did the calculations that I've done, um, to work out how many people have got broadly conservative views, and how many people have got broadly liberal views in the world. It's actually about 80 20. Wow. In favor of conservative views. So about 80% of the world's population, um, prefer the past to the present or the future. Um, they prefer the traditional way of doing things to the modern way of doing things. They prefer people who are like them to people who are not like them. Um, they think that society would run better if it was run strictly on reli traditional religious grounds, and so on, and so on and so on. So when we see, um, for example, uh, rebellion against, uh, um, authoritarian, uh, traditional conservative governments going on, as in Iran at the moment, there's a temptation to believe that the world is becoming liberal.

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Speaker 2

It's not, um, it really isn't. People don't like being oppressed and they don't have, like, having their lives interfered with, but the fundamental values of 80% of the world's population are basically, um, uh, what we might call in the west right wing. So it was a brave thing for Sweden to do, but they just dropped it. Um, last week, um, the Prime Minister announced that, uh, they, they were no longer going gonna do this anymore. And that's unfortunate because whether it was the right or the wrong decision, I couldn't possibly say, but, um, it's so very, very important to stick to these in for a good long time. Otherwise, you get people around the world saying, So is Sweden a friend to women or is it not? Um, and I just don't know. And now I'm confused, so I'm gonna stop thinking about Sweden. It's too complicated.

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Speaker 1 Q9

Okay, Thank you. This is the, uh, second last question in this part. Uh, then we're gonna move to quick four questions about two countries in particular. Uh, you've mentioned the role of media in building, uh, a perception, and you gave the ex the example of South Africa. And I was thinking, while giving me an answer, So earlier you said that, uh, whatever we hear about the Middle East in general in Western news, is mainly negative, although many positive things take place in the Middle East, but they're not reported. There is an influence of, of media on a nation's perception, but if the global media or the West's media is only focusing on, you know, broadcasting negative news about one particular part of the world, what would be the solution for this kind of countries to, uh, come back?

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Speaker 2

This is the, this is the real challenge. Um, and it's a challenge, uh, particularly for, for countries like Saudi Arabia, um, which have, which have a very negative image because the,

the problem for them, um, is it's not simply a matter that they don't do enough good stuff, and therefore people think they're bad. The problem is that the negative image means that even when they do good stuff, it will be either, as you say, ignored or else interpreted in a negative light, right? So if you don't like somebody and they do something nice to you, your first reaction is to be suspicious. Yeah. And you say, Why are you being nice? Right? And it's exactly the same. So what I, um, a phrase I often used to use when I, um, when I still use the word brand, was, um, your brand is not your message.

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Speaker 2

It's the context in which your message is received, and you can't control that. So, um, you know, if you have no respect for me, um, and I say something incredibly intelligent, it's not gonna suddenly increase your respect for me. You're gonna think I stole it because you have no respect for me, and therefore you think that I'm somebody who steals things. Um, that's unfortunately the way that, that, that human perception works. So governments need to realize that there are no shortcuts here. You're gonna have to do an awful lot of very good things before, gradually, gradually people start to change their minds. And the role of the media actually creates, um, even more, uh, lag, even more inertia in this system for the simple reason that the job of the media is not to change people's perceptions. The job of the media is to echo people's prejudices.

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Speaker 2

That's how it makes money. Um, most newspapers, most websites, um, all of the organs of traditional and modern media that I can think of, almost bar a tiny handful, the way they make their money is by, uh, reflecting people's prejudices back on. And actually, nation branding, if you wanna use that awful phrase, is really an invention of the media taking, um, a prejudiced, stereotyped, unfair, old fashioned, cruel view of a country ignoring every part of it that's different and presenting that to people. So we see it every day in the media all over the world. Um, if, um, uh, you know, there's a, there's a dispute between the UK and France, which there is, uh, quite often, uh, these days. Um, most journalists will, without even realizing it, defaults to the negative prejudices of France. And they'll start saying, um, Oh, I heard it this morning on the radio I was listening to, to the bbc.

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Speaker 2

And unusually, the BBC was asking, How is the current political turmoil in the UK being viewed around the world? This is a really good sign, right? If the Brits are finally starting to wonder what the rest of the world thinks about, instead of just not caring <laugh>. And, um, and, and the, the analysis said, um, to get one perspective, we spoke to, uh, Mario Monti, the ex Prime Minister of Italy, to find out what he thought about Britain today. And his answer was non one or, right. So this is a pastiche, you know, why use the Italian language? You, you know, why would you do that if not to try and evoke a sort of satirical sense of, you know, the Italian speaking Italian? Um, Mario Monte is a very serious politician. The fact that he speaks Italian as his native language is just completely irrelevant.

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Speaker 2

Um, and this is what the media does, even supposedly fair, a state funded media like the bbc. So their job is to reflect your prejudice back on you. They're the ones who very often keep these prejudices alive because that's the language they speak, and that's the currency they trade in. So they create this inertia in the system, even after people around the world start noticing that a country like Saudi Arabia is behaving differently, the media will still be frantically trying to pedal the negative story because it's easier to sell negative stuff. It's

easier, to sell cruel stuff, dangerous stuff, frightening stuff than it is to sell happy stuff, approving stuff. Um, that's the problem. But, um, you have to stick with it. And eventually, if you have a clear, clear, clear strategy of what, what is your utility in the world, what is Saudi Arabia for? Why should a random person anywhere in the world feel glad one day that Saudi Arabia exists and you do the real stuff that makes that happen?

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Speaker 2

Um, and you never, uh, you never deviate from that path. And everything you do is astonishing. Not because you spend a lot of money on it, but because it's truly extraordinary. Gradually, gradually, gradually that will begin to happen. I mean, um, every time I see an advertisement for Neon, I think to myself, that could be part of a good strategy for improving Saudi Arabia's image. It would need an awful lot of modification in my view. But the fact that they are doing a real thing, um, that shows that they are a leader potentially could one day show that they are a leader in combating climate change, which is the thing that people in other countries worry most about, that could start a process of shifting people from thinking Saudi Arabia, like all other Gulf countries, is an enemy to the climate and an oil producer and a major polluter to actually, they are aware that we've got a problem called climate change, and they are investing money in trying to do something about it. So those are the tiny, tiny, tiny little perceptual changes. It couldn't happen in less than 10 years. Um, I guess, but, but who knows? Um, so that, so that's the way it works.

Speaker 2

That, that's the problem with the media, that you can't have a conversation with it. And that's why PR agencies make so much money because they claim to be able to provide that conversation, but of course they don't because the, the media, the media is, is running its business. It doesn't, it doesn't care about you, the subject of its story. It doesn't want to hear the truth most of the time. I mean, there are some media outlets that do care about the truth, but they're only read by about seven people.

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Speaker 1 Q11

Right, Right, right. Uh, you've mentioned the, uh, the Russian Ukrainian, uh, uh, conflict. And, uh, clearly one of my questions was, would there be any impact of political events? And you've answered that, but then again, this is the last question in this section. How come some brands or countries, um, get affected negatively due to their actions such as Russia, whereas we, so a similar invasion of the United States to Iraq, uh, there is a sort of an invasion of Israel to Palestinian, and Israel and the United States do not have the same global perception that Russia is enjoying today. So why is that?

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Speaker 2

Well, I think the, the first thing I would say is don't be so sure that Israel and the United States don't, aren't penalized. Um, they certainly are. Um, the United States, uh, when, uh, George W. Bush was responsible for the second invasion of Iraq, uh, dropped about seven places in the Nation Brands Index. So, uh, countries that invade or attack or offend or insult other countries or groups invariably suffer, um, according to the, according to the data. Um, physical conflict is something that international public opinion does not tolerate. And, um, Israel is not very high in the Nation Brands Index, and that is primarily, uh, well, it's partly because it's not a very big or very powerful country, but it's also, perhaps largely, uh, because it's associated in people's minds with conflict and very little else. Um, and it does rank a bit higher than Palestine, but basically the two countries are associated in people's minds with conflict.

So both of them have, uh, somewhat damaged images. The United States was always top in the Nation Brands Index up until about, um, six or seven years ago, it was always the most admired country on earth. Of course, you look at the detail, and they're a large number of people who hated bitterly, but overall average, average, average, the most of my country on earth. Um, since, um, since, um, George W. Bush left office. And Obama proved to be something of a, of a disappointment in many ways. Or the America of Obama turned out to be not so very different from the America of George W. Bush, America has dropped out of the top five. Um, in fact, it looks as if one day soon it might even drop out of the top 10. So, um, it really is punished by international public opinion for its interference in other countries. But there's a bigger picture going on there, which is that the traditionally admired countries, the big strong major players, generally speaking, are all losing, um, profile.

And the countries which are rising most tend to be the second tier countries who perhaps have been victims of colonial ambitions rather than the perpetrators of colonial ambitions. Uh, what I call the hipster nations like Costa Rica and New Zealand and Scotland. Um, and, and of course the, the, um, um, uh, Australia, which is kind of the opposite of Britain and Canada, which is kind of the opposite of the United States, You know, because we hate America, we love Canada because we hate Britain, we love Australia, um, uh, or New Zealand, or both. Um, that's the way that things are changing these days. So, um, it's very easy to assume that everybody still loves America or everybody still admires Israel, actually. They really don't. Um, and it really is going downhill quite quickly. So I think there is justice in heaven, and if we were able to look at the future of the Nation Brands Index, we'd probably find, um, that all the countries that, um, offend or attack other countries, um, continue to fail, um, as a result of falling image and therefore falling trade and so on and so forth.

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Speaker 2

I mean, uh, the, the Trump's presidency has damaged the image of America by an incalculable amount. Um, it's simply no longer as universally admired or trusted as it was before. And that was 300 years of hard work basically, um, in the trash can. Um, Britain with Brexit, a somewhat similar story, um, because it's perceived perhaps correctly as Britain just turning its back on the international community and saying, you know, we don't care. We're, we're still a British empire. Um, and as I tweeted on the morning of the Brexit referendum, um, my country has shot itself, whether it's in the foot or in the head, it remains to be seen. Um, but it's certainly shot itself. Um, so, you know, the, these traditional major powers are discrediting themselves left, right, and center, and Russia, well, never has there been an act of want and destruction on a country's image, so flagrant as what Vladimir Putin has done to his own country and his own population in invading Ukraine. Um, I won't give away the details because we're just about to release the next edition of the Nation Brands Index. Um, but, uh, Russia, um, shows a pretty remarkable change, um, since last year.

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Speaker 1 Q12

Okay, thank you. Now, uh, we have two countries in my thesis, uh, I'm comparing the United Arab Emirates versus Spain in terms of them being able to attract tourists, foreign direct investments, and talented immigrants. So expats. Uh, so I have four questions about the countries, and, um, from your experience, what is appealing about Spain? On one hand, three points, uae three points about the brand, the, the, the, the nation's brand?

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Speaker 2

Um, well, uh, Spain is a little bit easier. Um, I would say number one, it's European, um, and I know from the data that, um, belonging to the European Union, being part of Europe

provides any country with an immediate, massive, um, premium. Um, the second thing is, um, culture, by which I mean the, the well known, well understood popular culture of Spanish cuisine, um, Spanish history, landscape, language, dress, dance, music, bullfighting, it's, it's a, it's a, it's a rich recipe that people are very familiar with around the world, and perhaps particularly famous people, um, because most people can name, if they think about it, quite a, quite a decent handful of famous Spanish people. And, uh, famous for, for, for good reasons, not for bad reasons. Um, and sport is a very important part of it as well. Um, a noted footballing nation, uh, which is, which is really a, a valuable thing.

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Speaker 2

Um, I'd say those are, those are the three, uh, if you like, major brand assets of Spain. Um, none of them particularly modern. Um, so they tend to be backward looking. They're somewhat historical. Uh, and that's potentially, um, a concern. Uae, um, well, UAE is a difficult one, um, because, um, most people don't know what those letters stand for. Um, and outside, if, if you, if you go outside, um, West Asia and you exclude highly educated people, the phrase United, Alabama, it doesn't convey an awful lot to most people. Um, the word Emirates is known because of the airline, the football stadium, the sports sponsorship, and all the rest of it. So in terms of just sort of raw awareness of what that name means, that's good. The other word that's in there is Arab, and that has quite a negative connotation to people outside the Arab world for all the reasons that we mentioned before.

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Speaker 2

Um, somebody wrote a fascinating book recently pointing out the number of, uh, American movies, uh, in which the, the bad guys are Arabs, um, and how frequently that occurs. And this is a sure sign of, um, of, uh, systemic prejudice within a society, which can be extremely, uh, dangerous and very powerful and very hard to get rid of. So problem number one for Dubai is that, um, it's got a much better brand than the country that it's in. Um, and it's not the only case in the world. I mean, I think that, for example, Prague has probably got a better brand than the Czech Republic. Um, there are a few other cases like that. Um, it would be worth wilding some comparisons there just to, just to look and see if there's anything, uh, instructive. You can learn from it. If you're talking about Dubai, then we know what the assets are.

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Speaker 2

It's tall buildings, it's luxury vacations at a reasonable price. Um, and it's, it's, it's warm weather, so it, it, and, and wealth, which is a double edged sword. I mean, being very wealthy can be considered to be a good thing or a bad thing depending on how powerful you personally think you are. If you think you are powerful, then you like rich countries, If you think you are weak, you might fear rich countries because of the power that they have over you. So if the question is Dubai, then it's quite easy to answer those. Those are the, um, those are the three or four attributes if you're talking about the uae, my guess is it doesn't have any on average globally.

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Speaker 1

Q13 Okay. Um, if I ask you which country has, uh, an encouraging policy system for foreigners?

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Speaker 2

I think that, I think the uae, um, has been, uh, quite clever at coming up with innovative, um, policy, uh, and administrative solutions. Um, well, maybe solutions isn't quite the word for it. Innovations. So, you know, minister for the future, it's a cool idea and, um, it gets you a certain amount of free publicity because people like to write about that. And arguably it makes people open their minds a little bit and maybe think again about what kind of country this is. If they have a minister for the future, and maybe that mindset doesn't support so very easily the, the more negative idea of what an Arab is or what the Arab world is like. Um, hey, they're innovative, so they must be kind of cool. They must be intelligent. Maybe they're even nice. Um, the trouble with, um, the Emirates is that I don't see much singularity or continuity in this kind of activity.

S

Speaker 2

Um, there's a lot of it, and it's not telling me a single story, it's telling me a bunch of stuff. Um, and in the end, it runs the risk of appearing slightly kind of hysterical. Um, you know, here's a very rich, uh, country or city that has, um, an addiction to clever Western consultants, and it spends huge amounts of money on getting, uh, American or British PR agencies and management consultancies to come in and dream up creative ideas. I mean, you know, Minta for the Future is a classic London advertising agency idea. I hope I'm not doing anybody a dis a disservice here by saying that, but that's how it looks to me. And if it's not clearly part of the country's long term str the city's long term strategy, if it does, if it isn't, if it doesn't, uh, echo and reverberate with everything else that that country or city does, then it can start to look a bit superficial.

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Speaker 1

Q14 Um, from your experience, uh, which country is more active in terms of advertising Emirates or Spain to advertise tourism to advertise? Sorry,

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Speaker 2

I dunno. Um, I would guess that in dollar terms overall promotion, the Emirates spend much more because those, um, particularly football sponsorships, uh, na naming stadiums and things like that must cost an enormous amount of money. And I'm not aware that Spain does anything like that. So Spain tends to do standard, traditional tourism promotion. I'm sure they have limited budgets as almost all European countries do for doing that. It's not politically popular these days to spend huge amounts of money on promoting tourism. Um, so my, my assumption is the uae, but I don't, I don't see much evidence of advertising from the uae. I see a lot of set piece, uh, performances buildings. Um, so, you know, you could say that on the face of it, it looks as if the Emirates is, um, is following my advice, which is do more stuff and say less so talk less and act more.

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Speaker 2

Um, obviously the expo is somewhere on the continuum between advertising and policy. Um, in one sense, I'm very skeptical about Expo. I think in one sense it's just a very, very, very expensive advertisement. Um, I don't think that expo achieve very much, um, because I don't think anybody knows what they are or what they're for. And I only think a very small number of people around the world are even aware that they exist or what their purpose is. Um, they're

very bad value for the money. When you consider how much it costs to even exhibit at an expo, let alone hosting one, the number of people who actually attended is tiny. It's really, really bad value.

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Speaker 1

Q15 Do you, do you believe that do you think the same about the World Cup?

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Speaker 2

No, I don't because I think the World Cup has a ha on death. It's football. Um, in the same way that the Olympics has a ha on debt, it's, it's, it's athletics. So people know about those because they love football and they love athletics, and so they follow it and they watch it. Um, I think very often hosting the Olympics or the World Cup can have an unexpected negative impact on the host country. Um, South Africa, for example, its image was quite badly damaged by the World Cup, not because it did, did a bad job of hosting it. On the contrary, did a very good job, but it showed a lot of people around the world on TV how poor South Africa really is. And I think they were quite, quite shocked by that. The same is true of Brazil, The World Cup and the Olympics damaged Brazil's image quite badly.

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Speaker 2

Um, because for the first time people saw for hours and hours and hours a day on tv, this poverty and inequality, and they thought, My God, you know, Brazil's in the third world. Um, and they didn't really think that before. So you have to be careful what you wish for. Um, but on the other hand, there's no question that, um, China, Australia, Spain benefited in enormously from hosting the Olympics and, and the World Cup can do some good as well. But, um, it's an awful lot of money for maybe quite a short lived return, you know, for six months according to my research. That's as long as the effect lasts.

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Speaker 1

Q16 My last question, Simon, is that what are the weaknesses or areas of improvement from your experience that could be shared with the Spain on one hand and Emirates? Uh, on the other, I think you mentioned Emirates

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Speaker 2

<laugh>. Yeah. Um, you mean specifically in terms of approaches to this, this topic,

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Speaker 1

Q17 Um, yeah, for Spain. So this is the comparison between Spain and Emirates. Um, and the question is, what are the weaknesses or areas of improvement that you think Spain needs to work on in terms of having more, uh, positive per perception or good, good image?

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Speaker 2

I, I don't see that Spain, that there's anything Spain can do to improve its image. Um, I think Spain, uh, as a, um, as a, a vibrant, uh, highly cultural democracy in Western Europe, um, has about the best image that any country could possibly hope for. And if the Spanish government feels that it needs to improve that image, I'd like to know why. Um, you know, what, what is so much better about Spain that people don't already know or don't already believe? You know, I, I think that Spain is probably in that handful of countries whose images

are so good and so positive that the question for them has surely got to be how can we use this soft power, this good image, um, to do some good in the world? And then maybe as a result of that, earn an even more gratitude from people rather than how can we improve it, improve it, improve it?

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Speaker 2

I mean, I, I think for a country as successful as Spain, to be still obsessed with competition, um, is really worrying, uh, it seems to me to be quite, quite wrong. Emirate is a little bit different because this is an emerging country in several senses of the term. It's still has a lot to achieve, a lot of, a lot to grow, a lot of problems to sort out. And I think it's, um, I think it's not unreasonable for the Emirates to, um, to take a sort of competitive approach to these things. And for sure if it had a better image, a lot of things would be a lot easier for it. It's negative image is not really its own fault. It's the fault of the, uh, region in which it sits. Um, what I don't know about West Asia, about the Middle East is whether it's actually possible for any individual Gulf country, um, to be able to do anything about its image since it's so profoundly regional. The problem, and I know it's never gonna happen, every time I go to the Middle East, people tell me this, but actually in theory, the only way that we could fix this would be as if all those countries work together on it.

Speaker 2

Gonna happen. Right.

S

Speaker 1

Q18 I don't know. You are the expert. So, uh, this is actually not part of the questions, but why do you think the Spanish brand is so perfect? What, what makes you, what would be like, what, what made Spain so perfect? Is it the policies? Is that the people? Is it the culture?

S

Speaker 2

It's just, uh, it's just been, um, I was gonna say ever since 1975 when, when, uh, Franco died, but actually long before that, it's, uh, it's just a country that has been, um, deeply inserted to the, into the cultural life of Europe and therefore into the world. So this is a country that everybody feels strong familiarity with. And the way that human perception works is that the more you feel you know something, the more you trust it. Right. You know, the, the reason why people don't trust, uh, the Arab world is because they don't know it. So it's like a nightmare. You can't see properly, you're guessing, and when you're guessing, it all looks dark and scary. Spain, the sun is shining all the time. You can see everything. It's, it's, um, and that's why Juan Mira's, uh, famous logo of the, of the sun, uh, is so appropriate in a way, it's not the only sunny country on earth.

S

Speaker 2

Saudi Arabia is sunnier than Spain, but, but it's, um, it, it's, it's about sunshine and, um, it's had a lot to do with tourism. The fact that so many people from so many countries around the world have enjoyed, uh, cheap holidays in Spain with a lovely climate and decent food. I mean, it's not nearly as good as people pretend, but it's okay compared to Italian. It's McDonald's, but still. Um, and the Spanish people are awfully nice. And, uh, it's a very fascinating and rich culture, you know, um, half Islamic and half European and, um, it's been doing this Spain thing for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years. Why, why would it not have a wonderful image? It's a great country.

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Speaker 1

So it's not related to government policies or procedures?

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Speaker 2 (Politics)

No. I mean, to some, to some extent in the sense that it's generally been, um, that there's, it's, it's generally enjoyed reasonable political stability since the end of, of fascism. Um, and also one mustn't exclude the mon monarchy, um, because monarchy are very picturesque. And, um, all of my research shows all the time that nobody likes monarchy quite as much as people who live in Republics. And, um, the people who live in republics are the vast majority and they find, uh, royalty and monarchy absolutely magical and fascinating. And that's an enormous part of the tourism appeal of Spain, even, even more so for the uk. And it helps turn it into a kind of fairytale place because, you know, it has a king even if he doesn't behave himself all the time.

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Speaker 1

Simon, thank you so much for your time, for your, uh, experience, for your wealthy input in, uh, this interview. I really appreciate, uh, the knowledge, the experience that you have. And I'll look forward to have more collaborations with you in the future.

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Speaker 2

I look forward to reading the PhD. I hope you're gonna send me a copy.

S

Speaker 1

I will, I will. <laugh>. Thank you so much, Simon. Take care.

End of interview one

Interview with: Jose Filipe Torres – Nation branding author, researcher, and expert

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Speaker 1 (Tarik Alhassan – Interviewer)

Q1 Tell me what are the outcomes for a nation when they have a good nation brand?

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Speaker 2 (Jose Filipe Torres – Interviewee)

So in general, um, the, the importance is having a positive perception, and when I say a positive perception, I don't mean, uh, and I don't recommend to have a better perception than the reality. Uh, but it's really about this, it's about when perceptions are aligned or more aligned with reality. Because, uh, what I've seen throughout the years is that I'm gonna give you just around number, but, uh, the majority of the countries, um, don't have, or the, the perception is worse than the reality. The majority of the country, if you remove the top 10 countries in the rankings that we publish and so on, normally the perception is inferior, uh, to, uh, the reality. So it's very important for countries to, to make sure that that perception is aligned with the reality why. Uh, because if you have a better perception, uh, you are able to attract, um, or you are able to foster economic development and social development, you're gonna have more people that want to and, and more qualified people that want to, or specific type of, of, of talent that want to live in the country or in the city. It's easier to attract, it's easier to attract investment, uh, strategic investment. It's even to attract, uh, more, or if you prefer, or if you rather better tourism, uh, to the country or to the city. So, and not only that, but also the, the, the strength that, uh, diplomatic strength of, of a country, uh, internationally, Right? Or the level of influence that you may have having specific perception or a better perception or not. So that's why it's important.

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Speaker Q2

Q2 What is the most important consideration to make when branding a nation?

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Speaker 2

Many ways. I think, you know, the, what is important to understand is that nation branding per se, or a nation brand, or a positive perception, per se, is not directly going to generate more business, right? So what do you, it's a means to an end, if you like. So if you have a better perception, then ultimately, if you promote a country, or if you have a company that wants to do a, a domestic country that wants to do international business, they have a competitive advantage or they have a, um, leverage, uh, because of where they come from. So, classic example. So if you go from, I'm a IT company from the US trying to sell an IT solution, uh, and I'm being very proud, of course, but to, let's just say another country, and there's an, uh, uh, versus the same, uh, company or the same style of company with the same capabilities, but from an unknown country by, or Germany doesn't matter, a brand, a country that has a positive brand. Um, that company has a competitive edge, uh, facing on the ghetto. Even before you present anything, just saying where you're from. This of course, is not applicable across all sectors, but definitely, uh, it's, um, every sector benefits from a positive perception,

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Speaker Q3

Q3 From your experience is economic strength an influential factor to a nation's brand?

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Speaker 2

Uh, first and foremost, it's, I think it's important to, to, to tell one thing, which is there is not a one way to build a nation brand. You know, there's, there's a many a multitude of factors that influence the, the, the ingredients or the, there's the different types of what we call touchpoints or points of contact of, of a country that influence, uh, perception. So for instance, a country that is in a specific continent, um, that, let's just say continent that does not have a positive perception, having elements that stand out are really, really important. Uh, or having touchpoint or experiences that are very different from the, from that continent or associations to that continent. And I'm saying perceptions associations not, not reality. They are a, a, a value added to improve perception in a very simplistic way, right? But those same ingredients or touch points or experiences that you have on a continent that already has very well established, it's a very positive perception, will not add anything to, to, to it. So, coming back to your question, economic development, yes, it's an important factor, but you don't have to have, uh, you don't need to be, um, economically, um, developed, if you wanna call it like, like that with a strong economy to have a strong brand.

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Speaker Q4

Q4 Don't you think that countries on the top 10 nation brands in many different tracks around the world, but let's take an an example, the United States. If the United States was economically weak, do you think it would enjoy the brand that it does today?

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Speaker 2

Let me ask the other way around. China does not rank so well, and it's very strong economically. So, so that's, uh, you know, it, it's one of, of course, it's one of the things that you can add to the equation, but it's not the thing.

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Speaker Q5

Q5 What is the importance of policies in nation branding?

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Speaker 2

Yeah, again, it's not just one thing. Uh, it's a constellation of things that make, uh, or build a perception of other country. Um, and definitely when we say on, when we say that policies are more important, and the point there is that policies are more important in marketing, right? And, and there's this confusion between marketing and, and branding. We're not saying that marketing is not important, and it's not even important for branding, but you don't build a country brand with a country marketing. You build a country marketing, if you like, with a country brand. Yeah. So, so, or a nation brand, or a nation marketing. So the, the point there is you may have a policy that you implement in a country that is much more meaningful and much more impactful from a perception point of view that will generate much more media. Because in the end, this is, is, is, is all about, uh, building an influencing perception and building, it's, it's through influence, right?

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Speaker 2

Um, then if you do, for instance, a campaign, so if you want to shift perception, if you want people to think, uh, this, uh, differently about the country or improve a perception or get more aligned with the perception that you observe, um, your policies need to, um, be aligned with that ambition, right? So because that's what the world pays attention to, um, it's not because what you say, but is rather what you do and the policy making on a country level is doing, and on a city level, we call it urban policies, which has a lot to do with placement.

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Speaker Q6

Q6 From your experience, is the pillar of policies/regimes/governments/vision the most important in branding nations?

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Speaker 2

Yeah, I think it's the most important one, I would say. Um, I don't know if I would put regimes or internal regulations in the same level as policies, because those are things that, um, especially regimes is not something that you can actually <laugh>, um, change, let's put it this way. Or if you do, it's through a revolution or something like that. So it's not through a nation branding project. So I, I prefer to, to focus on the things and the, the practice of nation branding as, as we say, is with the hopes of generating a nation brand, right? So that's an act of, of, of, so I prefer to focus on the things that you can actually work on and influence, right? So, so that's why I would remove probably Okay. You can say internal regulations and policies are a little bit, or could be classified in the same cluster, but regimes know.

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Speaker Q7

Q7 Ok, so what is the role of marketing and communications in branding a nation?

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Speaker 2

Yeah, I think it's important to understand that marketing has many components, right? So marketing is not just advertising the classic advertising, the classic Fifth Avenue, you know, Times Square Avenue, uh, what Times Square as or, or an now in the Economist, that's, that's, you know, marketing is much more than that. Marketing is important, uh, especially when you want to talk about, um, when you wanna talk about, uh, exposing the policies that you have been or are being developed, right? And by exposing, I don't say, Hey, look at this amazing thing we've done. This is in a great, that's, that's the advertising. It's about, you know, if you don't work in, and we classify this within marketing, if you develop a policy, and if you do not work on making sure that the world knows about the policy via through third parties, so why three? Right?

S

Speaker 2

By third parties, we mean, um, content contributors, which is media outlets, journalists, et cetera, et cetera, then the world does not know about those policies. So, so it's really important to make sure that you have a, a strategy there to make sure that the policies in the initiatives you have, or even things that are already existing and you have, but the world is not melt, um, or, uh, let's just say, um, uh, reach the audience we want. So that's where we see the role of, of marketing. And then you have the other part, marketing within branding, right? And then you have the other part about marketing of promotion. That's not nation branding, that's another thing which comes after. And that's the thing we're saying, like, it's also important.

So yes, when you go into tourism, when you want to promote a product, when you want to promote the destination, which is marketing, not branding is also very important, but comes after.

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Speaker 2

And what we want to say is when you do a marketing campaign about a nation, it's not to change a perception, but it's to benefit from that perception, right? So, and what we say is, if a country or a city promotes the country for tourism, for investment, what have you, the return it has as a nation, or when I say return is either more investment or more traction is higher. You have a higher return, um, if you have a better perception. So it's two different things. One thing is working on the perception so that later on when you work on the marketing and the promotion, the conversion is higher and more efficient. So the better the perception, the better the conversion.

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Speaker 1 Q8

Q8 How do you see the difference between corporate/product branding and nation branding? Aren't they they built around the same elements?

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Speaker 2

Some elements? Yes. But, but, uh, they're very, uh, in essence, um, I would say they're very different. So there's some, some components that may, um, overlap, uh, or just say that, Yeah, it's the same thing, but, but overall, no, and it has to do with the structure of, of what this is, right? So when you work on a, uh, on a nation brand, you have, you have a multitude of stakeholders that you don't control as you would control on corporate marketing or corporate branding. Uh, and you shouldn't control, uh, that, you know, it's impossible to deal with, right? So it's much more, um, difficult, uh, to manage and to implement, uh, because of the stakeholder management and engagement. It's completely different. So, so this is the challenge on why it's so different Now, you say, Well, but the word brand is that it's true. I mean, the brand is to generate an emotional, non corporate brand or consumer branding, if you like. Yes. It's also to generate emotion that, that I give you. Yes, it's true. Um, it's not different in that sense. Uh, but then what are we gonna say is, okay, but what type of emotion are we talking about? And what is the feeling that you're gonna have and generated and so on and so forth. So it's just the words are the same, but the concepts are different.

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Speaker 1 Q9

Q9 Can we say that the branding intersection is in theory, but the practice is different because of the difference in stakeholders and size?

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Speaker 2

I would say it's in, it's, it's not in, in, um, so not even in theory. I know, I, I, I understand what you're trying to say. And as an easy answer, I would say yes. No, I would say it's the same in terms of definitions, or it's in terms of the same, of, of the, of the syntax or the words itself. But when you go into a second level of the conversation, you see it's completely different,

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Speaker 1 Q10

in terms of media influence, um, you know, Hollywood is linked with the US foreign policy. Hollywood is an arm for, uh, US foreign policy. Uh, it's a strong arm, uh, global strong arm to create public influence and shape public opinion. Yeah. Yes. Uh, how does that make nation branding fair?

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Speaker 2

I mean, it's just not, we never said it's fair. It's probably a very unfair, the nation, I mean, nation, again, nation branding, can be fair. The nation brand result can be unfair. Uh, never said it was fair.

S

Speaker 1 Q11

But what if the problem of China for example is not being, you know, incompetent or being a real bad nation or brand, but it's the power of Hollywood's media creating this perception. Um, how can a country like China overcome that

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Speaker 2

Play a game? Basically, there's the, there's the thing, and maybe, I mean, the US does not have, um, a strong brand just because of Hollywood. And I can back again to the conversation we, we had. It has to do with a multitude of, of factors and a constellation of, of, of elements, uh, that, that play that role. I mean, um, it's very important to understand that, um, that that's definitely, uh, a keynote, a key aspect. And also, and, and some cities understood this, and they, they went back to a, a very known, uh, uh, filmmaker editor, and, and one of the best for, for many, which is with Allen, which they create some cities like Barcelona, um, uh, Rome, uh, Paris, all these cities understood the value of what you're saying. And they wanted to start creating movies that happen in those cities, so that then you would fall in love with the cities.

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Speaker 2

And so, but again, two things here is, um, the US is not just because of Hollywood. That's one, number one. And number two, some formulas work well, and that's what I also said at the beginning, which is there's not a one way formula. So if you apply a, the same logic now for Germany, and Germany invests everything in Hollywood, or, or it doesn't matter, another India, what have you, um, India actually has a strong word, but, but internationally, um, it would not probably, or there's not, I mean, it was not, it would not, I'm saying there's no guarantee that would have the same success. So coming back to the question about, you have to understand what are the new drivers, What is the new Hollywood and other things that help to build that perception. But definitely movies, uh, play an important role. And I think now going into that, uh, uh, uh, section, uh, you look into, for instance, um, uh, into series, into other, uh, platforms that provide like Amazon, like Netflix, so on that, there's, it gives you more opportunity to go into that field. But again, there's no, there's no guarantee that will work. So what is the new Hollywood as one of the elements we think is the digital, It's one of the most important parts, is what, what, uh, what will shape perceptions it has to do with the digital.

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Speaker 1 Q12

Q12 When it comes to branding tools uh do do you think digital media will be the future of nation branding?

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Speaker 2

It's more than the future is already what it is. The question is that nation branding industry is not paying the, the, the necessary attention it should, uh, to, uh, to this, uh, to this mean. In the end. It's like you say, like, it's a platform. It's not just a platform. It's the most, um, I would say influential means, or the most effective mean to create an influence and an impact in the short and medium term for countries, regions, and cities. So you can build the bad, and the good thing is that you can do this, and you can do this really quickly, but you, so you also can destroy brands, uh, or hit brands, uh, much easier and much faster. So this, you know, leads, or it's countries and cities need to pay attention to this and need to be prepared from a structure point of view, which is a big problem in this industry, which is there's, it lacks structure and governance.

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Speaker 1 Q13

Q13 How can nation branding impact soft power?

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Speaker 2

You want? I mean, some say it's the same word, some say it's of, of, of this. Some say it's, uh, uh, it's something that comes as a consequence. I think in the end, um, nation branding or, or soft power has to do is, is a consequence of the nation brand. Or if you want, it's the same thing. I would say it's the same thing sometimes. Sometimes it's not, but it's, I think the conversation about this is, it, there's a lot of conversation, a lot of, of, of, uh, okay, I'm gonna put this way. It's much more closer to nation branding with soft power, very, very close, if not the same nation brand than for instance, nation market.

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Speaker 1 Q14

Right? Right. Uh, so if I ask you how can nations develop or sustain their soft power through nation branding, what, what would your answer be?

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Speaker 2

I think the problem with the, with nation branding is that this is, um, it's very difficult to create a correlation between the perception, um, and coming back to the conversation about soft powers of power, you can define the way, the way you want, but it's the, the result of that perception, if you like. But coming back to changing the perception, working on the perception, it, the biggest challenge you may find today is that it's very difficult to measure the impact of perception, right? And, uh, you go into to governance and you go into public department, you go into the, to, um, to minister or to the prime minister, or the president to the king, and they say it's important to manage. And they say, you know, perception in the brand is, it's very important. It's true. And say, Well, you need X to do this because these are the things you need to do. And then it starts to get tricky, uh, because you say, Well, I have other priorities. I have healthcare system to improve. I have roads to build, I have schools for, Right? So, so it's difficult to explain how, or to demonstrate how important, uh, it is to, um, for those aspects, like, or, or to prioritize against we're facing those, those other initiatives. So that's why actually we are developing a study right now with, uh, which is to

try to create this correlation between perception and economic and social development, right? So that when a country, when you talk to a country, you say like, This is important because of this is how impactful this will be for, or this is in the, in what way this is going to impact your society. So, so the measurement, the governance are the aspects that countries need to pay attention to.

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Speaker 2

Um, and that's the reason why most times the projects fail, and because nation branding is very difficult to implement, as is corporate or consumer branding. But the difference is that there's a structure, there's a, there's a budget, there's a, there's an understanding of this importance, and that's why it's done professionally. And, and in a way, and I would say that nation brand is done currently in most, most cases, in a way that lacks this structure, uh, lacks this governance, lacks this proper, uh, uh, management system as you would have or you would do for consumer brand. So, um, that's the thing that I think that, uh, nations and cities should pay more attention and prioritize.

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Speaker 1 Q15

If you follow specific orders, then you qualify to have a good nation of brand. If not, then it's not. And for example, if we see the top 40 nation of brands or top 50 in different, uh, indexes, you find that, uh, there are no communist or socialist countries mm-hmm. <affirmative>, uh, so does that prove the statement that nation of branding is a list for capitalist countries? First? That's the first question.

S

Speaker 2

No, I don't think so. And I even looking at our indexes and our rankings, um, you probably you would see that those that's not, uh, you have countries that are not classified as capitalists or something like that. Again, it does not have to do with economic strength. Uh, it has, that's, that's the hard power, if you like, and not the soft power, um, again, is a multitude of aspects that, you know, you have to look into, uh, that put you where, where you are, the perception you have about the country is not because if a country is rich or not, it's because, you know, or, or if it was in the past, it's because you admire or you, um, you, you liked, period, the country for what it stands for, what it does. And again, the US is cause of, yes, not only economic, but freedom and the freedom of everything and innovation, everything that was associated with that. But you have other countries, for instance, in our, uh, rankings that, that are not, they were unknown or they were not there as, as, as strong as from a capitalist perspective. So I would probably have to disagree with you on that, which is, it's not only for the classical western point of view, uh, the capitalists as, as you would say, but it has to do with the ones that, um, builds policies that are aligned with the needs of, um, and, and that are relevant for, for, for your stakeholders.

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Speaker 1 Q16

Q16 How can a nation's brand be negatively affected due to a political influence/ for example in wars, or not being an ally to the West? Uh can you control a nation's brand from external influence?

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Speaker 2

There are things that you don't control. It's not, and that's the beauty about social media and, well, you think you, you don't control. You can control some things. You can influence some things, but there's some things you can't. And, and here, I mean the conversation, uh, and the,

the, the, it hasn't not necessarily, this particular part has nothing to do with, with the, with nation branding. Um, what I can tell you though is that please see this recent war from, from the nation brand angle only, which was from a nation brand perspective, this was fantastic for Ukraine from a nation brand perspective. Okay, So bear with me. This is of course, no, this is, this is not good for you Ukraine. This is, this has been terrible for, you know, the lives that we're taking, all this horrible, most horrible thing that has happened.

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Speaker 2

But what Zelensky has done, what has happened to Ukraine, has placed an, I wrote in our piece about this is in our journal, which is a new nation brand was born. The opinion people will have about Ukraine is completely differently for and after the war. Now, not because, uh, only, uh, of, you know, the strength and so on, but the opinion people have about Ukraine, Ukrainians, like how resourceful they were, how, um, adaptive, how innovative, how brave, uh, they were. It's completely different, completely different. So for instance, now we go, coming back to the conversation about the company from, again, American company and Ukrainian company, an it Ukrainian company, and an it Ukrainian us coming in the past, before the conflict, the war, they were very far away. And Ukrainians were like, Ah, now you go maybe. And not because of sympathy, that because of admiration and because of, and so people relate to that and people admire that. And what they've done and what they stood for, and that they built it in, in, in a, in six months, in two months, this has made what Ukraine would probably would need to take 10 to 15 years to build as a nation brand. So that's the only positive thing, if you like, about this.

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Speaker 1 Q17

Q17 Fair enough So, yeah uh, I'll move to the country's questions. from your experience Jose, what is appealing about brands Spain and brand uae? If you can describe the appealing elements for both countries?

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Speaker 2

So I, I think the, in different, uh, actually not in different times, actually, approximately in the same time there was, um, a big, um, change, I would say in the perception of Spain. Uh, and yeah, due to there, in this case, economic development, that was a very important aspect there. But Spain already had a very good cultural legacy cuz of what it had in terms of not only culture in terms of astronomy and these kinds of things, but cuz in terms of arts, if you would say that arts is inside culture, but cuz of cast the artists because of, uh, fashion, because of everything. But what happened was that Spain started to have brands, and that's something that is very important. You suddenly have back then a brand called Telephonica, which was a, a brand that started to buy oh two, which was a very important, uh, mobile, uh, service provider in the, in uk uh, in Latin America, you had sometime there, which was a bank that was expanding.

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Speaker 2

So you have an economy and you have a country that was no longer this, uh, just, uh, seen as, um, as a siesta style, but as a, as an ambitious and, and efficient and powerful, uh, country that had a lot to, to show. And so it played a very important role there. And, um, so that, you know, the creation of the brands was probably one of the most important. And the expansion of the international economy internationally of the, the, the private sector was a very, very

important part for the nation brand of, of Spain, um, on when we look. So, so that's, that was one of the things that I think was very, very good, uh, for the brand, uh, the nation brand. So there was this transformation that was seen on the case of the Emirates. What was very interesting was that was done not through the country, but thanks to the, the Emirates itself.

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Speaker 2

So mainly cause of Dubai that started to show what is this, you know, crazy country doing there, this Emirate doing this Dubai that people did not know it was a city or the Emirate, if you like, the, it was a, that is going and building this, this new landscape, this new things that are dev developing there and getting away from oil into other industries and, and and welcoming foreigners to go there and so on was a formula of success in terms of, of, of branding. I think that Spain was more successful in terms of perception than it was definitely the Emirates because the Emirates were not a brand. So I'm talking from a Dubai perspective. The Emirates, per se, as a brand is a very recent brand if you like. Uh, it's not established yet. Um, but let's just say that what was happening and also when Abu Dhabi, um, was definitely, uh, uh, at par and actually when they were doing the same things at the same time as, as Spain when <inaudible> was doing so, so these were actually, uh, in terms of transformation, in terms of brands, these were probably the two that was actually, that's a good choice because, uh, you chose, well the analysis because it's, uh, in the, in the time, uh, when they look into time, they did this at the same time from a one, one perspective and, and another, and with different strategies if you wanna call strategies.

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Speaker 2

But I think they were very concerned, they were very paying a lot of attention to their international image and to their brand, even if they didn't call it like that.

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Speaker 1 Q18

Q18 Did you sense any sort of direct competition between them in the past two decades or three decades in terms of them attracting investors in terms of them attracting tourists?

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Speaker 2

Uh, too much that it was probably, would, would hinder the overall reputation that people who only associated with fun and, and, and not seriousness. And that was something that was damaging the, the economic side, uh, the economic side, the business side, the, the companies and so on and the brands. So, so, uh, I don't think they were competing cuz they were looking at different geographies and, and different approaches. Um, they were doing in tandem, more in parallel if you like. Uh, but they were not, I don't think they were competing or predominantly they were not competing about the same thing.

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Speaker 1 Q19

Okay. In terms of internal policies and regulations, and I'm gonna separate regime from the question. Yes. Uh, how did the countries evolve, uh, in order to grow? Uh, you know, of course we're talking about Spain on one hand and Emirates on the other hand to be a better brand.

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Speaker 2

Well, they share, they are not, they are not the same. They don't share the same system. Uh, not, no, You know, one has a completely different system than another. Some similarities of course, but they're, they're different. Um, very different actually. So they go answering your, your question, but, uh, that regimes are not, uh, uh, a factor. But one of the things that I think are important and not a factor for this case, but one of the things that I think are important is they all have an outward looking approach. So they always thought about the world, what the world, how the world sees us, how can we go to the world? How, what is our place in the world? And from one angle to another, I think this is really the vision that they both share. They were both ambitious, uh, from a good way, from a good, uh, good angle. Uh, which one they wanted to, they had vision, they wanted to go for more, uh, and more, or in the sense of better. Um, and, and, and that's what I think they shared in common.

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Speaker 1 Q20

Q20 So both had vision and both had, um, a strategy to communicate with the world, right? Yes. Yes. Uh, would you support the statement that says UAE is the most successful brand in the Middle East and Spain is the most successful brand in Europe?

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Speaker 2

Uae No, I wouldn't say so because it's not the brands yet. I think that it's Dubai, if you like, because Dubai did not exist mentally in, in people's heads. Um, I would say until now, definitely I would have to say it's probably the most successful in the Middle East. Yes.

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Speaker 1 Q21

Q21 Dubai, not UAE?

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Speaker 2

The uae, not not Emirates. Um, and um, in, in Europe, I, I would say it's not the most successful one, but it was probably the one that was, that was able to achieve more, uh, or, or, or improve more, uh, than, uh, any other, uh, in Europe. So it was in a, in a, not in a such a positive spot and it went up really in a very good spot. So it was the one that increased more in terms of perception, improved at a, you know, bigger gap than, than any other city, or, sorry, another other country in the world, in Europe.

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Speaker 1 Q22

Q22 Uh, do you think, uh, Spain, let's say, because the focus is not on UAE now, it's on Dubai, Spain, on on one hand, do you think Spain can use its nation brand as a communication strategy to achieve more?

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Speaker 2

I'm not sure the question. What do you,

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Speaker 3 Q23

Brand the brand name Kingdom of Spain, can it be a tool to communicate, or the brand. Can it be a tool to strategically communicate with the world and sell?

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Speaker 2

Yeah. From a marketing perspective, yes. Cause I think, and again, I said it was, it gave the biggest gap, but then it came down, right? So I don't think sp so leveled, it corrected. It's, it's where it was, uh, I think it has decreased in terms of perception. Um, but it's in a position that the country may bring value to, to, to the industry. So if a country, if a company let's, best way we want to give always is in what way, right? So if a company says they're from Spain, does it bring value to the company? Right? And I would say across the board that it would add more value than it would 10 years ago or 15 years ago. That's the answer. Does it still add value only in some parts of the world? So for instance, in Latin America, for sure, um, it's difficult to answer. I'm not a hundred percent sure that it's value, for instance, in Europe.

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Speaker 1 Q24

Why has Spain lost its appeal in the past decade? Um what can be improved?

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Speaker 2

Say uh I, I think it has to do with the, the policies, the, the issues it had. Um, also of course the, the war, when I say the war, I'm talking about the war in, uh, in, um, in Iraq, um, because they were a strong supporter of that war, um, and so on. So we saw a series of policies and initiatives, um, and also a lot of, um, flaws if you want from a system perspective that, that, you know, the world got a little bit disappointed with, with Spain, or at least if you like, others did better. And so Spain was left behind.

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Speaker 1 Q25

Q25 Okay, fair enough. Uh, the part, okay, so do you think before, before we conclude, if I asked you today about your preference in terms of countries, would Spain be more appealing to uae and what why?

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Speaker 2

Depends on where you are in your life. I mean, uh, if you ask me, it's different. Cause I'm in Spain, so I mean, we are in Spain. I lived in Spain for many years. Um, it depends, um, it's not, uh, a one way answer. Uh, but definitely I think I would say Spain.

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Speaker 1 Q25

Q25 Why is it in terms of, is it more appealing for a specific reason?

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Speaker 2

Because one of the things is that it's more, again, this is very personal, uh, but I think it, you asking me, right? You said you asking. Yeah, yeah. Not as, as an abstract, uh, as a word, right? Um, because it has, it's, it's because it's real, you see? And, uh, and the Emirates are probably not so, so real. It was something that was fabricated to serve a purpose. And, uh, and you feel it once you're there, so it's not so authentic. So, so, so, so unless you're looking for, you know, uh, good revenue from a specific company and then you go back to where you were, um, you know, in Spain you feel it's more authentic. It's more that you have a future if you like, where you identify more cell, you know, the places are real, they have a history, they have a legacy, they're there for a reason.

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Speaker 2

It's not to say that you cannot, from the US is a, is a modern, it's a new country, right? And, but it's, I mean, New York is real, you know, Dubai, it's not real. I mean, it was built on purpose. I mean, the consequences of New York with this skyscrapers and all that, it was because it served the purpose. It was because of, of something. And Dubai was different. The reason why it was created was from an aesthetic point of view. And, and, and you, you go there and you feel it and you understand where they, so I'm looking from a perspective of, of, um, an experience perspective. And once you go into a place, into another, you feel that it's more real <laugh> in, in one another. So that's,

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Speaker 1 Q26

Q26 So in terms of, uh, abstract and professional opinion, uh, the measurements would, you know, fall in the official categories and ranks. But in terms of, uh, personal preference, it's the authenticity?

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Speaker 2

I mean, and, and you have to understand that that's why we always say it's never go better than the reality, right? And I think Dubai tried to go beyond the reality, so it looks really nice, but when you start to scratch and you go there, then the experience is not as good. So, so that's very important to make sure that it doesn't surpass the, the, the reality. So from a distance, you would say, Yeah, Dubai, you live, you go out. That's the thing. So from a nation, from a perspective, from a perception, probably the bias better, but from a reality than in the end it looks.

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Speaker 1 Q27

Q27 So I'll, I'll conclude with the PhD thesis. Main question. Yes. How can nation's brand be a strategy to support countries' competitiveness in a globalized competitive world?

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Speaker 2

So, so that is, that is, I mean, it's in this it's about, it's about coming back to the first questions you asked, which was, it's about perception. Nation branding helps, is about aligning perceptions with reality, and it's about improving reality. So sometimes you have policies and initiatives, and the nation brand is something that pushes the country to go into the next level, um, even if they're not there yet. So sometimes it's something that does not exist, but when the brand is live, then that reality should also be live. So, so it's all about that is, is you become more competitive if you have a better perception.

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Speaker 1

Jose, it's been a pleasure. Thank you so much for your time.

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Speaker 2

Yeah, thank you. All good? All good. Good luck with the thesis and I hope this was useful.

End of interview two

Interview with: Candidate A – Nation branding author, researcher, and expert

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Speaker 1 (Interviewer Tarik Al-Hassan)

Q1 I'd like to welcome you and, uh, start the questions. Uh, as a nation branding expert, can you tell me what are the outcomes for a nation when they have a good nation brand?

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Speaker 2 (Interviewee Candidate A)

I thank you, uh, first of all, for an, and I would like to wish you best to luck on your, uh, uh, research. And, uh, as we agreed, uh, uh, I, uh, agreed for the interview. So my name, uh, will not be associated with any of the answers. Uh, you will, uh, just, uh, uh, you know, identify me as an interviewee, uh, with general profile information, but without my name. And also, this recording will not be shared with anybody, this recording for your use as a researcher. Uh, thank you for engaging me in this, and I, I think it is a very important, uh, study, and I would like to wish you the best of luck, regarding your question. Uh, to what extent the outcomes of a nation brand can have, uh, you know, utility for, for the country. You know, nation branding is, is very important.

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And, uh, uh, the benefits to the country are abundant, not, or benefits from, uh, every aspect, Um, from direct foreign, direct investment, attracting foreign directed investment in terms of attracting business travel, in terms of attracting tourist travel, uh, in every dimension. You know, one cannot, uh, ignore the, uh, critical importance of branding in general, and more specifically at as it relates to the country brand. Uh, so the country brand is here to stay, and, uh, uh, the benefits are, uh, are great, and they can vary from country to country based on their approach to branding and their approach in positioning to their brand, uh, and the, their strategic approach in positioning their brand. Do you want to position the brand, uh, primarily for tourist attraction? And that can be true for, uh, certain countries that the portfolio, the, the economic portfolio is limited to, uh, tourism. Uh, some of the island countries, you know, two rhythms, they're bread and butter. So in that respect, you know, there is high, uh, tourisms that highly fragile, uh, sector. And hence, uh, you know, informational messages that are positive about the destination that have a direct impact on the flow, uh, and the influx of, of tourists, uh, now for other nations that have a broader economic, uh, portfolio, uh, then depending on how they position it and how they differentiate it. And I've done, uh, and I'm very familiar with the several of these, uh, country brands, and some of them have achieved high ranking as direct results of robust, uh, branding strategies. So, uh, yeah.

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Speaker 1 Q2

Q2 Can you share with me the names of these brands?

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Speaker 2

Well, I can think of, uh, you know, Peru, for example. Uh, Peru jumped in the, in the ranking, uh, over a short period of time, uh, because their, uh, campaign that was, uh, uh, managed by, uh, Future Brand. And I had direct experience, uh, with that. And, uh, the Peruvian, uh, ex experience is amazing because Peru was recovering from a lot of, uh, political, internal political issues, uh, that were turning the country apart. Uh, but then, uh, Peru, uh, started putting their house in order, if you will, and started building up, uh, in phenomenal efforts

in, in, in, uh, unifying the country behind, uh, a brand identity that brings all Peruvians together, that speaks one voice to the world and the anchored the brand around sustainability. And I think that was a big savior for them. And, uh, it jumped in ranking by 10 points, uh, as a result of this, uh, robust campaign. I'll be happy to share more information with you, uh, offline, uh, if needed regarding the experience.

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Speaker 1 Q3

Q3 Thank you. From your experience, uh, can you name the most important components of a Nation's brand?

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Speaker 2

I think, uh, it is very critical for the nation brand to have a custodian of the brand. Um, so who is the brand custodian? Is the brand custodian the government? Is the brand custodian the private sector, or is the brand custodian? Is the hybrid of the government and the private sectors? Does the country have a board for nation branding or not? And, uh, don't be surprised to know some of the powerful, uh, country brands, uh, didn't have a board that acts as a custodian of the brand until only recently. Bear in mind that attention to the, the country as a brand, uh, is only recent. I I would say just within the past 20 years, it, uh, started gaining, uh, momentum. No. Uh, so, uh, I think putting our house in order, uh, is very important. Um, I, the closest to a nation brand is corporate branding, um, uh, not product branding, I would say more of like corporate branding. And if you are an entity like a corporation or a country yeah, and you are embarking on a branding campaign, you got to have a way to manage that brand. How is the brand gonna be managed? Who is responsible for managing the brand? Because if you don't claim the management aspect of it, then it's up for grasp. But every for grabs, everybody can claim it. And when every, when everybody's business is nobody's business and that respect. So I'm saying the first step is putting your house in order, huh? This is very important. Having an entity that is responsible for the nation, branding initiatives, programs, managing it, measuring it, monitoring it, that is very important. And these people ought to be experienced brand managers across a broad sector here. Sure, this is not, uh, an amateurs job. Uh, let's put some, uh, media campaign here and some media campaign there, and see the results. That is amateurs. Uh, to done it professionally, you have to have a way to manage it, and you have to have an entity that is responsible for monitoring the performance of the brand over time. That's the, I think this is the most important, uh, uh, attribute or assets of the or component of the nation brand, is how is it being managed and who's responsible for managing it and integrating these vast assets in a unified campaign.

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Speaker 1 Q4

Q4 Thank you. Uh, I, I have, uh, the following question. I think you, uh, you've answered it already, but I don't know if you wanna elaborate. Uh, the question was, what are the differences between branding a consumer product and a nation?

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Speaker 2

Well, there are a number of, uh, things that we can differentiate between a nation brand, uh, corporate brand, uh, and a product brand in terms of focus, for example, in terms of target audience, for example, in terms of goals and objectives, for example. Uh, so they, they're different. When I'm talking about a nation brand, the focus is really multi stakeholders. Okay. In the case when we're talking about, uh, consumer package, good product, for example, you, you, your focus is on your target consumers. Uh, uh, so it is customer centric. While the brand strategy for a country, it is a stakeholder, a multi stakeholder centric strategy. Yeah.

So they could be the visitors and the non visitors as well, huh. Uh, so the broader focus of the nation branding dictates a different type of strategy, uh, than that of a, a product brand. Now, uh, the goals, the goals of, uh, product brand oftentimes link to market performance.

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Speaker 2

Uh, the goal of, uh, a nation brand in that respect is more of public opinion. No, you know, do they have high regard for your brand, whether they are visitors or non visitors. However, it will be interesting to look into the visitors versus the non visitors, or before the visit and after the visit. Uh, that type of, uh, surveying can be, can be very, uh, useful. Uh, one thing that we need to be, uh, concerned about is the objective of nation branding is to prove that we are doing a good job, or is it to improve on the job that we are doing? There is a big difference between proving and improving. Um, so that is another aspect of, uh, nation branding, but it also relates to, you know, corporate branding and product branding as well. So there are commonalities, but there are inherent unique aspects that are unique to the nation brand that differentiates it from that of the, uh, product brand. Uh, like I said in my earlier, um, point that the closest to nation branding is, uh, corporate branding that is very closer to nation branding than product branding is to, to to, to nation branding. So corporate branding is very close to that. So, so, uh,

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Speaker 1

Perfect. Thank you.

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Speaker 2

That's my take on that. Yeah.

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Speaker 1 Q5

Thank you. Uh, you're someone that worked with the two different governments, uh, on, uh, branding places. You participated in the UAE Nation brand, you participated with, uh, Greenland, uh, branding. Uh, as, as someone with who's been through this experience, uh, when you promote a Nation's brand, what are the most important considerations that you make when you start doing the, uh, strategy?

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Speaker 2

I think each one of the examples that you mentioned had, there is no single fix. There is no single solution for all. Well, it just depends. In the case of Greenland, there was not a country to be looked at as a country brand. Uh, it is an island. It is the world's largest island, and it is part of the Danish Commonwealth. And it had just at the time, had just gained quasi autonomous status. So the issues of branding are different than that. So, of the uae, where the UAE is a nation, um, obviously, uh, but also the UAE had its own inherent issues too, that, uh, at the time when I was involved with them, it was the most, I think I ran the first workshop I was told that brought all the, uh, Emirates, uh, those that are responsible for the branding of these Emirates together under one roof, to start talking about how does that and mean to the UAE as a nation brand.

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Speaker 2

Um, still to this day, a lot of people don't know what the UAE is, but a lot of people know the Y Yeah. A lot of people know Abu Dhabi, um, you know, Abu Dhabi is more linked with government, for example. That's the prevailing perception as the seat of the government. Uh, Dubai is more linked with, um, uh, free trade, uh, tourism luxury. Yeah. Uh, that's Dubai. Ironically. Maybe Abu up has more wealth than Dubai, but people perceive Dubai is a wealth

center or ence. So it is a matter of perception and these inherent issues. Another destination that I've done, uh, uh, a study for is Destination Canada. Uh, and that was a different set. Here is a mature market, mature in the sense of branding. Here is a mature brand, a highly recognized country brand, everybody knows Canada. Um, but they were looking into a very interesting aspect relates to their tourist, uh, branding. And that is that we felt that we have a lot of qualities that relate to sustainable tourist nature ecotourism, but they are not recognized as premier destination for that. When people think of ecotourism nature, they think of the islands. Uh, people don't think of Canada. And then they started looking at the market performance in terms of tourist arrivals in that category or in that subcategory of the travel segment. And they said that Canada is not recognized as a premier echo, uh, to resume sustainable, to resume destination, yet that they're doing a lot of efforts in that direction. So they, I was brought to develop a segmentation framework for them as it relates to the echo and sustainable, uh, tourism. So that's a very, So each country there is this, there is no rubber stamp on branding. Uh, that is one fixed for all. It doesn't work that way. Yeah. Each destination has its own inherent challenges. Each destination has its own footprint, has its own, uh, strategic goals from that campaign. Uh, and, and I, this is the way I approach each country is unique. I don't take one solution from one country and impose it on another destination and say, it work there, it's gonna work for you. That, that doesn't work.

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Speaker 1 Q6

Q6 Thank you. But in, in terms of, um, just, just so, uh, I, I can have something to make sure that I understood the answer. Wouldn't, when, when you decide to, to be, when you are the leading a, a, a team to promote a specific brand, wouldn't there be some sort of a, um, manual or guide or initial steps that would be, uh, the beginning of promoting any destination? I understand you said that first, it depends on who the country is, what the outcome of the, uh, strategy or what is the objective of the country, But would there be a common ground where you start at, when you start to promote, uh, a Destin a a brand, not a destination, a nation brand in general?

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Speaker 2

Yeah. I think the first step, yeah, I agree that there are three fundamental questions. Why are you doing it? What do you want to achieve from it? And what are the tools that you can afford? Because, you know, they have a budget and they have limits on these budgets. So these three fundamental questions are diagnostic questions that I always use. Uh, why are you doing it? Okay, what is it about and how can we move forward with it? And why are you doing it? I take them back and say, Where are you now? And where do you see yourself going? And what are the gaps? So that is, if you are looking for a template or a framework, that is the framework that I use. I conduct a brand audit. Okay. Also as part of this. And that's part of the questions of where are you and where you want to be, because that helps identify the gaps.

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Speaker 1 Q7

Perfect. Thank you. Um, would you have a preferred channels to, uh, so first you will identify your stakeholder that you will communicate with. Uh, how do you identify your stakeholders and what would be your preferred channels to reach them when promoting a a specific brand?

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Speaker 2

When you say you, you mean you as a country brand, or you, me?

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Speaker 1

As, as a, as a nation branding, uh, global practitioner.

S

Speaker 2

Oh, okay. Expert. I, I, I define myself more as an expert, as opposed to a practitioner. I am practitioners working for me on that project, but how do I go about it again, you know, that is a question on

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Speaker 2

How to move forward. So that is subject of how, what are the answers on the first preceding questions? So how we move forward? It depends what the gaps are, Huh? It depends on the purpose and the intent from the campaign. No. So, uh, then when it comes to the tools and my preferred set of tools, it just depends, You know, the set of tools may work for one destination because their, uh, objectives are different than another destination, because the gaps are inherently different. And therefore the tools I'm gonna rely on are gonna be different set of tools. Maybe they have strength in certain area, or they need to be reinforced in these, in some other areas. So the question of what tools we use, communication tools is a function of what is the outcomes of the diagnosis. It's like going to a doctor and saying, Doctors, uh, I don't like to swallow pills. Can you just do an injection? How do I know if it's gonna be the swallowing or the injection? I have to diagnose what's going on first, and then I'll tell you, uh, I need to figure the, the illnesses of the brand in order to diagnose the brand and enter to identify the gaps. And in order to see if there are informational gaps. Or it is not about informational gaps. It is about how, uh, the campaigns are designed to first in the first place. So it just depends, my friend, you know.

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Speaker 1 Q8

Perfect. Uh, I would like to have from you, uh, two examples of, uh, how you successfully communicated your desired messages while you are working on a nation brand. And another example where you did not, uh, I'm, I don't like the word failed, but you failed to achieve your aim in branding a nation through, uh, communication. Why can, and can you define why the first example? What was the key for its success and what was the key for the brand? Um, communication or brand, uh, development failure in the other?

S

Speaker 2

Yeah, I can talk about examples as long as I'm not gonna mention the names. If you are to agree on that, that's fine. I am not at liberty of mentioning the names. Okay. Okay.

S

Speaker 1

Yeah. Okay. Okay.

S

Speaker 2

So let's call them example A and example B. Okay. Okay. And example, A, it was a, a private sectors led, but it had some government involvement, but a very heavy hand from the private sector show. Okay. And I told them that we need to have an army of people to build that brand. And we were talking to a lot of the tool operators that don't have a grasp of the brand to start with. So we ran a workshop, a national workshop, okay. For that particular destination. And first of all, educating the ambassadors of the brand with the message before we launched the message, because we wanted their reinforcement as we launched the message at the leader station. And that was a very successful campaign because at that

destination, they lacked coherence. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, they lacked synergy, and each was moving in their own direction. So it brought sort of one voice to the brand, and that is very important in getting that reinforcement. And that was very successful campaign and achieved tremendous success considering that the budget was very modest. Okay.

Speaker 1 Q9

Q9 Sorry, just to other, to reinforce the first example. So you believe from your experience that the reason of the success was the successful collaboration between the private and the government sector?

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Speaker 2

Yes, absolutely.

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Speaker 1

Okay. Thank you. And the second example.

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Speaker 2

Say what again?

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Speaker 1 Q10

So what's the second example?

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Speaker 2

Oh, the second, Yeah. The second example is chaos. Uh, that example, very heavy handed government. And even within the government entities, the, uh, heads of these com gov. I don't wanna name the positions. Cause that is gonna give a lot, uh, about the destination. The heads of these government, uh, entities are competing against each other. Sure. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, it's a throat cutting thing in order to get the blessing of the top ache. No, uh, of leadership.

S

Speaker 1 Q11

So, sorry, like competition between different states. Like for example, if it's Portugal porto, Lisbon Algarve?

S

Speaker 1

Yes. Yes. Within the country. Yes. Spain, Marid, Barcelona, you know. Okay.

S

Speaker 2

Within the country, within the country, where are we gonna anchor the brand? Is it gonna be tourist tourists says where we are doing our thing? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, how about foreign direct investment, foreign, indirect, Oh, we are doing our thing. Everybody just blocked into their, uh, silos. Very highly siloed, uh, approach. And the political leadership is moving its own way as well. And that was fiasco. You are ending up investing a lot of money, going in different directions, and still to this date, very humble achievements as a result of that. And that is why I reaffirm that putting the house and order is very important part, first step. And that is a proof of the lack of coherence in the, in the coordinated efforts related to the brand. So you have not only siloed efforts, but you have competition over resources within these silos. And these silos are, uh, uh, transmitting different messages about the brand.

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Speaker 1 Q12

Thank you. Thank you. Uh, in a globalized, competitive world, how can a nation do demonstrate or communicate? Its, its competitive edge.

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Speaker 2

I think, uh, to demonstrate your competitive edge or competitive advantage, you need to do all of the above that I mentioned, you know, from question one, two, and three. Yeah. Um, put your house in order, have a leadership commitment, have a strong private public sector partnership, and have defined goals and objectives, and know who your competitors are. Hmm. And define your competitors in a broad sense.

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Speaker 1 Q13

Perfect. Uh, what do you consider, Okay, this question is supposed to be to a, uh, to, to the government sector. But, uh, from your, in your opinion, what are the importance of creating or upgrading policies related to, um, strengthening the nation's brand and in, in, as a result, participate in, uh, increasing tourism, foreign direct investment to local development? So the importance of policies.

S

Speaker 2

Yeah. I think the policy may see making in that re respect ought to be mindful of the importance of the nation brand. And nation brand is not just a set of communication tools, it is an offer arching strategy. Yeah. And the policy needs to be mindful of the fact that we need not to look only over short term goals, but also we have to think in terms of the long term, uh, implications. Uh, policy also should dictate a set of resources and, uh, and, and a mandate to reinforce the direction, uh, and not to over expect, uh, and be realistic of the expectations out of these policy decisions. So policy is very important. And, uh, need to also be mindful that the nation brand is a soft power or a source of a soft power for the country that enables, uh, relationship nation to nation relationship and international outlook of the, the nation, and not just tangibility that are related to the influx of tourists and influx of foreign direct investment. So, so that understanding from the policy makers ought to be there Sure. Indicating the policy makers about it. If they're not, um, aware of what a nation brand is or their views of a nation brand are rather myopic, if you will, you're well now. So need to have a broad umbrella policies.

S

Speaker 1 Q14

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, how are, how are governments considering nation branding strategy when designing policies in, in, in general?

S

Speaker 2

Well, I, I, I don't think a lot of governments really, uh, consider nation branding strategies in designing, uh, policies. It is the other way around. They come up with policies and then they say, you know, hire a PR firm and say, Do this for me and do that for me. It is not the other way around. So, so, uh, I'm not aware of any example of a government that is taking nation branding very seriously, to be honest with him. Well, uh, I'm yet to see that. So even those powerful brands, they still see it as, um, we have our policies, and now you are a tool, uh, going fix this. They, they, they are reactive mode as opposed to a proactive mode. They are reactive mode, and that is diminishing the nation, the effect of the nation branding. Okay.

S

Speaker 1 Q15

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, Um, as a global nation branding expert, how do you employ marketing activities in achieving a, uh, global positive perception?

S

Speaker 2

I think the marketing activities that you are referring to is how I manage the four Ps, for example, Huh? Or however we define them. Four piece, five p or six Ps <laugh>. So I say it is about awareness, it is about engagement, and it is about advocacy. Yeah. A lot of the marketing activities that are implemented, unfortunately from a policy maker level or a decision maker level, huh. The only thing that you worry about is create a publicity campaign and increase level of awareness. And that is very short-sighted because change level of awareness from what to what, and is awareness and end goal in itself. What makes you special? Everybody knows who you are, but you are nobody special. So awareness is part of a journey for the premise. Awareness is a prerequisite, but should not be a goal in itself. Awareness must be followed by an engaging mechanism or engaging tools or marketing activities beyond awareness. So engagement is very important in order to build brand ambassadorship from. And advocacy is, my goal is just to know that I'm here and I exist. But they know that for some of the more established countries, they know that you are there and you exist. But would I go there and how much time would I spend there? And would I come back and would this be a memorable experience for me to talk about it positively and to celebrate it and to share it and to remember it. All of these require different sets of marketing communication stores.

S

Speaker 2

So the designation of the marketing communication activities varies from one campaign objective to another. And if we define nation branding only as increased awareness, then it is very short-sighted, and we are not gonna get much out of it. So yeah. People know that you are there, sh yes. So now I know you are there, sh but how am I gonna engage people in the experience and how can I make the country visit a seamless experience? Okay. And how is that going to have an effect on turning me as an advocate or an ambassador of that experience? So this is Abra three clusters phases here, and each phase have their own marketing activities related to it as we move from one phase to the other through the journey.

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Speaker 1 Q16

Thank you. Uh, this is a side question. Do you think that, uh, digital media will be the future, uh, tool when it comes to nation branding, marketing activities?

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Speaker 2

I never start thinking of tools. That is the biggest mistake that practitioners have the champion tool, and they just, to me, content is the king. What is the content? And based on the content, then I can design the tools. And that is why a lot of campaigns end up in failures. 80 to 90% failures in terms of new campaigns, success rates. And the reason is we lost control over the content because we got sucked into the tools. Is the digital platform appropriate? Well, it depends on the content. It depends on the target audience. So yes, it can be very powerful if I'm reaching a certain audience with a certain content that is appropriate for it. So, but it can be total failure and a waste of dollars, to be honest with you. Just because I'm getting thousands of likes, that doesn't mean that people admire your nation destination.

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Speaker 1 Q17

Hmm. Uh, I, I have to agree to that. Uh, I, I think you've mentioned this earlier, but I don't know if you wanna also elaborate. Uh, how can nation branding impact a nation soft power? Uh, would you like to add something to your previous answer?

S

Speaker 2

I think a nation branding is very important to reinforcing the soft power of the nation and allow a sense of forgiveness. If I have a very powerful nation brand, it gives your nation a sense of forgiveness, or tolerance, and increases the level of tolerance when it comes to the soft power of the, of the, of the nation here in, uh, in, uh, in influencing, uh, decision makers in influencing, uh, media, uh, and media channels. So yes, there is a relationship between the two. And nation branding can be definitely reinforcement for the soft power of the nation. No.

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Speaker 1 Q18

Perfect. Any example? Relative example for a nation with good soft power or benefited with, so sorry, a nation that has soft power as a benefit or as a result of nation branding?

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Speaker 2

I think, uh, Canada is a good example. Uh, the reason is, um, it is amazing what Canada have gotten away with just because of their viewed as a good neighbor, uh, or a good country or good people, You know, good nature, bad prime ministers, humbleness, uh, they got away with a lot on that and people tolerate it. Um, they say, Well, with this Canada as if Canada is my cousin or my brother, I should forgive them for a lot of, uh, so I think Canada, New Zealand is another example. I think the prime ministers of New Zealand have done a remarkable job, and that is where soft power reinforces the nation brand because it's a two way street. So, um, this is her house soft power lit the Islamic world to look the other way in the mosque incident. So, uh, remarkable. No, remarkable. No. Uh, so, uh, uh, I think the, uh, political leadership, uh, has a lot, uh, to, uh, look after when it comes to soft power diplomacy and, uh, uh, cruising the brand in the right direction. <laugh>,

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Speaker 1 Q19

Thank you. Uh, again, as a nation branding global expert, So, how can nation branding practitioners communicate with the world relying on a good nation of brand? So how can the nation of brand itself be the strategy to communicate with the world that competes in terms of tourism, in terms of attracting investment, in terms of, uh, hunting talented immigrants?

S

Speaker 2

Yeah, all of the, I mentioned above, you know, all of the above. You know, we have been talking about this in large details now. So, you know, all of the above is gonna lead to that end result of turning your nation brand into a more competitive brand. Uh, one thing I need to differentiate here in that respect, so is that a lot of nation branding, uh, practitioners confuse two terms and use them interchangeably. And that is the competitive, uh, advantage and the competitive advantage. Yeah. Competitive advantage tools, they say, We have this and we have that. We have the beaches, we have the monuments, we have the hotels, we have this and this, and that. How come the influx of tourists is not as high as country B, where they don't have as long beaches as we have. They don't have as many monuments as we have. They don't have as many luxurious resorts as we have. And how come they are attracting more tourists than we are? That's oftentimes because they are not looking, you know, branding where the total sum is greater than the actual total that's branding. One plus one is

not two. And the world of branding, one plus one could be 3, 4, 5, 10, because they are looking beyond the comparative advantage. Comparative advantage meaning how am I compared to x y Zs on these factors. Competitive advantage is taking your competitive advantage and turning it into a competitive edge.

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Speaker 2

So there is a difference between, we always talk about our competitiveness and mention our competitive advantages. Competitive advantage is what I have. Competitive advantage is what I can do with what I have. That's competitive Advantage practitioners oftentimes confuse them. I have a book that's really addressed that is, they really don't look at it this way. They are missing it. They look at their comparative advantages, and they are building more hotels, extending the length of the beaches. They are more resorts here and there, but the fail to look at the end result is how, with my experience versus the other destinations experience. And that's what I talked about a little

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Speaker 1

Earlier. And that's found in the competitive advantage.

S

Speaker 2

Yes. Competitive edge and competitive advantage. Yes. As opposed to a competitive.

S

Speaker 1 Q20

Thank you. Uh, last question before we go to the country's questions. Um, how can a nation brand negatively be affected if it's not a political ally to the west? So, for example, uh, the misrepresentation of, uh, political competitors to the United States. Uh, I think that you see how they're represented in Hollywood. Uh, how can a nation overcome such misrepresentation on media?

S

Speaker 2

I think building dialogue with media and putting your house in order. <laugh> as simple as that. If you have a problem, uh, then you have a problem, uh, you want to cover up for your problem, you know, you pay a lot to cover up. And I don't know if it's gonna, your efforts will be successful. Why don't you tackle the issue in the first place?

Speaker 1

I, I don't want to get into a debate here, but for example, I think with the, with the US foreign policy, the use of social media, uh, I think if, uh, politically there're, uh, not in good terms with a nation, even if, uh, they conduct a, uh, uh, I've actually read an article about the way, how

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Speaker 2

Exactly what I, I didn't hear the last part.

S

Speaker 1 Q21

Yeah, sorry. I, I was telling you, I, I, I'm giving you example. I read an article that was saying how, uh, Guantanamo was covered in US media versus the detaining camps in China. So despite the US was doing the same action, they were attacking the other nation. So, uh, I think, uh, you know, somehow, if the country is not in a good political term with the nation, they would, no matter how good the house is, they would still find themselves under an

attack. So I, I don't know what could be the solution for that. That's why I asked. So I say with political background,

S

Speaker 2

Political upheaval, and have the nation brand, uh, resolve some of these upheavals, right? Yes. Okay. Uh, I think, uh, if it's media power game, then try to put powerful media behind you.

S

Speaker 1

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Okay.

S

Speaker 2

But you have to do it very carefully because it can turn against you. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> by publicizing its mere existence, <laugh>, sometimes ignoring it is the best asset

S

Speaker 1

<laugh>. Oh, okay.

S

Speaker 2

And let time take care of it, <laugh>.

S

Speaker 1

Fair enough, fair enough.

S

Speaker 2

Or building dialogue, I think building dialogue and using, uh, uh, NGOs to be on your side and, and, and voicing that that is not truly what happened. I don't know who's right and who's wrong, you know, who's right and who's wrong is rather very subjective in that respect. So,

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Speaker 1 Q22

Yeah. So, uh, I'll move to the country's questions. Uh, quick four or five questions. Uh, from your experience, what is appealing about brands Spain and brand uae? If you can give me three elements that are appealing for you in each brand, what would they be?

S

Speaker 2

Well, I happen to have visited both countries. Um, you are talking about the brand UAE and the brand Spain, and not necessarily the country UAE and the country Spain. Cause I differentiate between the two, you know, because brand UAE is not at the level of the power of the brand Spain, and they admit that because, you know, a lot of people, they don't know what UAE stands for in the first place. With all due respect, you know, Well, uh, until recently, you know, uh, but they're aware if your question was brand per solona versus brand buy, Yeah, it would have carried a whole different level of discussion here. Huh. Uh, you know, so country brand to country brand, country brand, Spain, uh, have a incredible history, heritage and powerful organized, uh, well managed, coherent, uh, campaign. But country brand, UAE is very young.

S

Speaker 1

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, is that appealing to you? That is very young.

S

Speaker 2

Oh, you're talking about the, uh, to what extent it is to me personally?

S

Speaker 1

Personally or as a, a nation branding, uh, global expert.

S

Speaker 2

Well, I think personally, you know, if I am asked where would you spend your vacation, which I think there's a question coming.

S

Speaker 1 Q23

Yeah. No, sorry, we're gonna, we're gonna get to that one. But what is appealing about the brand, Spain? So, uh, you said the history, the heritage, the, uh, campaign, the coherent, that's your, the, the, the elements that are appealing to you about brand Spain. What about ua?

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Speaker 2

Personally? Okay, the UAE is diversity.

S

Speaker 1

Diversity?

S

Speaker 2

Yeah. I mean, definitely it is, in my opinion, it probably is the most diverse country in the world. I mean, I will never forget one time we were in, uh, Dubai mode and I looked around and I cannot see a saw wearing the traditional Arabic thob in the mall. I mean, you know, every 10 minutes, maybe you see one <laugh> or 15 minutes, or maybe every once an hour. It is incredibly diverse. So diversity, uh, I, I misread your question. So now I'm rephrasing my answer. The most appealing assets of the brand Spain is, um, you know, the factors that I mentioned, you, the history, the heritage, uh, this span image, uh, that is there well pronounced. So, uh,

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Speaker 1

Okay. And brand new.

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Speaker 2

I have, I have to take, uh, a quick call here, if you don't mind.

S

Speaker 1 Repeating the question

Sure, sure. Okay, We can pause. So your, uh, the appealing points that you've mentioned about Spain, Are there, uh, what would be appealing about brand UAE other than diversity?

S

Speaker 2

Well, I think heritage also, you know, I, I think, uh, for me personally, for me personally, if I have the choice, uh, but I, I don't wanna jump into that question. Uh, as far as appeal, I think being in a, in an Arab culture, it's still, it is diverse, but you still feel that you are in an Arab culture, you know, well mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So, um, I think the Arab culture, the hospitality, the luxury touch is there. Convenience, uh, uh, yeah, I mean, these are good touch points with me personally. Uh, okay. UAE is, uh, is like home. Okay. So for me, you know, the language, the language aspect is very important. I'm not a Spanish speaker, you know, my words in Spanish are wouldn't go far beyond one sentence, <laugh>. So, so I feel a sense of comfort in, uh, in, in, uh, in, in English, Arabic language, speaking country. Uh,

S

Speaker 1
Perfect.

S

Speaker 2
It's exciting to be in Spain, don't get me wrong, <laugh>. But, uh, I think, uh, uh, it feels like home being in the uae. Uh, the culture, heritage, uh, aspect, uh, the luxury, convenience, uh, speed of service. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, uh, yeah, all of these.

S

Speaker 1 Q24
Okay. Uh, we've mentioned earlier the importance of policy and communications and, uh, how a nation should define objectives and strategies to be where they are today or where they want to be in the future. Uh, from your experience, what do you think so far are the strengths for Spain? On one hand, if again, I want you to give me three defined strengths for Spain and three strengths for brand uae.

S

Speaker 2
Okay. So from my personal experience, the, uh, Spain, uh, is, uh, service quality, you know, uh, attention to the tourists, the tourist comes first. Uh, that's a another one because service quality is one thing. And then attention to the tourist is another thing. Uh, another aspect is, uh, you know, to me it's a novel culture. Sh you know, Huh. So there is an aspect of novelty, but this is to me, um, so, uh, you are in Europe, but it really doesn't feel like Europe. You know, there is a paradox about Spain. Uh, it is not as cold as London. It is warm. I don't mean climate. I mean, uh, you know, culture, people, yes, people of Spain are warm, uh, welcoming to tourists and the service quality, These are the three, uh, dimensions and the novelty, you know, it is a novel. It was a novel experience to me, you know? Uh, very interesting. You know, I, I would go back definitely, uh, as opposed to other destinations in Europe from, uh, regarding, uh, regarding the u a e, again, the three areas of strength is luxury. You feel it. Luxury, definitely luxury. Um, uh,

S

Speaker 2
Service quality also is, is got topnotch service quality. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, uh, and then the newness of everything, everything is new, you know, it's like a brand new city. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, uh, so new metro, new, everything, everything is new, you know. Um, I love new things, so that appears to me. Some other people, it may not be, but it is appealing to me, you know, that is being new, you know, brand new. Everything is brand new. It feels like brand new. Well, okay. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, and the communication aspect, you know, that is a strength.

S

Speaker 1 Q25
Perfect. Uh, we're, we're going to the communication, uh, aspect. Uh, two or three more questions before we end this, but, uh, in which country, uh, which country do you think is more active in terms of advertising and communications?

S

Speaker 2
From my personal experience, definitely Dubai. I see it, I experienced it, but maybe I am, uh, sort of, uh, biased there because my visit was all about market. I mean, I visited, this is a hub for media. Dubai, Yes. For media. It is a hub for media. It's very clear that Dubai is positioning, is well positioned as a hub for advertising and a hub for media, you know, know

all the advertising agencies are there, you know? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So, uh, yeah, definitely Dubai has an edge in that respect, so.

S

Speaker 1 Q26

Perfect. And, uh, in, in terms of policies that are, uh, encouraging to foreigners, which country has better policies? Uh, more appealing to foreigners, UAE or Spain?

S

Speaker 2

I have to be honest, I don't know much about, uh, Spain's policies. Uh, but I know a lot about the UAE policies, and I think UAE one measure to look into that, if I am a researcher, looking in that aspect of it and how welcoming the policies are, look at the free zones. I think Dubai, uh, and, and generally the uae, um, take that, not just Dubai, but generally the UAE has the more free zones that I have ever seen in any country.

S

Speaker 2

Free zones, free financial, d i c as a free zone, media city as a free zone, j as a free zone, um, free zones, that is an expression of welcomeness, you know?

S

Speaker 1

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

S

Speaker 2

So I, I would say definitely Dubai has an international reputation of really, uh, of that being the most welcoming.

S

Speaker 1 Q27

Okay. So what are the weaknesses or areas of improvement in your opinion about brand, brand UAE or brand Spain?

S

Speaker 2

I think, uh, areas of improvement for brand UAE, I would like to see more, uh, heavy, strong, uh, unifying campaign that shows the collective, uh, presence of the UAE as a nation brand as opposed to the uae. Although, you know of UAE as a sort of a Confederated brand, uh, of total sum uae, we are Dubai, uae, we are Abu Dhabi, uae, we are sja. I think that's sort of campaign with registers as really empowering to the UAE brand. And I don't talk about UAE country, I'm talking about the UAE brand. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, uh, particularly to the non Arabs, because to the Arabs is different to the Arabs. They know the uae, you know, uh, uh, but to non Arabs that are not active in the political space, you know, uh, foreign policy and all of that, out of that foreign, if you talk, I, I told you my story about returning once from my Dubai trip, This is just an anecdote here.

S

Speaker 1

Okay. Okay. Uh, I thank you very much for your time. Yeah. And, uh, for your input in this research. Uh, would you like to add anything else before

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Speaker 2

No, I would like to wish you the best of luck and, uh, keep me updated. And I hope, uh, you know, this, uh, conversation or this interview will add value.

End of interview three

Interview with: Diogo Paciencia – Digital Media Manager at European Travel Commission

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Speaker 1 (Interviewer Tarik Alhassan)

Q1 So, uh, welcome. Uh, thank you for, uh, accepting to be in this, interview. And I'll start by asking you, uh, from your experience, can you tell me what are the associated outcomes for, uh, a nation when they have a good brand?

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Speaker 2 Diogo Paciencia

I mean, uh, I think we can, for example, have Portugal as an example. Uh, I think Portugal didn't invest that much in tourism in like in the nineties, but after two thousand there was like a specific focus in promoting Portugal as a destination and as a tourism destination, a welcoming destination. And now you can really see how it impacted the many sectors because like Portugal, it's now becoming this innovation hub as well that is trying to catch up. Startups is trying to become this, uh, especially Lisbon as a study case because you can see how the city changed in a matter of 20 years due to tourism. And that was actually like tourism accelerated the other businesses as well because without tourism, Lisbon would not be the creative city that it is nowadays. It would, will still be behind. We are still a bit behind when it comes to tourism, I would say.

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Speaker 2

Because for example, we mention Spain and there you can actually see that it is part of this strategy for years that they are promoting tourism and that they know how to welcome people. And I would say that we have such similarities when it comes to countries, but Spain understood way before than Portugal that their focus should be tourism because they were very good in doing it and everyone would like to come to visit them. And that impacted the nation immediately because I think due to tourism, like everything went better and you can even see like the quality of life in Spain, it's a bit better than in Portugal because it was like this domino effect that everything was impacted due to the development of nation and nation branding and make people aware of your nation. Also Dubai, The Emirates, I think it's a great example when they make this world tourism fair.

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Speaker 2

Like they make it why? Because they wanted to put Dubai on the map because everyone knows Dubai, but not everyone has the curiosity to go to Dubai. And if you create such a fair that you are actually calling your competitors to come to your country, it's actually a super smart move because you will make that the competitors will come meet Dubai and then they will impact the other people when they come back to their own countries because it's like, I think it's a super smart move because they basically gathered everyone together. They made sure that Dubai was in the mindset of everyone because they were making this world tourism fair that they postponed to Covid, but then they still want to make it and even better, like they build like a specific thing just to have this space as well. So even in the media in the press, everyone was speaking about Dubai and before maybe you know about Dubai, you know that

one day you might want to go. But since they like, they use the momentum to really promote themselves and then promote themselves like as a destination to come, as a destination to stay. Like you have a lot of people that goes there because also, for example, the salary in there, it's not text. So they also use this tourism hub as an attraction opportunity to then yeah, impact the other sectors. And I think that's it. I think I already covered at least three cases, so I think you have good input

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Speaker 1 Q2

<laugh> I think we're gonna get there. Okay. From your experience, can you name the most important components for a Nation's brand?

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Speaker 2

Uh, a good strategy.

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Speaker 1

Okay. Can you elaborate?

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Speaker 2

Need to you need to have a good overall strategy, I would say.

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Speaker 1 Q3

Q3 Okay. Okay. Uh, what are the differences between branding a consumer product or corporate branding and a nation?

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Speaker 2

So consumer, corporate, a nation?

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Speaker 1

What is the difference between them if all of them are branding?

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Speaker 2

I mean, uh, so all of them are branding for sure. Uh, I think consumer incorporate, when they are well done, they impact your nation branding. So I think the nation branding, it's like the umbrella on top and then you have the consumer and the corporate that goes together and you should work together with consumer in corporate in the way that you impact your nation branding, I would say. So that's how I see it, at least.

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Speaker 1 Q4

Q4 In terms of the application of branding concept, is it similar to brand a product or to brand the nation?

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Speaker 2

No,

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Speaker 1

Can you elaborate

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Speaker 2

I think to brand Nation it's way more formal. You need to think in many sectors of the economy, you need to think about making synergies with other departments. When it's consumer, I think it's easier because you just have your target audience, you know, to who do you want to communicate. So it's very simple and straightforward. And I think nation branding is something that all the little pieces goes together, like a puzzle and then they make this nation branding. So I think nation branding, it's way more complex than consumer or carpet

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Q5 Speaker 1

When promoting a specific nation's brand. What are the most important considerations that you would think about in terms of target groups, stakeholders, communications?

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Speaker 2

The most important things, the way that we have done it in 2020, it's that, uh, first we wanted to communicate clearly with all the nations and say the points in and see the points in common that we have between nations. So it, it depends if you want to brand the nation from a national point of view, or if you want to also brand a regional point of view.

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Speaker 1

So regional, we're speaking regional

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Speaker 2

Regional. Regional. So I think in terms of regional, it's basically have this time that you assess the similarities that you have among neighbor countries and try to promote them together. And then I think now Europe has this really nice thing that it's like, since we already know the similarities between countries and we know what we can promote together now, it's just missing this part of making it more penny European because you have like countries like China that are building railways to go everywhere. Like they even go to Africa now or you have, uh, I don't know, you also have, uh, the Arab, the eRate as well, uh, for example, that I think they are also a good case of connecting all the regions because they want to be in the middle of the center of everything. And I think that's what is missing with Europe. Like we are still lacking a bit, uh, working together. I would say we are still very individualistic comparing with other continents in terms of promoting either tourism or promoting Yeah. Other sectors of the economy that are vital to development, I would say.

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Speaker 1

Q6 what would you consider, uh, what are the consideration you make to promote a specific brand?

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Speaker 2

<affirmative>, uh, then I would say the things that makes the nation unique, because that's sometimes hard to map as well. Like what is the difference between Europe and Asia? And basically because now I'm also managing, for example, our channels in the Asian market. And it's super interesting for me to see like how the communication has to be different because basically what I focus in, uh, global markets, it's more like things that people know about or secondary places that, uh, are not so well known. And in China, for example, I need to offer something that Chinese people don't have there. So it's something that makes them come because they know, okay, I will travel because actually I cannot find this in my continent, so I need to go here and the way that this is the special thing that makes me travel. So I, I would say like, uh, so the similarities, the point in common that is also the similarities

and then something that makes your nation special or that actually brings this diamond to your nation branding. Um, yeah, I think that's it.

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Speaker 1 Q7

Q7 Perfect. Um, in terms of, uh, promoting a nation, what would be your preferred tools and why? So when it comes to the communications part, what are the most important tools that you think about when you start branding the nation?

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Speaker 2

Social media for sure, because I think people nowadays, they don't want to consume heavy content anymore. They want, uh, festival content, content that they can consume in matter of 30 seconds and they get the main idea. So nowadays you need to be really cohesive and coherent and really focused in your messaging rather than before, because before you could have long form articles, but nowadays you can see that the attention span, it's not the same. This the evolution of the society so fast. And nowadays you have access to so many content that you need to make your content as sexy as much as you can in the way that the people will consume it. But then you also need to focus in the way that your message is still there. So you need to make it very consumable, but you also need to know, which is the message that I want to share with my audience, with my consumers. I would say,

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Speaker 1 Q8

Q8 Uh, can you give me, uh, like, okay, social media is important, uh, and uh, if, if I ask you to give me an example about a successful, uh, you know, case or, or, or a brand that uses Nation of Branding, and another example where the use of social media went wrong or failed, which examples? Can you give me?

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Speaker 2

Uh, so social media that failed and one successful case? Yeah.

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Speaker 2

So I would have to say that one of my favorite European countries, and it's because of their communication strategy, it's Switzerland. So they came up with the program that is called Swiss, Sustainable and Sustainable. It's basically their sustainable program where they call out for partners that are basically local producers in Switzerland, and then they tell the story behind that businesses and why the businesses are special, because they are making this sustainable strategy. And at the same time they use it as a label. So people that applies to this program actually needs to comply with some fact checks, and then they basically use these people as successful stories or inspiring stories, like to have more people joining the program and to go with this conditions. And then it's so well done because from a corporate point of view, it's brilliant. And then from a consumer point of view, it's also brilliant because as I was explaining, like what makes your destination different from the others? So Switzerland understood, we are a small country, we are a very expensive country, so we need to come out with solutions and ways to promote our country even better. And I think they have made it so well. And then maybe, I mean, I also don't know if I can say, uh, which definitions failed because when you have 33 members, uh, it's very, let's

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Speaker 1 Q9

Let's say a destination that can perform better in social media doesn't necessarily have to fail. But I want you to, like you highlighted Switzerland, and it's a great example. I thank you for

that. But if you wanna give me a contrary, an example, without saying it failed, but it's using social media not in the way it should, let's say

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Speaker 2
Romania.

S

Speaker 1
Okay. Why?

S

Speaker 2

Because for example, I think in the, the, so it also has to be with the European integration. When countries join later on, they also have less strategy behind, because politics, it's also different when you are from a European integration side of it. And then you need to comply with some rules and you are also, and you also have some funds and access to platforms and tools that actually allow you to develop your brand awareness strategy rather than countries that join later. And since they are still making this path, they still have a way to go. And for example, Romania, I know that they are not interested in promoting tourism at the moment because they lack some resources. So they still have a long way to go, I would say.

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Speaker 1 Q10

Q10 Okay. Thank you. Uh, in, in, In a competitive world that we live in today, how can nation branding, how can a nation communicate its competitive edge?

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Speaker 2

Um, for example, the one in, uh, Dubai, I think it was so important like to, so you need to use the momentum and use the events and everything that you do and the way that you communicate clearly what your organization stands for or your country stands for. What are your values? I think it's super important, like to make this kind of networking events as well because I mean, if you don't present your country as it is, and if you don't call out people to actually come and put themselves in the center, you can create that momentum through press. But I think if you actually call out the people that you are interested to promote, uh, the destination, it's way easier because you bring the word Spain to the topic because you are just making this conference about something and then people starts to know, for example, Portugal, you can see from Lisbon, like before Web Summit, there are a lot of people that knew about Lisbon, but after Web Summit it was a boom because everyone started to come for that event that is a specific startups technology.

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Speaker 2

And so, and Lisbon became like this hub for the three days. And then that also impacts because the people that were coming for the event itself were also promoting the country mouth by mouth and chat by chat because they were just probably saying, Oh, I went to Portugal, it was an amazing country, I didn't even know that existed. And since you kind of create this momentum to call out people, it's way easier than actually make a communication campaigns or make, uh, a good strategy for 10 years. Like I think sometimes it's really about catching up this talent and catching up the people that you want to impact. Yeah.

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Q11 Speaker 1

Q11 Thank you. Uh, what do you consider, uh, when you are creating policies related to attracting foreigners, investors or tourists?

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Speaker 2

I mean, uh, I don't think I'm the right person to answer you to that one because I work in a communication side of like point of view. So I don't work with a lot of policies, so.

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Speaker 1

Q12 Perfect. Uh, do you think governments are considering nation branding when designing policies?

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Speaker 2

Some are, some don't. Uh, that's why I say that it's very hard to promote Europe as a whole because we don't have like a aligned strategy for all the countries. So each country has their own autonomy to do what they want to do.

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Speaker 1 Q13

Can you tell me from your opinion, the importance of policies in attracting, uh, foreigners, tourists, investors? What is the importance of a nation's policies?

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Speaker 2

I mean, I think nation policies are crucial to also impact all the other sectors because, uh, I mean from now what comes to my mind, it's, for example, this program that tourism Portugal created about digital nomad. That if you come to Portugal and if you are a digital nomad and if you want to pay your taxes to Portugal, you actually have, you are not taxed if you weren't until 2,200. And you can still like, have benefits to help benefits, uh, or visa goals. That was very polemic as well. Uh, I think it's crucial because it kind of develops everything. And if you think for example, about the visa goals that, uh, you basically call out foreigners to invest in your country, buy a house, they don't pay for taxes, it's true, but then they are generating a different cultural, cultural awareness. They are generating value to your country, they are bringing richness to your country. So policy policies, it's always the crucial way to start an implementation because even in terms like of the European Union way, if you think about if there were not conditions and policies that you should respect, everyone would just enter and everyone would just do whatever they want to do. So policies, it's always like the driven of change, I would say.

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Speaker 1

Q14 Thank you. Uh, are you familiar with the terms soft power?

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Speaker 2

Ooh, that one is hard. Um,

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Speaker 1

You can skip whenever you want to skip a question, you can pass and that's fine.

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Speaker 1

Q15 If a nation as a brand is built or constructed from three or four or five main pillars, what would these pillars be?

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Speaker 2

I would say networking in terms of partners and stakeholders that you can collaborate with. Digital for sure. Or, um, it that it's more, uh, generic. I would say. I would also say sustainability. Nowadays it's very important be in the order of the agenda, uh, especially for the green transition. I think it should also stand for human rights. I think it's super important because sometimes, uh, when the human rights element, it's not present. It also impacts the way that people perceives your destination. And I think I'm missing one, right? So I would say economy and services.

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Speaker 1 Q16

So as a nation branding practitioner mm-hmm. <affirmative>, how do you reach the positioning that you want in the global competition through nation branding?

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Speaker 2

I mean, it's about standing for, for of values and the values of your nation, and again, the unique factor that makes you different from your competitors. And then in the end, offer something or try to wrap up, uh, a kind of like, not a package, but try to sell this image that we are a continent that offers this, this and that. And I think that's why so many people travels to Europe because if you think that we are such not a small continent, but comparing with other continents, we are a bit smaller, but we are so diverse. And in a matter of one hour you can be in Finland in a matter of, uh, three hours, you are back to Portugal. So I think that way it's, uh, the thing that we offer and that's important as well.

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Speaker 1

Q17 Perfect. Uh, we're gonna move to the country's uh, section. Uh, from your experience, what is appealing? I will ask you to list for me three, uh, appealing, uh, points about brand uae and on the other hand about brand Spain. Three appealing elements,

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Speaker 2

Three appealing elements about Spain in about, uh,

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Speaker 1

Of the country. So the nation brand, what is appealing about?

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Speaker 2

So I would say that, um, the Emirates, it's way more digital Technologic and Spain, for example, I don't see it, I see it more like a traditional and a very Mediterranean place. So it's very, yeah, I would say that one thing that they both have in common, it's the nationalism because I think they are very patriotic in both countries. But you said something that is different from both. So the first one I already said, the second one that makes them different. The climate, I would not say it's that different. Uh, I would say the human rights question that it's still a thing that, uh, I think the Emirates should work on. Uh, but that's the European perception, uh, that's why.

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Speaker 1

So the human rights would be appealing for you for the Spanish part?

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Speaker 2

Yes.

S

Speaker 1

Q 18 So my, my question is, give me three reasons for you to admire brand Spain. And so far you were told me the nationalism and the human rights aspect. And in Emirates, what do you find appealing is the digitalization and nationalism?

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Speaker 2

I mean, it depends because if I think about the destination itself, I would say culture appeals me more in Spain. History also appeals me more in Spain. The Emirates don't have that strong historical point of view, and I think they still have to work on it. And then I would say that also the lifestyle, it's also super different because, uh, in the Emirates I think it's, there is still some developments to do for sure. You have the spaces that you can still have parties, you can do everything. But I would say that when I think about Spain, it's way more liberal and that would be a thing that I would like to see in the ambulance, for example, because I think if there would be a bit more liberal, they would even attract more and more people as well. Perfect,

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Speaker 1 Q19

Perfect. Um, the second question was about the strengths, but I think that, uh, your answer can combine the two questions in the, uh, in the answer. But would you, would you highlight a special strength that brand UAE has and a special strength that Spain has? Let's say something exclusive, like a strength point for the brand?

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Speaker 2

Uh, I would say architecture for one from the historical point of view.

S

Speaker 1

You can use the same point for both, uh, <laugh>,

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Speaker 2

I mean, I think that's the first thing that comes up with my mind. It's the history also that also influenced the arch architecture. But when I think about Spain and uae, I don't think about the culture or think about the food. I think really about what can I see with my eyes from there. Then the people, if I can meet, it's also an eyes, but first I think about the top site and then I think as people as the additional compliment of my trip.

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Speaker 1

Q20 Perfect. Uh, which country is more active in terms of advertising and communications? UAE or Spain?

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Speaker 2

I think right now, uae.

S

Speaker 1

Q21 Okay. Does that give UAE a strength?

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Speaker 2

Yes.

S

Speaker 1

Okay. Uh, which country has more encouraging policies for foreigners to invest, to visit, to immigrate, even

S

Speaker 2

UAE

S

Speaker 1

Policies.

S

Speaker 2

Okay, yea I think so.

S

Speaker 1

Can you, can you explain a little bit more?

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Speaker 2

I mean, I have, uh, many friends that went there because they have this special regime where you are not taxed where you can live there. I mean, for sure it's way more expensive than Spain. You also need to have that into account. But I think, uh, even all this luxurious image, they are attracting way more people because the positioning in terms of brand, it's stronger at the moment than Spain, for example, because Spain was there for the last 20 years and UAE it's super recent, so they still have a long way to go, but they are going in the good way. And I think they are making such a faster transition. I don't know if that is due to policies or to strategy, but I think UAE has more policy, but maybe I'm wrong.

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Speaker 1

Q22 Um, what are the weaknesses or areas of improvement that Spain can do or Emirates can do?

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Speaker 2

The weakness

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Speaker 1

Area of improvement for, for the brand? So I, I think earlier you said that if, uh, uh, Emirates can work on more liberalization, that would be more encouraging for the nation. So maybe you gave this example as as an answer. Do you have a brand, something for a brand Spain that they can work on and come back to the competition, you know,

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Speaker 2

Because UAE I think they are super, they know where they want to go. Spain doesn't know because they have so many different regions and they have so many yet political issues that then in the end, they cannot promote themselves as a nation because Catalonia or Catalonia doesn't have the same interest as Madrid. And then it's very hard to conjugate this because even in a political way, you already know that it's fragile. So that's why they don't, they could do better, but they cannot do better because also the regions don't work together.

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Speaker 1

Q23 So this is a very important point. So the collaboration between different entities within the country is important to strengthen the nation of brand and the communication

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Speaker 2

For sure. Because if you don't want to, if you don't work together, if you don't sit down and just talk and see what are the strengths, what can we promote together, what are, So if I'm going to Madrid and then going to Barcelona, what does Madrid offers me with Barcelona and how can I go from here to there? Like that's still a way to go in Spain and for example, the railways in there are not that great. The transportation's in there. Either you have a car or it's very hard to go from a region to another. And I think for example, uae, they are way more developed in

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Speaker 1

Perfect. I'll conclude this, uh, interview, uh, with a question. Um, if you are a brand, a nation brand, let's say owner in terms of you are in the government, uh, you have access to policies, to advertising, to funds, to everything, what would be the, let's say 2, 3, 5 steps that you will take to create a very strong nation brand and communicate it? What would you work on? What would you do?

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Speaker 2

Uh, so if I, I think I would have to focus my nation branding strategy and pillars. And maybe I would have to identify which are the crucial pillars or the pillars that generates more money and income. And when I say money and income, I also say social income. And then after that I actually have a map out of the things that makes my country develop more, I should invest more in them. And then on the other side, I should also invest, I should also invest in the ones are not that developed and understand how can I achieve the competitiveness, uh, of the sector as well.

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Speaker 1

Would you focus more on policies or advertising

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Speaker 2

Policies. Policies are always the way to make changes, then advertising comes next.

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Speaker 1

Perfect. This is a pleasure. Thank you so much for participating.

End of interview four

Interview with: Dr. Nadia Kaneva – Nation branding author and researcher

... Conversation started before recording about nation branding.

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Speaker 1 (Interviewer Tarik Alhassan)

Q1 I just want to have the first point that you mentioned about, in your own words, what is nation branding? Mm. Can you just, I'm not gonna say to repeat the whole answer, but can you just elaborate about in your own words, nation branding and propaganda? Because first your answer was mainly about propaganda and then at the end, it, it was, you said it's a form of propaganda, so Right. Is nation branding propaganda or a form of propaganda?

S

Speaker 2 Dr. Nadia Kaneva

Yeah. I mean, so in, in that, in the article I wrote in, in 2011 that a lot of people kind of use as a starting point, right? For the field of nation branding, the definition I use there is that nation branding is a collection of discourses and practices that attempt to reconstitute the nation in commercial terms. And meaning that, you know, nations have always been constructed by different groups of people and elites, but this particular form of constructing the nation follows commercial principles. Right? Um, and so I still subscribe to that, Okay. Even though not everybody would agree with me. But for me, that's still what nation branding is. It's not about campaigns and communication, but it's about thinking about what a nation is through a commercial lens. So in that sense, I would say that nation branding is a form of propaganda. So All Nation branding is propaganda, but not all propaganda is nation branding, if that makes sense. Right, Right, right. Yeah. Because you can have other forms of propaganda that don't necessarily follow commercial principles and logics, but all Nation branding is a form of propaganda. It's just a particular commercialized manifestation of it.

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Speaker 2

About the component of a nation's brand. The nation's brand seems to be something that it, first of all, it has clearly defined boundaries, and it's something that somebody deliberately creates, right? And so therefore, if we can identify the components to it, um, we can then engineer this nation brand by, you know, making sure that all of the components are present, right? Kind of like a cooking recipe. But I don't think, um, I think in a way that's how governments have come to think of it. Because they would like to have this notion that they can control the ingredients, and if they put in the correct ingredients, they will end up with a particular nation brand, and then they will communicate it to the rest of the world. Then people will just accept the message. But that's not in reality how communication works, <laugh>. Um, I think that's kind of a very, sort of, um, simplistic way of thinking about even propaganda, right?

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Speaker 2

And the classic way of the term that somehow you expose people to a message and then boom, they are persuaded. Um, in reality, I think the way people form opinions or perceptions of other countries, um, most of the time has very little to do with what the country it, it itself is telling them. Um, in today's environment, it's, I would say these impressions are much more influenced by person. If you have any personal experiences with that country or people from that country, if you have visited, if you know somebody who is from there, let's say you

have a friend from there that you met in college, right? You will form certain opinions about that country. And that's probably the most powerful and most lasting way in which people form impressions of other places that they don't know much about. Whether that's really a brand, I don't know.

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Speaker 2

But that's, you know, you know, one way to think about it. And then another, another very important aspect is media visibility. And when I say media visibility, I don't necessarily think of advertising, um, because, uh, most people don't pay attention to advertising, right? So unless you have decided, like, let's say you met a friend from, uh, Bulgaria happened to be from Bulgaria. You don't know anything about Bulgaria, but you happen to like this person from Bulgaria and they're telling you that there's great beaches in Bulgaria and you should go visit, right? Then maybe you'll start paying attention to advertising about tourism trips to Bulgaria because you have a personal interest in the topic, allies, you just ignore it, right? But, um, what you, what we do usually pay some attention to is when something really dramatic is happening in a place like a natural disaster or a war or something like that. And those kind of heightened crisis events tend to shape our impressions of countries. And again, I don't think that's how governments want to think about the perception of their country. In fact, they think that many of them think that you could use communication or branding as they call it, to counteract some of these negative portrayals, right? But I, again, I have not personally seen any kind of clear evidence that that actually works.

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Speaker 1 Q2

Okay. What are the differences from your perspective when we're talking about branding a consumer product and branding a nation?

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Speaker 2

Hmm. I mean, they're not at all comparable in my opinion. I think the whole, it's a fallacy to think that they are comparable. Although, you know, now it's kind of taken for granted. People, you know, basically say, Oh, well, it's the same tools apply. So, okay. When you're branding a product, um, first of all, you have complete control over what the product is, right? And you can change it. Um, you can also create the product based on research that you have done in advance about what people need, what they would be willing to pay for, uh, how it would be marketed and that sort of thing. So the product in a way, um, precedes any kind of communication you will do about it when you're selling it. And also, as you're designing the product, you might also be thinking about its brand. So what will be, its kind of, um, intangible qualities, right?

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Speaker 2

The values that you want to associate with it. And, and that's all within the control of the company that's making the product. So it's kind of a very centralized, hierarchical process where the private entity, whether it's a corporation owners or a small business or an individual, has complete control over shaping the product, right? And the communication about the product. And they might still make mistakes, right? And people might not like the product, or they might reject the advertising, but then the person is free, or the organization is free to go back and change it and fix it as many times as they want to, right? When you're dealing with the country, none of this is true, right? None of this applies. First of all, you know, um, most countries have long and complicated histories. Um, there's a lot of internal contestation about what the histories even mean.

S

Speaker 2

Um, you know, there's various groups within a country, whether they're political or ethnic or cultural, that might not necessarily describe the country in the same way, if you talk to them,

uh, then you have, um, the whole problem of deciding, well, what should be the national goals or, or, you know, aspirations of this country at any given moment in time. And then, um, that's also contested often through the political process, regardless of what kind of political system you have, right? Even if it's an authoritarian system, you still have different factions within government that may not agree on the same thing. Then you have, um, you know, assuming that you want to bring in some kind of communication aspect to all of this, you have to bring in marketing, branding experts in, somehow figure out with them how, what do we wanna say to whom and why?

S

Speaker 2

And so on and so forth. And, and, and then even when you do come up with some kind of message that hopefully everybody can agree on, um, there's no guarantee that a, you would be able to get it to all the people that you want to get it to, um, because you might not have sufficient access to funding for these campaigns. Um, also, people might simply ignore your message, reject it. I suppose some of the same risks in communication are true for commercial brands as well. But really it, um, the whole issue of who owns it, who controls it, who has the right to define it, is completely different in a national context as opposed to just a regular product.

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Speaker 1 Q3

Thank you. So do you, do you think that there is a role of marketing when it comes to building, uh, a nation's brand, or No?

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Speaker 2

I mean, depends, right? What do we, how do we define marketing, right? If we talk to marketing scholars, they would say, Well, marketing is the four piece product price place promotion, right? So what's the product? What's the price? What's the place, right? In the case of a nation, those are very difficult questions to answer, and most countries don't even attempt to answer them. So they focus only on the promotion side of it. Um, and so if you wanna think about it as, you know, in the classic marketing terms, I think a lot of marketing scholars would say that yes, there's a place for marketing and building a good nation's brand, but they think about it in very sort of, you know, um, industry specific terms, right? So if we're promoting, let's say the, the tourism industry, the product is our beaches and hotels, uh, the prices, whatever price we set for that product, the places where are we gonna go and promote this various, uh, fairs and, you know, tourism expos and that sort of thing, And the promotion will be the type of messaging, right?

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Speaker 1

So in that sense, yes, there's a role of marketing, but is that simply tourism promotion or is it nation branding? I don't know. I guess that's sort of again, how you define it. If you look at the, what is being measured as the nation brands of countries in the nation brand index that Simon and hold created, for example, what's, what's really being measured is, uh, perceptions of an international public, right? So it's like an opinion survey basically, and it's very kind of general. So it's not based on any particular one industry or in kind of reaction to any specific campaign. And so if that's what we think of a brand as kind of the general impression of the world's population about your country, that's very different from what a marketing promotion will be doing in relation to, let's say, the tourism industry. So I would say, um, marketing could be very helpful in promoting a country if it has very kind of narrowly defined business objectives. I am not so sure that it's helpful or relevant at all if we're thinking about the brand as kind of this general perception that people have of a country.

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Speaker 1 Q4

Okay. Thank you. Um, do you have any field experience in working with any nations on like branding or building an nations brand?

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Speaker 2

Uh, I have talked to government representatives in several countries, but not to advise them on specific campaigns or to give them recommendations about how they should brand themselves. Um, what my interactions have focused on is, has been to basically talk about the kind of research that I have done in the past, which sort of raises some red flags about how what is commonly referred to as nation branding can, um, sort of lead to political conflict or amplify political conflict, or in some ways, um, is relevant to politics and governance. But I've never given specific advice on here's how you should do it, or look looking at a particular campaign and giving them feedback on what they need to do or change.

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Speaker 1 Q5

Q5 Okay. What do you think the role of policies, uh, is a nation branding?

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Speaker 2

I mean, again, what, what do we mean by policies here? Give me an example.

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Speaker 1

Regulations of the country. How does it deal with, So zero tax policy like Emirates, uh, uh, Saudi Arabia, zero tax policy to attract investors, Um, uh, policies on how, what, what foreigners can do, introducing the golden visa for example to come and live, and then enjoy, you know, long term residency followed by citizenship. Those kind of policies we're talking about, right?

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Speaker 2

I mean, uh, you know, to the extent that, uh, these policies are aimed at external constituencies, right? Investors or people who want to go live in a particular country, uh, you have to publicize them. You have to let people know that these opportunities exist. Um, so in that regard, it's, yeah, it seems logical that you would have some kind of communication effort around that to announce these things, to explain how they work, to make them accessible to the relevant people. Um, how, again, how that adds up to some kind of comprehensive brand. I don't know. Perhaps, you know, over time, you know, let's say you have a policy that becomes very successful and it gets a lot of media attention internationally and, um, in some way, uh, people start kind of noticing it. And so it's not just, you know, something that a handful of targeted, um, you know, users or consumers are aware of, but it becomes kind of a bigger deal.

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Speaker 2

Maybe then it could have some kind of longer term impact on how the country is generally perceived as, let's say, business friendly or, um, welcoming to expats who wanna work there. But I don't think that's kind of an immediate effect of any one policy. And especially with smaller countries, those types of policies will have relevance for a fairly small group of people, even if it's investors, right? You know, a country like Portugal, you know, probably has a finite number of large investment deals in anyone given here that are super important to that country, but probably are not even on the radar of most other people in the world, right? They don't follow what's going on in Portugal. So, yeah, I don't know if I'm answering your question, but I mean, I think you know, promoting policies is very important from the point of view of government because, you know, they adopt certain policies because they want to attract certain kind of investment or behavior, uh, but it's not necessarily, in my view, a direct influence on general perceptions of the country.

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Speaker 2 Q6

Perfect. We're gonna go to the parts that, uh, you like more, probably, uh, I wanna have your opinion, uh, about the relationship or the influence of soft power on a nation's brand. And some people that I've interviewed asked me to put the, the question the other way around. So the influence of, of nation's brand on soft power, uh, whichever you prefer.

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Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah. So, okay. I mean, I'm glad this is helpful because I personally, um, do not find the concept of soft power to be very helpful. You know, as an academic, I have never used it in any of my analyses of nation branding, because to me it's a concept that's very, uh, US centric. And so even if in its original formulation, even if it explains something about the US' influence in the world, which even that I think is questionable, but let's say in the beginning it was conceived as a concept that put, explain something about the influence of the US in the world. Since then, it's been sort of co-opted, adopted to talk about international influence more generally. But most other countries are completely different from the us, right? So they, how can we use a concept that was developed to explain the influence of the US to explain the influence of any other country, right?

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Speaker 2

So it just doesn't make sense to me. This particular concept, um, recently I was, um, I, I've been working on this, um, academic forum in the aftermath of the, the war in Ukraine. And one of the essays in there that I really like and I can forward to you is, uh, by Maria Nikola, she's an associate professor, and she kind of problematizes this whole notion of soft power, right? And so soft power as something that, you know, is very much defined by the existing power relations in the world. And so these power relations, so, because power ultimately is about your ability to get somebody to do something that you want, right? So if, if you can't do that, then you don't have power, right? So how do you do that? Well, military power is one aspect of it. Um, economic power is another aspect of it.

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Speaker 2

And, but even when you have notary and economic power, like the United States has its policies, and its, uh, foreign policy agenda are still not liked and accepted in a lot of parts of the world. So what does that mean about this notion of self power then? Does it mean that, you know, United States has lost its soft power? Does it mean that the notion of soft power is defined just was not right in the first place? Anyway, I'm kind of getting off topic, but I guess what I'm saying is that for me, this, this sort of question doesn't really have an answer because the real question for me is how do countries, how do they, uh, how, what allows them to exercise influence over international audiences in a particular situation, right? So I don't, I don't even wanna call it self power or nation branding, but influence, geopolitical influence, right?

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Speaker 2

And it depends, it's always contextual, right? It depends on what is going on at that particular moment in time, but it also depends on preexisting structural relations of power. So, you know, that would include military power, that would include economic power, but it also include things like international alliances that, so that, you know, Country X can also rely on support from these other countries that it considers to be tallies. Um, and depending on the goals, right? If the goal is simply to have, uh, friendly relations with a nation that's already predisposed positively towards us, then, you know, um, you don't even have to tap into

military and economic power. You can just have cultural exchanges and that sort of thing. So it's very contextual, basically, is what I'm saying. And I think, I think what you're trying to get at here is whether there is some way in which this kind of brand communication, marketing communication can help a country in these efforts to exercise international influence.

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Speaker 2

Um, I don't know. I mean, that's sort of the assumption, right? That if you create this beautiful, let's say pavilion at the World Expo, and, you know, people will go there and they will just be wowed by, let's say the pavilion of, I don't know, Iraq, let's say, and, and suddenly their opinion about Iraq will be different, and that will somehow increase Iraq's soft power. But is that really how it works? No, not really. Right? So in a way, it's kind of a nice fantasy to have that we can just put our best face as nations on display at some kind of global event like that. But when we're really talking about real foreign policy, I think a lot of that stuff is just irrelevant. It comes down to military power, economic power, existing alliances. Uh, it also comes down to personal relationships very often where certain leaders form personal relationships with other leaders or diplomats find ways to, you know, form a bond to negotiate over a authority issue, and so on so forth. And branding, you know, as far as I can tell, has nothing to do with it.

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Speaker 1 Q7

Q7 Perfect. Um, what is the role of media in building a, um, I'm not gonna say a positive, but I'm gonna say a global perception about a nation.

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Speaker 2

I it's huge. I mean, it's huge because, um, even people who are super well traveled will never visit every single country in the world, right? So, so in that sense, to the extent that we're willing to pay attention to what's going on elsewhere in the world, media is our only source. Uh, for the most part, people don't really care <laugh>, right? They don't really pay attention to what's going on far away unless they have a personal connection, they know somebody there, or there's a war, or there's an natural disaster. And even then, unless they see that it will somehow personally affect them, the attention span is very short. Um, so, but having said that, right, whatever impressions we have are shaped by how the media talk about a particular country, how they frame the narratives about that country. Also, it matters a lot what type of media we have access to, because especially in today's world, you know, the same, I mean, let's take the war in Ukraine, again, the same event, the same facts on the ground can be described completely differently based on the media source.

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Speaker 2

And so that could lead to people having very different perceptions of what's going on. But the qualifier there is that it's not like we go in with no preconceptions, and then the media just put these ideas in our heads, right? Usually we go in with some preconceptions, especially in the case of a conflict where, you know, Russia is a major global actor that most people have at least heard of, right? It's not like we're talking about some tiny little country like Kosovo when there was the war in culture where nobody knew anything about coastal. But when it comes to Russia, people already have certain ideas, preconception. So if they're positively predisposed, they're more likely to seek out these kind of stories and kind of agree with them. And if they have, um, sort of negative historical associations because of who they are, what their country's history is and so on, they're more likely to take the other side and

seek out those types of media narratives and, and so on. So I think media plays a very important role, but it's not a straightforward role, right? It still depends on how people engage with whatever the media has to serve,

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Speaker 1 Q8

You know, you know, the role of, um, or the impact of political events such as the example that you gave the Russian and Ukrainian War, and I saw your recent article about, uh, Bravery Ukraine, and immediately when I saw the article, I thought, Would this article be written with a title bravery Iraq, or bravery Palestine, or bravery Kosovo, Or is it just bravery Ukraine? And why?

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Speaker 2

So, I mean, that's a great question. So, um, the reason why I titled the article this is because this is literally the slogan that the Ukrainian government has been promoting, right? So they are branding, right? Ukraine in this way, and in this very sort of media heavy, commercialized type of way that I was talking about in the beginning, right? They're running ads, billboards, social media, and so on and so forth, just like any advertising campaign that said, right? The reason why they can, okay, they're not, I write this in the essay, right? They cannot claim that Ukrainians are the only brave people in the world, right? We can say that there are lots of other people who have bravely fought to defend their countries. So what allows them to own this right now, part of it is that, um, the western media coverage, news, media coverage of the war was already using that word and that trope to talk about Ukraine, and its, uh, resistance to the invasion.

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Speaker 2

And so what this campaign is doing, rather than trying to change anyone's mind, is just taking something that's already there and just amplifying it. And that's how persuasion often works, right? You find something that people already believe and then you amplify and give it more space and just keep repeating it, repeating it, repeating it. So if, right, if there was some kind of international news narrative about let's say, Palestinians, uh, resisting Israeli occupation, along the same lines, we probably could do the campaign about the brave, the brave Palestinians. And in fact, I think some people in the world today do look at Palestinians in that way, right? They, but there's been this very long standing struggle over the framing of the conflict or the Palestinians, the brave defenders of their ancestral lands, or are they the terrorists that go in attack and blow themselves up, Right?

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Speaker 2

So that goes back to the role of the media, right? How is it frame who gets to frame it first? Why? Right? And those are the kind of things that, um, in particular in the case of Ukraine, the Ukrainians very cleverly recognize that, Oh, this is, they're already talking about that about us in this way, so we should go with it. On the flip side, I don't think that the bravery campaign that Ukraine is running is terribly successful in other parts of the world. It's not working for Russians for sure, Right? It doesn't resonate for them, but it also doesn't seem to be working a lot in, in countries of the global south, in, in African countries in China, certainly it's not working. So because there this idea that Ukrainians are the brave defenders, and the Russians are, the aggressors is just not accepted, right? That's not how those media sources and those governments frame the debate. So yes, so it's like very much dependent on existing, like I was saying before, preexisting historical alliances and geopolitical alliances that have very little to do with branding. If anything, branding can amplify, um, ideas and beliefs that people already have. I don't know that it can necessarily change them so much.

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Speaker 1 Q9

Thank you. Um, I've read, uh, some of, uh, Kovac's work and, uh, mainly she was covering, uh, Chinese soft power, Yes. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and the perception, the global perception, and I digged even deeper, and I was checking, um, an Australian author who is specialized in, uh, also the, the, the Chinese culture and history, and propaganda. Mm-hmm they both were going towards the idea that the west doesn't perceive China because. So China has weak soft power because they have different, uh, agenda than the west, and therefore the west doesn't, uh, trust them. And even they dig deeper into when, oh, you can use Facebook, be careful, but if you use TikTok, oh, it's a Chinese application, you should be extremely careful because they could steal your data? What is your perception about the brand and its soft power?

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Speaker 2

Uh, this is such a big question. Um, I had an interview similar to the one I'm having with you a couple of years ago with a doctoral student from China who was studying Chinese soft power and asked me exactly the same question. What can China do to have the West respected, Like, like it, you know, so on. And

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Speaker 2

So I am a media communications scholar right? I look at, at communication. And so there is this temptation to think that if you could only have the right kind of message and you deliver it to the right kind of people through the right media channel, then all of this misunderstanding will go away, right? Because people will see the true nature of whoever you are, whether you're China or Egypt, or Iraq or Bulgaria, It doesn't matter, right? I think that's, uh, an illusion. <laugh>, I don't really think, because okay, why, you know, if you, if you think from the point of view of, you know, a geopolitical, um, actor who is powerful in the global arena, let's say the us, um, and they view China as an adversary in terms of its economic power, its influence over other countries and so on and so forth, you have to have a reason to want to change that perception before you would even pay attention to any messages, right? So what would be that reason? The reason would not be that you saw some, you know, beautifully produced commercial or that, you know, Chinese state TV started forecasting a different type of news, sorry, broadcasting a different type of news, and suddenly Americans were exposed to it.

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Speaker 2

You would have to be willing to kind of completely reimagine the global order of how power is shared and exercised among national actors, right? In order to be willing to do that. And so, um, I think back to the Cold War, right? And during the Cold War, you know, the US and the Soviet Union were the two main adversaries, and they both, we didn't have this kind of global media environment where you could, in theory, broadcast to anybody anywhere in the world. And even if that was blocked by the local government, people could still access it probably through the internet here and there, right? Um, but each country was very much invested in portraying the other one in a certain way, right? Because that was the premise that they were adversaries. So for me, the question is not how we deliver these positive messages about the country, but how do we get the, how do we change the political and structural situation so that these countries do not have to view themselves as adversaries?

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Speaker 2

And I don't have the answer to that, right? Perhaps communication has something to do with it, but it's part of a much bigger picture of, you know, a powerful countries being willing to feed some of their power and share it. Uh, also building some kind of relations of trust where, you know, uh, if you include, let's say China or Russia in some kind of international

agreement, they come, um, they follow through and they stick to the agreement, right? And, and I don't know that that has anything to do with, um, Well, no, that's, that's exaggerated. I think the way media talk about things very much kind of follows the, the world view that a particular country adopts as the the true view of reality, right? And so it's not that the media independently Hollywood or CNN or anything like that independently decide that China is the bad guys, and the US is the good guys.

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Speaker 2

They're kind of building on ideas that have already been established historically because of various, you know, political things. Um, and it's very hard to break out of these, right? Because let's say US and China have been adversaries throughout the Cold War as well, right? And they didn't even speak to each other until, you know, Nixon decided to broker some kind of a his. Anyway, I, without going into too much history, I think, you know, media and communication people maybe tend to exaggerate a little bit the power of the media to change perceptions. And my my personal opinion is that we have to look at it in a much more complex way that actually brings in all of the things that are not publicly communicated, but that really inform international relations.

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Speaker 1 Q10

Perfect. Uh, I would really love to discuss this topic with you deeper, but I know you have limited time, and I'm moving to the last part of the interview. I have, uh, two countries, Spain and United Arab Emirates, and I'm just asking general question about the brands. Uh, you could be a tourist, you could be an investor, you could be a professor in the university. So it doesn't require particular, uh, specialty, it just your opinion about the brand. Uh, so from your, you know, in your own words or experience, what do you think is appealing about the brand Spain and the brand Emirates?

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Speaker 2

So, you know, I guess I will answer this kind of, if I were, let's say, answering can't hold survey about, you know, what, what are your opinions about Country X and country Y? Right, so first of all, I have visited Spain, so I have some personal experiences there, and I feel like I know a lot more about that country. I have never visited the Emirates, and whatever impressions I have are entirely mediated, right? And so, secondly, I'm a European, so for me, uh, any European country seems easier to understand and relate to simply because of various sort of, you know, cultural similarities or even shared cultural experiences, um, historically. So my, my first association when I think of Spain is with, um, you know, know certain cultural icons like Gaudi and the Beau, the beautiful architecture, um, in Barcelona, uh, flamenco music, Spanish wine, uh, Spanish food, uh, you know, passion, beauty, sun, that sort of thing.

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Speaker 2

Um, and also a country that, um, at least to my knowledge, um, has kind of a left-leaning political system that emphasizes, uh, social welfare and support for family values and that sort of thing. Um, my associations are generally positive, but they're also very superficial, as you can see, right? They're kind of like, you know, um, architecture, music, food, that sort of thing. Um, I don't know that much. I mean, I know that Spain is a, for, uh, used to have a fascist government and a dictatorship, and that that was kind of a very big part of the history of the country. Um, but I don't think that actually most people outside of Europe would even be aware of that, or like, recognize that when it comes to the United Arab Emirates. Uh, my first association is wealth and, um, you know, Sun Desert in terms of demo, uh, geographic qualities.

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Speaker 2

Uh, certainly I think of it as a Muslim country. I don't know much about the history of the country at all. Um, and as a researcher, actually, because I study, uh, public diplomacy and nation branding, I've come across studies of how the Emirates is trying to use certain, um, issues as part of its public diplomacy, and in particular the issue of gender equality and how they've been kind of using that as a, as a way to present the country, um, as a modern country. Um, but based on at least the study that I have read, the studies that I have read, there's a lot of, um, kind of contradictions, right? That there's a lot of, um, positive, uh, oh, what's, what's the word? Public discussions about gender equality and the role of women in society that don't necessarily match domestic policies in terms of, you know, access to, um, I don't know, the workforce or other types of things. But again, that's sort of very secondhand, uh, information that I've read through studies of other scholars. Um, as a woman, that's interesting to me, right? So if I were to think about visiting the United Arab Emirates, I would wanna know, well, can I travel there as a woman alone? What would be some of the restrictions? What would I be allowed to do or not allowed to do? Um, and yeah, and that's about it. It's kind of very, very limited.

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Speaker 1 Q11

Perfect. Um, do you think, can you, can you name a strength for one or two points as brand strength for Spain or Emirates?

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Speaker 2

I mean, yes, I think for Spain, any Spanish culture is very widely known globally. And so I think that's definitely a strength. Um, probably almost, I mean, I don't know, maybe you go and interview people in, in Asian countries and African countries, they would not be able to name any kind of Spanish cultural artifact. But I think most other places people will have some kind of association with Spanish culture, uh, for the uae. I mean, in terms of like immediate perceptions or associations, I can't really think of anything. But my, my thought would be that, um, a strength would be that they have actually a lot of resources to invest in various types of programs if they wanted to, two, that could, um, possibly elevate the visibility of the United Arab Emirates on the international stage, whether that, um, is necessary, what purpose it would serve and so on. I don't know, but if they wanted to, they could probably invest a lot of resources on that, that other countries wouldn't be able to simply by virtue of economic disadvantages.

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Speaker 1 Q12

Q12 Perfect. Um, I'm, I'm not sure if, uh, you would have, uh, like please feel free to skip when, when you're not interested to answer a question. Uh, which country do you think, uh, has a better policy to attract foreigners in terms of expats or investors or tourists?

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Speaker 2

I, I really don't know. Um, I, I have not, Yeah, I have not, I mean, I, as far as I know, Spain doesn't have very many restrictions. Um, but I don't know anything about the United Arab Emirates policy, so it might be that they also have very little restrictions on investment or tourism. I don't know.

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Speaker 1 Q13

Q13 Okay. Uh, do you think, uh, sorry, who do you think is more active in terms of advertising?

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Speaker 2

Oh, that's a good question. I've actually not seen any recent ads from Spain. They were quite active, I think maybe, uh, 20 years ago. Um, I have seen more ads recently from United Arab

Emirates, actually, than Spain. I have not really paid attention to them, to be quite honest with you, but I have come across them, so I think maybe they're more active at the present moment.

S

Speaker 1

Perfect. Um, and I will conclude with, uh, do you, do you think there is any, uh, weakness that brand UAE or brand, both, like what is the weakness in brand UAE and the weakness in brand Spain?

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Speaker 2

Uh, so it depends, right? Um, this kind of goes back to this conversation we were having about how the same country can be perceived very differently in different parts of the world, right? And so, but at the same time, the nation brand index kind of averages it all out, right? So it's supposed to produce some kind of generalized metric that averages out all the different countries, both the ones that are positively predisposed and negatively predisposed. And so if we have to talk about it from that point of view, this kind of average aggregated image,

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Speaker 2

I really don't know. Um, but if you focus more narrowly in, let's say, how the UAE is perceived in the West, there would be certain weaknesses versus how the UAE is perceived in the Middle East or in the region in which the country is. There would be probably other weaknesses. Um, and same with Spain. I mean, I'm sure that even though Spain has this kind of very positive generally, uh, image, I'm sure there are countries in the world that are former Spanish colonies that don't have warm and fuzzy feelings about Spain. So, um, yeah, I don't know that I can answer this in the abstract. Okay. You know, this would be kind of a good question for the people who are doing the Nation brand index, because they track certain indicators, right? Yes. And so they would be able to very clearly look at their indicators and say, Okay, on average, Spain is strong on culture, but it's weak on let's say, economy. I'm making the suck. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Whereas the United Arab government is strong in economy, but it's recalling culture, right? So they can answer that question. I don't really know the statistics, so I hesitate to Yeah. Say where the weaknesses are.

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Speaker 1

Perfect. I'm gonna stop recording. I thank you very much.

End of interview five

Interview with: Dr. Talal Al Moghrabi – Nation branding expert KSA

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Speaker 1 (Tarik Al-Hassan) Interviewer:

Okay. So, Dr. Talal, welcome to this interview, and thank you so much for accepting to be part of the, uh, interviewee panelist. It's such a pleasure to have you. Uh, as you know, my PhD is about nation branding, and I have a few questions that I will share with you. Uh, I have to confirm that this, uh, interview is recorded for me to be able to retrieve the data.

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Speaker 2

Speaker 2 Dr. Talal Al-Moghrabi

It's okay. No problem.

S

Speaker 1 Q1

Q1 Thank you. So, uh, Dr. Talal, tell me, what are the outcomes for a nation when they have a good brand?

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Speaker 2

I think, uh, I think maybe we are going to talk about Saudi, but, uh, uh, it's just like a very good examples. Like, uh, when you see, for example, uh, uh, I give you just an example. Now. I was watching the TV and there was an interview for the, the Saudi ambassador, uh, s Rema with the cnn. Uh, and they have asked her that the United States reevaluating, uh, the relationship with Saudi Arabia. So the simple answer, she said, Saudi, the way Saudi exists five years ago, 10 years ago, is not as the same today. So it is a very positive way to reevaluate, because we are not as we used to be. So maybe, and she said, every single agreement may also not be valid today. So that, I think it is a very basic, but a very strong, uh, canvas that Saudi today with a very strong brand, very strong policy, uh, evolving very quick, uh, having an impact on the world decisions, not only in oil, but in investments in the green, uh, movement in, uh, protecting the environment, I think.

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Speaker 2

13 And examples, uh, what is going now in real, even though the Americans told some of the companies not to go, uh, in a indirect way, but we see a lot of Americans participating. So that is also, uh, uh, for the six years now, is reshaping the, the policies and the procedures. Uh, we see the green initiatives, which is going to take place for the second year. Uh, I think this area is going to be, uh, in a few weeks in Sharm Al Sheikh in Egypt. so that also is, uh, reshaping the policy and procedure and making the right, uh, lobbying. Uh, yesterday I saw through the TV uh, something related, like a new company is going to be in the, the, the financial market related to reducing, uh, the carbon on the climate change. So helping companies who want to go green, uh, by supporting them or investing in them. So that's like the basics, when you have a very good policy and we have a very good and strong nation brand, the people are going to trust you because you are not focusing only on your country. You are taking care of the world and also the initiatives of the world.

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Speaker 1 Q2

So the outcome, once Saudi Arabia has a good, uh, nation of brand, is it limited to, for example, economic sustainability? Or are there any other, uh, areas that the, the nation benefits from?

S

Speaker 2

I think, uh, uh, if I, if I can say it's like in a parallel line. So you are going to have a very strong greet here on your country when it comes to having the right talents, uh, the right investments, attracting foreigner investor investors, Uh, also having a strong name that will help you to export your, uh, products and services easily. In the same time, having a strong plan that will lead you to also have the right impact globally. I think that is part of your, uh, studies. So that's mean is we, as Saudi is going to reposition itself when it comes to having the right impact on the global, uh, policies.

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Speaker 1 Q3

Q3 Uh, you mentioned earlier that, uh, now Saudi Arabia has good nation brand from the policies development that it's going through, or the country is updating its image from the past six years. Uh, in your experience, uh, Dr. Taal, uh, what are the components of a nation's brand? So what makes Saudi Arabia today say, We are this nation and we have this name? What are the components?

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Speaker 2

Uh, if we are talking about Saudi, uh, maybe before, uh, we have the, uh, the Saudi vision 2030, uh, we do not have like a clear vision, even though there is a vision, like, uh, five years vision's vision. But this vision is different, because it engages all the stakeholders and it become, becomes the owner of the people. So one of the things, I think one of the, the most important component is to engage all the right stakeholders to be part of it, and to try to build from that, uh, base. So, for example, uh, it could be, uh, revolving all the policy and the procedures because it hasn't been changed for a long time. It hasn't been agile enough, it hasn't been, uh, uh, flexible to attract for an investors. So one of the components is always to try to re, uh, revisit and revise, uh, the policy and procedures when it come to all the, the different components, uh, if it's like health, economic, uh, all those type of, uh, uh, things.

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Speaker 2

Uh, also focusing more on taking care of the, the local people as, as well as creating the global buzz. So if you notice that Saudi is focusing more on creating a global buzz and making the globe, uh, talks about something, it could not be happen. Like new, for example, the Ritz see gig projects, uh, bringing investors, stopping, uh, some of the neighbors from expanding like United Arab Emirates from the free trade, by having very strong statements. If you want to have a good projects in Saudi, you need to have your headquarters in Saudi, because we are the, uh, the drivers, uh, economic drivers of the Middle East and the, uh, the global. So I think those components is like having, revising the policy and procedures, uh, engaging all the stakeholders and having a very clear, uh, visions, uh, with the right, uh, uh, like gig projects that will create the global buzz as, as is happening now, uh, in, in Saudi, and feel free to be part of it.

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Speaker 2

It comes in, for example, uh, as Prince Mohamed Binman said from the beginning, what creating conflicts about, uh, Saudi brand image globally is, uh, the first thing is why women are not driving or women are not, for example, being study engineers and other things. So he stopped that in just like, uh, uh, like pressing the button so everything was not accepted by,

uh, is being accepted now. So I think that is like the things I don't want to, uh, mention, like having the woman to be part of the, the workforce, because that should be by, uh, default. But I think just by starting being, uh, flexible to change all the policy and procedures of, uh, Saudi Arabia's and moving through the big data, having all those decisions built on data, uh, and also invest in technology, making the life very simple by, uh, reducing, uh, the contacts between, uh, like, uh, yesterday maybe you have seen is not relevant, but, uh, uh, a guy from United Arab women, right, from, uh, United States, I think, to create an international airport.

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Speaker 2

And you are criticizing the way and the treatments, uh, were there. So by reducing, uh, the contacts between humans, uh, in the airports, in the shopping centers and others through the technology, uh, that is like, uh, giving more satisfaction. Uh, today, I, I renewed my license, driver license. Uh, everything was just through the up, uh, app. And, uh, my new license come as a digital license to my app. So everything was done in, uh, seconds paying the fees, uh, choosing the number of years, 10 years to going to up confirming my identity, and then immediately I received my digital driving license for the coming 10 years. So I think that is like making people happy because they will not go through that traffic. They will not go and interact with other human being. All of those type of things, I think is making the, the, uh, the, the quality of life is better for the, the Saudis, and they are also moving up on the, the ranking.

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Speaker 1 Q4

Perfect. Feel free to give examples from Saudi Arabia or outside Saudi Arabia with your experience about nation branding in general. I know you have, uh, uh, a lot of wealth and knowledge when it comes to branding, uh, but, you know, thank you for the answers. Now, from your experience, uh, can you tell me what's the difference between branding a nation and branding a product? Consumer product?

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Speaker 2

I think most of the scores, they say, uh, there are no differences, uh, when it comes to the nation brand and, uh, branding, uh, it has the same, uh, concept. Uh, but, uh, I have, I don't know if I have shared it with you or not, but, uh, in a philosophical way, uh, I think the nation branding is not a new concept. Uh, it is part of when the creation of the human being even, uh, started. And if you go back to the history and how is the, even the technology evolved, how is the human being evolved? Uh, we see the, the human they use to move as the tribes move from place to place, to, to survive and find, uh, uh, a place, uh, where they can find water and they can blend and, uh, uh, as long, as long as they find the right place, they start, for example, uh, uh, planting food and trees just for, uh, them to survive.

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Speaker 2

As soon as they start having enough, they start to start, uh, looking what, how we can help others for the exchange of other services or other products. So they started to explore to the next, uh, uh, neighbours within the same boundaries and also getting, uh, uh, other, uh, products or services. And, uh, that moves, like, for example, to more of branding and marketing the place and the products you have, uh, to attract more people to come and making your area, uh, bigger. And also the other, the same. So it comes for the trade exchange, and we having people then coming from, uh, uh, uh, even before, uh, Prophet Mohamed and, uh, Abraham comes to Maca. So people, they start talking about, for example, their areas try to promote their areas to bring more people, to bring more investment, to bring more trust.

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Speaker 2

Uh, even the Muslims, they went to the far East, like Indonesia and Malaysia and those, uh, uh, China, uh, based on trust promoting, uh, uh, their product and services from their origins, uh, uh, countries. And we see until now, uh, people from Hara remote and Yemen, they are in Malaysia, in, uh, Africa, South Africa, all over the world, uh, started from, uh, the trades. So this is the way I see it, is like, uh, people are talking about their cultures, what they have to promote, uh, themselves and promote their na nation with pride and others the same, as long as your message arrive to the others people, and that will build an interest for them to come and visit you. So that will also will spread the world when they go back home. If you have the right also policy and procedures, you have the right talented people in your land.

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Speaker 2

That's mean also, you'll attract foreigner investors to come and invest because there is gig projects, there is a clear map for the futures, and also you have the right, uh, uh, talent people, because everybody's talking. Without having talent, people in your country, you will not attract foreigner investors. So it's not about money. Money is easy to move everywhere, but it's about having the right, uh, uh, uh, talent flow in different, uh, disciplines where you can attract foreign investors in a easy way because the foreign investors, they can move their money, but they will not move all the, their expertise and bring all the talent people from their countries to stay forever, because there is going to be like an expensive way for grow growth.

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Speaker 1 Q5

Q5 Thank you. Uh, you've mentioned the role of policy. You've mentioned the role of people, culture. Uh, what do you think, uh, is the role of marketing when it comes to building a good Nation's brand?

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Speaker 2

I think as we move to, to change the way marketing being perceived, which is now being happening, uh, then we will see the role of marketing, uh, uh, being interested, because now everybody is talking about marketing only as advertising or as sales. But if you talk about the knowledge and size of marketing, that's I mean. It, it comes before you start your products, before the idea, by understanding the behaviors and, uh, of the people, uh, what behavior you want to change, how you are going to make forward, uh, how you are going to change certain habits, uh, how you are going to create the new habits like Apple done through their, uh, products. It comes like how you are going to communicate with people, how you are going to get them engaged with your product and services or nation. And then you are going to see also the feedback, how you are going to improve as a nation for the future based on the feedback or as a product or as a services. So it's a complete, uh, cycle is not only for advertising or making the huge advert about your nation, uh, abroad, but it is about ongoing 360 degrees, uh, process. So that is the way I see marketing is very important, because you are going to understand how is the people in India, Pakistan, China, Japan, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, America, thinking about the Saudis, and you are going to communicate with those people in a different way, attracting them in a different way. Not one message fits all.

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Speaker 1 Q6

When you work with the government officials, let's say in Saudi Arabia, and, uh, they're designing policies or they're revisiting policies, is this with the, with the objective of having

a positive nation, a brand, some nations, until now, from, from my, uh, I, I'm just sharing this with you from my interviews with people from, you know, Frost World countries, uh, they told me that, uh, you know, it's not considered in whatsoever what other people will think or what the brand is, you know, going to be, or how will this reflect on the brand? We design our policies because we want the policy to be like that. Uh, we want to have taxation or delete taxation because we want it like that in Saudi Arabia. Now, when you are with working with government officials or, um, you know, leaders that are designing these policies for Saudi Arabia, are they considering creating these policies or revisiting them to make Saudi have a better image globally?

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Speaker 2

I think yes. Uh, even though we don't have like a, uh, uh, a single, uh, groups are taking care of the nation brands, But I think under the, the, uh, I have this already, the leading by Prince Mohamed bin Salman, because all of those other identities, part of it, we'll see, for example, when the Ministry of Investments putting all the policy changing how they're attracting startups, how they're attracting, uh, innovators, how they're attracting, uh, big giants companies to come, uh, always asking the Ministry of Trade, for example, to see, uh, their policy and procedures, why we are there is like an obstacles here, because that is preventing, uh, them from coming. And then at the same table are setting the minister of, uh, tourism saying, for example, we have a, a, a, an issue. We are not getting visa or so when they are sitting in one table, they are trying to, all of them, them to ease, uh, the movement of the boat towards having a strong brand image for Saudi, because they want investors to come.

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Speaker 2

They have a targets and KPIs for having, uh, tourism, uh, increase in Saudi, uh, having also, now they're talking about the city brand. They are, I think they nominated or mentioned somewhat is the leading the, uh, the city branding for, uh, uh, reap. Uh, I was going to go for a conference last week in Madeira, but it was postponed to December. Uh, my role was also talking about how to the power of location, how we are going to use the power of Medina to create also brand, uh, uh, image for Medina. So I think now even they're moving towards, uh, the 13 regions we have, uh, because I think for the way I see it, and I am sure maybe you have, uh, as soon as you bring like the monarchy like, uh, United Kingdom, the, the, the, the sooner you have a very strong brand image, then you need to move forward, because that is coming as a prestigious now, uh, Saudi Arabia is, I think it came to the stage now.

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Speaker 2

It, uh, it build that, uh, image as a, a country, and then now you lead the, the cities to compete because it's part of, uh, the, the, the, uh, Saudi vision 2030 is to have, uh, uh, uh, three Saudi cities, part of the top hundred, uh, cities, or 10 cities, uh, to have also, uh, the competition between the 13, uh, regions within Saudi Arabia. Uh, so that is like, the way I I see it now is like, yes, we build that, or at least we, we are moving towards, uh, country brand image, and now we are going to go, uh, more deeper in the city branding where we can have more of using the right resources, Uh, because study is a huge country, and we have different resources in different, uh, regions. So I think focusing on the resources and how you are going to bring the right foreign investors for a certain region is very important.

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Speaker 2

I just one examples, uh, yesterday they launch also the, uh, the logistic, the global, uh, supply and, uh, supply chain, uh, logistics strategy. And the focus is not only Saudi, but yeah, they're using the brand image of Saudi as an important location of connecting three different

continents to be the, the, the secure place and the secure supply chain when it comes to oil, when it comes to food, when it comes to other things. So the way they put it e even yesterday, uh, on the, the objectives of this strategy is to try to help and secure the global issues when it comes to any supply chain. So they're not focusing on our issues. They are making the global buzz by, we are taking off the global issues. We are not taking care of all Saudi.

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Speaker 1 Q8

Perfect. Uh, I, I, I was gonna ask you a question about the media, but I want to discuss with you a point you mentioned that they're trying to create now a competition between the 13 cities in, in Saudi Arabia,

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Speaker 2

19 regions. Yeah. Like Rio region has many cities, uh, macro region has regions in the Western. Yeah.

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Speaker 1 Q9

Now, in, in, in other countries like, uh, Spain, for example, uh, the competition between regions, uh, actually led to having, especially when it comes to tourism, uh, damage to the brand, because cities like Barcelona got more attention than the entire country in Emirates. Uh, Dubai is more famous than the entire United Arab Emirates. Do you think competition between, you know, regions or cities inside the nation is beneficial, or is it destructive to the brand?

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Speaker 2

I think what you are saying is a hundred percent true, but in the same time, some studies says, sa our memories and emotions globally when we visit countries linked to cities and a single place not to the country. So you have like maybe with your family or your, uh, friends or whatever, like, uh, a, a, a nice memory in London or in Paris or in <inaudible>. So that's mean, the importance of the cities and what activities it could produce. Like r now is, uh, you see, the last advert is Kama, Nancy, uh, all the global, uh, uh, stars big in one single advert. So I think that will create, uh, an, uh, an attachment between the people who are visiting for United Arab members and others to Aria, uh, to Ur to G, for example, to Mac when it comes to, uh, Medina for the special, uh, journey.

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Speaker 2

So it is, yes, but as soon as not going as, uh, United, I remember with Dubai, because Dubai in that time, they do, they moved fast, but the, the country itself has no, uh, strategy. But, uh, moving, uh, like for example, I think Saudi is moving with, uh, made in Saudi now. And, uh, all those type of things, uh, and always being there in the global, uh, media as a decision makers and influencers as a country. Then you also, uh, you will have, uh, a nice parallel movement with the, the cities. So I think, uh, you need to play it carefully, but when it comes to reality, we are more attached, uh, to the cities, not to the the countries.

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Speaker 1 Q10

Thank you. Uh, what do you think is the role of media in building a global perception?

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Speaker 2

Uh, the media is very important, uh, but as they say it in the theory of expectation, confirmation theory, do not build huge expectations if you cannot confirm that one, because if whatever message you are delivering is being dis confirmed, you will have a backfire. So

yes, you need to create that buzz. You need to create the, the people who are with you and against you to talk about you in the global media about Saudi, about whatever they don't like with us. Uh, that is good. I think that create, uh, more debates for people to go and read and understand more. Uh, I say always if you, we are open country, even before we have, uh, being open. And I have seen it when I was in, uh, the state, I have visited, uh, different, uh, prisons. Uh, and it was even in the media when during the nine 11, uh, I used to go and get license to visit, uh, uh, prisons in, in the United States, and, uh, help them to build, uh, relations because it is like anyone, uh, Muslims not Muslim.

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Speaker 2

They can't get the permissions to go and sit with those people, try to, uh, make a nice environment for them. So I, I try with the Saudi, uh, embassy and, uh, the Islamic, uh, centers, which is under the Saudi embassy in Washington too, to build libraries and donate books to them and other things. So when I was sitting with those people, the prisoners, they asked me about why women, they are not, uh, uh, driving. So even though they are not being, they are in the prison maybe for their life, but they repeat things that, uh, they're seeing in the media, for example. So when you open the, your country to, for people to visit, you are not going to change their attitude, for example, or their, uh, beliefs and perceptions about you. Maybe they will not believe in Islam or whatever, but they will understand you and they understand your cultures and why you are defeating in that time.

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Speaker 2

Women shouldn't drive, for example. So when they go to back to their country, they will not say that we are with the Saudis for preventing, uh, females from driving, but they will understand why. So that means they are going to spread the message of why we are living this way, why we are very united matter, uh, nations. Why the, the GCC countries, uh, always like look the same, feel the same working, uh, like if they are one, uh, uh, nation. So that means when you are open, we, my role is not to change you, but making you closer to understand us. So when you go back, you'll try to share what you have seen. So the more we are open, that means, we do not have any secrets to, to hide. And the people, when they go there, they will not say Saudi is the best, but they will find ways to, to share our beliefs.

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Speaker 2

Uh, uh, we do not have in Saudi Arabia the right infrastructures until now for tourism. We see a lot of people criticizing, uh, uh, we are not respecting the zebra lines to cross roads, for example, uh, when we crossed the road, no, uh, care about people driving with the bicycles. And, uh, yes, this is normal life. It is, I have seen it in Italy. I seen more trouble people in Italy down, uh, the Arab world. Uh, so we do not need to hide any things, but the people, when they go, they will understand why we're living, uh, like that. So when they go to Italy, they say, Yes, you are worse than the Arabs <laugh>.

Preceded

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Speaker Q11

It's true. I, agree. I've seen it the same. Uh, when I was on, when I was, uh, exploring this question, uh, what should be the, the, So if, if the West's media is always looking at the Middle East and educating its people showing the negative side, what do you think the Middle Eastern countries or any brand like Saudi Arabia should do to combat or to fight back this, uh, media misrepresentation?

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Speaker 2

I, I think in the past, Saudi, uh, maybe they did not have a clear strategy for this, but now with the, uh, uh, the King Salman Foundation, and how, for example, all the donations, the four, 400 million to Ukraine is going to be under the King Salman Foundation. So they are using that very strong, uh, soft power to go, uh, around the world by building schools. Uh, but it depends on each, uh, country needs. Uh, uh, Muslims or non-Muslims. They have been in Argentina, Brazil, uh, all over the world, uh, uh, also the Muslim World League. They are using, uh, uh, the power of, uh, uh, uh, of Islam, uh, on, uh, been trading, uh, in different countries, uh, through, uh, the Muslims is not only for Muslim, but for, uh, uh, helping other, uh, uh, nations. So Saudi is now starting to to feed the world, uh, in a way.

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Speaker 2

And as I said in the beginning, uh, by creating the buzz and making them talks about the belief or the unbelievable things that Saudi is considering for the futures. And I think, uh, the new is, uh, the line, the project's, the line, uh, by the way, the last week, they already have started their constructions and, uh, the media, hopefully the global media will talk about it. Uh, the, uh, the see projects, uh, today, they have changed the name from, uh, uh, uh, Al to the, the International Red Sea, uh, company, uh, where they want to do giga projects with global conservatives, uh, taking care of their environment because of their projects now in the Red Sea is being, uh, very concerned about the, the climates and the, the conservatives. So they want to also, uh, do the same projects in other, uh, uh, countries. I have a threat from 2015 in my daughter account talking about the daily stabbing in the street of London, the crimes, the daily crimes.

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Speaker 2

So every time I put a message, if they have that as a breaking news, nobody will leave their house in London. So in a daily basis, they are stabbing, uh, killing, uh, uh, even today I shared it with my family cause they're there. Uh, he's still in the run. I think he shotgun three people, maybe two dead and one critically in the hospital. So this is happening in the street of London in the daily basis, as you said, maybe one guy will still, uh, like a run, uh, motors, and he left, lifted, and they will say, Saudi is not a secure country. See this guy, he's a poor in a very rich country, and he's still from, uh, still a car or whatever. But, uh, just see what is going on in the other world. So I think, as you said, is the media.

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Speaker 2

And I want to say something, uh, to be frank with you, I think we are responsible, uh, for sharing the bad news through the social media. Because if you just examine the, the news coming on, uh, France 24, uh, CNN and others, it is coming from how the influencer sharing their lives or what they want to say or how they want to criticize their community. And they're taking that as a news. If you go to the BBC trend, which is come, you can see it and you see they're just bringing like a Saudi, uh, man try to, to, to act as a woman, and they put him in the prison for 16 years or for one year or whatever. So we are trying to feed them with the news, and then we criticize them, but we should criticize our way, how to be mature and what to share and what not to share.

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Speaker 2

So I think we need to be mature enough to try to help our nations to have very strong brand, because we are the ambassadors of our nations. You, myself, everybody is the ambassadors of what or how we behave when we are in our country, how we are going to behave, uh, when we are outside. I will just give you an example, if you don't mind. When I was in, in San Antonio, Texas, uh, in, uh, in 91, 92, uh, and then I was attaining my bachelor's degree from

94 to 96 in San St. Louis University. These Saudi students, uh, they, you know, these, uh, store cards like we did it from, uh, GC venue and others where you can purchase products and you can, uh, finance, uh, instalment the payment backs. Some of the, the people when they, they, they, they're close to graduate, they go and buy all the gifts for their families, and they leave the country and they put all the pressure on us because we still studying.

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Speaker 2

So they come either to say, Where is your friends? We need those people. And they put pressure and bad behaviours and bad reputations on us. Some other Saudis, when they leave, they do all the damages and the rubbish, uh, in their flats. So when you come and try to rent an nice secure, uh, compound next to your university, because you want your family to be in a safe environment, and you also, you can go walking distance to your class, they will say, Sorry, you are from Saudi, and they have this as a fact. He said, I cannot rent you because you are Saudi and we have a bad reputation about, Saudi, uh, uh, people who rented from us. when I was in London, uh, I woke up on police, uh, downstairs and, uh, the firefighters and a lot of things. And, uh, the, the guy, the owners was there.

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Speaker 2

So do you know what happened on the flat and why the guy left? <laugh> left in Saudi Arabia, and he went all the water tabs of the flat, and he, the whole building hit with the whole bin the water. So people, they notice when they have start leaks on the walls from us out, the neighbours downstairs and the people they come, they open damage the door, and they found it, and he was sorry, he just disappeared. So they are giving a bad reputation. So we, you have to act not for yourself and how you are going to deliver a message about your brand image, which is part of your country image. So I am not going to deceive people because you know, I care about my identity first, then about the identity of my, uh, country. So the way I see it, even when I deliver that, uh, class, uh, to the, the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the, the future leaders, I said, it is start from you then how you are going to talk about, uh, the brand image about your parents, about your, uh, relatives, about your community, about your, uh, bigger circle of your relatives, uh, city, and then you go to the nation.

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Speaker 2

So this started from you, uh, how you are going to present and represent, uh, yourself.

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Speaker Q12

Thank you. Uh, what do you think is the, you, you started the, the conversation speaking about soft power. How do you think soft power is influencing a nation's brand, or how does an nation's brand influences a nation's self power?

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Speaker 2

I think, uh, because I have an example, not for TA Saudis, but I, because I have been in, in close contact with the British Embassy in Saudi, uh, and, uh, also like the French Embassy, and they're using, uh, their strategies and the soft power strategy on print trading on the nations. So for example, the friends, uh, try to use cultures and music more in been trading, uh, in Saudi, and that help them also to get bigger projects for their countries. So they're trying to engage with universities, with the young generations to build different hubs for the cultures and the music and engaging more people. So then the more people are going to engage, because there are a lot of activities being led by artists from, uh, France. And there

will be, uh, in Saudi, uh, the British also, they're using, uh, different, uh, activities, uh, to, for example, enable the generations, enable the, the, the female to be leaders.

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Speaker 2

Uh, they will take a problems like obesity, and then they want to also, uh, educate the people to be, to, to reduce their weight, but to bring, to build up a confidence on them to engage, uh, with confidence in, uh, a daily activities in life. So no bullying against, uh, them. And also to bring that lifestyle to the end generation, you need to have dedicat educated leaders who are in the universities or the schools who can deliver that message in the right way. So they are focusing on those. But in the same time, in enabling people who can take this strategy to go forward. So the way they're, uh, taking, uh, uh, their soft power in Saudi through enabling and passing their knowledge, knowledge transfer, and being engaged with universities in the same time that help them to get more projects for their innovations, for their health, uh, sectors. (22)

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Speaker 2

So I think the same Saudi need to, uh, to do about the soft power is not only helping others or trying to help them with the humanitarian aids, it is about how you engage with other communities, how you are going to enable them through whatever innovations we have, whatever knowledge. Uh, I think the sports is a very good things. Uh, it's not only hosting, uh, and changing the behaviors and penetrating, uh, through others through the sport diplomacy, which is, uh, part of the supports, but also because I think Saudi has a very good heritage of, uh, sports and how we are going to help other Muslim nation to build their policy procedures, uh, uh, organizational structures, uh, for all their, uh, sports, uh, because Saudi is also leading the Islamic, uh, world when it comes to sports, also leading the Arab League when it comes to sports. So going to those nations only see how many nations are Muslims, or how many nations are Arabs, and try to help those, uh, nations who need help to rebuild their, uh, organization structures and bashing our knowledge and expertise to them. I think that is also part of the soft power, how we are going to influence them now and in the futures and bring all those, uh, young generations to bring in a positive, uh, think in a positive way about Saudi and all's policies.

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Speaker Q13

Q13 Uh, I have, I will conclude the, the second section with the one question. Normally the question should be, uh, what is the impact of political event on a nation's brand? But I will discuss with you a live example of how now Saudi brand is distorted on American news and American media, uh, accusing Saudi Arabia, that they're supporting Russia with the oil decision that they made with Opic. How can Saudi Arabia defend its brand, um, when it's, you know, due to a political conflict?

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Speaker 2

It happens today, two different stories, and I will give you how people they think Rahi soak, who is now the prime minister of, uh, uh, United Kingdom. In his short speech after, uh, meeting, uh, King Charles, he said he will do everything for the people of United, uh, kingdom, not only for them now, but he said, I will not make the, the, the coming generation and the coming generation and the coming, coming generation to pay for the mistakes you are taking now. So that that's mean. He's putting the interest of his nation. First,

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Speaker 2

Brings up the bin Salman, who is the minister of, uh, energy in Saudi Arabia, just in the bia. Uh, now they ask him a similar questions, and he said, Why the American think either you are with me or against me, why we do not have something in the middle? Because he said, if they want to put me as a very bad public speakers or minister, I don't care as long as I am putting the interest of my country and the people of Saudi Arabia first. So that is kind of things. If Saudi says, we are taking this, it's for economical reasons. We are taking that decisions for economical reasons. We do not care about Russia or America. It is what is the benefits? What is going to generate more income for us that will help our, uh, nation is, is an advantage, and we are taking advantage in an ethical, ethical way is not an ethical way. So I think that is the way, is how you are going to, to speak proudly and strong with confidence about your nation first. And I think Trump will see how people are loving him because he said America, pH that's a very simple way.

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Speaker 2

From myself. But I mean, everybody is talking about, if you are talking about Trump, about, uh, uh, uh, zelinski in Ukraine, or you are talking about macron in France, everybody's talking about taking care of the people of your country first. Yeah. So, uh, that is Saudi says, we are taking care of our nations. We are taking the care of, uh, we are taking care of the oil. Not for now is for, uh, we have slogans. We have a lot ofs says, I doom, uh, campaign frustrates. You need to take care of your energy now because you are not taking care of yourself, but think of the generations to come. So that is, uh, the decisions being taken because you are taking care of our, uh, wealth and oil. Oh, <laugh>.

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Speaker Q14

Fair enough, fair enough. Now, the last section, Dr. Taal, is a comparison between new AE and Spain. Now, mainly the comparison is in the economic field, so it's not political, um, in the economic field in terms of attracting investors, tourists, or even expats or international immigrants. Um, from your own nation branding experience, what do you think is appealing about brand Spain? I want three points and about brand new uae three points, if you have,

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Speaker 2

I haven't been in Spain, but I can build up on the perceptions I have and all the families and friends who visit the Spain. Uh, so the, the, the perception is, is nice people very act, uh, open people similar to the Arabs, uh, even they have their daily night life. Uh, they stay until late nights. Uh, they're games even start late nights. Uh, they are attracting visitors as well as investors. So they will, they go to Barcelona or uh, uh, Jabal Par or whatever, but they are talking about Spain. So they say, We are traveling to Spain, but when it comes to the Arabs or the Saudis, they say we're traveling to Dubai, not to, uh, United Arab Emirates. Yeah, but Emirates, they, or United or Dubai, they, the reality is they, they have a very successful stories to have a very competitive advantage, and they are a way of their competitors, Muhammad bin Salman, when he comes with any initiatives.

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Speaker 2

As soon as you try to communicate his, uh, previous initiatives, he brings you with, uh, another gap. So that is, uh, a way he build up, uh, Emirates real estate. Still people, they love to go there, or the stars of, uh, uh, the world they feel is more, uh, uh, uh, destinations to go to Dubai, uh, than, uh, Saudi until now, we, we have the golden visa, or the indefinite stay visa, but we still, we have not attracted the, uh, global figures. So yes, Dubai is, uh, is, yeah, is booming more than, uh, Abu Dhabi more than United Arab s that is a fact. And they still, they're attracting, uh, ongoing visitors from all over the world. Uh, when I was in London

and advert in the radio, uh, uh, a guy talking to his mom, uh, he said, Uh, I will see you six hours, mom.

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Speaker 2

I am in Dubai shopping and coming back. So that means a single trip, you can go to the free trade zone, do the right cho, come back to London with the nice gifts to your family. So that is the way they attracting more people to go for a short visit, long visit, to have a second home, uh, there by buying, uh, uh, real estate, uh, the most expensive builders being purchased by different billionaires, Indian billionaires. Uh, now I think one is just both a few days ago from, uh, Ashire, uh, the Kuwaiti guy. Uh, so it comes as the most expensive, uh, villa in the, uh, Dubai. So, or in the world. So still attracting people to buy clients or villas or houses or invest in the real estate. So that is the difference. I'd see it between Spain and, uh, United Arab is counting by,

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Speaker 15

Uh, from your experience, what, which country do you think is more active in terms of advertising?

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Speaker 2

Uh, I think, uh, it, it depends on like what I see on, uh, on, uh, the advert on, uh, the social media. But, uh, I think Turkey, when they, the Saudi opens back to them, they attracted, uh, a lot of Saudis back in, uh, in a second to go to Turkey. Uh, even like my, uh, uh, my younger brother, uh, he loves to travel to China and, uh, all over the world, but, uh, uh, he said, I want to go out to ul. So he just took a blame and went to Saul. Then my other brother took his family and to Saul. So I don't know how they, in, in, in very short time, they,

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Speaker 1

But sorry,

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Speaker 2

In terms of with the perceptions being like, it is not a country's a safe, uh, country, and as soon as Saudi in the border again, uh, to allow you to travel, they were able to attract, uh, uh, people. But, uh, I think for example, uh, uh, the ambassador of Japan, uh, France, uh, United, uh, kingdom, they are very active in engaging with the local community in Saudi Arabia in, uh, uh, tracking people to visit, uh, uh, their countries. So there is, uh, visit UK and they have a visit UK for gcc. So they try to communicate with them based on their interests, where to go in the right kingdom, Uh, France, they have a similar things where to go in France and to have, for example, the music, the cultures, the museum. So they are active on try to communicate with the different messages based on the different nations or the different cultures or the different background who are coming from as a gcc.

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Speaker Q16

Okay, I will conclude. Dr. Taal. Uh, how can a nation, how can the brand of the nation be a communications tool to sell the country to the world?

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Speaker 2

it will, It's a very, it's a very simple answer, but the prerequisite is very hard work. And the example is like when you get lost during your shopping, uh, by having a confusion, which products to buy, uh, from a small products to a very expensive, uh, products, you will put the perceptions back to made in. So when it comes to watch, maybe you'll go to the Switzerland,

uh, watch. When it comes to technology, you go to the German, uh, and Japanese technologies when it comes to, uh, cars and the safety of the cars and the sophisticated technology immediately will go to the German, uh, car. Uh, so building a brand image will help you to achieve a lot of things beyond only delivering and exporting your cultures, your products. Uh, so that is the way people, they will know you or when they do not know you, they will immediately go back to their minds and back memory.

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Speaker 2

Do we have, do you know anythings about those? So if we do not have a brand image, whatever products we explore to any countries, it'll stay in the shelves because maybe they will buy, uh, a Tunisian dates, but they will not buy the, the Saudi dates because they do not know anything about Saudi, even though the Saudi days maybe one of the best in the world, for example. So that is, uh, it comes, you need to do a lot of hard work to bring that brand image of your country. So that will make it easier for, uh, productions, for your investors, local investors, international investors, to be proud to come and invest in your country, and also to have factories in your country and export from your country because you have a brand image. Uh, and, uh, China even you start, if you, uh, ask your grand, uh, uh, parents or whatever, even I start and ask my grand, uh, father or mother, anything about China that's mean is not good quality, right?

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Speaker 2

But still, China is the most and the massive and the productions of the world. So all the products is coming, uh, from China. So when you go to the market, you know, if you want to buy a very expensive watch, you know where to go. And if you want to buy a cheap watch, you know which brands to buy. And, uh, if you want to look nice but attractive, but you do not care about, uh, if you the brand is origin or not, you just go to the cheap, uh, Chinese, uh, uh, brand. So that is I think, the perception, uh, of brand and brand image when it comes on even the daily, uh, consumptions of life.

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Speaker 1

Thank you very much, Al. It's been a pleasure to have you, and I thank you for the input and for answering the questions.

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Speaker 2

Well, it's a pleasure and, and I wish you the best on, uh, uh, the data collections and all the analysis.

End of interview six

Interview with: Khalid bin Rajab – Marketing and Communications Ministry of Tourism Tunisia

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Speaker 1 (Interviewer Tarik Alhassan)

Q1 So, Mr. Khalid, thank you for your time and welcome to this, uh, interview for a PhD research Exploring Nation of Branding. Uh, I thank you for accepting to be part of this research, and I would like to start my questions with, uh, for you to give me your definition about what Nation of Branding is.

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Speaker 2 Khalid bin Rajab

Well, thank you Tarek, and thank you for having me. Uh, this interview for PhD, I wish you all the best for your PhD. Um, for, um, my definition is, uh, for nation branding, branding, the definition is, uh, uh, is as follows. Uh, nation branding is the perception of a country, um, whatever it is. So, um, the country or the nation needs to promote itself as a whole place, as a whole territory for foreign people, um, to, uh, to visit or to, um, to invest or, uh for their quality of goods and, uh, for, uh, attracting talents So this is, um, I mean, my definition for nation branding, so it is how we perceive that country. When we grow up, when we, I remember when I was a kid when there is country that, I don't know, I, I always think that it's more interesting than my country, because it's something I, I see on media. So bit by bit I discovered through the different media channels, and I tried build up the perception that I have on that country, and I think that it happens with everyone.

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Speaker 1 Q2

Okay. Thank you. Um, from your experience, uh, Khalid, what are the outcomes for a nation when they have a good brand?

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Speaker 1

Sorry, sorry. Khaled. I need to ask the question again and hear the answer again because I didn't, the voice was cutting completely. I couldn't hear anything

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Speaker 1

What are the outcomes? What, what happens to the nation when they have a good brand?

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Speaker 2

Well, uh, as I said, um, each nation has a different element, like a tree, different, uh, different branches for its branding. So it might be, uh, economic, uh, branch or, um, political branch or, um, economic, or cultural. Uh, for example, if I, we think about, uh, uh, Japan, it's a very powerful when it comes to the economy. So this is the main outcome. Japan is technological outcome, uh, which is, um, which is the, the, the channels that fill, uh, through which we, we, we perceive the, the branding of Japan. If we think example about, uh, uk it's, uh, it's powerful in terms of legacy. Uh, if we think about, uh, uh, USA also, it's, it's powerful, uh, in terms of technological and political. So it depends on the branch, uh, on which, uh, the country, uh, want to position itself and build its branding. Uh, also, uh, through emotional,

uh, branches. Also, if we think about it, uh, uh, the country or nation, whatever, whatever, I mean, whatever it is, it needs to work on connection, uh, with people around the world. So I think this is it. The, I mean, the most powerful, outcome for each nation depends on, which branch they work on.

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Speaker 1 Q3

Q3 Okay, perfect. Thank you. Uh, from your experience, can you name the most important components, or as you call them, branches of a nation's brand?

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Speaker 2

The most important component, um, the I mean, most important component for nation. For me, my point of view is, um, the airline companies, especially for tourism. I mean the, uh, the, the national air carrier companies, airlines, Uh, if we take some example from different countries like Singapore, I think, uh, the first example that comes to my mind is Singapore Airlines, or Emirates Airlines, or Turkish Airlines, uh, this, this company, airlines, companies are, uh, leveraging, uh, the nation brand of, uh, their respective countries. So it's a kind of connection, a strong connection between the airlines, uh, company, and it's, uh, a country of origins.

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Speaker 1

Okay. Can you please elaborate more?

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Speaker 2

Um,

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Speaker 1 Q4

So how would this be important for the nation to, um, you know, so if, as you mentioned earlier, when the nation has a good brand there are economic or political or social benefits. So if the nation has a strong brand component, such as the airline, how would that help the nation to gain politically or economically or socially,

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Speaker 2

Economically? It can, it can be a good, I mean, a good, uh, uh, branch if we want to cover that way to construct and to build the, the, the nation brand, because the airlines company travels around the world. It depends, I mean, how often or, uh, how long it goes to other countries. So the national flag and the national culture goes with that, uh, travels with that airlines company. So it's very important component for me, for nation branding is to work on the, uh, airlines company and to associate the nation branding with that company, as I said, because it travels around the world. So the, the, the, the people in other countries can see a country through that company.

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Speaker 1 Q5

A5 Okay. Perfect. Uh, Khalid what are the differences between branding a consumer product and branding and nation?

S

Speaker 2

Well, the, the, how can I say? It's, um, I mean, if we want to construct branding campaign, it's the same, uh, path we go through, but the outcome is not the same. So, if we want, for example, if we talk about, uh, a product branding, so here, uh, we talk about a promise. Okay. That that product that product or that company in the mind of the consumer. In other words,

in other terms, it means that, uh, if I buy a product, I buy a value, a promise of that product. For a country, it's a slightly different Okay. Uh, as I said, uh, nation branding, it's, an image. It's not a promise, but it's, um, it's a image in our head, in our mind, uh, that is, uh, built up with different components, uh, different, than, companies. Uh, so this is the perception of a country. It's not a promise like the product, but it's a, a perception how we perceive that country.

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Speaker 1 Q6

Q6 Okay. Okay. Um, can you describe the role of marketing when it comes to building a good nation brand?

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Speaker 2

Well, if it comes to marketing to build the, uh, a nation brand, we have to go, uh, through steps. The first step is, uh, to analyse the differences, I mean, to analyse the market, to analyse the other countries. What are, I mean, the most powerful, uh, branch, in nation branding Uh, is what are what are the policies of each country? So this is the first step that needs to be achieved and accomplished it by, by the country, is to analyse, to have clear idea of what's going on around you. Second step, I think, is to, uh, to construct, to build up your image, how, you know, I mean, to ask yourself a question, which is, how am I, or how do I want to be perceived? And then I must think about the different channels, the different environment in which we want to build up, or to put that, um, uh, image or to put the, the, the component of this, uh, components of that image into practice and make it visible and make it available for the audience.

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Speaker 2

I think this is it, but the most important thing, uh, most important step is vision, is to ask yourself, what do I want? Or how do I want to be perceived? What image I want to, uh, to, I mean, to, uh, uh, to give it away. And then I have to put this the next, I mean, the next last step is objective, and object allows us to, uh, to give, I mean, to give us, uh, a kind of, um, a kind of, um, target, or, I mean, uh, goal for our marketing strategy for the nation. Branding. In other words, it gives us the possibility to measure, uh, uh, to measure what we are achieving.

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Speaker 1 Q7

Okay. Perfect. Perfect. So we're talking about having a vision, objective, plan, and then, uh, conduct the communication advertising

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Speaker 1

Right, right.

S

Speaker 1 Q8

Q8 Okay. What about the role of policies in, um, communicating a positive Nation brand? What is the role of policies when it comes to branding nations?

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Speaker 2

You said the politics?

S

Speaker 1

Policies.

S

Speaker 2

Uh, policies. Policies. Well, well, it should be, uh, I mean, something's, it should be coordinated by the government efforts to manage a country image, uh, in order to promote the nation branding through, uh, tourism, investment, and foreign relations. Uh, in this regard, nation branding is, uh, uh, seen as a, a, a powerful tool in the hand of the government, uh, and especially for small countries, uh, who are, um, who are eager and interested to strengthen or to promote their economic position, uh, with the, the policies of the country. So in order to be able, at the end, automatically, uh, I mean, at the end, it, uh, that need to be achieved by the government in order to be able to compete other countries, uh, when it comes to, uh, uh, economic or financial policies, uh, uh, I mean, uh, on different levels.

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Speaker 1 Q9

Q9 Right. Uh, you, you work with the, with the Tunisian Tourism Board. Um, can you tell me what are the strategy for communicating the, the Touristic Tunisian brand? Um, what are the considerations that you make when it comes to policy setting, when it comes to communications? What are the hardships that you face

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Speaker 2

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>? Well, when it comes to tourism, uh, from the perspective of the ministry of tourism, we work, uh, very, very hard on, uh, creating, a favourable context that, uh, allows the, the audience or the people around the world to appreciate what the country, um, has to offer to visitors in terms of experience. So, um, the context is, uh, is, uh, is the whole image, the brand of the, that the country wants to, to build up through tourism. So we want our country to be viewed as, uh, as a modern, secure state. Uh, the chances that the tourism can, can have to visit attractive destinations that they can enjoy. Um, so this is, I mean, the tourism is something we work very hard on it. So in order to be able to promote, uh, to promote the, uh, the experience, how the people can enjoy our culture, our weather, our people, especially the communities, local communities that they have, uh, uh, attracting and interesting legacy. Uh, so this is it. I mean, uh, I mean to, I mean, to appreciate, I mean, to, to give the, the people to appreciate that, uh, whenever they come to Tunisia.

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Speaker 1 Q10

Q10 Okay. Thank you. How do you select the tools, the communication tools that will make people familiar with the Tunisia legacy and culture, and to know what to expect when to go to Tunisia? What tools do you choose? How do you choose them?

S

Speaker 2

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>? Well, um, before we used rely a lot on, uh, the classical media channels, like, uh, we invite, uh, we invite journalists, uh, TV hosts to come to Tunisia, uh, and to present, uh, Tunisia in a different way to them. And, and, and then we expect them to, to have a kind of broadcast, either a live or recorded broadcast to have Tunisia, and that it depends on the theme of the topic of that, uh, uh, newspaper or the radio or tv or the TV channel. But now we rely more on, uh, uh, digital platforms like Twitter, uh, like Facebook, uh, Flickr, um, emailing our, uh, Instagram. So we try to work very, very hard on that platform, this platform to communicate, uh, to socialize, uh, with our audience, and to, I mean, implement, uh, online communication strategy, and try to equip them with the, with the, with, with the, the, the relevant contents. Um, likewise, we work with influencers, uh, to, to come to Tunisia, to, to let, I mean, to, to let them, I mean, to have them talk to about Tunisia, uh, and make, I mean, um, and make them, uh, write blogs, uh, or videos, uh, on

attractive destinations or, um, I mean, attractive, uh, uh, communities. So we work these days, We work, we, we, I mean, uh, we have a lot of work on digital because this is the secured way to reach people, and less, uh, it costs less than the classical channel.

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Speaker 1 Q11

Q11 Okay. Thank you. So you think that the reach for Plat social media platforms these days are costly, more effective, um, and they have wider reach than traditional media platforms?

S

Speaker 2

Absolutely. It's a cost-effective channel, which, I mean, you can reach, uh, the audience wherever they are. It's easy to get in touch, uh, can, we can, for example, we can target, uh, people in, in Chile or Paraguay, if you want. Uh, it's easy. I mean, all we have to do is to have a strategy, uh, and equip your platform or your, uh, digital platform with a relevant content, and then you, you have the audience right away. So it's a cost effective and, uh, I mean, easy, very easy.

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Speaker 1 Q12

Q12 Okay. Thank you. We're going to move to the political side of nation branding, and, um, you can pass any question that you, uh, would be unfamiliar with or not interested to discuss. So the first question is, can you explain the influence of soft power on a nation's brand, or the influence of nation's brand on soft power?

S

Speaker 2

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

S

Speaker 1 Q13

Okay, sure. So we can just pass this question and move to the one after that. Uh, can you tell me what is the role of media in building a global perception about a specific nation?

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Speaker 2

Can can you I have a problem, Trouble in my network

S

Speaker 1 Q14

Q14 Yes. I'm gonna repeat the question. Can you tell me the role of media in building a global perception about a brand?

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Speaker 2

Oh, okay. Oh, right. Okay. Well, the media is very important in, um, building the, the nation. We don't have, um, the, the main and only contact with, uh, with a country that we don't know. It's far away. It's, it's, uh, it's, uh, uh, media. So the media is the, the brand establishment that is well, uh, established and documented. So this type of media can, uh, give us, uh, the, the branding, the, the, the, I mean, um, the elements of the country. They can, uh, they can give us, uh, some information about its legacy, about its culture, about its economy. So this, through this me, the media platforms, either the classical media or social media, we can build up, uh, our nation branding through this channel. And it's very, uh, um, I mean, very important, uh, media platform, uh, uh, I mean, if we try to, to keep it, to keep it up with that, uh, that level. Uh, so the social media would be the most and effective, uh, steps, uh, to take if you want to work, uh, effectively on the nation branding.

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Speaker 1 Q15

Okay. I'm gonna have the question now from a different perspective. So you mentioned that media has a very important role in building a, uh, public image, or, or a global perspective about specific nation. But I'm gonna discuss with you media that is not, it's not what Tunisia is communicating to the world. It's when the CNN speaks about Tunisia, and it's not a paid promotion, it's in the news or it's in a political program. Now, there, you mentioned that there is importance and there is an effect of media on, on brands in general. Right? Um, what is the impact when some countries are misrepresented in foreign media such as Hollywood? Uh, if Hollywood is constantly, uh, when they have anything to do with the Middle East, or show any destination in the Middle East, it's mostly desert and camels. Yeah. And this does not reflect reality. What is the impact of media misrepresentation for specific nation of brands, and how can these brands defend themselves when they are misrepresented?

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Speaker 2

Well, this is very true. I mean, we can be misrepresented, any country can be misrepresented by, uh, by foreign media. Uh, and, uh, it's very challenging, uh, what you just said. I mean, this is very true. And, uh, uh, from my perspective, I think the best way is that to have, uh, your ears open, um, I mean, to know what's going on and how your image is treated abroad in, in a, in a foreign media. And then the second step you have to correct to correct, uh, your image if there is a need too. For example, uh, remember, uh, um, a country, I can't remember exactly, it's Kazakhstan, I think I mentioned that during a conference, Kazakhstan, it was misrepresented in a very, very bad way in a movie. And, uh, I think the officials of the country, they do not correct the image, uh, which was, uh, uh, I mean, was, um, uh, was, I mean, was perceived by the audience, but they tried to make, make fun of it in a way that, uh, as, uh, for example, as a, who's watching the, that movie, I, at that moment, I had absolutely no idea about that country.

S

Speaker 2

And, uh, through that movie, I said, Well, this is. I mean, very poor, very poor, representation. Um, I mean, this is the only idea I got about the country from the movie. And, uh, once I, I, I, I saw the, the, the, the, the, the reaction of the officials of that, that country, it made me laugh. So this is very challenging for each country is to have, uh, uh, uh, I mean, to keep, as I said in the, in the beginning, to keep, there is a lot to know what's going on, and then try to correct that image if they, to, uh, to, to, if there's a need to, to correct it. If not, um, that would be a positive. If the, the, the coverage of the media, for example, by CNN, they're talking bad about you about what's going on the political level or a level that wouldn't be good. It, it's an extra, war, uh, if it's in a, if it's not the case, we need to interact, to interact in, in a way to correct the bad image, uh, that, uh, that shape it up like the, the host of, of the program.

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Speaker 1 Q16

Q16 You, you mentioned the example of Kazakhstan and how it was mis misrepresented in Hollywood. So yes. What do you think, uh, Kazakhstan could do to? have a war with a big platform like Hollywood, or to educate people or to reach the amount of people that the movie that was produced in Hollywood has reached?

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Speaker 2

Well, well, they cannot have a war. And, uh, I mean, because, uh, if we talk about Hollywood, it's, uh, I mean, it's a very powerful, uh, powerful platform for movies and communication

through the movies that they produce, uh, each month and each and each week. So it's not a war and a literally war, but they need to have a kind of, um, as I said, a kind of relationship with them in order to promote or try to promote, uh, our country through this platform. For example, I'll give you an example. Morocco, for example, Morocco, they have, they have a good relationship with h by having, uh, uh, what we call it in, in, uh, cinema, uh, setting, uh, scene, or I can't remember the name in English, uh, where, where the, where the movies and the directors comes, and they choose the right scenes, uh, uh, for their movies. So they have a good, very good relationship with the Hollywood in a way. I mean, they, they, they build up, uh, uh, uh, a good relationship in a way that they, they have good feedback in their movies. And there are many movies are produced in Hollywood, uh, featuring Morocco in a positive way.

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Speaker 1 Q17

Hollywood is a very powerful media arm, right? And they made a movie misrepresented Kazakhstan. Uh, they also have other misrepresentation examples, how Hollywood misrepresents Russian people, or Chinese people, and the perception created. So I'm asking you, what would you, what would your suggestion be for a country like Kazakhstan? Because you mentioned that they didn't have a good reaction. So what would be a good reaction for Kazakhstan after they have been misrepresented and to fix their image?

S

Speaker 2

Yeah. Well, um, the example I mentioned that with Kazakhstan, uh, as I said, uh, it was, uh, misrepresented by the movie and the movie's called Barat. But I can't remember exactly the details of the, the reaction, I can't remember exactly the detailed reaction, but what I remember, it was a funny reaction from the officials of Kazakhstan in a way that they, they, they, uh, reduce the impact of the image of, uh, or, or let me say, the misinterpretation or misrepresentation of their country in that movie. So they try to use what is being, what has been used in that movie, and put it in a funny way. But I can remember exactly, uh, what, what it was exactly. If you want me, I can get back to you with the details, but I remember it was really, it made me, I mean, it made me laugh, said, Wow, it's very, very funny.

S

Speaker 2

So they used it in, uh, on a national level in their commercial, in their official communication. And they used that misinterpretation, misrepresentation, sorry, uh, uh, used it in the movie in a funny way. Uh, that's an example. Other example I remember is to combat or to, to, to fight, or to, I mean, to, uh, to, to, to combat, uh, this, I mean, giant platform, media platform is to try to have a similar one on the other side. And, uh, remember, uh, you know, tariff that, that China, for example, China has, uh, uh, its own media outlet, uh, cgt, uh, Cgtn, uh, China Global, uh, national network, uh, Russia, the same has its own media outlet. Um, Turkey also has its media outlet. So they tried to combat the, the influence this powerful media by trying create another one on the other, on, on the other side.

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Speaker 2

So the audience, in this case, they would have two sources or three sources. It depends on the country. Uh, if I want for example, to, to know, uh, to, I mean, to inform, uh, I mean, to get informed about the news in, uh, Russia, I have two sources. I have, uh, uh, Sky News, or was News British, uh, CNN or abc and other side I have, uh, Sputnik or other other media outlet. So this is the real, on the level. So to have to create another channel and, uh, make it, uh, try to make it bigger and bigger and have, make it has, have influence on the audience, and try

to create, also try to look on the, the, the credibility of the media outlet in order to reduce the impact of the misrepresentation of other medias.

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Speaker 1 Q18

Perfect. Thank you. Uh, I'm gonna move to a section where I have just two countries, and I have three questions about them. And I would like your opinion, uh, to evaluate these two brands. So the first one is, uh, Kingdom of Spain, and the second brand is United Arab Emirates. So from your experience, can you tell me what is appealing about brand Spain and what is appealing about brand United Arab Emirates? You can mention one, two, or three points.

S

Speaker 2

Well, when it comes to Emirates, um, well, um, the first thing that comes to my, the first thing that comes to my mind is, um, the blink, blink side of the country. Uh, it's a country for rich people, Uh, blame glamour. Um, that's it. That's it. Uh, for Spain, that's different. I mean, from the time, from the time, I mean, uh, if we go back to the, to the time of Franco up to now, and before that, the Spain has two different images, uh, let's focus on now. Spain is a beautiful country. The thing that comes to my mind is, uh, I mean, um, legacy, uh, um, culture, uh, monarchy, uh, and football, but I'm not really a fan of football <laugh>.

S

Speaker 1

Q19 Okay, perfect. Uh, what do you think are the strengths of these brands?

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Speaker 2

The strengths, Yes. I think for Spain is, uh, uh, football, as I told you, I'm not a fan, but, uh, I see, uh, Spain is leveraging a lot from the football teams. The pretty famous, uh, four years ago, uh, I saw people in Mauritania, they know the Spanish football team players names, which is amazing, incredible to me. I mean, to see people from Mauritania you know, name, the names, the, the, the Spanish, uh, Spanish football teams. I mean, it's very incredible. Uh, so I think this is the main vehicle, I mean, main, uh, not vehicle, but, uh, well, I know, what's the word in English? Uh, brand, I mean, the platform, channels, vehicle. Okay. For, uh, for the brand nation branding of, of, of Spain. So, uh, for Emirates, this different, different, it's different. Uh, I think that they're leveraging from leveraging the, the, the, the, the, the, uh, the authority of their, uh, I mean, uh, um, the airline airlines company, they are leveraging the, I mean, the reputation with the reputation they have around the world through different channels. They have channels, uh, many channels, uh, uh, they, they, they, they pose us a lot of, uh, TV channels. They have, uh, digital platforms, uh, the national care, national, uh, airlines. So this is it. I mean, I think, I think this is it.

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Speaker 1 Q20

Q20 From your experience Khalid, which country has more encouraging policy system for foreigners to, to visit or to invest or even to live in

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Speaker 2

The most encouraging, encouraging country?

S

Speaker 1 Q21

Policy systems. So in terms of policies, which country is successfully in attracting more people to invest or to immigrate or to visit as tourists, Spain or Emirates?

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Speaker 2

Emirates? I think the Emirates

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Speaker 1

Why,

S

Speaker 2

I think because, um, I'm now, I'm given my opinion as a, as a, as audience, not, uh, as, uh, because I can see that on different platforms. I see that on TVs, they are encouraging people to come, they are encouraging people to, uh, that Emirates is a good place to live in. Uh, yesterday or before day, I discovered, uh, uh, a series on Netflix called Dubai Bling. And in that series, uh, they, they tried to show the glamour side of Emirates, and more precisely in Dubai. So they give you, not me, of course, I'm not interested in that. So, uh, they try to give, say to the people that Dubai is the heaven on earth. You can be the most, the happiest, uh, man or woman on earth if you come to Dubai. So this is the main message that they didn't say it literally on the series, but this is the main message in, in, uh, in that series.

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Speaker 2

And I recommend you to, to have a look at that series of Netflix. If you have Netflix, it's called Dubai bling. So it's like, it's like an invitation. And it's a very important for me because the human being, um, is very sensitive, sensitive human being. If we give him the money and give him the glamour, and, uh, you show him that he will be in a perfect place in terms of women money, uh, hotels, comfort, they will be, I mean, they say, Okay, this is, this is what I want. And I think they work in, I mean, very, in a clever way to invite people to their country, to, to, to encourage people to come and to live in that country in a clever way, very clever way through different channels.

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Speaker 1 Q22

Q22 Okay, Thank you. And my last question, Khalid, is that, what are the weaknesses or areas of improvement that you see that brand Spain needs to work on and brand Emirates need to work on?

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Speaker 2

Oh, that's a, uh, that's a pretty tough question. <laugh>. That's pretty tough question. So I'm going to give a recommendation to the Spain authorities. <laugh>,

S

Speaker 1

yes

S

Speaker 2

Whoa. Wow. pretty tough. Well, Spain, I mean, Spain, it's very close, uh, very close country to Tunisia and Tunisia, I mean to Spain. And Tunisia, uh, I mean, are two countries that are, that are part of the Mediterranean area. And I think they, they should be more connection, more, uh, more diplomatic, uh, relations with the, with, I mean, uh, between the two countries to have more, more understanding, more, I don't know if, um, I think I'm talking about the, uh, on the political level, not on the nation branding. Uh, I mean, I mean, they need more collaboration between the two countries because we, we belong to the same Mediterranean area, and we have, uh, different and various, uh, and common, uh, common, uh, culture on

different levels and legacy. Uh, um, so this is very important to encourage and to improve, uh, collaboration on different levels, politically, economically. And, uh,

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Speaker 1 Q23

But, but this is how it related to Tunisia and Spain. If, if you are a, a, a nation of branding, public practitioner, global practitioner, and you are evaluating brand stain globally. So for example, you mentioned that Emirates is more active in terms of advertising, uh, and this is because you saw this. Do you think Spain needs to work more on advertising, or do you think people already know Spain and Spain doesn't need to advertise? Uh, what would be your input?

S

Speaker 2

Well, Spain doesn't need, uh, advertising. I mean, uh, it's not, it's a very well known country, but in comparison to Emirates or Dubai, uh, well, that's the different, uh, different, um, that's, I mean, different. But Spain is very well known country. It's very known by culture, by, uh, by the area belongs to, uh, by, uh, we have common between Tunisia and Spain, we have very different common, uh, common culture. Spain, I think they need more. Uh, they, they at some, at some, at some, at some point, Spain, uh, was, uh, um, you know, that, you know, uh, Tarik Spain controlling north, um, South America, uh, in, uh, south. So it's very, very powerful country at some point. But that's different, different, uh, than branding. It's, uh, a colonial power of a country. Colon colonization. It's a country of, a country of, uh, I mean, of open country and, but gained relevance.

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Speaker 2

I, I, I don't see any, I mean, I'm, I don't feel that I'm in the right position to recommend what Spain should do, uh, in terms of nation branding, cause it's very, very well-known country. As I told you, I've been in Morita and people, they named to me Spanish football teams, and they, they, they, they, they were, they were, I mean, they had the desire to, to visit Spain, like, uh, uh, Barcelona, Barcelo, uh, or other, other countries of Spain. So it's very, I mean, expanded country and very famous culturally and sport, I mean, and in sport level also.

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Speaker 1 Q24

Q24 Perfect. So any weaknesses or areas of improvement that you think Emirates as a brand can work on

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Speaker 2

Uh, from my point of view, there's no weaknesses, uh, directly because they have extensive network of, uh, relationship and the, uh, they have a good, uh, nation branding activity, they are working on different platforms, uh, media, digital platforms. So, I mean, from my perspective, I don't see any weaknesses so far. So I need, I mean, I need to, um, I mean, I mean to dwell, uh, uh, more into the nation branding to give you my, my, my feedback. But, uh, um, this moment I don't see any weaknesses. Probably. There are some, but I don't see them for, for instance.

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Speaker 1

Okay. I'm going to stop recording now. I thank you for this interview.

End of interview seven

Interview with: Brian Ambulo – Trade and investment promotions board The Philippines

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Speaker 1 Interviewer (Tarik Alhassan)

Okay. So, Brian, welcome to this PhD interview, and thank you for accepting to, uh, take part in it. As you know, I'm researching, uh, Nation of Branding, and I have few questions that I'm recording, and I would like to have your answers. Do I get your approval to record this interview?

S

Speaker 2 Brian Ambulo

Yes, I can consent

S

Speaker 1 Q1

Q1 Thank you. Thank you. So we can start with, in your own words and from your own experience, what, what, what nation branding means to you?

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Speaker 2

Well, nation branding, I mean, for me, it has to do with how the country tries to represent itself, Not just through, um, not just through aesthetics or design or creativity or, you know, face value, but actions by loss, by its loss, by its policies. So it's not just, um, it's, it's basically walking the talk. So it's, it's a combination of, it's a combination of, well, promotion and at the same time, action or policies. Um, yeah, that's, that's it for me.

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Speaker 1

Q2 Hmm. Perfect. Perfect. Thank you. So from your experience, Brian, what are the outcomes for a nation when they have a good brand

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Speaker 2

For Asia or for the Philippines

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Speaker 1

In general? You can give a specific example, but the question is, what does a nation get when they have good brand?

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Speaker 2

Well, good branding is good recall, right? So when it comes, when it, well hopeful, well, of course it has to be a positive recall, right? Because, I mean, like what you said, you were talking about Middle East and which is basically tantamount to terrorism or bombing, or like, so that's po So that's, that could be a negative recall, and that's something that, of course, nation branding or branding can also work on. But I guess in the case of, um, well, Asia, I think most Nation branding is really towards, you know, tourism campaign, creating this tourism destination, uh, and or foreign destination, uh, for investments. Um, so yeah, I mean, it's, it, it's good recall. I, I, what I'm thinking actually, that has a very effective, very good

nation branding is Malaysia. Um, their tourism slogan is Malaysia, Truly Asia, Um, very sin, very brief, but it really connects to what Malaysia, I mean, has been doing or doing, I mean, culturally, um, economically.

S

Speaker 2

And what's good about them is they, they've been using that slogan for so long now that everyone, I guess in Asia knows of that slogan as compared to the Philippines, which changes their tourism campaign every, every administration, which is every six months. So there's no recall. So there you wouldn't really, So it's hard if you're not a local or you're not a follower of different communication posts of the Philippine Embassy or the Philippine government, it's hard for you to know what the, what the nation branding of the Philippines is. Another problem with that is there is no one like nation branding, So it's just like, that's the tourism slogan. The tourism slogan in the Philippines is, it's more fun in the Philippines, That's it. But there is a different branding or d different campaign for, let's say the trade in industry. There's a different one for agriculture, there's different one for the office of the president. So everyone, so there's this very different branding, um, campaigns from different sectors and different, you know, government agencies that it becomes complex, it becomes convoluted, and yeah, there's clearly no internal communication between these agencies. Um, so yeah, so I mean, as much as it's great that you are, you know, you, you thought of branding or communicating your agency, your products, your services, your brand, well, it just gets modeled in the end because everyone has their own, you know, voice and there's no unified one Philippine voice. So, yeah.

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Q3 Speaker 1

Perfect. Uh, can you name the most important components of a Nation's brand

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Speaker 2

Component? Hmm. What, what, Lemme just ask like, what do you mean by component?

S

Speaker 1

So for example, in in Nation of branding in general, uh, in the practice of nation of branding, uh, some people refer to components such as culture, policies, marketing, um, history of the country, location of the country, just like the example that you highlighted earlier. Um, so some, you know, like different people view nation branding from a different way, and they would think that the most important components of it is policy or marketing or this. So what do you think from your perspective and experience the components of, uh, and most important components of Nation

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Speaker 2

Sure. Okay, so I guess I'll be speaking about it from my, from my personal, um, experience as someone who's working for who's, who worked for the Department of Trade in industry. So it's the trade in industry branding, right? Or how do we promote the Philippines as your foreign destination or foreign, um, investment destination. So the main component there is our workforce. I, I think that's what we are. Of course, there are, um, we have, I guess six components as to how we, we, um, promote the Philippines. One is our people. So that's, that's the main component. Our people, the workforce. Uh, we are in a demographic sweet spot, I guess. Um, we are younger than the rest of the world, so this is something that we would say to most of the companies abroad or other governments. Like we are younger compared to the rest of the world, meaning our median age.

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Speaker 2

The median age of Philippine workforce is 23 years old. So that's very young. That means they just graduated from college. If they just graduated from college, they are very agile. They are highly trainable. They, they have fast learning curve. They're very customer oriented, and they, they're very dynamic workforce. So you can, you know, you can, they're very malleable, I guess. Um, also, it's also the people, which is like rich talent pool, because we turn out, or we produce around 700,000 college graduates every year. So that's really good talent. And mo and the literacy rate of Filipinos is 94.6%. Okay. So it's not that it's not that bad. It's, it's pretty good. And, um, Filipinos are highly educated and English proficient, and, um, because English being, you know, one of our official languages, and because of, I guess historical like Spain and then being colonized by Spain and being colonized by the us we have this western sensibilities.

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Speaker 2

So it's a good way to sell it to the western world, you know? So you have this universal, universal sensibility. So, so that, so component one is people, next is geography, is what you're saying. We would always say that, um, Philippines is a critical entry point to stop East Asia, um, because most of the key cities in Asia are just three to five hours away by playing from the Philippines. And then we are a natural gateway to, um, <inaudible>, which is the association of Southeast Asia, uh, nation. So that's like the eu, but in, within Southeast Asia. And it's also, you know, very open to ease Asia economy. So China and Japan, Korea, uh, Taiwan. And so we are basically like the gateway, um, of, uh, of Asia. Um, also another component is our policies, our free trade agreements. Um, of course we have really very special free trade agreements that even, um, investors outside, whenever they hear about the, whenever they hear of that would be like, Okay, I haven't, I haven't thought of that, that you have this partnership.

S

Speaker 2

So we have, um, the, um, of course association of Southeast Asia nations. That means free trade among Southeast Asia. So that's Singapore, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, um, Brunei, um, Laos, uh, Singapore, Thailand. So these are, you know, growing emerging economies. Um, also we have the ASAN plus six, so that's the whole of Asan plus China, Japan, South Korea, India, um, Australia and New Zealand. That means, um, uh, of course it's not the whole all goods and services and products, but there are, you know, there are chosen ones that, um, uh, doesn't give you any barriers, you know, within these countries, which is huge. Also, um, Philippines is part of the, um, E U G S P, so that's the European Union General generalized Scheme preference or the E U G S P plus. So only a few countries in the world are part of this, uh, meaning the European Union are giving Philippines priority with some of its products that could enter European Union tariff free.

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Speaker 2

So tuna, mangoes, all of these products, tropical products coming from the Philippines, they're tire free. Um, entering unit, uh, the European Union, also a new one is Philippines being part of the regional comprehensive economic, uh, partnership or the rrp. So this is the world's largest trade deal. This happened in, in Asia, so it's 14 Asia Pacific countries and the Philippines. So that's Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, um, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, So basically Asia Pacific plus China. So that's, that's huge too, because I mean, China is, you know, one of the world's, uh, economic superpowers. Um, also there's the Philippines

and, um, Philippines, Europe free trade agreement. So that's Philippines, Norway, um, Switzerland, Linch time, and the Iceland I think. And then Philippines, Japan, and then Philippines, us. So those are the four, no foreign trade agreement. So that's the policy side. And also lastly is the Foreign Investment Act.

S

Speaker 2

So the Foreign Investment Act, um, it liberalize the foreign entry, uh, the foreign investments into the Philippines. Of course, there are very chosen priority industries. Um, this means a hundred percent ownership of foreign, foreign, uh, foreign companies when it comes to public utilities. So that's, uh, telecommunications, airlines, domestic shipping, railways, subway, persuade, tollway, um, airlines, airports, and I, I think anything that's related to like climate related company. Um, so yeah, for investment. So we have, I guess, so, so I guess just to sum it up, oh my God, sum it up. I guess the components are human resources, our people, um, our geographic location, our access, you know, to key markets and, uh, our free trade agreements in our policies, economic, economic and foreign policies, I guess.

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Speaker 1

Q4 Perfect. Yeah. Thank you, Brian. Um, what are the differences in your opinion, between branding a nation and branding a consumer product?

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Speaker 2

Oh, wow. So, well, branding a consumer product. Well, I, I, I mean, branding a nation is very, very complicated, right? More so for the experience of the Philippines that has, you know, we have 7,600 islands and we have 180 different languages, and we have, you know, like different indigenous people. As for you to become a country that try to, you know, that would try to, as much as possible include all these voices in your branding. Uh, it's, it, so it takes more than just, I guess, when it comes to branding a product where you were saying branding a product, right? Branding a product is, you know, you can have a good sample size and, um,

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Speaker 2

Good sample size and just, I don't know, like, I feel like there's, there's, there's a very big difference between a product, product that you would sell, but okay, before, before I even say all these things, in my mind, I'm already thinking. But then again, the people or these, if you're, I mean, you're also trying to sell them, you know, you're also trying to productize, you know, you're also, you know, because I mean, with my, with my previous job, it's the, the motto is your business, our people. So like, we're clearly using the people as our products. So, you know, like as much as I should say as much that I should believe that there's not much difference between a product, branding a product and branding a nation, I feel actually there is not much difference, apart from the fact that you carry with a nation a lot of complexities of your histories and narratives of your people and the, Yeah. Yeah.

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Speaker 1

Q5 You, you mentioned the brand Malaysia earlier, and yes, mainly the examples that you gave were related to tourism.

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Speaker 2

Tourism, yeah.

S

Speaker 1

And truly Asia. And what is the role of marketing when it comes to building a good Nation's brand?

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Speaker 2

Oh, a lot. I think a lot, it doesn't, I mean, it wouldn't make sense if you were able to crack that one liner, that beautiful slogan, um, without using the right platform to be able to enable that, you know, that, um, that slogan or that voice, you know, that one, for example, one Malaysia voice. Um, so it's, it's very crucial to find the right platform and the right markets that would listen to you or be able to, you know, those eyeballs that would look into your, to your, uh, um,

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Speaker 1

Q6 Let's, let's talk about something relevant to your experience. So for example, let's say you were going to promote investment opportunities for the Philippines in January, 2020. It's a bad date, it's the beginning of Covid. But let's say there was a campaign you're gonna promote. What do you do? What are the steps that you take as a government organization to research then to decide how you're gonna attract the people, and then to select which channels to promote? What do you do?

S

Speaker 2

I guess what I would do is, one is visit, revisit how Philippines has done, um, in the past when it comes to handling with crisis. So when it comes to fur, like, you know, the pandemics or epidemics of the past, how did we do it? So look into the history first and then,

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Speaker 1

No, no, I'm sorry. I'm sorry to interrupt. But let's imagine there was no pandemic. Let's imagine we are in January,

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Speaker 2

Oh, January, 2020, right?

S

Speaker 1

Yeah. But no, no, let's, this is, as a nation, you're trying to create a campaign to promote investing in Philippines. So regardless, like without having a pandemic, it's a normal year. Yeah. You want to promote something for, you want to promote investment opportunities for the Philippine and communicate it with the world. What do you do?

S

Speaker 2

Well, of course, See, I'd still, I'd still look, whatever, even though it's not the pandemic, you'd still look into the what's happening in the world. Yeah, yeah, go ahead. Um, yeah. Well, anyway, so what we do is not just, I mean, not just revisit, but see what, what is the, how it feels like at that moment? Like, what is the world economy at the moment? What is the trajectory? What is, you know, how it's working at the moment. So most, I mean, 2020 is about, you know, financial crisis, um, or, um, or, uh, inflation in the West. And something that Philippines would do is it would envision itself, or it would place itself as a resilient and shockproof country against these economic factors. Um, because we are, I mean, of course, as, as we are very much connected with the whole world trade, but then part of their reason why the Philippines is very resilient is because of its people. One because of the, um, I forgot the term, but all these money coming in from Filipinos abroad, going inside the, you know,

getting into the country that, you know, all their salaries, um, of these overseas Filipinos abroad are all in the Middle East, or, you know, in different countries, in different countries around the world. Um, they're being sent back to the Philippines. So despite, for example, like rising dollar prices, it, it actually helps these remittances. There we go, these remittances to the Philippines. Um, so that's one. So it's, it's shop proof, it's resilient to these economic, you know, um, factors. I would, um, also say that, of course, the quality of our human resources and our strategic business location, apart from the fact that of course, it's a, it's a tropical paradise. It's a first class lifestyle for businessmen and, you know, other expatriates, um, and, uh, low startup costs. If you want to start your bus in the Philippines, um, you know, very, uh, um, competitive prices compared to other Asian, um, neighbors. And we have the right infrastructure for global growth. So, yeah.

S

Speaker 1

Q7 Uh, you defined the points that you wanna communicate with the world of why should the world invest in the Philippines? Now, stage two would be to communicate right?

S

Speaker 1

What do, how do you select, Why do you say, I'm gonna choose Instagram, I'm gonna choose Google, or I'm gonna go to cnn? How do you decide your social, the, the, the, the, the marketing platforms or channels?

S

Speaker 2

Well, yeah, of course, one is defining your stakeholders. Um, one is, of course, most of the people who you should be aiming for are high level C-suite executives. I mean, for, for, for our experience. So most of the time you will put these ads on wherever these C-suite executives will read or where their eyeballs are. So one would be cnbc, cnn, Bloomberg, um, uh, uh, where else we, we never done Fox News before, <laugh> all those. So yeah, cnbc, cnn, um, and then it cascades to all their regional, um, regional, uh, offices. Also very, very critical is pushing all these, um, all these materials to our, um, trade at attach shapes or trade offices abroad. So, well, in case of the Philippines, it's the, um, it's trade offices are located in like 30 different cities around the world. So the, our trade diplomats are in charge of, you know, being able to connect to the, their jurisdictions and really promote it. So not just through online or through media viewership, but creation of, for example, like a high level forum on, um, on clean energy in the Philippines. So you, so you can attract the right people via the trade diplomats in those jurisdictions. So yeah.

S

Speaker 1

Q8 Perfect, perfect. Um, what is the role of media in building a global perception about a nation's brand?

S

Speaker 2

Oh my God. It's, uh, I think it's,

S

Speaker 1

Q9 Now we're not talking about marketing, right? We're talking about media. Media,

S

Speaker 2

Yeah. Right. Well, I guess it's very, I mean, it's very important. It should, it, it is very important because, I mean, media is that, is that platform that amplifies, I guess, um, your message. Uh, so yeah, they are, they're very, they're very, very important. I mean, keeping

relationship with the media, you know, is very helpful, I guess from, from my, from my, from my previous work. I mean, it's, it's, it's very important. Yeah.

S

Speaker 1

Q10 Okay. Let's, There are some countries, Brian, that are badly represented on the media, uh, simply because they could have, you know, they're not a political ally to the United States, and as a result, they would be, or to the west or to the east, regardless. So you wouldn't have good representation of US business promotion in Russia, for example, right? Uh, you wouldn't have business promotion about China in the normal US everyday, media, government, media, what, and, you know, to continue that, there is misrepresentation. Sometimes it's, it, it goes beyond the competition to start to create misrepresentation about nations such as the Middle East or, or even the Chinese or the Russians. Um, how do you think countries can combat this kind of misrepresentation?

S

Speaker 2

That's a very hard question. It's, I don't know. It's, it's, uh, um, how is it in the Philippine experience? I mean, it's also, see in the Philippine experience, it also, I think the, the very, the very, um, people that we try to brand as like, you know, our best is what the media usually use as a poor representation of the Philippines, right? Like, for example, um, of course we'll be saying our workforce is the best in the world, blah, blah, English speaking, um, uh, literate, uh, highly trainable, blah, blah, blah. But then again, some of, for examples like American series, you would see this, um, when you, when you see a nanny and the nanny is Filipino, and then the one that's, you know, being, being, you know, slaved to death, um, mostly Filipinos or whenever they would think of some like cheap labor or, you know, cheap cost.

S

Speaker 2

It's, uh, going to be a Filipino worker. So, you know, from, from our end, I mean, we are trying to, you know, promote these, but the media intake is completely different. I don't know how to combat them, because I mean, I think you can just, you just, you combat them with a good media. I don't know, Like, it's just, it's just a very, very complicated, um, uh, question. Um, but then again, if you, if you, Yeah, so I guess, yeah, like one media could only be thought off by another media, I guess, like that, that that's the equal playing field. Yeah. Okay.

S

Speaker 1 Q11

Q11 Okay. Do you think social media can be as effective as, you know, Hollywood or normal media platforms to, uh, create different perceptions? For example,

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Speaker 2

Sorry, what was your, your

S

Speaker 1

Social media? Do you think it could be an alternative for countries to represent themselves positively around the world, and how,

S

Speaker 2

A short answer is yes, of course, but then again, it's not, it's not black and white, right? Like, for example, like, so I mean, social media is pretty much, um, you know, it's, it's also not the place where there is equal opportunities for everyone, right? <laugh>, it's right. Like, can

S

Speaker 1
You explain place?

S

Speaker 2

I mean, of course, like the, you know, algorithms and it, I mean, I think there are studies, there are studies by a pre, by a former Google employee that, you know, that social media or artificial intelligence are internally inherently racist, actually. So there, so we couldn't say that social media is this clean slate where everyone gets, you know, an equal piece of the pie. Um, but it, it also pertains to social media is just powerful if you're powerful enough outside of social media, I guess.

S

Speaker 2

So it, it, you know, like, you already have this, you already have one foot in the door if you already have the enough res enough resources or you know, enough capital, enough power before you enter. I mean, of course, I mean, if I, if I try to get in, for example, I mean, use social media and then I compare it to someone who's, um, I guess already famous, already celebrated, um, outside, outside of social media than once he, once they join social media, then, I mean, of course it's already easier for them to, there's an ease of entry for, for them. Um, but it doesn't mean that it's all bad for me. Of course, I can make a name for myself in there, but then in terms of ease and like barriers, I think, you know, I have so many things more to hurdle than compared to this one. So, yeah. Um, yeah.

S

Speaker 1 Q12

Q12 Thank you, Brian. So, uh, now we're gonna just have couple of questions about political section, and, uh, it starts with what do you think is the relationship between soft power and nation of branding? Do they relate? How do they relate? What's, what's the relationship?

S

Speaker 2

Well, for me, of course, like, uh, going back to my previous comment, Nation branding is, you know, all about this hopefully dispositive recall. Um, and the being able to associate your country to what you hope it should represent, or it, it's, it's, it is promoting. Um, so that's where soft power comes in wherein, you know, you try to promote your country in other ways possible, um, um, basically non militarily or non highly political. Um, so yeah, I guess one feeds off the other. Um, um, I feel that nation branding is another source of soft power, I think, because, you know, it gets, I guess once you, for example, you already activated this nation branding and it's already, it's already gathering a lot of like, famili familiarity and recall, then that's the time when you start harnessing your, you know, benefiting, um, um, basically harnessing, uh, all those wins, I guess.

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Speaker 2

And then that's when other aspects of soft power can come in. And, you know, for example, like, uh, uh, Korea, right? Of course, Korea and this, their whole, um, k everything. So K drama, k, Kpop, k, k, skincare, k, everything. So, um, now, I mean, of course this took like years. This took like probably 20, 30 years along the line when they started, you know, having this, this branding, and now they're basically harnessing it and everyone has this familiarity in this recall. So now, for example, Korea can go to, um, Portugal and open up this, I don't know, like K-pop festival, like even there's even one club here that had a K-pop, K-pop night, like last week. So that's when you know that your branding and, you know, soft power is working.

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Speaker 1 Q13

Okay, this is the last question in this section. Um, tell me, would there be any effects of political events on a Nation's brand?

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Speaker 2

Oh, yes. Oh yeah. How? I'm just, I'm just thinking. Well, if you've put it in the social, social media with, I, you know, most of the people in social media are highly creative and they really can skew the message a lot of times. Um, so for, for example, the Philippines, the tourism slogan is, is more fun in the Philippines, but when something bad happens in the Philippines, or for example, like the previous, the previous president, which is, you know, pro-war on drugs, um, just probl blood fr um, basically just, uh, fascist, you know, that's when people would use that slogan to like, it's more blood in the Philippines, or it's more poor people in the Philippines. So, you know, they would change the messaging to kind of resonate what's happening in the Philippines. So those political ev those political events can definitely skew and hurt the, the nation's brand. Um, so yeah, of course, like

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Speaker 1

This is, Sorry, Brian, this is internally, right? So Filipinos were using these slogans the way they did in social media. So these are

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Speaker 2

Filipinos, not just, not just Filipinos, but

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Speaker 2

Even foreigners as well, you know, but most, mostly Filipinos. But yeah, it's, uh, it's participated by people all over the world. Um, but yeah, it, Okay.

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Speaker 1

Q14 What about externally? So for example, let's say now we're witnessing the war between Russia and Ukraine. Um, what is the impact on the image of Russia or the image of Ukraine now that both of them are in a war

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Speaker 2

Image of them? From the Philippine perspective, or

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Speaker 1

A brand Yeah. For foreigners. So for, for foreigners, would, would a political event like that affect the brand positively or negatively, and how,

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Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, of course, I dunno their branding, right? But, uh, of course it affects for me the way my perspective is, um, it, like, I don't wanna go to Russia. I think like, you know, like there's this, there's this sudden empathy for Ukraine, and of course you get to know more about one as you get to know more about their countries, not in a good light, but I mean, you get to know about them, right? Um, of, for me personally, I gained empathy for Ukraine and, you know, what they've been experiencing. And this made Russia for me, like, okay, I would not support anything that is, you know, Russia. Like, I, I remember I was at the Expo 2020, um, this year, and then I, like, I did not go to the Russian pavilion, and then

we all, we went to the Ukraine pavilion, and I even had a photo of the, of me with, uh, with my middle fingers up <laugh> with, uh, towards Russia. So it really created a bad light. I think even, even most of the people, um, in Expo 2020, most of them are, do not go to the Russian pavilion and the UK Ukraine, which is a big pavilion by the way, and the, the Ukrainian Pavilion, which is in the mid-sized, um, pavilions, a lot of people are in there, and there's a lot of like, you know, support messages to them. So yeah, it definitely, it would definitely change.

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Speaker 1

Q15 So this will bring us back to the media perspective, a similar scenario to what's happening in Russia. And Ukraine is taking a place as we speak in other parts of the world, do you think the representation or the story that is told on the media about Ukraine versus Russia, uh, is it similar to what they cover, what is covered in the media is similar to other conflicts such as Israel Palestine, or what the US invasion to Iraq and how it was promoted? The stories, in terms of framing, how are they promoted?

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Speaker 2

I mean, for sure of course not, you know, the very unequal, of course, um, you would only hear of the, these, um, you know, Palestine and Israel, um, conflict when something, you know, media would pick them up now when something that really bad happens, right? Or something that would, would, I don't know, There, there, there should also be like an emotional twist to it, like emotional aspect that they would pick up and something that would make for a good story, right? So, um, so absolutely different, different way of, different way of, um, casting light on Ukraine versus Russia or us versus, uh, US Iraq but also, see there's also, because everyone is bombarded with this images and these stories all the time, I think there is a point where you reach a certain level of fatigue and a certain level of desensitization that you just,

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Speaker 2

So I guess whoever, whoever holds the power, wields the power. I mean, because I mean, us, CNN, and all these big, you know, media companies, then, you know, they can just, as much as, I mean, of course, they, they also don't wanna hurt their own country.

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Speaker 1

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Speaker 1

Q16 Okay. Thank you. So we concluded the main part of the interview, Brian. Uh, I just have the three more questions about two countries in particular. Okay. Uh, I think, um, yeah, like, it's, it's, uh, it wouldn't need much of explanation. It's based on your experience, for example, as a tourist or as someone who is professional in evaluating, uh, destinations for investments. So since this was your background, you could give me your opinion as a tourist or as someone that would evaluate the destination for right

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Speaker 2

Investments.

S

Speaker 1 Q16

Q16 So from your experience, what do you think is appealing about brand United Arab Emirates and about brand Spain?

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Speaker 2

Okay, so UAE right off the bat from, um, uh, an investment perspective will definitely go into par. I mean, from the Philippines perspective, we're definitely going to partner with UAE because it carries around 600,000 to a million Filipinos in there. So not just as blue collar, but all the way to csu, you know, position. Or like, even some of the most celebrated fashion designers and creatives in UAE are Filipinos. So definitely a good country to work for four, um, to like partner with when it comes to trade, export, import as a tourist. On the other hand, of course, as I felt that it's a very artificial city. <laugh> very, it's very, it's a very artificial country. You know, it doesn't have this, I don't know, it doesn't have this soul for me. Okay. Um, so yeah, that, Spain, can

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Speaker 1

Can you please elaborate this point

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Speaker 2

On soul? <laugh>

S

Speaker 1

On soul? Yeah. What do you mean by the soul?

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Speaker 2

Uh, I don't know, Tarik, it's hard. I dunno what the soul is, I guess when you go there, because you've, everything just felt so fabricated, I guess. Um, it, I guess because every, I guess people celebrate, you know, the lavishness and the opulence of people. That's why it felt like, What about the Cohen folks? Like what? I don't know. I guess it's just me, because you mean, I mean, as someone who's doing culture studies, I guess I should be, you know, it, it, I am not quite a fan of, of, you know, artificial, artificial environment, But of course it makes for good research, but it's, it's, yeah, it's not, it's not good. Um, so yeah, there's, it just, I don't know, everyone felt so built and so artificial that it lacks its own soul. I, I really don't know. Like, I don't, I I don't know how to explain so <laugh>, but yeah,

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Speaker 1

Q17 I, I will, I will discuss this point with you after the interview. Okay. But at this point, I want to ask you, what is appealing about brand? Spain.

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Speaker 2

Spain, okay. For Spain, of course, Philippines, Spain relations from a government perspective, of course, I mean, Philippines has been a colony of Spain for 333 years. So culturally, you know, there, there's a cultural mix and intersection between Philippines and Spain, um, as a, so yeah, a lot of workers in the Philipp, uh, a lot of, uh, Filipino workers in Spain as well, that Spain even recognize the Philippines, as you know, when it comes to visa, um, restrictions or lack thereof. So Filipinos can, upon staying in Spain for two years, they can apply for citizenship just two years. And it's, it not other citizens, or not other countries are afforded that privilege apart from the Philippines. So, so good for governments, investments, great. Tourists wise, I, I like it. I <laugh>, I love the city because it feels, I mean, it's foreign, but at the same time it feels like home because I guess when I go to Spain, I would, there are a lot of, for example, like Filipino food, they're all in there, which is great. A lot of Filipino foods, Spanish food that are pretty much like Filipino foods. So it, there, there's this level of familiarity and home to Spain, um, when it comes to lifestyle astronomy, um, but not, of course, not infrastructure. So this is something that's, that is, that is appealing

to it as well. Like just great infrastructure and the stories, the histories that your teachers would tell you about, like Spain, um, when you were a kid. So it's something that you would see like right in front of you. So, yeah.

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Speaker 1

Q18 Perfect. Uh, if I ask you to define, uh, you know, being someone looking at UAE on one hand and looking at Spain on the other hand, and I def I asked you to define what strength do you see this nation has as a brand and what strength this nation has? You can name one or two or three points.

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Speaker 2

I think uae, I'm sure, probably not afraid to take risks, maybe when it comes to innovation, I guess, because, you know, they, they're positioning themselves to be a world, you know, this global, a global city, right? So they are willing to open up to everyone, like in terms of their policies, in terms of, you know, like visas and all that. So they're not afraid to take risks, and they're very open to innovation, um, uh, and tax cuts, right? So they're, they're, they're willing to welcome everyone. So that's what's great about them. Uh, also the culture, like the different, like the diversity of culture in that in UAE is amazing. Like a lot of, a lot of, um, South Asians, a lot of Filipinos, Indonesians, a lot of Westerners as well. So you get to experience bits and pieces of different cultures from around the world.

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Speaker 2

Um, Spain, <laugh>, what do we like about Spain? Uh, um, Spain. Spain. Spain. I guess equality, you know, when it comes to, you know, L B T, um, equality, they really, one of the, you know, they ranked one in the world, uh, one of, one of the top ones in the world. Um, so there's this, um, openness when it comes to, um, to who you are as a person. If UAE has openness to like innovation and like risk takers, I guess pain is this openness to who you are as a, like your identity to identities, different identities. Um, also of course that it's long history, um, and, uh, I guess tourism in infrastructure. Infrastructure, yeah, <laugh>.

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Speaker 1 Q19

Cool. Uh, finally, which country? Okay, so in terms of, uh, policies, I think you mentioned both, uh, nations indirectly, because there was a question about policies. If I will ask you which country is more active in terms of advertising, which country would you choose? Who, who's active more in terms of advertising and why?

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Speaker 2

I would say uae, I mean, why, I mean, just one YouTube ads. I would see UAE tourism campaign with Zach Efron and you know, this Hollywood A-listers, um, never see that in Spain. So uae absolutely

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Speaker 1

Thank you so much, Brian, for, uh, Thank you. And I'm gonna, I'm gonna stop recording.

End of interview eight

Interview with: Nuwan Gamage – Sri Lanka Nation brand president

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Speaker 1 (Interviewer Tarik Alhassan)

Mr. Nuwan, welcome to, uh, this interview, and thank you for accepting to, uh, take part in it. As you know, uh, this is, uh, related to a PhD thesis and academic research, and, uh, it's covering nation branding. So welcome and it's good to have you. And for the record, this interview is recording.

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Speaker 2 Nuwan Gamage

Thank you. Thank you very much. Yes.

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Speaker 1 Q1

Q1 Okay. So I want to ask you, from your experience, what is your definition about nation branding?

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Speaker 2

According to my understanding and the research, I, uh, gathered and, uh, about nation branding during last 3, 4, 3, 4 month, actually. So I think according to me, the nation branding is the respect or, or, or reputation gained by the country or, or some state due to the, some of the work that they are doing. Not as specifically, not the marketing communication, but also like if you look at the good governance and, uh, you know, freedom of the people that who are living there and attraction of tourism, attraction of investment investors, and plus, uh, most importantly the, the secured future for the generation, next generation who are living in this country. So I think if you put oil distinct together, I can, uh, you know, explain, uh, it very simply the reputation gain by the, uh, any country. I think that is the, that is nation branding especially.

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Speaker 1 Q2

Q2 Perfect. Thank you. Uh, can you tell me what are the outcomes for a nation once they successfully communicate a positive brand?

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Speaker 2

Yes, they can, they can gain their reputation. And if you look at the countries are there in two different, specifically I have seen, uh, when it comes to power. So some countries are using hard power, especially if you look at Ukraine and all those other country, uh, you know, uh, the warfront. So some people, some, some countries are actually using hard power, but if you look at the country like Singapore, they basically use soft power. So I think, I think, uh, it's good. Uh, if you, if you have a good brand image for your country rather than hard power, from the soft power, you'll be able to get, uh, you know, win the heart of the rest of the world. So I think that is the 1, 1 1, uh, one example, 1, 1, 1 of the advantage. This country's having a good, uh, brand name. That is one good advantage.

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Speaker 2

The second one is actually attracting, uh, more, more and more investors and, uh, you know, specifically, uh, then you have very positives to develop your future generation, plus the skill and talent, uh, of your country. And, uh, when it comes to specifically Sri Lanka, we are an

island nation, so we have a surrounded sea, like entire island. So, and it's, it's actually very good tourist destination in that way. If my country or Sri Lanka specifically any country was having, uh, very good common, uh, you know, quite, uh, and very good governance and public policies. So I think most of the tourists can be attracted to those countries. Uh, third thing, uh, political establishment. So whatever the political and, uh, you know, uh, if the political establishment there, then the, uh, you know, international relation also play a vital role. Uh, most of the countries who are having very good brand name, actually they are influencing power, and they are connection with the other countries, especially when it comes to trade and, uh, other arrangement. And, uh, that will be really good. And, uh, the final one is country of origin. So specifically, uh, those who are having very good brand image, the countries, they, the people tend to, uh, believe that they produce good products, country of origin effect, basically can, those are the, uh, areas that actually I found from my research. I believe that those are the, that you can gain from the, uh, developing good brand nation brand.

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Speaker 1 Q3

You, you gave me, you, you gave me an example of, uh, Singapore, and you said that, uh, I'm, I'm, I'm not sure if I understood well or not. So you said Singapore has a good nation or brand because of their soft power, correct?

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Speaker 2

No, no, uh, because of the, Singapore has developed good, uh, nation brand, so they have more soft power with them. Okay. Who convince other people, Right. Ok. So they can negotiate with any, because if you look at, uh, Europe people or Asian people or African people, and maybe from the north and South American people, you ask, uh, whether they like to go to Singapore, they answer yes, at least to go and come. Every person is like to go to Singapore. Right. So, so that's why I took that la

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Speaker 1Q4

Yes. So, so Singapore has gained good soft power, or has gained soft power because they have good nation of brand, right?

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Speaker 2

Exactly. Exactly.

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Speaker 1 Q5

Yes. Okay. Okay. Uh, thank you. Um, from your experience, um, how can you name the most important components of a nation brand? So what can constitute a good nation brand?

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Speaker 2

Uh, most important component is actually you need to have a very strong government and, uh, uh, infrastructure and, uh, the, you know, moving forward strategy for, you know, long term and short term strategy, uh, for, you know, in a different areas. Uh, uh, so when the political, uh, you know, power shifted, even though political power shifted here and there, the country policy has to be very strong, and it should not be changed time, time based on the political agendas. So I believe that's, that's the, that's, that's most important thing. And apart from that, uh, you can bring good cultural values into that because each and every country's cultures are different. People would like to understand different cultures, and they would like to, you know, experience different culture. That's another area, because we have to have a very good, strong culture, uh, maybe history. So those are the area that we can use for, uh, as essential part for having, uh, good, uh, nation branding implementation.

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Speaker 1 Q6

Thank you. What is the difference between branding activities that are conducted to promote a nation and those conducted to promote a product or an organization?

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Speaker 2

Yeah, actually, when it comes to branding, uh, what I learned and what I experienced, uh, you have to deliver a promise. Uh, for me, it's brand. Some brand, if something, uh, if you look at the product and brand, actually products are manufactured in the factory, but brand especially built on the heart of the consumer or heart of the user. So it's applicable for, uh, you know, uh, country also because you have to walk the talk. So basically, for an example, we, if we invite more and more tourists to visit Sri Lanka with the big, uh, you know, advertising campaign. But if you don't have infrastructure, uh, like if you look at close destination, like Asian destinations like Thailand, Vietnam, uh, kind of infrastructure developed. So, promoting Sri Lanka, then we, we break our promise, right? In that way. The, it's, it is actually for me, like trust and confidence that you build, uh, around it. Uh, I can't see any different, but only thing when it comes to product, actually, uh, the manufacturer or a product owner, a brand owner can take all the decision about the product.

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Speaker 2

But when it comes to country, actually political, uh, reason, geopolitical reasons as well as your geopolitical location and, uh, when the way that you are dealing with other countries, your culture and your beliefs, your values and those or everything come into a play. So, but again, uh, all these values actually, and the contribution will be developed, uh, the trust and confidence about, uh, your country. So for an example, uh, if you look at the countries, uh, if you look at like, uh, we, we believe that according to United Nation, we have about 200 countries. So you can see, uh, first 20 countries. So even something bad happen, uh, people would like to go and stay there, spend their time and find a job migrate into those countries. The tail part of the countries like me about, I'm not going to mention the countries, but you know, tail part of the countries, uh, we are always complete and worse happening, human right violation. So nobody would like to go there. So that's, that's why I'm telling you it's a kind of a reputation that you gain. And I can see a lot of similarities is actually trust and the, your brand promise. So country also have to give a brand promise.

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Speaker Q7

Perfect. Uh, what is the role of marketing when it comes to building a good nation brand

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Speaker 2

Role of marketing? Actually, uh, very important question, because when you look at, uh, marketing, it's in all, uh, uh, you know, if you look at like the product marketing and the service marketing, actually, you have to understand the gap in the market or maybe a certain unmet need in the market, uh, based on that, only you develop your product and services to reach out to your customer. And the same time, when you develop the, your product, you have to communicate that to the customer. When the advertising and all this communication, uh, part came into play, ultimately, now it has been extended. Earlier it was customer satisfaction. Now you have to see whether your customer is delighted with your product and, uh, after consumption disposal also, whether it's cost for the environment. So whether you are polluting seed from your, the packaging material, likewise, very lengthy process in that way.

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Speaker 2

The same way I think country has to bring that kind of marketing, you know, strategy to develop the country, you have to develop the, uh, you know, it's, it's people. One is you have to develop the infrastructure. Another part, you have to develop the attitude and the skill of the employee, uh, not the employees actually your population, your your people in the country. That's how India did, like this small Silicon Valley in Bangalore, because according to my understanding and reading, India got to know in back in maybe about two, maybe about one and a half decades away, so that they can fight with China in the production. In that way,

they identified, okay, China is manufacturing all the electronic devices. Who is going to write the software for this thing? That's why they have, uh, you know, country policy. They have invented dango as it hub and as a result of that, again, I'm retweeting, same thing.

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Speaker 2

So most of the Indian are running a lot of big IT companies in the globe. So likewise, we have to have infrastructure and the skill development. So then we have to communicate those things to the other countries. Once you develop all these things, you have to communicate, and then you have to measure you outcome as, that's why I mentioned like, uh, I think I can share those documents with you. There's a soft power index of the country. Even though countries, uh, you know, population wise, GDP wise less than the, the country like us, Singapore is having very good soft power. Uh, even it's a small nation. That's why I took that example, because it doesn't matter. You are the population. Like if you look at like Bangladesh also having a huge population, but if you look at Bangladesh and us, uh, par is so different. Uh, it's not population. It's actually your attitude and the way you go move forward. So I think, uh, we need to communicate that. And then, uh, you have to measure your outcome also very carefully how respect you, your nation, uh, around the, around the globe.

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Speaker Q8

Q8 Perfect. Thank you. Now we have a life case of you, uh, leading and, and working on Bra ri Lanka. Tell me, what are the difficulties that you are facing to create the brand, to strengthen the brand, to communicate the brand,

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Speaker 2

Uh, create a brand. Actually, if you look at the s sale, Lanka grant history, we are the only nation who are having like 2,500 old written history. So our people were like, you know, well educated and, uh, well talented people in the, in the, in the era of like, you know, maybe about, uh, two or three centuries ago, uh, uh, when the British come to, uh, uh, Sri Lanka, and not only the British, uh, Dutch people came, then, uh, Tu geese came, and then after that, uh, English and the British came here, they colonize, uh, this part of the world, like including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and then, uh, certain human values, actually, we, we lost during that period. Uh, so I, uh, we with that, actually most of our people are potential, but we have to teach them attitude. So that is the one challenge that I have seen.

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Speaker 2

And, uh, second thing I have seen is actually the currently, uh, Siri Lanka is facing a huge economic, uh, challenges. I think it'll take another, maybe five, good five years for us to come out from this situation because, uh, inflation is almost a hundred percent here now, and, uh, exchange rate has gone up again, uh, more than a hundred percent, uh, up. So I think, uh, we have to put those things into the, into, into a, you know, certain level, uh, into a kind of a, you know, peaceful, uh, manner. Then that's another challenge that I'm facing at the moment. And second thing, political stability actually. And, uh, so that's actually paramount important in this uh, we have to have a very good political, uh, system or maybe, uh, the government here to, uh, you know, facilitate those things. Uh, the third one, fourth one, if you look at, uh, so, uh, last after we call, after we, uh, you know, independent from the British, uh, about exactly about 20, sorry, 74 years ago.

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Speaker 2

So we have never thought about, uh, branding. So I think that's, that's like lacking part from, uh, our fraternity. Also, because being a marketing fraternity, we have not given this direction to the government. So accountants and economies are really closely working with the government, but unfortunately, the marketers are little, were a little away from the government because they always, uh, engage with their day to day activities on the place that they're

working. That's why, actually, I also thought of fact marketer here in Sri Lanka. Uh, we should be a driving force to, uh, you know, market the country. So in that way, those are the kind of challenges actually. Uh, we have to in calculate this, uh, uh, nation branding concept, uh, from the grassroot level, that's the quite challenging one. That's why I'm, I'm, I'm conducting lot of, uh, you know, seminars and interviews in, in our native language for people to understand why nation branding is required. What are the advantage that you can get from the nation branding? That's the kind of another challenging area, because most of the people can understand what I'm talking about, nation branding. They think that I'm, again, proposing to, uh, uh, develop, uh, tourism campaign to people to come to say Lanka. It's not, Yeah, that's, those are the challenges.

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Speaker Q9

Q9 But this is the thing, uh, thank you for sharing this with me. But this is the problem. Let's say the new government will accept to work with, with the marketing wing in Sri Lanka and say, Okay, let's promote Sri Lanka. Let's communicate a, a positive image. But given the problems that currently Sri Lanka has, do you think that if they give you the green light to start to, to work on the communication side, do you think it would be a good idea to start now, uh, promoting Sri Lanka with the way it is? Or don't you think that we need to work on the house first or fix the internal problems?

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Speaker 2

No, Yes, I'm agree with you, Tarik, actually in all my exercise, putting the house in place. So initially, uh, not to communicate in this, this, this, this, uh, point of time. So we have to change attitude of the people. We have to give an understanding and, uh, you know, better learning about nation branding to the people who are living in the Sri Lanka, especially public sector, private sector, as well as NGOs and all other, uh, stakeholders. We just wanted to give an understanding about what are the benefits. So I'm doing that, that communication part, actually, not the communication out from the country, but it's the kind of internal communication now I'm doing. So educating our people, What are the advantages, uh, in nation branding? So to communicate to the outside, actually, we have to keep, uh, you know, prepare our house first. That'll take us time. (11)

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Speaker 2

But, but we can start blueprint, we can start, you know, ball rolling in our, in our own small own way. So then when the country comes to the little bit of stable, uh, you know, uh, level, so we can, uh, you know, uh, start communication part. And I have identified the small and medium business sector, SSEs, uh, will, uh, actually, because we have another project launch in, uh, organization, uh, Sri Lanka marketing, uh, to, uh, you know, uh, what do you call, uh, uh, uplift, uh, because twin, uh, 52% gdp, uh, contributed by sme, 45% employment from sme, right? Uh, then 20%, uh, 75% of industries are anting from sme, 20% export, bringing to the country from the symbol even we call it a emme, they're big <laugh>, right? So I think that is, that's, that's the first, uh, first uh, area that we have to touch and educate them, brand themself, their product.

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Speaker 2

Then we can, uh, you know, market them as a country of, if you look, Ceylon is one of the biggest brands. So I think if you look at the brand, Sri Lanka and brand Ceylon, tea brand, Ceylon is much more higher than value, higher than brand Sri Lanka. But unfortunately we can't, uh, after our constitutional changes, we name as Sri Lanka earlier, British, uh, called us as Ceylon. So now we have a little bit of, uh, you know, gap between in those two brand

name, then we are trying to bridge this gap, so how we can get the, you know, uh, mileage from FI into Sri Lanka. So, yeah.

Speaker 1 Q 10

Thank you. Um, can you tell me what is the role of media in building a global perception about a brand?

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Speaker 2

Media plays a vital role because country media actually, uh, if you look at now, you have seen all the, because media controlling is a little bit tough in this time because of the availability of social media and other, you know, new media. So because, uh, earlier it was only the, you know, registered channel, but now you can with the, uh, if you have, uh, you know, smartphone in your hand, you can like go live or anywhere in the world. So in that case, its little difficult for us, uh, to control that, but to, uh, you know, develop positive vibes, uh, I think, uh, media plays a bigger role if, and the industry, like, especially film industry. Now, if you look at, I will give you a small example. I think we talk about this, uh, previously. Also, if you look at, uh, Netflix, uh, the countries like Israel and countries like US, uh, they always produce, uh, you know, some intelligent and, uh, you know, military intelligent kind of things.

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Speaker 2

And, uh, super nation, Superman, Batman kind of, uh, characters with that, actually, it's not direct media, but indirect media also, they're trying to develop some of the, uh, country and, uh, country value and positioning themselves into a different level. And if you look at, uh, uh, Butan, uh, so they have gross domestic happiness index, and plus they have cur, uh, people traveling to that country up to 75,000, only 75,000 tourists can travel to Butan because they believe that they are, if, if that they increase more than 75, that will ruin their environment. Those kind of users are actually very, very few newses. So that's why I'm proposing to our government also, we are, we actually, uh, uh, you know, country, which is, uh, uh, very close to median of the world. So we have maybe about, if you look at like 12, uh, months in the year, almost eight month, good six hours, we will be getting sunlight.

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Speaker 2

So, but again, Sri Lanka, we have, uh, two hour power cuts in DC because all of our power generation, most of the power generation happening from <inaudible>, right? So if, if I'm proposing our government to declare that 2035, we'll be running 50% of our electricity requirement from solar, right? So those are the kind of news that, because entire world now thinking about climate mitigation, adaptation, hgd goals, so those kind of small tricky thing we can use as a country to, uh, you know, uh, get the media, uh, uh, get the focus from the world, right then in that way, actually, rather than talking about riots and all the protests in the road and full queues. The meanwhile, if Ri Lanka can develop that kind of a good vibes. So, uh, I think, and that is one thing, and if you look at, uh, if you look at the, as a nation, we are the most donated of blood, blood and ice. So Sri Lanka has most number of people who are donating ice after they, they, after their they die. And, uh, donation of blood, if you look at like blood donation center, all the weekends, you can see huge cue to donate their blood. Those are good vibes that we can, you know, promote for s Lanka. But I am little doubtful whether the Sri Lanka media is doing their part right, to, uh, uh, promote this.

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Speaker 1 Q11

Now, we, we'll have this discussion, but from a different angle. Uh, I discussed with the, with the Simon Un in a previous, uh, discussion that, uh, when it comes about specific parts of the world, let's say Russia or China or the Middle East, uh, you've mentioned the, the power of, uh, media and, uh, what kind of perception it can create in terms of shaping public opinions and knowledge to educate people. Uh, some, some media platforms tend to, if there is, for example, a protest in City Lanka, they would have videos distributed all over the world to show that part of the world that has riots or protests. But then City Lanka has the highest blood donors in the world, or the country that donates eyes, the, the most in the world after people's death, which is a good contribution. This doesn't go to the media. So in other words, some media platforms, if there is bad news about the Middle East or about Ciri Lanka or about Russia, I will distribute it to all the platforms. But if there are good news, I will just ignore it. What would you do to combat that?

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Speaker 2

Yeah, actually that's, that's very good question. Uh, little, uh, little tricky area. So in that way, actually, we have to use our diaspora, most of, uh, the diaspora who are living from. So the people who are living, uh, you know, especially out of the country, you look at, uh, most number of people, Sri Lankans are living, uh, in Middle East, uh, for their jobs and second highest in Australia. So in that way, we have to use our diaspora also, because I, I request, and I actually, even my last night interview also, I requested from our diaspora to promote, uh, good wives about Sri Lanka. So, uh, that's one area. And then another thing, as you correctly mention, uh, that's what the, that's what the power of brand. Say for an example, if recently, if you notice, uh, there was a mass shooting happened in Thailand, right?

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Speaker 2

In the Montessori, right? Preschool. It doesn't stop any tourists to go to Thailand. That because of the security and uh, the brand value that they have gained as a tourist destination. But say an example, if even we are struggling to bringing tourists, even the country time is stable now in Sri Lanka, we still trying to, uh, get tourists here. Even Russia, National Airline and France, near National Airline, they took their flight to Sri Lanka, even Emh, they about to stop, right? So that happened because that's why I'm always, you know, fighting with Sri Lankan government to develop a strong nation brand. It doesn't, uh, if you have a very good brand image, the impact that you get with those kind of things, little, uh, you know, very little, the impact is little, uh, very less, but now our impact is very high. Even you do one thing bad, it goes viral like nothing.

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Speaker 1 Q12

Q12 Thank you for that. Um, I'll conclude the first part of our, uh, discussion with the a question. Uh, how do you think, I think actually this is this, you've answered the following question with your current answer, because I was gonna ask you, how do you think a brand of the nation can be the marketing arm to, you know, communicate with the world? But would you like to add anything to what you just said, using the brands as the marketing tool?

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Speaker 2

Yeah, especially if you look at, uh, you know, sport like, uh, cricket. So we are a little, uh, in a little higher level, the cricket playing countries. We look at all the cricket playing countries. Sri Lanka has very good, uh, you know, standing on that. And apart from that, we have one or two athletes actually, uh, we produce recently, I actually, I recently met him personally, so his name Ispu Nabe, he's actually, he lives in Italy, but he always run for Sri Lanka, right? He became, uh, the fastest man in Asia about two months ago. So now he's actually,

his dream is, So those are the little, little thing that we can, uh, promote, uh, nation's brand, uh, around the world. I think I have answered your question Tarik.

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Speaker 1 Q13

Q13 Yes, Yes, you did. Thank you. So now, the second part, I just have four questions about two specific countries, and I would ask you from your experience, what do you think is appealing when you listen or hear about brand United Arab Emirate and Kingdom of Spain? Give me two or three points or one point about Emirate. What do you think is appealing about the brand and Spain?

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Speaker 2

Yeah, I will start from, uh, uae actually UAE became a, you know, developed country very recently because the, that area, actually, if you look at like 30 years ago, uh, there were not much thing, but after oil ation and, uh, you know, industrialization, uh, they actually, uh, uh, emerge in the world as a very, very good destination for travel and when new, so whatever. Uh, and, but uh, recently, uh, like recent past, they have some rude, uh, you know, rules and regulation because most of them were like Muslim. Uh, all of them were like Muslim countries, but first in Dubai, actually now most of lot of people are moving, and it has become a very good destination for business. Their focus is, is business. So, uh, they just wanted to become a central business for, uh, all the kind of, you know, global, uh, uh, you know, big multinational organization, uh, regional op where they are, and they attract tourists.

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Speaker 2

If you look at sports, they have, even though they are not playing cricket, they have given all the past structure and facilities and they're conducting some, uh, you know, cricket matches and, uh, you know, kind of competition. So they, they earned revenue from that. And those, uh, if you look at like entire Arab countries, UAE kind of a more secured place in that part. And they are, they are very closely working with the west and east boat. So, uh, and uh, with actually they have developed their brand. If you look at Al Jazeera (airlines) and, uh, the Etihad and Emirate kind of airline who are applying for each and every destination in the world. So in that way, actually they have developed their brand, uh, by, uh, putting a lot of effort when you look at, uh, Spain, so it's actually, uh, that brand name was there from the, from the beginning.

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Speaker 2

But as you mentioned, like in about three, three or four decades ago, there were some down-turn and then upwards, uh, skew, uh, Spain, actually, it is a country, uh, has much more freedom for people to live. And as I mentioned, there are, uh, you know, uh, uh, I think, uh, it's their culture. (Question 13, answer line 25 – 29) They are very music lovers are there, and, uh, you know, people are, uh, if you look at, uh, if, if you ask from me France and, uh, well, you know, Spain people are better because French people are little, little, uh, arrogant. But if you look at people who are living in Spain, so they are little, you know, they treat them in very humble manner. So apart from their, they infrastructure and their geopolitical location actually is very nice because they have seasons.

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Speaker 2

And I think, uh, uh, in that part of the world, lot of brands, I think most brand, uh, came from Italy, if I'm not mistaken. Uh, I think second or third Spain and that, and they are, they are very, you know, um, uh, artistic people are there. So they're design and they are, the way they dress and way they conduct things, and I'm really impressive. Those are the two different, uh, thing. If you, if I, if I, if I give you one or maybe one two s about the different, most of the, uh, uas stuff done by Europeans, if you look at, uh, town design, if you look at building design, if you look at all the CEOs who are running in those companies, stuff from British,

so basically they use their money to bring the, you know, expertise and knowledge from Euro. But when you look at the Spain, so is their own people. So they're using that, those are the different that I have seen.

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Speaker 1 Q14

Okay, thank you. Um, which country do you think has a better policy when it comes to attracting investors or tourists, and why?

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Speaker 2

I think, uh, better policy wise is, uh, is no doubt uae. So, uh, they, they actually recently, uh, you know, invited people. If somebody buy an apartment, they can have like working visa kind of thing. They are, yeah, earlier it was little strict, but very recent past, like to look at last after the Covid, they were really open so people can go there and start their own businesses because a lot of Lanka out now started their own businesses in ua, especially Dubai and qar. So, uh, but when it comes to, uh, Spain and Spain, that part of the, uh, world, so their main focus is, uh, the currently, uh, they are more innovative one social issues, the same social issues rather than like money. So basically because they are very rich and they have already money, so they, they always investing on, uh, finding, uh, you know, global, uh, the solution for global issues like climate, issues and uh, you know, water issue.

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Speaker 2

So yeah, that's, those are the two different, uh, thing actually I think, uh, that's because that's, that's actually, they are long term vision. So UAE has not come to that level because they are still in a business mind. Uh, they always look at, if you look at triple bottom line, people, planet, profit, uh, uh, so if you, if you add the, uh, you know, kind of, uh, marking into that, So, uh, uh, UAE parties is still looking at people and planet, sorry, profit and people. But I think Spain is looking at people, planet, profit, they are more, more into the planet, planet side now. They, they, they are, they do a lot of innovation and invention on, uh, you know, uh, just in the social issues. That's the main difference I have seen.

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Speaker 1 Q15 Thank you very much. And my last question is, who do you think is more active in terms of, of advertising and why? Spain or Emmis? Uh,

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Speaker 2 Is, uh, UAE

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Speaker 1 Q16 Why?

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Speaker 2

So, because I have seen a lot of branding things are happening, uh, to attract more and more, uh, you know, investors and uh, and uh, some acquisition of some brand as well, because they have a lot of money, extra money. So they have, uh, good, uh, buying power when you compare with, uh, Spain. But Spain actually, even though they have money, as I mentioned before, they are moving away from commercialization to, uh, addressing more and more social issues in that way. Actually, I feel like they don't need much advertising, uh, uh, you know, to address the social issues. It's actually very well known issues, actually. You need to, uh, educate your, uh, customers or your, uh, stakeholders about the rising issues in the globe. So, uh, yeah,

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Speaker 1

Nuwan, I thank you so much for your time and it's been a pleasure to have you.

End of interview nine

Interview with: Miguel Gallego Marketing Manager at European Travel Commission

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Speaker 1 (Interviewer Tarik Alhassan)

Q1 In your own words, what is nation branding?

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Speaker 2 Miguel Gallego

(Audio unrecorded for a few seconds due to electronic error)Activities, double communication activities, marketing activities..... (Audio unrecorded for a few seconds)

Uh, we used to follow a one size fits, uh, all approach, making sure that, uh, in any activity that we do, uh, all countries were somehow mentioned, uh, so that everyone feels, uh, included in the, in activities. Uh, but then we came to realize that this was not very, uh, effective, um, in, because it was the end result. It was that it was very generic because we need to find something that will place, uh, more than different, 30 different countries. Uh, we could find that common ground, but the message will always be very generic, which in the end was not that, uh, useful for our members. So this took us a while to realize, uh, and a lot of discussions with the different, uh, nations, uh, eventually came to the conclusion that, um, our branding for Europe need to be more specific.

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Speaker 2

And we start with the one size fits all approach, uh, in this case, one size fits all countries and try to be more specific. And we're trying, that's what the, that we have been doing for a few years now. Uh, we are working on specific, uh, things or passion points as we call them. So, uh, as part of the, um, the work of the European Travel Commission, as I mentioned before, we do a lot of research. So we have investigating, um, in different markets, uh, in North America, China, South America. What was the, the perceptions and images that, uh, people had of Europe, uh, right now? Uh, because eventually the brand is what's in the mind of the consumers. So we need to understand, uh, how they saw the, the continent. And yeah, we did a lot of research basically used in, uh, ethnographic studies, uh, based on what people are, um, sharing content, sharing online about Europe, what kind of, uh, reviews they write, or what kind of images they post, what kind of comments they, they leave on, on travel blogs or website, electric advisor and so on.

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Speaker 2

We did that in different markets, and that gave us an novel idea of, uh, was the current perception that, um, visitors had from, um, of Europe. Of course, there were differences depending on the origin market, but we could identify some common threads. And based on those, we selected a few, uh, uh, themes or passion points as we call them. And we are now trying to work on those. And all our communication activities only focus on those, uh, passion points. Uh, we have three at the moment, uh, which are, uh, made around the outers, uh, what we call creative cities and history and ancestry. So our ultimate goal will be that, um, our brand, the brand Europe, is associated with these three. Uh,

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Speaker 1

I'm sorry, what was the third element?

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Speaker 2

A history. History and ancestry.

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Speaker 1

Ancestry, okay.

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Speaker 2

Yeah. Uh, because we need, as I said, because we're so diverse and we have so many things, of course you can do everything. But then said, our, what our research was telling us is that we were, if we wanna try to be everything for everyone, it means we're nothing, nothing concrete, and nothing is specific. So, as I said, we wanted to make the brand Euro more specific, and we decided to start with these three, uh, uh, things. And our goal will be, as I said, in the long term, that when people think of Europe, they really see as a destination for experiencing, experiencing this, uh, three types of, of, of activities. Um, we actually, you mentioned before, but actually working with, uh, Bloom Consulting to measure actually, uh, yeah, what's, um, the, still the perception that consumers have of, of Europe when they're searching for, uh, online about coming, coming here. And we compare that to the image of other continents, uh, America, Africa, Asia. So our goal will be to increase our market share of, for example, um, what people are

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Speaker 1 Q2

Looking. I I'm sorry to interrupt you, Miguel, because now you, you are answering four or five questions together, so I want to go just one question at a time. Yeah, sorry. Sorry. That it's okay. So I'll, I'll thank you for this introduction, but I'll go back to, to the basic, to the, the micro image first, and then we go micro. So you've mentioned that when you do a research to, uh, to understand what is in the mind of consumers, so you aim to have a good perception. And as a result, what do you think the outcomes are for nations when they have good brand?

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Speaker 2

Yeah. Well, um, yeah, of course, when we do this, this, uh, research, we identify positive aspects. We also identify negative aspects. Uh, of course we trying to, we tend to focus on the positive ones, and that's the ones we're trying to, uh, enhance those which are, uh, negative or negative perceptions of consumers associated with Europe. Then those are the ones that we also try to fix first to understand why those perceptions exist, and then see we can do something about it to, to fix it. And actually I minimize their impact or actually turning it to something positive. Yeah. Ultimately, uh, the goal for, uh, any, any nation yeah, will be to have a positive perception from, uh, from the rest of the world, uh, about their nation, which, and the ultimate benefit is that they should support, uh, all the aspects of nation branding from making the country more appealing for, uh, investments to attract talent to, uh, attract visitors, uh, even to make the people living there proud of, uh, the place, uh, where they are. I think these are in general, or the positive outcomes that having a, a global, um, positive perception can create for, uh, for any country.

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Speaker 1 Q3

Perfect. Uh, do you think, how can a nation achieve economic sustainability through nation branding?

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Speaker 2

Well, that's, um, there are many aspects involved, uh, on, on that, uh, on the, on the economic sustainability of, of a destination through nation branding. What governments can do is, as I

said, improve the, the image of the destination, which would probably attract, uh, um, investors from the outside. Um, which of course could, is beneficial for the, the gen, for the economy of, of, of the country to diversify also the, the revenue and, and how maybe developing new, new industries and, and, you know, develop, create employment and, and so on. So its a tool that can help towards achieving, uh, economic sustainability. Of course, there are many other aspects that play a very important role. So I think having a positive, uh, perception of the, of the nation can contribute towards that. Uh, but that's, uh, it may be a very long, uh, um, uh, long term goal. Uh, it not only depends from, from the image of the destination, it's an important element of the, of the aspect. It's important.

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Speaker 1 Q4

Thank you. Um, what is the most important components for a brand, for a nation's brand, from your experience?

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Speaker 2

Can you repeat the question?

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Speaker 1 Q4

The, the components of a nation brand. So what constitutes a good nation brand?

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Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah. Um, well, as I said, there are many aspects, uh, involved, uh, on that goes from the territory itself to the culture of the place, to the people living there, to the policies of that territory. I think we know also, uh, that's sometimes one of the aspects that it has more, uh, a stronger impact on the nation, more than actually, and speaking now, from my perspective of, from a choosing perspective as it explained, we do all these marketing campaigns highlighting, uh, our attributes, uh, the experiences that you can have in Europe or different, how diverse they are. Uh, more and more we're trying to put people, so Europeans at the center of our communication. Uh, but yeah, we can run a brilliant marketing campaign and then any political decision that is made, uh, and depend on the how how that decision is, can jeopardise, uh, for their work. This happens to any territory, right? Um, so, yeah. Uh, and that's something that is beyond our control. Uh, we can try to advise, um, you know, policy makers, uh, at least take this, these things into account before making any, any decisions. Um, some sense it works, some sense it doesn't work. And also also depends on the government, on its territory, and to what extent they are, uh, aware of, um, the impact that the decisions can have, um, in the image of destination.

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Speaker 1 Q5

Thank you. Uh, from your experience as the head of marketing and European travel, uh, commission, what do you think is the, the, the import, So you mentioned the importance of policies, uh, but now if, if you want to do a, if you want to work on the marketing or communication side, from your experience, what are the most important tools to use when it comes to marketing in nation branding?

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Speaker 2

Yeah. Uh, well, I, I mean, are many aspects involved in nation branding, So I can speak from the truth and perspective. Uh, so as I said, for us, it's very important, um, more important, important to work with, uh, our, uh, citizens. So with, uh, presidents, with locals, um, and I think they are the best ambassadors, you know, of, of a place. So, uh, in our communication marketing campaign, we try to, uh, uh, involve, uh, Europeans more and more, uh, showing their daily lives, uh, the things that they do in their expertise. Um, we know that the best, uh, communication marketing that exists is, um, uh, recommendations, you know, from, uh, for instance, relatives or peer to peer non communication. So based on, um, the three pillars that

we have at the moment, uh, if we're trying to brand you up as a destination for nature and other experiences, for example, and we want to attract people from other corners of the world, they are passionate about these activities.

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Speaker 2

Uh, probably the thing that would be more, uh, uh, authentic and, and, and incredible is having other, uh, people living in unable, even people who have visited u before speaking, uh, about their, uh, experience here and telling why the experience was great and why they, uh, they should do it as well. So from, from the tourism perspective, uh, this is something that I think is, is, is very important basically in terms of, you know, being, um, perceived as authentic, which is, uh, in the, all the noise that exists, uh, right now on the internet is very important. And sometimes, uh, people will tend to assume that our communication or our messages are a bit biased, uh, because we'll have a clear interest in portraying this very positive image. Uh, but it will have to, the real, uh, people telling that that's possible to is likely to be more, more effective. So I think working with your, um, with the residents of destination is very important, um, when trying to communicate, um, the brand of territory.

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Speaker 1 Q6

Q6 Thank you, Miguel. Um, I wanted to ask you about, uh, branding Spain, Uh, from your experience with the Spanish tourism, What do you think the challenges were when you were promoting Spain as a destination, tourist destination?

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Speaker 2

Yeah. Um, well, the main time it was trying to diversify a bit their, uh, their brand image. Uh, they also do a lot of studies, of course, and even if I just ask a few people here, I see it when I tell them that I come from Spain, and, you know, the immediate thing that comes through their mind is the beach and the sun. And, uh, I think astronomy and all that, uh, for tourism, that translates into, uh, um, Spain being perceived mostly as a summer destination to spend your holidays by, by the sea and relax. And, uh, and that's a very strong image established, uh, in the image of, uh, of Spain worldwide. So their goal was try to, uh, diversify, um, that image and highlighting not only the sunny, sunny beaches, but, uh, the culture, for example, the astronomy, Um, uh, also a place for, um, business and insensitive, so city tourism. So when I was working for in Spain, we will hardly ever run a campaign about, uh, sign, see, uh, destinations because we believe this was not needed, uh, doesn't add any value on the, on the opposite. We try to focus on those areas that we know, uh, or aspects that Spain, uh, has, and they're not, well, not that well known, I can still be benefit. So, uh, exactly highlighting more the culture aspects, the astronomy, uh, the cities. Um, those were the main aspects that we were trying to, to communicate. Um, in, for, for Spain specifically,

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Speaker 1 Q7

Do, do you know what kind of tools they decided to use to communicate and why?

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Speaker 2

What tools, um, practice mostly will be, uh, nowadays, especially when trying to address big audiences, uh, of consumers, it's on, um, there are two aspects in tourism. One is the image itself, and creating an interest in visiting destination of consumers then is all the part related to commercialization and sellings. For that you will work also with graders, uh, and other intermediaries, but in general, um, trying to, at least from inspirational level, uh, communication targeted directly to consumers. Uh, and this applies to almost any destination. This is, uh, nowadays using indeed of tools, uh, content marketing. So creating, uh, yeah, perfect, relevant content or on different formats. Uh, video now is key, I would say. Uh, and

then different channels that you used to distribute that content. Uh, social media or, um, Matic, uh, display advertisement, um, working with influencers as well. So there are many different tactics, uh, that many, uh, destinations are following to convey their, their message. But nowadays, I would say 90% is done, uh, um, online.

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Speaker 2

You. So in the very broad spectrum of online right, they have many different tools that you can use.

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Speaker 1 Q8

Q8 Perfect. Uh, do you think the, the government of Spain has a role in, uh, you know, designing or has a supportive role in designing, supporting, supportive policies to promote brand Spain?

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Speaker 2

Yeah. Well, I said they, they, uh, created this, um, body Marcus Spania a few years ago. Uh, I think before that, this was not, there was no specific body, uh, whose, uh, responsibility was just look after the, the international image of, of Spain. So that's a good first step. And when I think we're speaking about the nation branding, usually this is an initiative that must come from the, from the government, um, because it's probably the only one that has the means at least to steer, uh, the work. Uh, then of course, they cannot do it alone, uh, or anybody involved. So they should also work, uh, with their, um, with different businesses or other, uh, brands, uh, from the country in any economic sector with really in the territory, um, because they all play a role as well. Uh, also facilitating, uh, there's a cultural diplomacy as well.

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Speaker 2

Uh, so that is a very holistic process. So probably I think the governments, uh, are the ones at least that would initiate these, these conversations and coordinate them and bring, uh, around the table all the different bodies that are involved on, on, on branding a nation. Uh, so I think that's what Spain started, uh, uh, doing. Uh, in my opinion, it's also important that this, uh, is, uh, that there has, there is continuity in time. You know, changing the perception of the brand of our country takes a lot of time, is not gonna happen over overnight or, uh, even in a couple of, uh, days, probably take decades for generations. It's very easy to spoil the brand, as I said, with, uh, bad politics. But to build in that good reputation is a very long term investment. Um, so I want to say is that is important also, uh, from the government point of view, that is some, uh, is stability and where the, if there's a change to the government, you know, from left to right, for example, uh, that, that that's an impact the overall strategy or branding strategy of the nations, uh, which is unfortunately what happens very often.

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Speaker 2

And this can risk, uh, achieving any, any results, because I said it's a very long term, uh, uh, task.

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Speaker 2

You. Having that, having that body and having that continuity is very important.

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Speaker 1 Q9

Uh, do, do you think, um, actually, you gave me a question that I needed to, to ask you, but, uh, I was gonna ask you do, do you think that having different bodies working on a specific brand, so if you have Spanish tourism board and then you have Marca Espanha, do you think this could create conflict in terms of, uh, working towards one mission? Or is it a good thing?

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Speaker 2

Um, no, I think there's, um, there shouldn't be any conflict. So they should work together. Uh, either conflict is because they're not been managed well, uh, and unfortunately, I think conflicts usually, uh, appear, uh, sometimes because of political reasons or, or any other reasons. But in theory, if that common strategy, that common goal exists of how, uh, the government wants, uh, Spain to be specific internationally. So all bodies quite involved should always be working towards the same direction and each thing in the specific field. So with Spain, with just, uh, in anything related to attracting visitors, uh, the other bodies that also see is responsible for, uh, incentivizing, uh, uh, the economy and businesses. Uh, so they should work also. Uh, they do their work in the specific area, but following that common goal. Um, so yeah, I think it can, they shouldn't, the fact that different bodies should not necessarily be negative, uh, as long as there is a clear direction, which is probably that what Marca espanha in this case should do. Uh, and then making sure that this is properly communicated and that everyone that has a role in brand destination are working on following the same, the same guidelines. If messages start to be slightly different, then this, of course would play conflict among the consumers and it risks Yeah. To, to, um, uh, breach that, that goal.

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Speaker 1 Q10

In previous meetings, there were discussions about, um, Spain or Emirates, and there were, um, examples that, uh, for example, the, the competition between Barcelona or Madrid to attract tourists is not actually going well, and overall it affects the brand negatively. What do you have to say about that?

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Speaker 2

Well, I would say that, uh, they shouldn't compete. Uh, they should, uh, cooperate. Uh, that's a bit, uh, extrapolating is what I have, you know, at European level, uh, my, our members, the definitions, we try to maybe understand that they should not compete among themselves, that they should cooperate, uh, on the, in the benefit of, of, of all of them. So, uh, it is a very, it's the same situation that I have a continent level, but I can to level. Um,

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Speaker 1 Q11

Q11 How do you think you can overcome that to make Spain or Barcelona not compete or to make two states not compete and have the ideology that this is for your benefit if you work all together?

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Speaker 2

Yeah, it's, well, it's a lot of the diplomacy involved. Uh, but basically, yeah, trying to explain them, uh, the benefits, right? That what, what that is, that you can win by cooperating instead of trying to compete to each other. Uh, and there can be economic benefits. Uh, it can be, uh, yeah, attracting more, more, more visitors and, and business. Uh, that's a complete example of, of what I do, uh, from European perspective, but it could be extrapolated to a nation as well. Uh, many of the activities that we do to market Europe are based on economies of a scale, meaning that we pull resources together. Uh, if this is a specific activity that is, uh, interested, interesting for a lot of countries, doesn't make sense that they do each of them the same thing at individual level. So we can leverage all that and coordinate it and make it even front of a national point of view, uh, cheaper.

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Speaker 2

And is it to access if we do it together, so that, and that's what we do from European level. So the same would apply at national level instead of, uh, um, imagine that the, Yeah, uh, um, Madrid wants to attract visitors, uh, from the, um, from the, from the Emirates and, and so does Barcelona. Instead of going there separately and talking prior to the same people, uh,

explaining why Barcelona is my why <inaudible> will do it together. Uh, it will be first cheaper to organize, uh, and probably more and more effective for both cities as well. Uh, so, but then, yeah, is the political, uh, the policy, uh, is in my opinion, the biggest barrier. Uh, if the government in the, in, in Madrid is different from the government in, in Barcelona, from different, uh, um, wing, right wing or left wing, this usually is, uh, what prevents them, mostly from, from cooperating.

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Speaker 2

But if they, I mean, I do think they, they have done some activities together, even at the European level, Paris and London, sometimes they do joint activities as well, which you can feed their peer competitors, but, uh, at the same time, it's very appealing, uh, from America or from Japanese to visit both cities. So, um, they do this, not, not, not a lot of them, but they do some joint, uh, activities or see in the big picture. Um, uh, I think that's what you need to communicate for them, to make them understand that they can benefit from, uh, cooperating instead of trying to compete.

S

Speaker 1 Q12

Q12 Thank you. Uh, I'm not sure if, uh, since your focus is marketing or not, but you can feel free to skip any questions that's not relevant to your work, um, or your experience. Uh, I'm gonna ask you now, do you have anything to say from your experience or knowledge of what is the link between soft power and a nation's brand?

Speaker 2

Uh, yes. This, my, uh, my expertise. Um,

S

Speaker 1

So you can pass if you want. <laugh>.

S

Speaker 2

Yes, I will pass <laugh>.

S

Speaker 1 Q13

Okay. So, um, from your experience, what is the role of media in building a perception about a nation's brand?

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Speaker 2

Well, media's probably is a very important, uh, vehicle, right, to, uh, put make your message, uh, crash. Uh, and for me, media's not only, uh, traditional media, but also digital media. I was telling you before, how many destinations, uh, there are nowadays, basically using mostly, uh, online communication. Um, but it does, it's still done through media. So medias is important vehicle or channel to reach your, your private audience. Uh, it's important therefore to, you know, have good relationships, uh, with them. Um, of course, not all media is independent. Uh, so sometimes that also can, uh, influence sometimes, uh, to all extent, uh, these vehicles are also trusted by your, um, target audience or saying you before. Uh, it's important that people trust what you say, uh, and that, that your messages are, are, uh, deliverable and, and authentic. So, uh, and therefore, uh, you often need to probably careful what selecting, uh, the media you wanna work with, uh, making sure that their own perception that these channels have, uh, in the minds of the consumers, that there is something that they can trust, uh, especially in our base with all these fake news and, and so on, is always complex to differentiate.

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Speaker 2

So it's a very important tool, uh, vehicle for nation branding. Um, but you need to use it, uh, wisely.

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Speaker 1 Q14

Q14 Um, I'm gonna ask you about this, uh, thing related to fake news on, on, on one angle, but before we get there, if, if, for example, you have, uh, Paris is mentioned mostly positively in Hollywood. So you have Paris, you have Spain, uh, Italy, of course, always in Hollywood is, uh, you know, uh, exposed in a positive way, romantic destination, uh, cool people, culture, et cetera. Um, on one hand, it's a good promotion for these destinations, but on the other hand, a country like Portugal or a country like Romania or a country like Malta or Cyprus, uh, they're not getting this exposure. So it's on one hand, not a fair competition. Uh, from your experience, and let's think outside the, the, the European Union. So, like I said to you, if a country like Sri Lanka wants to have a spotlight, or Japan, or B in Indonesia or South Africa, and they're not getting this exposure from Hollywood, what a solution could work for them?

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Speaker 2

Well, um, based on our own experience, as I said, I think, uh, you need to select very carefully, uh, where you want to invest and how you wanna be perceived. So, uh, yeah, there are, you know, maybe, you know, having a Hollywood movie, it might give you a great exposure, uh, but it might be very generic as well. So in my opinion, if, um, you select very carefully, uh, your targets and how you wanna be perceived, and you don't need to, uh, be seen by, uh, 10 million people, uh, if you only seen by 10,000, but those 10,000 are the right ones, uh, that's probably more effective. So, uh, uh, it's not just always about the big numbers and, and big, uh, in, in your example, uh, Hollywood movies with big stars that yeah, we probably that, I mean, that depends on where you are. Well, in your development. (Social Media Marketing)

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Speaker 2

If you, if your brand is totally unknown, um, this can help you at least at the first place, to, you know, help people put your, place you on a map, uh, and find you. So depends on your life cycle. If you're really at the beginning, something like this major can help you, at least if you're totally unknown, people, your name or at least will start being familiar. Uh, but if you're beyond that versus stage, uh, for me, it's more important that you, and that's why I'm trying to be, to do a European level, that you're trying to be more, more specific. So, uh, maybe it might be more important for you to have, uh, uh, instead of a big Hollywood style, but just a specific documentary on something, um, unique, uh, that you have in your, um, in your country, in your destination, that may be something very specific about, uh, um, traditional festival that is done, or, uh, specific food or something, uh, that will interest, that will be of interest to people in that, uh, um, sector and that, uh, topic. And that probably will be more, more effective towards building the reputational destination as a place for this activity rather than, than just having, uh, big, uh, big numbers. Yeah.

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Speaker 1 Q15

Perfect. Um, you've mentioned earlier there is impact of political events that would take, uh, uh, role in destroying the brand. And, uh, I don't know if you have anything to elaborate on that, because our, um, my next question in this, in the next, uh, you know, point will be the impact of promoting, uh, uh, a region that has political instability such as the Middle East. So first to, to go back to the first question, do you have anything to add about your point that political events are, you know, enough causes to do to destroy or negatively influence any brand? And do you have an example?

S

Speaker 2

Yes, I think there are. So politics, they should set the, the tone for building the positive, uh, and managing the image of destination that's done through this, uh, like market span that I mentioned before. Uh, but policies can also very quickly, uh, um, destroy all the positive work that takes very, a lot of, uh, years to build. And this is, uh, very often linked to, to, uh, uh, politics. Uh, an example I can get in, for example, is right now is Russia. Um, no one, I guess, uh, apart from the fact that you, there are no flights or something like that, probably no one wants to go there at the moment, um, because of the world that Ukraine, uh, so before, uh, they decided to invade, uh, Ukraine, I mean, I'm not sure about the brand, uh, perception that they had, but probably was nail trial or not as negative as it has been right now.

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Speaker 2

Uh, so things like this, um, even take United States, uh, with, uh, Trump, for example. Uh, although this, I, I, I, I hear a lot of people were thinking that this would impact a lot the, the interest of, um, people willing to visit the country. Um, they, having a look at the numbers, uh, during those four years, I think the end that impact was not that, uh, that big. Uh, but yeah, those things can have very strong, uh, impact political decisions that have made that from international, uh, point of view, perceive that's not right. Perfect. So you can still be investing a lot of time, take a wrong decision, you know, everything is over.

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Speaker 1 Q16

Thank you. Now, let's, let's look at the bigger picture, uh, and something with your current role. So let's say the Middle East is trying, The Middle East has destinations such as Emirates, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, uh, Qatar, now hosting the World Cup, uh, Jordan, Petra, uh, Beirut, uh, many people that I've discussed this with, they spoke, they highlighted a factor that it's not just the country, but it's also the continent. So to promote, uh, a destination such as Spain and Europe or Portugal and Europe is way more easier and more, you know, acceptable by foreigners then promoting a destination in the Middle East, because the Middle East, even though it's, there are countries that have absolutely no conflict like Emirates or Qatar or, but the perception is negative about the Middle East. So from your experience, what can, uh, a region that is not enjoying a positive reputation do to overcome this obstacle?

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Speaker 2

Um, yeah, it's, um, as I said, it is, it's difficult. It takes a lot of time to, and effort to change, uh, the perception of, of a destination of a country in general. I think I would, a, an interesting example I would say now is in Saudi Arabia, uh, who's trying to develop their tourism industry, which was no existing, uh, and I guess trying to prepare to the, to the area without, uh, oil, uh, like other countries in the area did, they're now looking at tourism and trying to develop it. And of course, I'm sure they have, I haven't been there, I don't know it, but I'm sure they have amazing, uh, heritage, uh, which is completely unknown. So in that regard is, uh, interesting because not many people have been there, uh, yet. Uh, so that all that can be very interesting. And they're investing heavily in building, uh, developing the tourism industry and trying to build, uh, that image, that image, uh, with our brand campaigns, uh, very astonishing because they have a lot of resources.

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Speaker 2

So that at least would start creating some interest that among those who have never heard of or have never considered, uh, visiting, uh, Saudi Arabia because they didn't even know they was open to visitors. So that's a probably first step. Uh, now I know that even if they do this

marketing campaign, so people will still be reluctant of going there anyway, uh, at least now they're start being aware of what is there to see and do, which they know, uh, but they will not go there until, uh, other major issues are, are fixed. Um, so, um, and that's a big variable. So they wanna, uh, it is, I think it's good what they're doing to start to develop in the sections for working on the, on the, uh, on the right direction, but to have that big, uh, breakthrough that will change, uh, uh, um, the perception that consumers have.

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Speaker 2

Uh, this has nothing to do with tourism. It has more to do with, uh, other policies in general. You know, just, uh, how you treat human, human, uh, respecting human rights and some basic, uh, principles that, uh, unfortunately not all nations in the area, um, uh, are following at the moment. I said I'm not an expert, <laugh>, uh, uh, I, I've never been there. Um, but I, in my conversations, um, with perception with the sectors for choosing specifically, uh, there are many s in conferences for now, uh, for example, right now being hosted, uh, in the region. And, and some people still are reluctant to, to go there, um, until other mayor issues, uh, are solved.

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Speaker 1 Q17

Q17 Thank you. So, uh, I'll just have a quick, uh, last three questions to conclude. And they are a comparison between Spain and Emirates, and it's based on general evaluation without, you know, your attachment or previous experience with brand Spain. It's a general question that everyone is asked about their opinion. So from your experience, what do you think is appealing about Spain as a brand? You can mention one, two, or three points, and Emirates as a brand, what is appealing about it?

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Speaker 2

Hmm. Well, I think for Spain, uh, it's probably, yeah, uh, I think probably something you can trust, uh, is an old country, uh, with lot of history and, and experience. So I'm speaking in general, right? Uh, anything if you can say, uh, Spain made, usually it should be a guarantee of, of, of, of quality and, and probably also creativity. So I think that's, that's a positive aspect. Um, also coming back to the point I was saying before about, uh, people, uh, in general terms, I think, uh, Spanish people are perceived as, uh, nice <laugh>. So, uh, they're always, usually, and of course there are nice people and they're less funny people, uh, like everywhere else. Uh, but in general, having that perception of the residents is also something that would make people probably more inclined to, to visit or <inaudible> or, uh, <inaudible>. Just because you, you like, you like it, um, um,

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Speaker 1

Emirates,

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Speaker 2

Yeah. Name rates. Um, well, it's probably thing as a place for, uh, at least how I see it's a place for innovation. Uh, you know, there are building basically, or developing a country, uh, in the middle of the deserts, the last few, uh, dec couple of decades, something that we didn't exist developing really, really fast, uh, without entering about how sustainable, uh, things are. Uh, but the things they're doing, you know, they're new and innovative, know the place in the world, uh, is doing what they're doing. So in that regard, I think it's, it's interesting place, uh, to, to be, I have, I have visited Qatar and Dubai and Abu Dhabi, and a lot of experts there that move there. Maybe they don't stay there for good, but for a couple of years to do lot the professional careers, and especially being able to innovate because they also have resources that maybe we don't have in Europe at the moment. Uh,

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Speaker 1

Such as what, sorry?

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Speaker 2

Financial resources mostly. Uh, they are capable of developing projects, uh, a bit that may will not be able to do, uh, here. So in, in that regard, I think it's, it's interesting place and a lot of people tell me, I mean, I probably will not stay here for them for good, but, uh, for a few years, uh, working here and learning also a new reality is a very interesting place to, to be.

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Speaker 1 Q18

Okay, perfect. Um, which country do you think, uh, has more encouraging policy policies for foreigners to visit or to invest or to live Emirates or Spain?

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Speaker 2

Um, well, I'm not well familiar with, uh, with the policy of Emirate, so it be difficult for me to, to assess this. Um, I guess, yeah, actually I cannot tell you

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Speaker 1 Q19

Okay, fair enough. Which country is more active in terms of advertising and communications?

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Speaker 2

Um, I think both, but they're doing differently. Uh, as I said, I think Spain is being more, uh, because they probably a more mature destination. Uh, so I was telling you before being more specific, the communication, focusing on specific things that they want people to know more about. Uh, and that's the other culture, the history, the traditions. Um, whereas Emirates is probably still, uh, in our early stages of developing the servicing industry, they have built infrastructure, uh, with something that Arabia, for example, still is doing. So they do have infrastructure, um, they're still opening up to the world, so they, they're very active as well in, in the campaigns, but they are more in that early stages of, uh, very big campaigns, trying to reach as much people as possible so that, uh, they start considering, uh, going, uh, going there. And then with time, uh, once they develop more of the industry and the image I, in the actual extent will be that they will start being a bit more specific rather than just very generic. So I think both are very, uh, active, uh, but they're following different strategies, I think.

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Speaker 1 Q 20

Thank you. And my last question is, I would like you please, Miguel, to mention strength about brand Spain and Emirate and weakness that they need to improve. So something that you, you think it's a strength for the brand, one, two, or three points and a weakness that they need to work on?

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Speaker 2

Hmm. Well, I think this relates to what I, what I said, uh, before. So I think in general, Spain specific is a place of, uh, of, uh, high quality in terms of quality life. So, you know, it's a western European country, developed country, um, uh, with a lot of possibilities and, and, and diversity and very interesting culture and history and, and people. So, um, even, even the weather, it also strength so that those things make the, made the country, uh, appealing the culture, the way of life, the lifestyle in general, I think is very, uh, appealing. Um, weakness, uh, yeah, probably is the sometimes, uh, political, (8) uh, instability, Um, especially in the past, uh, year, some with course of economic crisis. And there is a lot of, uh, um, unemployment as well. Uh, these things also should be, uh, uh, improved. Um, for Emirate.

Uh, as I said, I think the, I dunno either, well, but for me it's this, the strength is the, their innovation and the fact that they're not, um, afraid of trying, is experimenting, uh, new things, new ideas in some sense, maybe a bit crazy or too out of the box, but there are not many places where you're allowed to do that.

S

Speaker 2

So, uh, in that regard, think that's, that's, uh, a positive, uh, uh, place is still with restrictions that exist, uh, of course, uh, if compared to other western countries, and they have their own very specific way of, of, uh, doing things. Um, but yeah, that creativity, I think is, is, is, is, is interesting and, and attractive, and the fact that it's so new, um, um, it creates an opportunity also for you to learn and, and test, study your work. Uh, what is that you can, you can do in general, like there's, there's no limits, uh, try to come up with new ideas. So that's, that's in that regarding an interesting, uh, place and not many cities in the world that, uh, allow you to do that. Um, it's, uh, from the negative point of view, um, again, I guess it's the same that applies to the entire, uh, region, especially when compared to, uh, western society.

S

Speaker 2

So I still perceive as more, uh, conservative in some aspects or maybe not being fully, uh, respecting, uh, basic human rights, um, with, there are differences in the region, of course, they're not all the same, uh, other regions, other, some countries have already make a, um, progress, uh, let's say, uh, according to Western standards. Um, that's, that's probably, uh, I think it's still their main, uh, weakness. So they need to, to fix that. And, and then they probably, there they will boom. Um, in terms of, uh, yeah, not only tourism, but also, uh, investments and all other aspects.

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Speaker 1

Miguel, thank you so much. It's been great for having you. I'm gonna stop recording.

End of interview ten

Interview with: Ilan Geva – Nation branding global expert

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Speaker 1 Interviewer Tarik Alhassan

Q1 Welcome to this interview. We'll start with the first question. In your own words, what is nation of Branding?

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Speaker 2 Ilan Geva

Okay. Nation branding is like any other branding. It's not different from a product or a service except it relates to a geographic place. Okay? Now, when people say nation branding, they mostly talk about the product that comes out of what the government thinks they should do to brand the countries or the people will come and visit. That's kind of the major thing that I see. However, there is not clear definition that I see that says exactly what nation branding is. Does it relate only to a country, the, the official borders of a country and everything that falls within these borders? Because if you're talking about branding such country, I think that it is extremely difficult to brand. For example, the usa the USA is a, is a, is a full cosmos. And there are places that are so different with people that are so different with habits, culture, food, music, whatever you want that are so different that in some parts of it you say usa it's only cowboys in the other side.

S

Speaker 2

In the other side, you say usa it's intellectuals in universities, I mean, and they have nothing in common. Nothing. Americans have one thing in common. When they travel to other countries, they help each other. That's it. Oh, you're American, I'll help you. Okay. Inside a America, Americans are not one nation, right? So that's just one example. Now, I assume that that happens in other places. Um, Italians are not one nation. The people in the north don't like the people in the south and they consider to be very different people. And Italy became Italy only, I don't know, a hundred something years ago when all the little kingdoms united. So nation branding is usually relating to what happens within the official borders of a territory, and that the government of that place decides what will be the brand of that place. That's it. Now, so what happens to places like Mexico or the US because the US has 50 states, Each one of them has its own brand.

S

Speaker 2

It's confusing that the best tourism brand that I know was created by Milton Glazer. I love New York. It's number one. There's no competition to that brand, but that's not the, the brand of the us Not at all. Loving New York is one thing, and loving San Francisco is a completely different story. So that's why I'm looking for a definition. I'm looking for somebody who will say something that I will agree with, and that's, that's very difficult to agree. So the second thing about nation branding is this nation branding is not created by itself. There are things that yes, are created by themselves, but nation branding is a project for politicians. There is one, one government that decides we are going to create and we are gonna give budget to create a brand for our nation. And usually how does it happen? It's a bid. It's a bid that is either international or national. Most of those bids are decided in advance before you even decide to participate. So the bid is created only to satisfy the law, because the law says that when you do a project for the government, like nation branding, the law says that you must have at least three proposals. In some countries, they say these proposals can only come from

local companies. That's it. Nobody outside the country is allowed to participate. Now that's an interesting story.

S

Speaker 2

So right there and, and when you allow people from outside the country to participate, who are those companies? Usually they're design firms. Yeah, they're designers. They will do the logo of the country, Big deal. That's not the brand. So we have a very, very complex, you know, combination of factors that put them all together. And that's what people call today nation branding. That's why I who have done it since 1974. I'm still confused. What do you want from me when you tell me, please brand my country <laugh>. And I have 2000 questions for you before I even begin to work.

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Speaker 1 Q2

Thank you Ilan. Uh, another question is from your own experience, can you name the outcomes for nations once they have a good brand?

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Speaker 2

Not much. Not much. Um, because outcome, again, if you define outcome as income, net income from tourists that visit the country as a result of a campaign that uses the tagline of your nation branding or the logo of your nation branding or whatever, the social media campaign of your national branding. Um, I don't know. People have, you know, we live in a world today that has so much communication that sometimes I don't even think that nation branding is necessary. Why? Because everybody knows something about a country. I know, for example, I mean either, either because of, um, the spreading of cultures, the mixture of people. Because in every nation today, there are very few people that you can say that the people who live in that country are the original inhabitants of that country. We have so much fluid, you know, of, of the, the fluidity of people moving from one country to another.

S

Speaker 2

That you know, how many Turks, Turks are living now in Germany? Tons of Turks live in Germany. Are they really Germans? I don't think so. Do they? Have they adopted the culture, the German culture? Do they run around in socks and you know, those CDOs and drink beer all day? No, absolutely not. Now, um, Chinese food, do the Chinese in China eat Chinese food? Well, for me, Chinese food is a Chinese food restaurant in Chicago. When they look at my Chinese food, they laugh. This is not Chinese food. So you'll see what I'm saying, that things are moving from one place to another. So I don't know what nations are really earning by doing a campaign or doing the whole thing, but what can help is create some kind of a culture in the country an inviting culture, something that is unique to that place.

S

Speaker 2

I'm just coming back from Mexico and I mentioned to you that, you know, the warmth of the Mexican people is something that nobody knows about unless they visit. And in my mind, they can export the warmth and the welcoming and the hospitality. Everybody thinks about Mexico. Oh my god, it's gang wars, you know, it's dangerous. People are telling me, Are you crazy? You're going to Mexico? I mean, look at the, the warnings, the, the us um, um, um, what is it called? The State Department has a website with warnings for American citizens where to go. And I'm looking at that website and I see red don't go. And then I'm going and I'm having the best time of my life and I'm 100% safe because accidents can happen anywhere. Yeah. What is New York safe? Why doesn't the US government publish something about don't go to New York, don't go to Chicago. You can get killed. So it, it's all about other things except for the logo and the logo and then all the nonsense.

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Speaker 1 Q3

Thank you. Uh, you've mentioned earlier, separately the components of a nation of brand, but if I asked you to give me clear bullet points as much as you can, what would you name, what would be the most important components of a nation's brand?

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Speaker 2

The behavior of its people. that's it

S

Speaker 1 Q4

Do you think policies in the country or marketing has a role in attracting foreign direct investment tourists and, uh, you know, talented immigrants?

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Speaker 2

Yeah, but I would <laugh> I would put one condition that nobody can agree with. My condition is don't put it in the hands of politicians. Why? Because in most countries that have this kind of habit of deciding one day that, oh, we need to brand our nation or our city or whatever destination it's given two politicians and in most of those countries, because it is a democracy. Those people go away who year, later, later, seven years later, and then the new people who come in say, Oh, we need to rebrand our country so you don't achieve anything. I think Simon was against those things, if I'm not mistaken. Cause he realized that, you know, you do all that work and you do all that work, and the new government comes in and say, No, we don't like that. And that's it. It's gone. The money is gone, everything is gone. And at the end, there is no brand because nobody can agree.

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Speaker 1 Q5

Q5 That's true. That's true. Uh, do you, do you believe in the role of marketing when it comes to building a positive nation brand?

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Speaker 2

Absolutely.

S

Speaker 1

Can you please explain your opinion?

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Speaker 2

If you don't do marketing, you are dead you don't exist. You have to do marketing at, at a certain level that is sustainable and that is reasonable and is is not looked upon as you bothering me. Stop it. Right. Okay. Um, so you have to really understand, I mean, I'm, we have now we are close to elections in the us Now I am getting emails from Republicans and Democrat candidates. I mean, my junk mail is full and I'm looking at it and I said, What the hell are they thinking? They're trying to make me vote in the state of Illinois, but they're in Texas.

S

Speaker 2

I cannot even vote for them.

S

Speaker 2

And they bombard me with information. These people are fools. So the same thing exists in the world of tourism. Okay? I mean, nobody is gonna go to the Ukraine or Russia right now, but there's a lot of people that, because Iran is supporting Russia, they're not gonna go to Iran. So you have to know how to spend your money. I cannot, I cannot go to certain places because I was born in Israel. My passport says place of birth, Tel Aviv. I cannot travel to, I don't know, 60 countries. They won't allow me. And they may even arrest me. So don't, don't waste

money on me. I'm not gonna come and visit you. Thank you. And we have enough technology today to, to analyze that data.

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Speaker 1 Q6

Okay. Uh, I wanna ask you, how many countries have you worked with in terms of place, branding, destination, branding, tourism? And you don't have to specify all of them, of course. I want you to give me the most successful case and why was it successful and a project that didn't go well and why it didn't go well?

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Speaker 2

Lisbon was my best project.

S

Speaker 2

Okay.

S

Speaker 2

Uh, and it was because I was not asked to brand the city. I was not asked to design the logo for to model boia. That was no, what I was asked was very specific. Please build the brand of Lisbon as a destination for mice. Okay. Meetings, incentive travel, conferences and events among American buyers. That was the objective. Very clear, very precise. So I worked, I had a contract with the, uh, convention Bureau of Lisbon and I worked for them for seven years. And it was very, very successful. And now Americans, American buyers know where Lisbon is before they thought it's part of Spain.

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Speaker 1 Q7

Yes. Okay. Can you give the opposite experience and why wasn't it as, uh, good as Lisbon's experience?

S

Speaker 2

I was trying to work with the Croatians and the Croatians. They have a wonderful, um, what is called tangible asset. The tangible asset is the country. The country is beautiful. People are very nice. Food is amazing. The sea is fantastic. There is a lot of, um, values in healing, air healing, everything there is pure. You know, I was in a hotel now and they told me, You know what, you can drink the water from the tap in the hotel because it's better than bottled water. That's how good it is. Here's the problem in Croatia, um, Croatia is a country there is very small. They have less than 4 million people and they have 250 local tourism boards,

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Speaker 1

Two fifty, two hundred and fifty

S

Speaker 1

Local tourism boards. They all compete with each other that none of them want to put resources together to let's say, build something regional. No, you have these people, you know, that are old fashioned. They're, they're not forward thinking. And they think that, No, my village is the most important thing in Croatia. It's the most beautiful place in Croatia. And I'm gonna do brochures or buy place and I will spend all my money and I, and these brochures will be in all the hotels and eh, waste of time.

S

Speaker 2

So a local competition was a reason?

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Speaker 1

Was a reason. Competition and, and narrow mindedness right there. There's a, there, there are countries in the world, for example, you know, countries that have a complete shift from one train of thought. For example, the eastern part of Europe was under communist rules for many, many years. There is a certain spirit, there's still things along the lines of how to do business under communist regime. Um, it's not entrepreneurial. It is not forward thinking. Um, it is like, what worked for me yesterday will work for me tomorrow. But they don't look beyond that. And they're, and it, and they're very protective of what they have. Now, there is another thing that I observed, which does not work in building a brand for a nation. Too much patriotism. Too much patriotism, Right? You know, because patriots tend to think that my place is the best one in the world. That's it. I don't care. I am from Afghanistan. It's the best place in the world. And other people look at them, say, Come on, gimme a break. What are you talking about? So I don't care what kind of, uh, message they're gonna put forward if their attitude is patriotic, cause it doesn't help them.

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Speaker 1 Q8

Okay. Um, do you think governments consider creating or updating their policies in order to have a better global brand?

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Speaker 2

No, because they don't understand what branding is. So, you know, the policy is for, look, <laugh>. Saudi Arabia is an example of a country that has no problems with money, no problems. I mean, they decide to build a city of the future, 500 billion, no problem. They decide to open tourism to the whole world, which started about two years ago. And ah, we are gonna build 200 hotels in the next two years. What's the big deal? We have the money. Um, but so what, there is still a perception of Saudi Arabia that will take years to change years. Cause nobody, nobody is open and hearing all the time about the changes. And the changes are fantastic. I've seen them, There are some amazing things happening there. And I think that, uh, Mohamed bin Salman is a forward thinking man. But I think that he has opposition in his own country, number one from the old generation. Number two, it's hard to believe that Saudi Arabia will change so fast in such a short time. And the perception will be, it's a desert with camels. What else can we expect? Well, they can expect, cuz there are gonna be a lot of surprises there, but it'll take time. This, these are, these are things that don't just, uh, happen overnight, takes time. And people, especially politicians, they don't have patience. They don't have patience. They wanna see results like many other clients that I have, not necessarily in tourism, but in other things, if you cannot change the, the sales, the, the, the sales chart, within three months, you fire. It takes time.

S

Speaker 1

This is a very important point, Ilan, uh, uh, that you've mentioned the example of Saudi Arabia, it actually has been mentioned, uh, in, in, uh, this research, but in a really controversial way. Uh, there are people who are seeing the examples of, uh, the changes. You're, you're one of the people who saw and then you know that there are many, that there is a revolution in terms of tourism, in terms of innovation, in terms of upgrading things in Saudi Arabia. What?

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Speaker 2

And socially

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Speaker 1 Q9

Exactly. Socially too. Whereas on the other hand, there are the people who still think of Saudi Arabia as the desert and camel like you mentioned, and oil. That's it. Uh, do you think that the role of media is, you know, really influential in terms of communicating this kind of message?

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Speaker 2

Yeah, the short answer is yes.

S

Speaker 1 Q10

But then if Saudi Arabia is following the book in terms of, of trying to communicate a good nation brand through really making changes, but then there is misrepresentation on the media. Whereas, uh, in, in one of the discussions we had, it says that uh, if any country in the Middle East is doing something good, it's ignored. But if it's doing something bad, it's highlighted. So it's not just Saudi Arabia, it's the entire region that's suffering from bad's reputation. Uh, what do you think the solution for that is?

S

Speaker 2

You think? No, no, no, no, no, no. Sorry. There are exceptions. Dubai, that doesn't suffer from that. Not at all. Dubai is amazing. I mean, I don't have to tell you what Dubai is, and Dubai has done everything that Saudi Arabia is dreaming of doing. Okay. That's the model. And, and it's only Dubai. It's not the Emirates, it's Dubai specifically. It's not Abu Dhabi. It's not color, it's not Kuwait, it's not no Dubai. And they have done an amazing job because they decided to diversify. They decided to be forward thinking. Um, and it works. I mean, every time I come to Dubai, I'm amazed and, and I'm comparing it to Chicago, for example, when I look at public transportation, men, Chicago, they put Chicago to shame with their public transportation or taxi drivers or anything else. Services in hotel. I was, I was in a, not a high, you know, not five star hotel, less than that four star, but the service was definitely five stars.

S

Speaker 2

Unbelievable. They pay attention to details. Um, and they do get a lot of help from foreigners, which is true, but they treat them with respect. And these people have nothing bad to say about Dubai. So I doubt that. For example, what I was talking about before the interview of ex-employees of neon in Saudi Arabia who had bad experience, I don't think you will find that kind of interview with people who work in Dubai. And I know some of them personally, they went back to the US just because 115 degrees is not really what they like, but they had nothing bad to say about Dubai.

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Speaker 1 Q11

So if a country is trying to conduct something, so, okay, thank you for the example we're gonna get actually to UAE and Spain in particular in in three questions to, to talk about them. But I, if, if the, if you know what happened with Dubai. Dubai started out of nowhere and then it didn't have any previous perception, therefore they, they started from zero. You know, they're, it's, it's a superstar now, but they started from zero. Whereas Saudi Arabia has been there for couple of centuries and you know, maybe not under this name, but it has been there for long enough and it has built, uh, uh, a long lasting perception if the country is going through changes. But it keeps, you know, being misrepresented on the media or, uh, if any political, you know, bad political or social or uh, economic factor happens. It's all over the world in all the media platforms. But with all the good things, uh, it doesn't get mentioned countries like that. It's not Saudi Arabia, Iran, I think, you know, maybe China is going through the same, maybe Russia is going through the same and it's before even the war with Ukraine. How do you think countries like that can solve the problem of being misrepresented on media?

S

Speaker 2

There is a fundamental difference between Dubai and many other countries. Dubai was a nonfactor 40 years ago. It was not on the map. Nobody knew what, where Dubai is. What Dubai, there was nothing. Couple of houses with some fishermen. That's it. It wasn't anything that's an advantage because you start from scratch. But they had a vision. So the family of the ruler had a vision and they implemented it. It's very difficult to do in Saudi Arabia or in Russia or in the US or any. Those places have a history. They have a legacy. They have a brand reputation for either a hundred years or 200 years or 500 years. They have a reputation. Famous people grew up and became famous there. I mean, look at Italy. Italy does not need branding. It doesn't, Italy is Italy. Why? Okay? Because they have toilets that are older than the United States. So, and they have Michaelangelo and Leonardo DaVinci and the Machi family and this and this and this and the other. And the emperors of Rome. I mean, it goes back thousands of years. Dubai didn't have that, nothing. It was a family that lived in tents on the beach and they started a vision and a dream and they made it. Saudi Arabia will have a problem because no Saudi Arabia has a reputation oil. And again, that started with a British a hundred years ago when they discovered oil and the British were there. Then they started to build a nation. Cuz Saudi Arabia is what's 70 something years old as, as a, an independent state. That's all. So before that they were under the ottomans. Now the Ottomans don't have great reputation. So <laugh>, so you know, you go back in history and you look what are the roots? Okay, where are you coming from? What are known for in your history, in your heritage? Cause heritage has a lot to do with nation branding and for some places it works. For some people it's not.

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Speaker 1 Q12

So the misrepresentation on media for countries, even if countries like Saudi Arabia try to have a new perception with the, the way how they're represented on media, they cannot give a rebirth to the brand.

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Speaker 2

They can. It'll go

S

Speaker 2

Take a lot of time. And there's another thing, because of what happened with Jamal Khashoggi, if they will make one more mistake like that, they're finished.

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Speaker 1

Sorry, if they make or they don't make?

S

Speaker 2

No, if they make another mistake like this, they're done.

S

Speaker 1 Q13

Thank you. Uh, we will move to the last part of the interview. Now, in this research Ilan, I have Spain and United Arab Emirates. Uh, one is a very successful brand in Europe. The other one is a successful brand in the Middle East. Uh, I want you to name from your experience, uh, three appealing elements for brand Spain and three appealing elements for brand. United Arab Emirates,

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Speaker 1

United Arab Emirates. And again, I'm, I'm talking about Dubai cuz that's the one I know. I don't know the other six little Emirates that are part of the uae. Cause the UAE is more of a political entity, not a brand. Dubai is a brand. Okay, so I make a difference. Um, Dubai is today one of the most I strong things about Dubai. It's cosmopolitan, which means that every guest is welcome. That's it. You're welcome. Number two in Dubai, uh, as a tourist, you have a great selection of things to do. Number three, Dubai is far but very easy to reach.

S

Speaker 1
Okay, Spain?

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Speaker 2
Well, Spain, you know, there is Barcelona is one brand with the Catalans. And, and they, they don't mince words about it. They make sure that you know that they're not Spanish, they're catalans. The Spanish are different. Madrid is different from Barcelona. Um, but again, the Spanish brand to me represents, uh, great history it represents, uh, variation of cultures, interesting cultures. And the last thing I think of Spain, huh? Miro. That's what I think of art.

S

Speaker 1 Q14
Right, Thank you. Uh, which country do you think, uh, has more encouraging policy system in terms of attracting foreigners for investments or tourism or even immigration?

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Speaker 2
That's a tough one. Um, I think it keeps changing because of the geopolitical situation, but, um, countries are making it very tough now because there is so much immigration, refugees and some countries that are being stormed by refugees. Either they swim or they come with a little boat or they jump on the fence. I mean, it's very hard. I mean, it used to be that the US was welcoming. It's not, the US is not welcoming. Uh, many countries in Europe are not welcoming, especially those that are now leaning to the right. They don't want immigrants.

S

Speaker 1
Sorry, but I'm just, I'm sorry to interrupt you. I'm just speaking in terms of United Arab Emirates and Spain, which one has a better, better policy system to attract?

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Speaker 1
Are you still with, you still with UAE and Spain? Yeah, Yeah. The, the, I didn't know. Ok. Sorry. Sorry.

S

Speaker 2
It's alright. Ok.

S

Speaker 1
Uh, UAE is more open than Spain. That's my perception. It's very easy to go there and, and do business. I mean, I'm doing business with Dubai now when I, I have a partner there that because of him, I can move to Dubai if I want. I can open a bank account, you know. No problem.

S

Speaker 2
So in terms of policy, uh, Dubai is more encouraging?

S

Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

S

Speaker 1

In terms of advertising, who do you think is more active? Spain or brand ua?

S

Speaker 2

None. I don't see anything. Honestly. I don't see anything from Spain at all. I mean, I, I was actually in touch with a Spanish, um, tourism office in Chicago. They don't do anything. I think they close the office actually, so they only have an office in New York and maybe in Los Angeles. But, um, I don't see anything.

S

Speaker 1

What about Emirates?

S

Speaker 2

The Emirates are doing something? Yes, the Emirates are active. Uh, they have huge conferences, uh, and I see most of it because of medical tourism, but, but they have a lot of other activities. And the brand Dubai appears much more than Spain in my world at least.

S

Speaker 1

Okay. Uh, so this is the last question where I want you to name strengths and weaknesses for United Arab Emirates and then strengths and weaknesses for Kingdom of Spain. Uh, of course we're speaking about the brand. We're speaking about strengths in terms of, um, it's different than what is appealing. It's now the strength, uh, and weaknesses. When I, when I'm asking you about the weaknesses, I want your professional opinion on what should they do to improve as a brand?

S

Speaker 2

I have no idea

S

Speaker 2

They're not visible.

S

Speaker 1

Spain and Emirates?

S

Speaker 2

No, Spain. Spain is not visible.

S

Speaker 1

Okay.

S

Speaker 2

Dubai is doing a lot of right things. Dubai is developing things. For example, there is a new museum. I forgot the name of the museum. It's museum, the

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Speaker 1

Museum of the future.

S

Speaker 2

That's it. Uh, so I saw it, it was just opening when I was there last time. Uh, I also visited the Dubai Expo. They're doing a lot of things. I mean, they show their ability facing the future. I don't see that coming from Spain. The last big thing in Spain was the Olympics in 92 in Barcelona.

S

Speaker 2

So what is your suggestion for improvement?

S

Speaker 1

Call me

S

Speaker 1

<laugh>. But in general, would it be policies? Marketing?

S

Speaker 2

Don't have, I don't have, I don't have suggestions because I don't know the objectives. In order to give a suggestion, you need an objective.

S

Speaker 1

So you're highlighting weakness in brand Spain, which is communications, Correct.

S

Speaker 2

And lack of activity.

S

Speaker 1

Any weakness for brand UAE or Dubai?

S

Speaker 2

I don't see something that jumps at me as a weakness, um, because I, I feel very positive about, uh, Dubai. So I, I don't, I don't see anything clear as, uh, oh, they're not doing that. My goal. They should do that. No, they're doing mostly the right things.

S

Speaker 1

Okay. Ilan, thank you so much for being in this interview. I will stop recording doing.

End of interview eleven.
