

# **Drug Cartels and Apartheid**

Critical Study of Nation Branding in Developing Countries Burdened by Stigmatizations

## **Master Thesis**

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**Keywords**: nation brand, nation branding, developing countries, semiotics, lexical semantic, critical theory.

**Abstract**: Nation branding is gaining increasing importance between both scholars and practitioners. Although, research in this field seems to focus mainly on developed economies, developing countries are affected by a "label effect" of being categorized as 'developing' which generates tacit social stigmatizations. Hence, their attempts to craft a desirable brand image to attract investment, tourism and human resources must deal with these stigmas. In this thesis we explore the effort of two developing countries, Mexico and South Africa, in crafting a desirable and compelling nation brand. In order to accomplish this purpose we employ a semiotic analysis of four video campaigns (targeted to internal and external audiences) and a lexical semantic analysis of brand perceptions from an online community.

**Thesis purpose**: The purpose of this research is to conduct a critical analysis of the practice of nation branding adopted in a developing country context, considering the existence of tacit stigmatizations that these nations carry for being labeled as 'developing'.

**Methodology**: The philosophical foundations guiding this research is critical theory. A multiple case study of Mexico and South Africa was adopted comprehending a semiotic analysis of four video campaigns triangulated with a lexical semantic analysis of online dialogues.

**Theoretical perspective**: This research is rooted in a critical theoretical philosophy, through which we explored the practice of nation branding.

**Empirical data**: Semiotic analysis of four video campaigns from the governments of Mexico and South Africa coupled with a lexical semantic analysis of collected online dialogues concerning Mexico and South Africa as a brand.

Conclusion: The outcomes resulting from the analysis of the empirical data confirm that the two studied cases—Mexico and South Africa- are indeed perceived unfavorably by the investigated online community. In addition, we disclosed that there are significant differences between the brand image projected by the governments of the analyzed countries (brand position desired) and the brand image perceived by external stakeholders (brand position perceived).

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#### 1. Introduction

"In a totally commodified world there would be no sacred sites"
-Peter Corrigan, 1997:36

With the above quote Peter Corrigan condenses what Karl Marx adverted from the capitalist societies in which everything is dragged into a thoughtless twirl of commodities (Corrigan, 1997). This project explores countries as brands, which is a notion that has been increasingly practiced and accepted since the late eighties (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011). Despite critiques of this commoditized approach, it is undeniable that places are marked whether intentionally or not. However, countries can be conceived as 'brands' when strategic work is done so that they become marks that symbolize a range of ideas and attributes that differentiates them among other nations.

Nation brands are usually paired with caricature and simplification which can be either positive or negative (Fanning, 2011), positive associations like 'efficient Germany' or 'technological Japan' can help improve the national image, on the other hand stereotypical images can be harmful to a country's development (Fanning, 2011). Developing countries, especially in the African continent, are experiencing additional problems in attracting international investment because of a negative reputation created and fostered by Western media (Osei & Gbadamosi, 2011). The demands of the globalized world emphasize the necessity for national leaders to manage the nation brand. Intense competition for countries to attract investments, trade, tourism and human resources are just a few things at stake.

Nation branding is defined as an instrument to improve or correct the nation's image or reputation (Gudjonsson, 2005; Fan, 2010). Here, the focus is often placed on the practice of branding such as the design of logotypes and slogans. We argue that nation branding should be embraced comprehensively, because after all it is not only the country's reputation at stake. As asserted by Anholt (2009:6) "National reputation cannot be constructed; it can only be earned".

#### 1.1 Research Problem

Broadly, our thesis seeks to address the difficulties encountered by developing countries in the practice of nation branding by exploring both campaigns and public perceptions. Developing countries seems to be affected by the established social order due to a "label effect" in which these countries are laden intentionally or unintentionally with a tacit social stigmatization of being situated as 'developing'. According to the World Bank (2014) a developing country is "one in which the majority lives on far less money—with far fewer basic public services—than the population in highly industrialized countries". In addition, developing countries have been called underdeveloped, less developed and least developed countries. These evidences connote the existence of an agreed social arrangement, which establish a conspicuous distinction between developed and developing countries in which the latter are marked tacitly as inferiors. Hence, their attempts to craft a desirable brand image to attract investment, tourism and human resources must deal with these stigmas, seeking emancipation of the legitimized social order in which developed countries are favored. In this study we will explore, nation branding in two developing countries, Mexico and South Africa, where government initiatives are in place to craft positive and compelling brand images. Although nation branding research has been developed exponentially since the late eighties (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011), our literature review unveil that investigations on developing countries have received little attention. However, both scholars and practitioners seems to agree that developing countries are those who might benefit most from constructing a positive and strong country brand. This is encapsulated by Moilanen and Rainisto (2008) who assert that

While a nation brand might be a drop in the economic ocean that helps improve competitiveness for developed countries such as Scotland, it is much more critical to economic success for developing countries. A nation brand is disproportionately important for developing countries... (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008: 62)

Often, a good brand is framed as a need for practical, namely economic reasons. Papadopoulos (2004:45) states:

Yet, to the extent that country branding can help enhance economic development, it is exactly the developing countries that need systematic place marketing the most...

It is clear that academia, practitioners and governments have recognized the relevance of nation branding in a developing country context which is accompanied by a notorious enthusiasm and embraced by the governments from these countries. In the recent years various efforts to systematically construct a strong country brand have been conspicuously displayed among these countries resulting in the proliferation of slogans, logotypes and national campaigns aiming to promote their country brand image such as Nigeria – *The heart of Africa*, Colombia - *The only risk is wanting to stay* and *Fiji Me* among several other examples. However, the efforts, pinned on enhancing the brands of developing countries have been mostly futile. From the comparison of the principal ranking systems -*Country Brand Index* by FutureBrand and *Anholt-GfK Nation and Brands Index* by Simon Anholt we identified that developing countries do not hold any top positions.

## 1.2 Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to conduct a critical analysis of the practice of nation branding adopted by two developing countries, considering the existence of tacit stigmatizations that being 'developing' carries. We strive to investigate place branding through the lens of critical theory enlightening that the positioning of country brands is not merely the result of a well implemented marketing strategy but rather a manifestation of the existent power relation between developed and underdeveloped countries. Practically, we argue that developing countries face challenges related to preexisting stigmatizations. Our aim is to shine light on the challenges and opportunities that nations face as they attempt to craft a desirable brand image and to attract investments, tourism and human resources. It is our final contention that nations must face their stigmas as a way to develop an authentic nation brand.

We intend to explore nation branding within a context of developing countries through two means. Firstly, through contemplating country brands as communicators (Hankison, 2004) in order to identify how developing countries portray themselves, in an attempt to shape a desirable country brand through the semiotic analysis of two governmental campaigns for each country; one targeted for external stakeholders (*Mexico City: Live it to believe it* and

Meet South Africa) and the other directed to internal stakeholders (Se puede and Inspiring New Ways). We will consider both internal and external groups of interest in attempt to embrace a holistic approach. The video campaigns directed to external stakeholders aim to improve the awareness of the nation brand in a touristic perspective, on the other hand the video campaigns directed to an internal audience attempt to forge the national identity by means of pride. On a second level, we will explore country brands as perceptual identities (Hankison, 2004) by detecting members of an online community's primary associations with these countries. With this we aim to shed light on the preexistence stigmatization that underdeveloped countries may carry tacitly on account of being labeled as 'developing'.

#### 1.3 Research questions

The two research questions that guide our inquiry are:

- 1. How do emerging countries attempt to craft a desirable brand through video campaigns?
- 2. How do online users perceive developing countries as a brand?

The first research question focuses on elucidating the denotative and connotative messages projected by governmental campaigns of developing countries as an effort to construct a favorable country brand image for their nations. We will employ a detailed examination of the semiotic signs displayed in two video advertisements, the former targeted to external stockholders (tourism) and the latter channeled to internal stakeholders (citizens).

The second research question aims to unveil the primary associations that emerging countries evoke in others as perceptual identities. With this research question we pursue to identify whether and how members of an online community perceive that developing countries carry tacit stigmatizations for being labeled as 'developing' or if they remain perceptually unaffected for being allocated in this categorization. This research question will be investigated through a semantic analysis of the expressed opinions submitted by an online community concerning developing countries.

#### 2. Literature Review

In this chapter we will elaborate the main concepts involved in the research process and analysis. We will firstly introduce the theories concerning nation branding, then we will focus on concepts regarding nation branding in a developing country context and finally we will explore the semiotic and lexical semantic fields in virtue of the adopted analysis methods. The purpose of this research is to investigate how developing countries embrace nation branding within a context of weak and stigmatized reputation. Mexico and South Africa are attempting to craft a desirable image but at the same time they are experiencing negative associations due to social problems and political inefficiency. In order to deeply analyze these phenomena with a critical perspective a literature review of nation branding, developing countries, semiotics and lexical semantics is mandatory in the interest of achieving useful findings to answer our research questions.

#### 2.1 Nation Branding

Before introducing the theoretical framework related with 'nation branding' it is necessary to provide a revision of the notions of 'brand' and 'branding'. Although the utilization of brands date back to the Roman period, the modern conceptualization of branding was introduced during the industrial revolution (Roper & Fill, 2012). Gardner and Levy (1955) depict brand as interlaced symbols which carry a range of ideas and attributes, enabling consumers to create associations of different goods and services, which otherwise would be impossible to achieve with an undifferentiated supply (Roper & Fill, 2012). Hankinson (2004) conducted an analysis of the literature in this specific field, concluding that brands can be conceptualized in four ways. Firstly as *communicators*, within this perspective brands aim to differentiate a product from the other of the competitors through logos and trademarks. Secondly, brands can be conceived as perceptual entities linking the brand image to a set of associations perceived by the users (De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998). Alternatively, brands can be conceptualized as value enhancers, from this perspective brands enclose the possession of a financial value, also defined as brand equity. Lastly, brands are assumed as relationships because through their attributes consumers create emotional associations with them. Even though brands can be conceptualized under these four different perspectives,

Hankinson (2004) asserts that brands are not confined in one category, but on the contrary "they are arguably inextricably linked to each other through input-output-feedback relationships" (Hankinson, 2004:110). In other words brands are simultaneously communicators, perceptual entities, value enhancers and relation builders. In this research we conceived 'nation brands' as communicators because every country has national symbols that distinguish them from other nations. Simultaneously, 'nation brands' are perceptual entities due to the tacit associations that they carry. We also conceived 'nation brands' as value enhancers on account that having a consolidated nation brand image generates strategic advantages in terms of tourism and trade for this country and therefore improve its competitiveness in the global marketplace (Anholt, 2006). Finally, 'nation brands' are relations because they evoke emotional associations, for instance when a tourists recall their experiences in a foreign country with nostalgia.

Initially the notion of 'branding' was related with the domain of products and services, but eventually the practice of branding was included in the corporate sphere in which a whole organization is conceived as a brand (Roper & Fill, 2012). However, since the late eighties the practice of branding was adapted for places -nations, regions and cities- becoming increasingly subject of interest among scholars and practitioners (Lucarelli & Brorstrom, 2013). This field of study has been termed in various ways such as place branding (Papadopoulos, 2004), destination branding (Morgan et al., 2003) and nation branding (Fan, 2010). Since the focus of our research is framed at national level, from now on we will employ exclusively the terms 'nation brand' and 'nation branding'. Even though these notions ('nation brand' and 'nation branding') are closely related, they are not interchangeable. As asserted by Fan (2010) 'nation brand' is the set of perceptions (people, culture, food, ambassadors, product brands etc.) associated to a country in the mind of an international audience whereas 'nation branding' is an instrument that serves for different purposes:

- 1. Nation branding as an instrument to reframe national identities (Olins, 1999).
- 2. Nation branding as an instrument to boost nation's competitiveness (Anholt, 2006).
- 3. Nation branding as an instrument to support different types of activities including business, culture, politics and sports (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2001).

4. Nation branding as an instrument to improve or correct the nation's image or reputation (Gudjonsson, 2005; Fan, 2010).

In this research we consider that the practice of nation branding is a vehicle to improve or correct the nation's image or reputation (Gudjonsson, 2005; Fan, 2010) through which countries may boost their nation's competitiveness in the market place (Anholt, 2006).

Nation brand comprises three elements: nation identity, nation image and nation reputation. Nation identity is constituted by the self-perception shared between citizens of the same country (Fan, 2010). Nation image refers to the external projection of a country to international stakeholders whereas nation reputation is the perceptual corpus received from internal and external stakeholders (Whetten & Mackey, 2002 cited in Fan, 2010). Although nation branding is concerned with a set of comprehensive national strategies which includes congruently these three elements (nation identity, nation image and nation reputation), special attention is placed in the reputation of the countries. Anholt (2009) claims that in the present era is mandatory for any competent government to control and manage the country's reputation or otherwise it will be controlled by the public ignorance, as in many African countries (Anholt, 2009). In this research we investigated the three elements of nation brand: nation image through the analysis of a governmental video advertisement targeted towards external stakeholders (tourism), nation identity by means of the analysis of a governmental campaign destined for internal stakeholders (citizens) and nation reputation through exploring what are the primary perceptual associations of an online community regarding the studied countries Mexico and South Africa.

The study of nation branding has been conducted within two main streams, a holistic approach led by Simon Anholt and an absolutist approach led by Gregory John Ashwoth and Henk Voogd.

#### Holistic approach on nation branding

Anholt, (2009), one of the leading expert in the field of place branding and editor of *Place* Branding and Public Diplomacy, claims that places (nations, regions, cities etc.) have brand images, but they cannot be branded because that would be "excessively ambitious, entirely unproven and ultimately irresponsible claim" (Anholt, 2009:11). Furthermore, he asserted that the concept of nation branding is a "dangerous myth" (Anholt, 2008). From Anholt's perspective, countries should manage their presence in a global context "in a clear, coordinated and communicative way, if they are to influence public opinion" (Anholt, 2009:12), yet no political body can control the nation as a "product". Govers & Go (2009) additionally emphasize that nation branding is not just about communication, but is mainly about designing and executing investments in local products, innovation, infrastructure, education, cultural patrimony and tourism services. Anholt (2009) further discusses that nations in order to change or modify the perceptions held by an international audience have to implement their strategies (implementation of a clear vision), substance (execution of the strategy through policies, economic reforms, legal frameworks etc.) and symbolic actions (actions with an essential communicative power); yet this change is only possible with the support of the population. In line with this perspective, Olins (1999) claims that nation brand management in the next future will represent a key national asset and a considerable responsibility for the government. We locate our research within this holistic approach because we consider nation branding as a vehicle to improve the nation's image, identity and reputation in order to consolidate a strong nation brand. Which in turn generates strategic advantages in terms of tourism and trade for this country and therefore improve its competitiveness in the global marketplace.

#### Absolutist approach on nation branding

Academics of the absolutist school consider that nations are comparable with products, consequently they can be branded (Gudjonsson, 2005). They consider that nation brands share the same qualities than product and corporate brands, as a result a holistic view is not required (Gudjonsson, 2005). This approach can also be defined as 'target market approach',

where places including nations, regions and cities follow the process of segmentation, targeting and positioning with the final aim of destination marketing organizations (tourism boards, chambers of commerce, financial institutions and trade associations) to "sell" a well-defined product to a selected target audiences (Govers & Go, 2009). In line with this perspective Ashwoth & Voogd (1990) suggest that cities can be considered as 'place-product' comprising various attributes such as infrastructure, houses, museums etc. Consequently a 'place-marketing strategy' is composed of two elements: product development, which involve all the activities addressed to improve physical resources of the place and 'promotion' which involve all the activities concerned with improvement of the place image (Ashwoth & Voogd, 1990 cited in Madsen, 1992).

## 2.2 Nation Branding in Developing Countries

In the research problem and questions we have introduced the concept 'developing countries', in this section we shed light on this terminology and its implications. Although the International Monetary Fund declares that the classification of the countries in the world is not based strictly on economic criteria (IMF World Economic Outlook, 2014), Sanford and Sandhu (2002) argue that the primary measures still focus on the economy of the countries. This is corroborated by the criteria to classify the countries utilized by the principal international organizations. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) classifies the countries of the world in two major groups: 'advanced economies and emerging market' and 'developing economies', this categorization is based on the GDP, total exports of goods and services and population (IMF World Economic Outlook, 2014). Likewise, the World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) of the United Nations divided all the countries of the world based on their economic conditions in three categories: 'developed economies', 'economies in transition' and 'developing countries' (WESP United Nations, 2012). According to the World Bank (2014:website) "A developing country is one in which the majority lives on far less money—with far fewer basic public services—than the population in highly industrialized countries". In addition, developing countries have been also termed as underdeveloped, less developed and least developed countries. These evidences connote the existence of an agreed social arrangement which establish a conspicuous distinction

between developed and developing countries in which the latter are marked tacitly as inferiors.

The disparity between developing and developed countries is further visible in various brand ranking systems created by specialized consultancy firms. Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index (NBI) designed by Simon Anholt and GfK is considered the first analytical ranking of the world's country brand (Anholt, 2005). Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index (NBI) surveyed a panel of 10.000 consumers in ten different countries asking about their perception of cultural, political, commercial, human resources, investment and tourist appeal of twenty five developed and developing countries (Anholt, 2005). The overall nation brand is obtained as the sum of the perceptions gathered through the survey in the six different dimensions (Anholt, 2005). On a similar way Country Brand Index (CBI) designed by FutureBrand collected qualitative data from 3.600 individuals from eighteen countries, asking about the perception in six areas namely governance, investment, human capital, growth, sustainability and influence. The assessment of the country perception is based on the Hierarchical Decision Model (HDM) consisting of the levels of awareness, familiarity, associations, preference, consideration, decision and advocacy towards the nation brand (CBI 2012-13, 2013). After a comparison of these two ratings (Country Brand Index by FutureBrand and Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index by Simon Anholt & GfK) we found that in none of them developing countries are included in the top positions of the ranking lists, proving the existence of a 'perception gap' between developed and not developed countries.

Developing countries, especially in the African continent are experiencing additional problems in attracting international investment because of a negative reputation created and fostered by Western media and academia (Osei & Gbadamosi, 2011). Nation brands are usually paired with caricatures and simplification which can be either positive or negative (Fanning, 2011). As asserted by Fanning (2011) positive associations like 'efficient Germany' or 'technological Japan' can help improving the national image, conversely stereotypical images can be harmful in the country's development. Widler (2007:148) defines stereotypes as "outdated simplifications", "generalisations based on impressions instead of facts" and "distorted ideas" attributable to inadequate knowledge of the nations which hinder

the creation of a strong nation brand. Further, Hazime (2011) claims that a strong nation brand conveys higher tourist demand as well as likelihood to attract direct foreign investments, subsequently a better position in the global marketplace. In line with this, Dinnie (2004) argues that global competition between countries is growing in importance, resulting in the proliferation of incentives for a nation to manage its brand in order to attract tourists, human resources and investments. Therefore, globalization is attributed as the main reason for place or rather nation branding, subsequently strengthening boundaries between countries instead of creating a cooperative and unified environment (Widler, 2007).

Globalization is the conceptualization of the world as a 'single place' (Robertson, 2002), besides this, the notion is complex and multifaceted because it involves various dimensions such as economy, environment, politics and society (Marks et.al., 2006). Appadurai (1990) asserts that media spectrum has intensified the tensions arose from the global interactions between cultural homogenization and heterogenization because media had spread and legitimized concept like 'Americanization'. In a globalized context, mass media play a principal role since they act as the custodian of the information provided to the vast audiences (Boholm, 1998). Due to the gigantic amount of information, media and subsequently journalists are in power to frame which news worth working on and which not, thus they focus on certain aspects and give less importance to others (Hornig, 1993). This process of framing news is defined by mass communication scholars as 'agenda setting', where "media may not tell us what to think, but they tell us what to think about" (Marks et.al., 2006:619; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). There are two levels of 'agenda setting': the first level considers that the greater the coverage of the media is, the more attention will be attributed to the information. On the second level, both cognitive and affective attributes are transmitted possibly influencing the public perception on the issue (Marks et.al., 2006). In this context Media framing information and choosing tone of voice have the potentiality to shape the perception of a country. In the last decades developments in ICT (Information and Communication Technology) had deep repercussions in the circulation of news and information, altering power structures in the channels of communication (Go & Haywood, 2003). Therefore, managing the country brand image is no longer a "push process" of communication where the information move only in one way through mass media, rather the

system is now interactive and dynamic (Molenaar 1996, 2002 cited in Govers & Go, 2009). In line with this, countries will be required to use their various stakeholders as source of information and competence in the next future, encouraging the usage of social media platforms where users can freely interact and express ideas (Govers & Go, 2009).

As asserted by Heath (2004:666) globalization is a "force that generates increased westernization of the developing world". According to the existent literature Westernization is broadly considered as system of influences originated through cultural and social emulation of western values. Alternatively, Heath (2004) considers it as an internal process resulting from modernization and liberalization. But what can be defined as western value? Traditionally, consumerism is considered as a typical "western value", however Heath (2004:670) considers the relation consumerism-westernization as a simplification of the reality explaining that Asian consumerism, for instance, has deep roots in Chinese culture. Therefore society can adopt a capitalist approach without adopting western values. Moreover, western values consists of ideological principles namely tolerance, diversity, participation, inclusivity which are resulting from a process of liberalization (Heath, 2004). The Western halo effect was identified in our study in the analysis of the Mexican touristic campaign Mexico- Live it to believe it, in which Mexico City is displayed as a westernized metropolis, presenting a life style that emulates those in the developed countries, this is even more stressed by the customization of traditional objects such as food and jewelry adapted to western standards and the conspicuous absence of locals in the video.

Likewise globalization has been also associated with the development of 'global colonialism', where developed economies continues to grow creating and reinforcing colonial influence in a post-colonial era (Banerjee & Linstead, 2001). As Thompson & Tambyah point out, colonialism

has shaped the historical development of the global economic system by establishing an enduring hierarchical pattern of center-periphery economic power relations conventionally characterized through a dichotomy between developed (FirstWorld) and less developed (Third World) nations. (1999:217)

The analysis of the touristic video *Meet South Africa* shed light on the global colonialism by displaying the citizens of this country with an attitude of appearement and docility whereas the inhabitants of developed countries were represented in a superior position, thus indicating an acceptance of subordination from South African people which legitimized the established social arrangement of superiority for people from developed countries over the ones of developing countries.

#### 2.3 Semiotics and Lexical Semantic

Considering that in our study we examined the denotative and connotative messages projected by governmental campaigns of developing countries as an effort to construct a favorable country brand image; we employed the method of semiotic analysis of video campaigns, because as asserted by Hall (1980) semiotic analysis enables to unhide the covered intentions of the creators by the exploration of complex meanings behind signs. After having introduced the theoretical concepts associated with nation branding it is time now to uncover the relationship between semiotics and brands. But first what does semiotics mean? Umberto Eco provides a broad definition of it stating that "semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign" (Eco, 1976:7). Contemporary semioticians analyze signs comprehending images, words, sounds, objects, gestures and "anything which 'stands for' something else" (Chandler, 2007:2) as part of a "sign-system" (Chandler, 2007) where they create meanings and express a reality. From this perspective, brands can be considered as abstract constructions that are associated with a wide range of meanings (Santos, 2012; Danesi, 2006; Semprini, 1995). This represents a bridge between semiotics and brands disclosing the underlying forces that construct meanings in the society and brands as part of it (Somerfield, 2014).

The field of semiotics is broadly considered as having two "founding fathers" (Berger, 2014), the Swiss Ferdinand de Saussure and the American Charles Sanders Peirce. Saussure coined the term 'semiology' in 1894, but afterwards this term was replaced by the Peircean concept of 'semiotics' becoming the referential term for the science of signs (Chandler, 2007; Berger, 2014). The Sausserian School considers semiotics as an extensions of linguistics, claiming

that language communicates ideas through a system of sign (Saussure, 1915-1966 cited in De Lencastre & Côrte-Real, 2010). Further, this approach divides signs in two parts: a signifier which is a form or expression and a signified which represents a concept or content (Santos, 2012). On the other hand the Peircean School follows a positivist approach towards signs, considering 'sign' as a connection to the real world (Peirce, 1931-1958 cited in De Lencastre & Côrte-Real, 2010). In contrast with the dyadic model employed by Saussure, Peirce presents a triadic design including: the representamen, that is the sign in different forms, the *interpretant* which consists in the interpretation given to each sign and the *object* which is something that the sign refers to (Chandler, 2007). Furthermore, Peirce depicts the relationship between sign and object in three forms, as *iconic* when the sign resemble the object, as *indexical* derived by causal connections and as *symbolic* when the relationship is dominated by conventional associations (Berger, 1984). To illustrate this in terms of country branding, a 'touristic postcard' would be an icon because of the resemblance with the place depicted, 'the image of a plane landing' would be an index because of the link between cause and effect and finally a 'flag' would be a symbol due to its association with a country which implies that the viewer must learn what country is represented (Berger, 2014).

Alternatively, Umberto Eco discloses that signs can also be used to lie (Berger, 2014), asserting that:

A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else. This something else does not necessarily have to exist or to actually be somewhere at the moment in which a sign stands for it. Thus semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie (Eco, 1979:7)

In line with this, the Barthesian notion of 'myth' is closely associated with the idea of classical tales employing gods and heroes and therefore suggesting an underlying belief of a false representation (Chandler, 2007). Furthermore, Barthes considers that myths are part of the current dominant ideologies as a facilitator to comprehend the significance of different notions within a cultural context (Chandler, 2007; Lakoff and Johnson 1980). This concept was encountered in the analysis of the video campaign *Mexico City: Live it to believe it* where

traditional national myths like "tacos and burritos" were replaced with a westernized version to present this traditional food as "gourmet" dishes.

Besides the semiotic field (explained above) which we employed in the identification of the 'signs' in the governmental campaigns; we also conducted an examination of the textual content of the expressed opinions submitted by the members of an online community through the lens of lexical semantic domain which will be detailed next. Words are one of the different forms in which a sign can be represented, and the study of the meaning of the words is usually referred as lexical semantic (Fodor & Lepore, 1998). Pustejovsky defines lexical semantic as (1991:1) "the study of how and what the words of a language denote... Under this view, different word senses have been generally associated with distinct lexical items". Pustejovsky (1991) moreover claims that analyzing a sentence from a lexical perspective can provide a deeper understanding of the structural information because is not just about grouping words in different classes, but primarily deal with lexical relations between words, facilitating to uncover hidden meanings through the analysis of 'figurative language' (Hawkes, 1972). This "type" of language is characterized by challenging the 'literal' meaning of the words because the intention of the expression do not match with the actual meaning of the signs (Chandler, 2002). In other words, "figurative language is language which doesn't mean what it says" (Hawkes, 1972:1). The figurative language is configured by rhetorical tropes which are the usage of the words in other sense rather than the appropriate (Oxford English Dictionary, 2014). As asserted by Chandler (2007:124) tropes offer a wide variety of "ways of saying 'this is (or is like) that". Analogous to other codes, figurative languages like tropes are part of a culture and sub-culture system, where the repeated employment of the above expresses a tacit agreement to shared assumptions of the community (Chandler, 2007). There are four rhetorical tropes: *Metaphor* which is when a figure is used to refer to something that it does not literally denote in order to suggest a similarity; *Metonymy* involves that one 'signified' stands for another 'signified' to substitute meaning; Synecdoche is when a part substitutes the whole or vice versa and *Irony* which presents incongruity between what is expected and what occurs (Chandler, 2007; Nack, 1996).

Having revised the domains of semiotics and lexical semantic and their relation with our study, it is necessary to point out that both fields ultimately pursue to uncover the connotations and denotations conveyed by signs. The former (connotation) entail the emotional, historic and symbolic meaning linked with a word or signs whereas the latter (denotation) "refers to the literal or explicit meanings of words and other phenomena" (Berger, 2000:20). Therefore, by employing a semiotic analysis of video campaigns and lexical semantic analysis of online dialogues as methods of data collection we aim to answer our research questions (RQ1: How do emerging countries attempt to craft a desirable brand through video campaigns? and RQ2: How do online users perceive emerging countries as a brand?) through the identification and sense-making of connotative and denotative signs. The philosophical foundations, research design and collection of empirical materials will be described in details in the next chapter.

## 3. Methodology

This research is rooted in a critical theoretical philosophy, through which we explored how two developing countries, each seeking to overcome tacit stigmatizations and stereotypes, engage the practice of nation branding and how consumers perceive them. We investigated two specific countries Mexico and South Africa through a multiple-case research design. Considering that the object of this study is twofold, we selected two methods of data collection. Firstly, we conducted a semiotic analysis of video campaigns, to identify the denotative and connotative messages projected by governmental campaigns of developing countries as an effort to construct a favorable country brand. Secondly, we employed the method of lexical semantic analysis of online dialogue to identify the primary perceptions associated with developing countries as brands in online communities. We conclude this chapter with the presentation of reflections and limitations.

## 3.1 Philosophical Foundations

Considering that the purpose of our research is to elucidate that developing countries carry a tacit mark of inferiority compared with developed nations, which allocates them implicitly in a disadvantageous position in terms of consolidating a desirable brand image; we consider that investigating place branding through the lenses of critical theory is advantageous due to its focus in generating reflexive knowledge through a critical examination of the dominant social structures (Alvesson, 1994). The ontological position of critical theory assumes that 'reality' exists and is potentially apprehensible because individuals are confined by real, independent and measurable structures (Guba & Lincoln, 1994 & Murray & Ozzane, 1991) &); but at the same time, this reality is distorted because social structures are the result of history and consequently creates a 'virtual reality' manufactured by the society (Murray et al., 1994, Murray & Ozzane, 1991 & Tadajewski & Brownlie, 2008). Critical theory and interpretivism share a subjectivist epistemology in which the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked; however, the central distinction between these two perspectives is that for critical theory knowledge is mediated reflectively through the values of the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In other words, investigators are not neutral agents detached from their political stances. Hence, critical theory research is

invariably influenced by the values of the critical scientists who ultimately seek emancipation (Murray & Ozzane, 1991). Under this approach, knowledge is conceived as simultaneously powerful and political (Thornton, 2002; Glesne, 1999). However, it is also recognized that the production of knowledge might be an expression of power rather than truth (Mack, 2010). Therefore, critical theory aims to unveil the power relations that constrain social actors, eroding ignorance and providing stimulus to action (Thornton, 2002). Because we consider that the positioning of country brands are not merely the results of a well implemented marketing strategy but rather a manifestation of the existent power relation between developed and developing countries, exploring nation branding through the lenses of critical theory is suitable for this research.

## 3.2 Case Study Design

The object of study of the thesis is twofold, the first part of the research aims to unveil semiotic meanings conveyed through video campaigns originated by governmental organizations (Mexico's tourism board and government and South Africa's government funded agency), whereas the second phase of the study will analyze the perceptions associated with the nation brands 'Mexico' and 'South Africa' by the selected online community. We decided to approach the above mentioned object of study with a case study design mainly for three reasons. Firstly we determine to employ a case study design in order to cover specific contextual conditions tightly linked with the research problem and research questions mentioned above, therefore it would be reducing for our study to analyze video campaigns and brand perceptions without considering the current contexts of the corresponding nations. This choice is further supported by Yin (2003) who considers case study as the fittest design when the research problem is closely connected with the surrounding context. Secondly, since the focus of our study is to answer "how" research questions i.e. RQ1: How do emerging countries attempt to craft a desirable brand through video campaigns? and RO2: How do online users perceive emerging countries as a brand? The choice to employ case study enabled us to acquire deeper and richer findings (Yin, 2003). Finally we adopted a multiple-cases study design (more precisely, Case 1 covering

Mexico and *Case 2* comprising South Africa) because it allowed us to expand our understanding of the research problem in two different developing countries.

Taking into consideration the qualitative approach of our study, which draws attention to words rather than number and quantification (Bryman & Bell, 2003); the choice of a case study design permits the integration of quantitative analysis which is suitable in the quantification of the most recurrent words and categories in the second part of the analysis of this study (lexical semantic analysis). Consequently it facilitated a holistic understanding of the studied phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Furthermore employing a triangulation (Saunders et al., 2007) of different empirical data (video campaigns and online dialogues) we restricted the risk of "blind points" in the obtained findings simultaneously enhancing the reliability and credibly of the entire work.

## 3.3 Criteria for Selecting the Countries

On a stage preceding the collection of data, we selected the countries subject of this investigation. As defined by the research problem and questions, the focus of our study is on developing countries because of the struggling experienced by them in terms of consolidating a desirable brand image, affecting their attractiveness for investment, tourism and human resources. Given the limited time frame and aiming to gain deeper insights we decided to put our efforts in the profound exploration of two countries Mexico and South Africa. At first we compiled a list of emerging countries from different continents through official country classification including: the International Monetary Fund (World Economic Outlook, 2014), the World Bank (World Bank List of Economies, 2014) and the United Nations (UN World Economic Situation and Prospects, 2012). The following step was to screen from the initial list the existence of nation brand communication material; therefore we assessed advertisement campaigns from various developing countries. Subsequently, owing to the material scrutinized we selected Mexico and South Africa as subject of the case study. Both countries have a background dotted of difficulty, social conflicts and internal differences; however, at the same time they have improved their economy as well as implementing official programs to systematically create a positive and compelling brand image for these countries, with the ambition to be included in the so called 'developed countries' category. A perfect example of this effort is the organization of the 2010 FIFA World Cup by South Africa, which is the biggest sporting single-event competition in the world (FIFA, 2014) and therefore it requires advanced managerial and organizational skills. Alternatively the Mexican picture presents different characteristic, according to The World Bank (2014), Mexico in the 2012 had the 11th largest GDP using Purchasing Power Parity rates, higher than country like Australia and Canada nevertheless it still struggles to adjust a negative image fostered by drug wars and corruption. Eventually both Mexico and South Africa are enhancing deep and content rich campaigns that will enable us to extract profound meanings through a semiotics analysis. Following this introduction we present a brief description of the context inherent the two countries.

#### 3.3.1 Context of Mexico

Mexico is currently ranked as a developing country by the International Monetary Fund (World Economic Outlook, 2014), the World Bank (World Bank List of Economies, 2014) and the United Nations (UN World Economic Situation and Prospects, 2012) due to its underdeveloped economic conditions. Simon Anholt is considered an expert in the field of nation branding. He stated that Mexico has been trying for almost 300 years to come out from the shadow of the USA without putting effort in presenting itself to the rest of the world (Freeman, 2012). Moreover in the report handed to the former Mexican President Felipe Calderon, Anholt affirmed that Mexico had "an already weak and in some cases badly flawed reputation" (Freeman, 2012). In line with this statement a study conducted by Cesar Villanueva Rivas shows that the perception of the international audience towards Mexico from 2001 to 2009, has clearly experienced a deterioration to negative association including "Narco-violence", "The women of Ciudad Juarez", "Failed-state", "Corrupt institutions" and "kidnappings" mainly due to the broader news coverage (Rivas, 2011 p. 29). The above stated negative associations hindered Mexico to strengthen their nation brand.

Country Brand Index (CBI) which is a global study of country brands conducted by the consultancy firm FutureBrand (brand consultancy specialized in country and destination

branding); located Mexico in the 51st position in the latest ranking *CBI 2012-13*; largely as a result of its perceived poor security and widespread corruption. As mentioned in the report (Country Brand Index 2012-13:51) "A country notorious for its criminal organizations, corruption and drug trafficking, the recent political and legal restructuring in Mexico is leaving many experts optimistic about the country's prospects". In 2010, Mexico was also rated 31st out of 50 countries in the Anholt-GfK Roper's Nation Brand Index.

Despite these negative associations Mexico is currently experiencing a great economic expansion undergoing an average GDP growth of 4.3% between 2010 and 2012, besides, with nearly 115 million citizens and a strategic position in the American continent is the second largest economy by GDP in Latin America (World Bank, 2014). The current President Enrique Peña Nieto took office in December 2012 for a six-year term. As head of the country, he started an ambitious structural reforms program in different areas in particular: education, financial sector regulation, fiscal policy, telecommunication and competition policy, energy and labor market regulation. In conjunction with these structural reforms the Mexican government employed several campaigns directed to both internal and external audiences with the aim of enhancing the current brand image. The campaign *Mexico – Live it to believe it*, launched in September 2013 aims to craft the brand image of Mexico on a touristic dimension. Furthermore the government in December 2012 broadcasted a national campaign composed of two advertisement videos *Se puede* and *Impulso* directed to the domestic population with the final aim to revitalize the national pride as long as reunite the country after a long and exhausting election campaign.

#### 3.3.2 Context of South Africa

South Africa is classified as a developing country by the International Monetary Fund (World Economic Outlook, 2014), the World Bank (World Bank List of Economies, 2014) and the United Nations (UN World Economic Situation and Prospects, 2012) due to its basic economic country conditions. However, its income level (*upper middle* according to the World Bank) positions this country in the forefront of the African continent where several countries have a *lower middle* and *low* income level (World Bank, 2014). Therefore, South

Africa is considered the economic powerhouse of Africa. Its inclusion to the economic bloc of the fast-growing emerging markets BRIC in 2010 along with being the only African country incorporated in the international forum of economic cooperation G20, has reinforced South Africa's position as one of the most advanced economy regionally. With a sustained average GDP growth of 3.2 per cent since 1995 (The World Bank, 2014), South Africa has managed to bear the global economic crisis relatively stable, largely due to a well-capitalized banking system and the implementation of a strict regulatory framework (South Africa Government Communication and Information System, 2014; MarketLine Country Profile South Africa, 2013). Despite the economic stability of South Africa, the International Monetary Fund forecasts a deceleration in its economy caused by a feeble private investment, lack of consumer and investor confidence and a conflicted mining industry (World Economic Outlook 2014, 2014). Likewise, The World Bank warns that the economic growth of the country is insufficient to meet the labor market, deriving in high rates of unemployment. In addition, as highlighted by Osei and Gbadamosi (2011) African countries are affected by a distorted brand image on account of a halo effect in which individual country brands are shadowed by the continental reputation, associating them with poverty, corruption and crime.

Since 2002 the government of South Africa has implemented an official program to systematically create a positive and compelling brand image for this country (Brand South Africa website, 2014). With the creation of the public entity *Brand South Africa*, the presidency of this nation aims to boost the country brand 'South Africa' through the diffusion of marketing campaigns. Having as goal to generate strategic advantages in terms of tourism, and trade for this country and therefore improve its competitiveness in the global marketplace (Brand South Africa website, 2014). Since its inception, *Brand South Africa* has launched seven campaigns of which the latest termed as 'Inspiring new ways' and 'Meet South Africa' are the units of study of this research. In spite of the efforts of this country to craft a desirable nation brand, South Africa has not been favored in the rating systems that specialize in assess how every country is performing in terms of branding. According to *Country Brand Index 2012-13* (CBI) of the consultancy firm *FutureBrand*, South Africa ranked in the position 43<sup>rd</sup>, losing eight places compared with the *CBI 2011-2012*. Likewise, in the *Anholt-GfK* 

*Roper Nation Brand Index 2013*, this country is located in the place 36<sup>th</sup> with none advance since the report of 2011.

## 3.4 Empirical research

As mentioned before the object of this thesis is twofold. In the first part we aim to examine the denotative and connotative messages projected by governmental campaigns of developing countries as an effort to construct a favorable country brand image. Therefore, we selected the method of semiotic analysis of video campaigns, because as asserted by Hall (1980) semiotic analysis enables us to unhide the covered intentions of the creators by the exploration of complex meanings behind signs. In addition, we attempt to study the primary perceptions associated with developing countries as brands in online communities, in order to unveil whether these countries carry tacit stigmatizations for being labeled as 'developing' or if they remain perceptually unaffected for being allocated in this categorization. Hence we employed the method of lexical semantic analysis of online dialogue through which we gathered and analyzed expressed opinions of the members of an online community. Following we present how we conducted these methods in depth.

#### 3.4.1 Semiotic Analysis of Video Campaigns

Through the semiotic analysis of video campaigns we collected the empirical data that enabled us to answer the first research questions: *How do emerging countries attempt to craft a desirable brand through video campaigns?* In our research we conducted a detailed examination of the semiotic signs displayed in two video advertisements for each country, the first targeted to external stakeholders (tourism) and the latter channeled to internal stakeholders (citizens). Through these means, we identified the denotative and connotative messages projected by the government of developing countries as an effort to construct a favorable country brand image for their nations. We considered that a visual and dynamic medium such as video is the most fitting form of communication to analyze in the specific domain of nation branding; because videos embrace a broader collection of communicative

elements such as music, images, texts and voices. Considering the richness of the medium coupled with a semiotics approach creates the prerogatives for deep and fruitful findings.

#### Video Selecting Criteria

We selected videos based on four criteria. Firstly, they had to be issued by the government of the studied countries as part of branding national campaigns, on account of the purpose of this research which is to unveil the nation branding effort coming from decision maker apparatus, therefore the choice to restrict the range to government organizations was obliged. The second criteria was the time of release, because we strived to identified the current semiotic messages projected by the governments of the analyzed countries, we selected videos belonging to the latest national campaigns. Thirdly, the videos had to be targeted to different stakeholders in line with our holistic approach. As Anholt (2005) asserted, nation brand is the sum of people's perceptions in six different areas: 'investment and immigration', 'governance', 'exports', 'culture and heritage', 'tourism' and 'people'. Therefore, we elected videos in two different areas of competence for each country (tourism and people). Lastly, the duration of the video which had to be in a format of short-film (not exceeding 2 minutes), due to the attempt to analyze semiotically in-depth and considering the time limitation of our research.

#### Selected video

1) *Mexico City - Live it to believe it* (Creator: Mexico Tourism Board; Duration 1:08 minutes; Published on September 07, 2013). The advertisement is part of the campaign *Mexico - Live it to believe it* composed of five videos promoting different Mexican destinations namely: Los Cabos, Riviera Maya, Vallarta-Nayarit, Mexico City and Yucatan. This campaign does not address Mexico as a nation instead it is divided in touristic destinations at a regional level. We opted to analyzed Mexico City as a representative sample of Mexico due to its greater political and economic influence internally and internationally. The campaign was launched in September 2013 in The United States of America and Canada followed by The United Kingdom in November 2013.

- 2) *Mexico Se puede* (Creator: Mexican Government; Duration 1:02 minutes; Published on December 04, 2012). The advertisement is part of a communication campaign executed by the Mexican Government. It was published on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012 shortly after the appointed President Enrique Peña Nieto took office on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2012 following the 2012 general election. The language of the video is Spanish because it was directed to an internal audience. Therefore we translated and contextualized the entire discourse. The campaign is composed of two video *Se puede* and *Impulso* both advertisements aim to formulate the future vision of Mexico from the Government perspective. After a preliminary audit we decided to analyze the first video in virtue of richer and deeper semiotic meanings employed in the commercial.
- 3) South Africa: Inspiring New Ways (Creator: Brand South Africa; Duration 1:03 minutes; Published on July 4, 2012). The advertisement was published on the 4th July 2012 by Brand South Africa, which is the government agency in charge of managing 'South Africa' nation brand. This advertisement features twenty-three South African men and women who are considered successful in their fields, in other words 'South African success stories' and was broadcasted on the national television and online.
- 4) *Meet South Africa* (Creator: Brand South Africa; Duration 1:00 minutes; Published on Mar 20, 2013). This advertisement was launched by the South Africa's Tourism Office targeting an international audience. The aim of this video is to attract visitors through the illustration of the country's resources, both human and natural.

#### Semiotic Analysis

#### Understanding Semiotic Analysis

We opted to employ semiotics as our primary method to analyze the selected video advertisements which we have introduced above. Since semiotics is defined as the study of signs (Chandler, 2007) it is appropriated to unveil the embodied messages of brand campaigns (Eco, 1979). Further, Hall (1980) asserted that semiotic analysis enables to reveal the covered intentions of the creators by the exploration of complex meanings behind signs. Because the purpose of the scrutinized video campaigns is to identify the denotative and connotative messages projected by the government of developing countries as an effort to

construct a favorable country brand image for their nations, employing a semiotic analysis is suitable to favor the richness of findings in this research. The field of semiotics is broadly considered as having two "founding fathers" (Berger, 2014), the Swiss Ferdinand de Saussure and the American Charles Sanders Peirce. The Sausserian School considers semiotics as an extensions of linguistics, claiming that language communicates ideas through a system of sign (Saussure, 1915-1966 cited in De Lencastre & Côrte-Real, 2010). This approach divides signs in two parts: a signifier which is a form or expression and a signified which represents a concept or content (Santos, 2012). On the other hand the Peircean School followed a positivist approach to signs, considering the sign as a connection to the real world (Peirce, 1931-1958 cited in De Lencastre & Côrte-Real, 2010). In contrast with the dyadic model employed by the Sausserian School, Peirce offers a triadic design including: 1) the representament, that is the sign in different forms 2) the interpretant, which consists in the interpretation given to each sign 3) the object, or something which the sign refers to (Chandler, 2007). Furthermore Peirce depicts the relationship between sign and object as iconic when the sign resemble the object, indexical for causal connection and symbolic when the relationship is dominated by a conventional association (Berger, 1984). In this research we employed both Sausserian and Peircean perspectives because we identified signifier and signified (Saussure approach) as well as taking into account the role of the interpretant (Peirce approach).

#### Evaluation of Advertisements

As part of the semiotic analysis the selected videos were evaluated through the 'advertising evaluation guidelines' proposed by Arthur Assa Berger (1989), through which Oyedele & Minor (2012) previously explored advertising plots. Berger's methodology is an acknowledged approach to semiotic and it consists of four stages, the first is to establish the narrative structures through identifying the main plot in the advertisement. The second stage is to detect the characteristics of the personages. Thirdly, is to evaluate the dialogue in which the language and methods of persuasion are identified. The last phase consists in the analysis of the settings, here special attention is placed in the objects, backgrounds and illumination (Berger, 1989 cited in Oyedele & Minor, 2012). Following we elaborate on how we implemented this methodology in our study:

- *Narrative structures:* We identified the main plot by separating the six elements of plot which are exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouncement (Calgary Academy online Lesson Plan, 2014). Through this process we were able to interconnect the different events to consolidate the central story.
- Character evaluation: After we detected the main plot of the video, we continued with the analysis of the performing characters in the film. In this part we identified which personages were the protagonists and which ones were the secondary figures as well as the interactions among them and the frequency of apparition. We also took into consideration the physical characteristics such as gender, ethnicity and age. The outcomes of this stage were that we uncovered the target audience of the video and semiotic connotations based on the visible signifiers of this characters.
- *Dialogue evaluation:* In this stage we analyzed the audio messages detecting the tone of voice, intonations, accentuations and the articulated content in the video. After analyzing the audio alone we matched it with the images that the video displayed while the dialogue was broadcasted. This unveiled complex semiotic signs in which connotative and denotative messages were combined simultaneously.
- *Setting evaluation:* Through this stage we detected the background objects and landscapes displayed in the videos which allowed us to create a comprehensive contextualization of the story. Various indexical and iconic signs were identified through this mean.

#### *Identification of semiotic themes*

After we conducted the advertisement evaluation of each video, we categorized the various semiotic signs that we found. Firstly, we created a list of the signifiers identified in each scenes, for instance in a shot where a couple is taking a picture of themselves in front of an historical building we listed the signifiers: professional camera, statue, incidental music, logotype, etc. Secondly, we allocated these signifiers in three categories: index, icons and symbols. Following, we gathered the related signifiers and we located them in subcategories; for example the iconic signs 'waterfalls', 'mountains', 'rivers', 'forest', 'lakes' and 'ocean' were placed under the subcategory 'Natural abundance'. Finally, after the categorization of the signs in subcategories, we compared these subthemes with each other to later interconnect

them in order to identify the primary semiotic themes. It is important to highlight that this process was highly iterative due to our personal interpretation about the denotative and connotative messages found in the videos. A detailed discussion of these semiotic messages will be presented in the chapter four (Analysis) of this thesis.

#### 3.4.2 Lexical Semantic Analysis of Online Dialogue

The empirical material collected through online dialogues aimed to answer the second research question which is *How do online users perceive emerging countries as a brand?*. This question aspires to unfold the perception of the nation brand 'Mexico' and 'South Africa' held by a targeted online community. The decision to frame the audience to online users is mainly due for two reasons: firstly internet community provide us with truthful and first-hand opinions which could remain hidden in the case of personal interviews. Secondly the limited resources and time frame of the research project hinder a satisfactory reaching of a wide community without the use of internet technology. The method employed in this part of the empirical research is not currently defined as a traditional business research method, nevertheless it presents some characteristic of web survey (use of website as platform) and some of online focus groups including the figure of the initiator and group of participants (Bryman & Bell, 2003).

Due to the richness in expressed written opinions, we narrowed our selection to social media websites (Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Reddit etc.). As claimed by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) Social Media is a set of different internet applications established in the Web 2.0 environment that allows the creation and sharing of User Generated Content. Following an assessment of the different websites, we selected Reddit as the chosen platform in the collection of online dialogues because of its unique community of users, characterized by high participation rate coupled with natural and first-hand opinions.

Reddit is a popular social media website established in 2005 which receives an average of 40,000 new subscribers weekly, more than 5 billion page views and over 1 billion of unique visitors per month from 195 different countries (Reddit traffic statistics April 2014). This

platform consists of a collection of entries submitted by its registered users which aims to be a source of the latest and popular content on the web. Users categorized their entries by topics in "subreddits" e.g. Funny, and Worldnews, creating niche online-communities. Reddit has a voting system in which other members support their favorite content through "upvotes", the entries with the greatest number of votes are displayed in the front page as trend topic.

#### **Procedure**

The procedure we applied consists in the publication of an open ended question, which was

"My colleague and I are doing a research about Nation Branding for a Master Thesis and we are analyzing Image and Perception of Mexico and South Africa. What comes to your mind when you think about Mexico or South Africa? (please specify which country)"

The above question was directed to a not predefined audience, therefore participants took part on a voluntary base. In addition, we posted the enquiry in different subreddits (category) eight times in a period of three weeks between the 22nd of April 2014 and the 8th May 2014. We collected a total of 124 interactions which of them only 80 were considered in the analysis, as a result of a skimming of our entries and not concerning opinions. At the end of the collection stage the screenshots of every comment were saved and filed (available in the appendix B). Considering that the question posted was referring to both Mexico and South Africa, the comments received was in most of the case relating to both nations, therefore in order to analyse them we divided the entries resulting at last in 67 dialogues regarding Mexico and 73 regarding South Africa.

#### Code and Analysis

We classified the stored dialogues through a lexical semantic interpretation, more precisely as defined by Pustejovsky (1991:1) "the study of how and what the words of a language denote... ... Under this view, different word senses have been generally associated with distinct lexical items". Since each comment presented different meanings and links to

different perceptions, we divided the comments in different fragments to later classify every part in semantic categories and labelled it according to the tone of voice. The categories were not predefined but created according to the nature of the information gathered. On the other hand with reference to the tone of voice of the comments we set three alternatives: negative, neutral and positive. For instance if a user wrote "I love Mandela" we classified this element in a category called *ambassadors* and labelled it as positive. In order for the reader to have a better representation of the findings a table comprehending the categorization and labelling of the main statements (semantic grid) will be provided in the analysis chapter. Coupled with the lexical semantic analysis we additionally quantified the most recurrent words and categories through the utilization of the software Nvivo and Microsoft Excel.

#### Identification of the themes

The acknowledgement of recurrent perceptions and the classification of expressed opinions through a semantic interpretation allowed us to identify the specific semantic themes which provided us with rich insights of how Mexico and South Africa are perceived as brands by the users of the online community. At first we compiled a lengthy list of possible themes, which was subsequently reduced to a maximum of three themes for each country that will be explored in the analysis chapter.

## 3.5 Reflexivity

The examination and interpretation of the Mexican case study was conducted by the second author, native of Italy, in order to guarantee an external perspective that would not be possible to guarantee if conducted from a native of the country. Hence the examination and interpretation of the second case study (South Africa) was conducted by the first author. Considering the application of personal interpretation throughout the research process and analysis, we are aware of the risk of possible personal biases principally in the semiotic and semantic analysis which can influence the results of the study. However, as stated in the philosophical foundations the critical theory investigators are not neutral agents detached from their political stances. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that our culture background

anyhow will influence the process of analysis although this peril is shared between researchers investigating semiotic meanings and personal perceptions. In light of the decision to analyze two specific countries in the case study it raises questions concerning the generalization of the study. However, the intention of this study is not to generalize patterns in the practice of nation branding but rather to generate reflexive knowledge through a critical examination of the research domain, specifically nation branding in a developing country context. Moreover the choice to opt for a multiple case study allowed us to expand our understanding of the research problem in two different developing countries.

In line with the ethical principles (Bryman & Bell 2003, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson 2012) the online dialogues used in the research was obtained with the informed consent of the participant as in the question posted we stated the research aim of the interrogation. Likewise, the usage of video campaigns fulfill the ethical principles since all the information used and collected are originated from publicly accessible websites. In addition, the characteristics of the online platform (Reddit) in which part of the study was conducted did not allow us to select or to identify the demographic distribution of participant users, inhibiting the researcher to contextualize the expressed opinions which is relevant to construct a comprehensive semantic connotation. As reported by Pew Research Center (2013) six per cent of the American internet population use Reddit representing the main audience of the Social News Website, of them 15% is male ages 18-29 and 5% are women in the same age range. Since our comments were collected through a voluntary base and taking into account the nature of Reddit which doesn't allow the identification of the geographical origin of users, we can only suppose that the respondents of the question personified the "typical" Reddit users. Accordingly to this assumption we recognize a sampling limitation of the respondents that could be avoided with further research.

The reflexivity concludes our method chapter. In the following section, we will explore in depth the cases of Mexico and South Africa through the semiotic analysis of video campaigns and the lexical semantic investigation of online dialogues.

# 4. Analysis

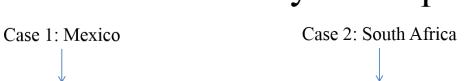
In this chapter we present the findings of empirical material which were elicited from the research methodology explained in the previous chapter of this thesis. We explored the practice of nation branding adopted in a developing country context through two specific case studies, Case 1: Mexico and Case 2: South Africa. As mention previously, the object of this study is twofold, consequently we analyzed the empirical data through two methods. Firstly, we conducted a semiotic analysis of four video advertisements (two for each country), to identify the denotative and connotative messages projected by governmental campaigns of developing countries as an effort to construct a favorable country brand. In the case of Mexico we analyzed two videos, the first is the touristic advertisement *Mexico City – Live it to believe it* launched by the Tourism Board on September 2013; the second video *Se puede* is targeted to the internal stakeholders (citizens) and was launched by the Presidency of the Mexican Government on December 2012. On the other hand, we conducted a lexical semantic analysis of online dialogue in the social media website 'Reddit' to identify the primary perceptions associated with developing countries as brands in online communities.

Summarizing our outcomes, we found that Mexico portrays itself as a developed country in the touristic video targeted towards external stakeholders. In this video, Mexico City is displayed as a westernized metropolis in which the life style presented visually emulates those in the developed countries. We identified two primary semiotic themes: Westernization and Submission of local dwellers. Regarding the video targeted to internal stakeholders, we found that Mexico aims to position itself as a country proud of its citizens and its historical uniqueness. Through the employment of national symbols such as the national flags and the national seal, the government of Mexico conveys a message exhorting the union of the citizens alluding that a unified nation is able to overcome the adversities that afflict the country. In this video we identified two main semiotic themes: Two Sides of the Same Coin and Together, where there's a will there's a way. In addition, we identified that the members of the online community link Mexico primarily with drug trafficking followed by various social problems such as poverty, crime and violence. In this particular case we uncovered that media serves as an instigator of a wide assortment of stereotypes ranging from physical characteristics to behavioral features.

In the case of South Africa, we found that in the touristic video this country portraits itself as a life changing destination in which the visitors are able to transform themselves by fully experiencing the authenticity of the South African culture. Likewise, this country is presented as a getaway to the "pure" natural world in which tourists can escape from the "artificial" industrialized western metropolis. We identified three primary semiotic themes: Power relation between foreigners and locals, Escaping from the ordinary life and Seducing the cosmopolitan inside us. Regarding the video targeted towards internal stakeholders, we found that South Africa aims to boost the local pride through the employment of national symbols along with public figures marked with a positive reputation. In this advertisement, South Africa is presented as a hotbed of talented people who are able to achieve success not only inside the country but also in an international scenario alluding that South African citizens are as proficient and skilled as the inhabitants of developed countries. We identified two main semiotic themes: A Hotbed of Success Stories and Boosting the Local Pride. Additionally, we found that the users of the online community perceived this country primary as a nation afflicted with high rates of violence and crime followed by entries related with poverty, racism and sexually transmitted diseases. Specifically in this case, we identified that the country carries a strong historical burden on account of its past racial segregation, the term 'Apartheid' is recalled in the great majority of expressed opinions.

Additionally, in order to help the reader to understand how this analysis chapter is organized we include a schematic representation of the structure followed in this section. First, we present the Case 1: Mexico divided in two parts: Semiotic Analysis of Video Campaigns (which comprises two videos) and Lexical Semantic Analysis of Online Dialogue. Secondly, we expose Case 2: South Africa with the same structure as Case 1.

# Structure of the analysis chapter



Part 1.

- 1. Semiotic Analysis of Video 1: Tourism Campaign
- Description of the story plot
- · Semiotic analysis
- · Semiotic themes
- 2. <u>Semiotic Analysis of Video 2: Internal</u> <u>Communication Campaign</u>
- Description of the story plot
- Semiotic analysis
- Semiotic themes

Part 2.

Lexical Semantic Analysis of Online Dialogues

- General findings
- Semantic grid
- · Themes description

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Lexical Semantic Analysis of Online Dialogues

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- Semantic grid
- · Themes description

Figure 1 Structure of the Analysis Chapter

# 4.1 Case 1: Mexico

#### Part 1

# **Mexico Campaign Analysis**

We explored two online advertising videos of Mexico, both deriving from the government of that country. The first video *Mexico City- Live it to believe it* was launched for the Tourism Office targeting international audiences and the following titled as *Se puede* is part of the official communication of the Mexican Presidency and is targeted towards the citizens of Mexico, this video was broadcasted in the national television of that country.

# 4.1.1 Video 1: Mexico City: Live it to believe it

Creator: Mexico Tourism Board; Duration 1:08 minutes; Launched on September 07, 2013.

The advertisement is part of the campaign *Mexico – Live it to believe it* composed of five videos promoting different Mexican destinations namely: Los Cabos, Riviera Maya, Vallarta-Nayarit, Mexico City and Yucatan. This campaign do not comprehend a video for Mexico as a nation instead is divided in touristic destinations at regional level. We opted to analyzed Mexico City as a representative sample of Mexico due to its greater political and economic influence internally and internationally. The campaign was launched in September 2013 in The United States of America and Canada followed by The United Kingdom in November 2013.

## The story plot

The video displays five elements; of those background music, narrative voice and images are presented simultaneously as primary components while text and graphic elements are exhibit briefly. The narration is performed by a female voice in English with a British accent. The protagonist of the video is a woman who is recalling her last holiday in Mexico with two other female friends. The three women are aged presumably between 30 and 40, belonging to a medium-high social class. The video starts with the image of the main character wearing a formal blazer while she is sitting in front of a modern building eating a salad. Next she articulates "The more I remember this place the more I want to go back" (seconds 03 to 06). At the same time the sound and image of an airplane reflected on a skyscraper is displayed. Shortly after this opening scene the narrator mentions "The comfort, the colours, the flavours" (seconds 09 to 13) while images of a building (presumably a luxury hotel), violet flowers and three different dishes enjoyed by the personages in a terrace are exhibited. In the second 15, the narrating voice mentions for the first time the word 'city' addressing it as "vibrant" and "that surprises you at every step" (seconds 15 to 18) accompanying these descriptions with a three-perspective glimpse of a futuristic architecture depicting the Soumaya Art Museum. The plot continues with another remark about Mexico City featured as "diverse" where the time is not enough to enjoy it fully (seconds 19 to 24), followed by video shots of the three protagonists relishing a walk alongside monuments and statues

(seconds 25 to 30). In the halfway of the film, the scene transits momentarily from day to night while the protagonists are displayed enjoying dinner in an open-air restaurant where newly three dishes are rapidly captured by the camera. Subsequently, the historical features of the city are mentioned, asserting that "in many places it seems that time has stopped" (seconds 33 to 36) while the characters are carried on a bike-cart through a spacious historic square. In this place they go up to a viewpoint of an old church to enjoy a wide view in concert with a cloud free sky. Later the place is described as "ever changing that it makes you change" (seconds 36 to 42) while the three characters are displayed preparing food with the help of a Mexican chef followed by the scene where they are shown trying clothes and jewellery in a small boutique. Shortly before the final part of the video a remark from the narrative voice describes with amazement the presence of an 18th century castle in the middle of a huge city coupled with a two-perspective aerial view of the Chapultepec Castle. The video finishes with the characters scaling up a monument (namely Monumento a la Revolucion) through a futuristic glass lift reaching a panoramic balcony with a view over the city on a sunset; with the narrating voice asserting "I don't know how to explain it, we just have to go back" (seconds 55 to 60). The last image displayed is an overview of a monument in the middle of a rotunda (the Angel de la Independencia) accompanied by four graphic elements: the text "Mexico City", the logo of the touristic board, the slogan *Live it to believe* it and the website address visitmexico.com.

## **Semiotic Analysis**

Resulting from the semiotic analysis we found that Mexico through connotative and denotative signs, has been portrayed as a developed and westernized country by employing symbols which represents globalization and modernity. At the same time, in order to differentiate themselves from other destinations Mexico connotatively delineates its core characteristics by contrasting elements and presenting (or denying to present) their citizens as passive and servile towards tourists. Overall, the semiotic meanings employed in the video aim to position Mexico as an exclusive destination for visitors of a medium-high social class, promising unique features and an all-round service.

## **Semiotic Themes**

#### Westernization

The first finding of the commercial is the "westernization factor" spotted in three representations. We employ the term "westernization" as referring alternatively to cultural or economical/environment factors, with the meaning of Western (USA, Canada and Europe) imitation. The first and more tangible symbol is the choice of the protagonists in the commercial, as noted in the narrative of the video the characters are three women aged around 35 and likely native of the United Kingdom. The actresses interpreting the role of tourists are white skinned, using fashionable items such as sunglasses, jewellery and elegant dresses which are in line with the stereotyped figure of high-class occidental woman. The significance represented by this picture is to portray Mexico City as westernized and refiguring themselves as a modern and open country for cosmopolitan visitors. At the same time the choice of using three women as main characters can be connoted as a perfect representation of a female independence since the qualities of the protagonists distinctly recall how Goldman (1992) defines the concept of 'feminism' in advertisement, in other words assembling signs "which connote independence, participation in the work force, individual freedom and self control" (Goldman, 1992:133). The above mentioned concept moreover connotes Mexico as a safe place where everybody can freely walk in the city which is also reinforced by the night scene without any security concerns, accosting one more time the country to the idea of secure and free West.

Another symbol employed in the video is the selection of food showed in two sections of the commercial. A total of six dishes are displayed in a time frame not exceeding four seconds of total coverage (about two seconds every three dishes) therefore the short exposition makes it difficult to recognize the actual content of the course. Furthermore, a common feature of the food employed lays in the presentation remanding to high quality gourmet restaurants usually linked with cities including Paris, London and New York to mention a few. Instead of choosing classical Mexican food and the traditional way of presenting it, the creators of the campaign focused on high international standards denaturizing recognized Mexican myths (Barthes, 1957). The perceived attempt of the campaign's authors is to dismantle the

myth of "tacos and burrito" and create a high-quality and westernized approach to food likewise major European and American capitals.

Thirdly the usage of a Mini Cooper car in the advertisement drives us to interpret it as a social code (Chandler, 2007) with a "meaning transfer" purpose. McCracken (1993) refers to "meaning transfer" when visual, verbal or thematic signs are associated with foreign, global or local consumer culture (Alden, Steenkamp & Batra, 1999). Considering the context of the video (from the Mexico's Department of Tourism directed to a global audience) the employment of a recognizable British brand further sustains the connotation of a western (or European) aspirational goal.

## Submission of local dwellers

Additionally, another noticeable finding of the video is the "submission" of local peoples or rather the indistinct representation of Mexican dwellers. In the analysed video the protagonists interact with local individuals in four scenes. The two early encounters are located in a restaurant context; in the first place the waiter/waitress is shot only by his/her hand giving no information about gender, age and facial expression. In the second restaurant scene a waiter enters in the recording, just providing superficial information about gender and age, but still lacking of facial expression and feeling. The third encounter consists of a young male bike-cart driver filmed in the process of guiding the three women on what seems to be a city tour. The final scene consists of a cooking lesson attended by the leading characters where only the teacher's back is displayed once more giving no information about gender, age and emotions. As claimed by William James "the absence of an item is a determinant of our representations quite as positive as its presence can never be" (James 1890:584), therefore the choice of not to include local persons in the spotlight is important as much as the decision to centre the attention on other factors. The connotation of local dwellers is perceived as they are "serving" tourists like in the example of the bike-cart driver or passively being part of the background in the other three cases, denying or hiding aspects and attitudes (positive or negative) of the Mexican popular culture.

Another valuable finding originated from the semiotic analysis is the depiction of Mexico as a country dominated by contrasts. Two oppositions are particularly emphasized by the creators; the first is represented by the use in a short sequence of two contradictory signs as

illustrated by a contemporary car and an eco-friendly bike-cart. The *representamen* (Peirce 1931-58) of the car can be broadly signified as a symbol of modernity along with comfort and air pollution (Graves-Brown, 1997). On the other hand the usage of a bike-cart may be connoted as a clean and "energy-consuming" means of transport. The contrasting component is further reiterated employing a polarity of signs which include a futuristic style building (Soumaya Art Museum) clearly connected with an idea of modernity and an historical cathedral representing the past and antiquity. Furthermore this disparity is to a greater extent enhanced by the narrating voice claiming "a city (Mexico City) so diverse that it makes you feel like there is never enough time to enjoy it", by articulating the word 'diverse' the protagonist alludes to a wide range of settings as a unique feature that enable Mexico City to differentiate from other destinations.

# **4.1.2 Video 2: Se puede**

Creator: Mexican Government; Duration 1:02 minutes; Launched on December 04, 2012.

The advertisement is part of a communication campaign executed by the Mexican Government. It was published on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012 shortly after the appointed President Enrique Peña Nieto took office on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2012 following the 2012 general election. The language of the video is Spanish because it was directed to an internal audience. Therefore we translated and contextualized the entire discourse. The campaign is composed of two video *Se puede* and *Impulso* both advertisements aim to formulate the future vision of Mexico from the Government perspective. After a preliminary audit we decided to analyze the first video in virtue of richer and deeper semiotic meanings employed in the commercial.

## The story plot

The protagonist and narrating voice of the video is a white skinned man, aged presumably around 30, dressed with a casual grey shirt and blue jeans. The video starts with a bold question "Can we or can't we?" stated by the character standing simultaneously in two portions of the screen clearly separated by a black frame. The following part of the advertisement comprises a list of characteristics narrated with the use of images and subsequently labelled either with "Yes we can" or "No we can't". Considering the schematic

essence of the video we opted to design a table in order to describe in a clear fashion the context of the video.

Dialogue	Illustration	Label	
"Mexico has poverty"	Children collecting garbage in	NO WE CAN'T	
	a landfill		
"We have the largest	Fast-forwarding caption of a	YES WE CAN	
workforce in the world"	ship approaching in a port and		
	containers moving on the quay		
"Our students rate below	Pencils falling from a table	NO WE CAN'T	
than other countries"	from a desktop		
"We have Nobel prizes"	Photographs' blow-ups of	YES WE CAN	
	books around the protagonist		
"Almost always we lose on	Illustrated representation of a	NO WE CAN'T	
penalties"	missed football penalty		
"But we are Olympic	People cheering and hugging in	YES WE CAN	
champions"	a bar / The protagonist in the		
	top spot of the podium		
"We have abundance that	Photographs' blow-ups of oil	YES WE CAN	
other doesn't possess: oil,	platforms / A worker forging		
silver, natural beauties,	silver / Background of a		
	natural waterfall		
"We have the ideas and the	Lighting bulb / Revolting	YES WE CAN	
desire to change the country"	image of a landscape (from		
	dull to sunny)		
"We have the energy, the	Man running with Mexican	YES WE CAN	
effort to move Mexico	flag		
"We are Mexico and we have	Close-up of the protagonist	YES WE CAN	
a strong belief, YES WE			
CAN			
"Government of the	Focus on the logo of the		
Republic"	Government with a white		
	background		

Figure 2 Description Plot Video 'Se puede'

## **Semiotic Analysis**

The semiotic meanings employed in the second video aim to position Mexico in the perception of internal stakeholders as a country with considerable resources, both material and human, but without ignoring problem and negative attitudes. Additionally the employment of national signs aims to boost the national unity spirit and pride.

## **Semiotic Themes**

## Green vs Grey: Two Sides of the Same Coin

As mentioned in the plot description, the video is structured with a classification of positive and negative components. In total seven features are positive and labelled as "YES WE CAN" compared to three linked with negative connotation and labelled as "NO WE CAN'T". The overview tells us that, notwithstanding the confronting nature of the commercial, Mexico possesses more positive than negative qualities. The protagonist's representation in the video is emphasized by a bright green background when he mentions positive stances. On the other hand the background is accentuated by a dull grey colour when negative aspects are mentioned. As claimed by Kress & Van Leeuwen (2002) colours represent a semiotic resource, possessing meanings related to local cultures. Therefore our interpretation of the meaning of the colours is based on existing literature and the conventional European standpoint of the researcher. The choice to employ two contrasting colours, as in the case of green and grey, highlights the contrast between two Mexicos: "green Mexico" is the prosperous country with abundant natural and human resources, on the contrary "grey Mexico" represents the recurrent old problems although with the belief of a possible transition. As Kandinsky writes (1977:38, cited in Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002)

Pictures painted in shades of green tend to be passive and wearisome ... In the hierarchy of colours green is the 'bourgeoisie' – self-satisfied, immovable, narrow ... It is like a fat, extremely healthy cow, lying motionless, fit only for chewing the cud, regarding the world with stupid, lacklustre eyes ...

This connotes that green is a symbol of prosperity, but at the same time passive and boring. Likewise, green is broadly recognized as a sign for hope and with soothing properties (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002). Therefore, the usage of a green background carried the purpose of conveying an encouraging and reassuring message to the Mexican population.

Conversely, grey often has a negative connotation as highlighted by Begum (2008) this colour is used as an expression of uncommittement and rejection of team-work, similarly it might be linked with something old recalling a symbolic relationship with grey hairs, and thus the scenes in the video depicted in this colour establish a relation with the negative events as part of the past. However, this colour can be also associated with a transitional stage due to the undefined nature of the colour, lying freely between black and white, under this approach the unspoken message here connotes the transition of the old grey problematic Mexico to the green full of hope Mexico.

## Together, where there's a will there's a way

A second theme resulting from the semiotic analysis of the video is the employment of symbolic signs related with 'team-work' in order to stress underlying potentialities for development. Both visual and audible symbols are employed in order to support the mentioned connotation. In eight out of ten sentences the narrating voice uses the pronoun "we" signifying a sense of unity between the sender and the receiver of the message. Considering the context when the video was broadcasted (shortly after President Enrique Peña Nieto was elected) a possible meaning conveyed by the commercial is to reunify the country after a change of the political party in power. Additionally, two visual signs are coherent with this theme, on the one hand a metaphor alluding to championship of the Mexican soccer team in the last Olympic games and on the other hand the usage of the national flag as symbolic sign which are elaborated following. Football is widely considered the most popular sport in Mexico and the usage of football's metaphors in a politics/government context is not a novelty in the international scenery. Semino & Masci (1996) conducted a cognitive analysis of the football's metaphors employed by Silvio Berlusconi, former Italian prime minister, during the politic campaign in 1994 and in the following years. The employment of these metaphors aims to exploit positive connotations usually correlated with football (Semino & Masci, 1996) in countries where soccer is largely popular such as Mexico and Italy. The illustration of people cheering in a sport competition aims to promote a national unity spirit, communicating the will of the government to reach all the citizens, also non-voters of the ruling party, and convince them to "play together" with the final purpose of creating a better society. This is complemented by the utilization of a

symbolic sign like the national flag aiming to awaken a sense of national pride in the receiver of the message.

## Part 2

# 4.1.3 Lexical Semantic Analysis of Online Dialogue

The examination of the online discourses enabled us to identified the primary perceptions associated with developing countries as brands in online communities to shed light on the preexistence stigmatization that developing countries may carry tacitly on account of being label as 'developing'. Through the lexical semantic analysis, we identified that the online community links Mexico primarily with 'drugs' and 'cartels' follow by entries connected with social problems such as poverty, crime and violence as well as opinions regarding traditional Mexican food and beverages. In general, the tone of voice of the studied comments were mainly negative (fifty per cent) whereas only a small proportion of them were associated with positive connotations (thirteen percent), the rest of entries were classified as neutral because the participants expressed them without a positive or negative connotation. Overall, we identified two primary themes: 1. Media as a cliché factory and 2. Drug cartels as national issue. Following we developed these themes in depth. Additionally, in order for the reader to have a better representation of the findings we present a semantic grid which is a visual support comprehending the categorization and labelling of the main entries regarding Mexico.

Lategories	Entries from online comments	Participant	interpretation
		tone of voice	
ocial problems:  Drug cartels	"militarised drug cartels"	Negative	Magnification of the drug cartel power
Drug cartes	"First thing I think about is the war for	Negative	Direct association between Mexico and drug cartel wars.
	drugs and the Mexican cartels"	ivegative	Direct association between mexico and drug carter wars.
	"Lots of narcotic exports"	Negative	Awareness of a vast drug trafficking network
- Immigmtion	"People jumping the border to the U.S."	Negative	Idealization of persons illegally crossing the border.
<ul> <li>Immigration</li> </ul>	"12-14 year old kids risking their lives to	Negative	Association with children performing risky unsafe
	cross the border into America"	ivegative	activity in order to enter America
	cross die border into America		activity in order to enter America
Violence & Crime	"Drug lord related mass murder."	Negative	Attestation of violence linked with narcotrafficker.
	"Scary guys in leather jackets with big	Negative	Visual association with a stereotypical representation of
	moustaches doing shady stuff"		Mexican men performing illegal activity.
<ul> <li>Poverty</li> </ul>	"poor country"	Negative	Assertion of the country poor economic condition
	"poor people"	Negative	Assertion of the population impoverished economic
			condition
<ul> <li>Corruption</li> </ul>	"heavy corruption"	Negative	Claim the presence of weak institutions that cause the
	"The lack of leadership allows other		failure of developments and allow the proliferation of
	developments to fall behind or cease to		different social problems
	exist, while negative issues (corruption,		
	drug industry, etc) start to flourish in this		
	environment"		
ood & Drink:	"Tacos (Best food in the world)"	Positive	Positive association with a recognized Mexican food
	"tequila"	Neutral	Connection with a local alcoholic drink
	"Greasy food"	Neutral	Connotation of Mexican food as employing abundant
			quantity of grease.
	"Mexican food (the only kind of food I	Positive	Association with a not defined range of Mexican food
	could eat every day of my life)"		that share positive features
tereotypes:			
<ul> <li>Personal Stereotype</li> </ul>	"Big moustaches. Probably got this from	Neutral	Association with physical trait likely originated by wild
	wild west movies."		west movies.
	"Short, lazy people sleeping under a	Negative	Association with stereotypical physical and behavioural
	sombrero or sitting on a donkey"		traits coupled with a clichéd context.
<ul> <li>Stere otypical associations</li> </ul>	"sombreros and ponchos"	Neutral	Mental connection with two stereotyped objects
	"big hats"	Neutral	Visual connection with a specific type of hat
Vative Attitude	"lazy people" "sense of being kinda	Negative	Mental connection with negative behaviour and attitude.
	aimless"	Positive	Mental association with positive attributes
	"family oriented, friendly, and genuinely		
	happy people"	Mainly	Remark of association with positive attitude not broadly
	"hard workers who don't get a lot of	positive	recognized.
	recognition"	200	
Media as Source	"From media (and hopefully a very long	Negative	Statement that perception is generated from Media, with
	way from the truth)"		the confidence of a better reality
	"I generally know most from media so	Neutral	Acknowledgment that perception from media are
	very stereotypical I know"		influenced by cliché
		Neutral	influenced by cliché  Acknowledgement that perception is influenced by
	very stereotypical I know"	Neutral	SNAME CANADA SATE OF TRANSPORT (AT A LAST SAME) SALE OF
	very stereotypical I know" "This is probably what comes to mind due	Neutral	Acknowledgement that perception is influenced by
	very stereotypical I know"  "This is probably what comes to mind due to the fact that it's mostly what is	Neutral  Negative	Acknowledgement that perception is influenced by

Interpretation

Participant

Entries from online comments

Categories

Figure 3 Semantic Grid of Mexico

## **Themes**

## Media as a cliché factory

The first theme spotted in the lexical semantic analysis is the recurrent presence of media as a creator and instigator of stereotypes mainly negative or neutral. An overview of the collected data shows that stereotypes linked with Mexico usually consist of objects (e.g. "sombreros and ponchos"), physical characteristics ("big moustaches", "short") and behaviours ("lazy"). Two of the respondents autonomously classified their perceptions as stereotypes mentioning respectively "sterotypical' Mexican things (tequila, sombreros, cacti)" and "I generally know most from media so very stereotypical I know". Accordingly to these insights an unexpected finding is that although persons acknowledge the stereotypical nature of the perception they consider it as a "valid-enough" illustration for a country, without trying to look for further information in order to have a more precise representation.

Online respondents mentioned 28 times "Media" or "News" as the source of their perception or part of it. Personal experience and literature are respectively referred four and three times. Without the implementation of statistical tool, the data resulting from our research clearly show that Media and News are the major "sources of perception" for the specific case of Mexico. One of the users primarily emphasizes the importance of a specific segment of media such as the film industry.

"This is probably what comes to mind due to the fact that it's mostly what is portrayed in film and other media"

The above opinion is further implemented by a different participant in the dialogue indicating the territorial origin of the media involved

"My image of Mexico, on the other hand, has been influenced by American media, pop culture, social media and news from various sources."

Altogether the findings allude that United States is not just an "ordinary" neighbour for Mexico. We previously discussed that USA is the main commercial partner for Mexico, influencing economically and politically their southern neighbour. On the other hand media

and film industries keep fostering a stereotyped image of Mexico and Mexicans, difficult to change or modify in the short-medium term. In line with concepts expressed by scholars including Fanning (2011), cliché or stereotypical associations can damage the economic development of a country in the global competition. For instance the image of Mexican citizens associated with lazy people sleeping under sombreros consists of the opposite representation of an efficient workforce.

## Drug cartels as national issue

Media are not only responsible for the creation of a stereotyped image, furthermore they are in charge of delivering news and information to a global audience. The results of the online dialogues provide us a strong message, nearly half of the interactions contain the word drug (38 times) and cartel (31 times) emphasising the impact of social problems in the perception of online participants. The consciousness of social problem including drug cartels and gangs is additionally tightly linked with violence and unsafety. Consequently images including "drug gangs who collect human heads", not only acknowledge the presence of rooted social problem but moreover they impact on the perceived unsafety of the whole country. For instance three participants expressed that their primary associations with Mexico are

"Extensive drug/cartel violence. Lots of narcotic exports. Sketchy government past but still a democracy. Dangerous environment for journalists."

"drug cartels (very dangerous)"

"drug gangs who collect human heads (yes, I know that's like one millionth of all Mexican people, but for right or wrong, that IS what comes to mind)"

Another respondent alternatively links drug cartels as a hinder to visit Mexican beaches and enjoy traditional food. In this case the connection between cartels and effects in real life is even clearer, literally stating that this social problem preventing the enjoyment of local product and places, with possible economic repercussions on exports and tourism.

"drug cartels, hookers, heavy crime, tequila, awesome food and beaches I can't get to because of drug cartels."

Finally, discourses reveal that the main perceived cause of the stated social issues is

attributable to the weakness of the government, claiming the corrupted nature of the

government and police or alternatively the relatively low strength compared to drug cartel

and gangs.

"crooked government, crooked police"

"In Mexico, a rural-urban divide exists as well, but their main issue is drug cartelling and

lack of efficient governance"

"the citizens actually possess more firepower than the government.

From the previous expressed opinion we found that overall Mexico is perceived by the

analysed online community as tightly related with drug cartels and correlated social problems

(crime, violence, unsafety environment), portraying the image of a non-developed country

fuelled by a (mainly negative) stereotypical representation depicted by American and

international media.

4.2 Case 2: South Africa

Part 1

**South Africa Campaign Analysis** 

We explored two online advertising videos of South Africa, both deriving from the

government of that country. The first video 'Meet South Africa' was launched for the

Tourism Office targeting international audiences and the following titled as 'Inspiring New

Ways' is part of the national project *Brand South Africa* and was targeted for the citizens of

South Africa, this video was broadcasted in the national television of that country.

4.2.1 Video 1: Meet South Africa

Creator: Brand South Africa; Duration 1:00 minutes; Launched on March 20, 2013.

This advertisement was launched by the South Africa's Tourism Office targeting an

international audience. The aim of this video is to attract visitors through the illustration of

the country's resources, both human and natural.

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# **The Story Plot**

The video displays five elements; of those background music, narrative voice and images are presented simultaneously as primary components while text and graphic elements are exhibit briefly. The narration is performed by a male voice in English. The plot starts (plot exposition) with the text: "SOUTH AFRICA IS DIFFERENT" in white capital letters on a black background at the same time the narrative voice speaks at loud this text. After this initial three seconds the narrator's voice states that when people travel to South Africa they do not "just visit" but "meet" the country while images of natural landscapes are displayed along with incidental music<sup>1</sup>. From second thirteen to thirty-eight, the narrative voice lists nature places, people and experiences that the visitor will be able to "meet", six scenes were displayed in images and articulated by the narrator: the "white open beaches", the "chief" whose ancestors have lived above the "Wauyana River", the "taxi driver", the "Shebeen queen" and the unforgettable night hiking where "you felt you saw the stars for the very first time"; this progression of images and narrative are accompanied by a faster pace in the incidental music. The video reaches its climax from second thirty-nine to fifty where the narrative voice claims that visiting South Africa is a life changing experience, this is articulated as "the YOU who leaves South Africa won't be the same YOU who arrived because none of it, not one little bit is ordinary" (exact transcription of the original audio in the video, seconds 39 to 50). Simultaneously seven scenes are displayed respectively: a presumably Asian man and a woman taking a selfie<sup>2</sup> of themselves while smiling with an historical building as background; two men saluting each other through a hug in a natural setting, one of them is dark skin and the other is light skin; three young light skin women hiking in a grotto conspicuously happy and; a couple of light skin man and woman sightseeing wildlife next to two light skin women, one of them is leaning on car's window; a smiling dark skin women with an expression of surprise after a hand uncovers her eyes; a dark skin man and woman holding hands while observing a waterfall and; a long distance shot of two motorbike riders crossing a vineyard. After this seven scenes, several short exposures of photographs presumably of South Africa are displayed while the incidental music reaches its culmination (seconds fifty-one to fifty-five). The plot ends displaying the logotype of *Brand South Africa*,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Incidental music is the "background" melodies in films or plays which add atmosphere to the action.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Selfie is self-portrait photograph, typically taken with a hand-held digital camera or camera phone.

its written slogan *Inspiring new ways* and its website <u>www.southafrica.net</u> during the last five seconds, the text are in white characters on a black background.

# **Semiotic Analysis**

We found in our semiotic analysis that South Africa is presented as a getaway to the "pure" natural world in which tourists can escape from the "artificial" industrialized western metropolis. Through recalling the myth of the cosmopolitan traveler, South Africa portraits itself as a life changing destination in which the visitors are able to transform themselves by fully experiencing the authenticity of the South African culture rather than remaining in the superficiality of the parochial. This is marked by the peculiarity of the South African characters presented in the video as in the case of the *shebeen queen* and *the chief*. Overall, we identified three primary semiotic themes: 1. Power relation between foreigners and locals; 2. Escaping from the ordinary life and; 3. Seducing the cosmopolitan inside us. Next, we will developed these semiotics themes.

#### **Semiotic Themes**

# Power relation between foreigners and locals

One clear theme we uncovered is the power relation between foreigners and locals. Both are displayed with racial-stereotype representations, the tourist are personified by characters with light skin and European or Asian physical features plus the audio of the word "you" while the images of the "tourists" are in the scene, on the other hand the citizens are represented for dark skin people with African physical features accompanied by the audible words "the chief", "the taxi driver" and "the shebeen queen"; this system of iconic signs denotes that the locals and the foreigners do not belong to the same group pointing towards a clear difference of status. This distinction is stress by the existence of an irony in the video: while the audio articulates the words "you will meet" refereeing that tourist will interact with locals in none of the scenes are actually interacting, in fact they are not even in the same scene maintaining the distance between this two groups and reinforcing the distinction of status. In addition, we detected that tourist are displayed performing their activities in-groups among people with similar racial characteristics whereas locals appear alone. This is observed in several shots of the video, for instance the hiking scene has three men, in a lie manner the scene of the

cave exploration shows three women, conversely, South African characters appear alone in different settings. The connoted message here is that foreigners favor social interactions with people alike, segregating individuals with different background in this case the citizens of South Africa. Moreover, considering that group activities involve coordination and social skills it can be infer that tourists are portrayed as socially efficient and well-organized individuals.

Furthermore, the locals are displayed conspicuously passive -just sitting and smiling- while the tourists are performing energetic activities such as hacking, running and driving a motorbike; this marked difference of behaviors entails a dominant position of the tourist over the locals because physical activity is associated with strength and skills evoking a powerful position whereas inactivity is related with lifeless and sluggishness; -the resulting connoted message can be read as appeasement and docility of the locals indicating an acceptance of subordination, which legitimized the established social arrangement of superiority for people from developed countries over the ones of developing countries-. This relationship between activity and inactivity and its significance concerning the power relations was previously analyzed from a gender perspective by Erving Goffman's. In the book *Gender Advertisements* (1976) he explored how men and women are presented in advertising images, one of his findings was that in general women are display in passive way 'just looking and admiringly' as if females do not want to imposes themselves connoting subordination, on the contrary, men embodied the executive role performing the actions establishing their superior power position (Corrigan, 1997).

We identify that South Africa is targeting tourists from developed countries, with a primary focus on the western countries. From the eighteen characters who appear in the video as "tourists", thirteen are light skin with European physical characteristics, two have Asian features and three are dark skin people; there is a notorious absence of characters representing individuals from Latin America and the Middle East which are regions associated with developing countries. The focal point given to travelers from developed countries reflects that South Africa categorized them as the "desirable tourists" establishing a superior position for them above the tourists from under developed countries. This legitimized the current social arrangements in which developed countries are favor over developing countries.

# Escaping from the ordinary life

'Meet South Africa' video cleverly alludes to the binary division of the ordinary everyday life and the extraordinary. Through the combination of narrative voice and iconic signs displayed in the scenes a metonymy of an "extraordinary life" waiting in South Africa is created. In the first shot, the text "SOUTH AFRICA IS DIFFERENT" in white capital letters over a black background accompanied by the narrative voice speaking out loud this text introduce a clear statement of South Africa being unordinary. This message is constantly reaffirmed during the course of the video, for instance, from second forty-five to fifty, the narrator pronounces the following words: "because none of it, not one little bit is ordinary" (exact transcription of the original audio in the video, seconds 45 to 50); in this quotation 'it' refers to South Africa. Similarly, the slogan of the campaign which is: "Inspiring new ways", displayed in the last four seconds reiterates this theme because 'new ways' implicate a change from the conventional course. The connoted message here is that South Africa symbolizes an escape from the visitor's daily life, the relevance of this lies in what McCracken (1988, cited in Corrigan, 1997) denominates the displacement of ideals. This notion supposes that humans seems to have an ideal version of the world, but since reality rarely match with these ideals, people extracted them from their everyday life and locates them in other "cultural universe" that can be either other times (past or future) or other spaces (a different country or city), in order to maintain these ideals tentatively achievable (Corrigan, 1997). Therefore, the metonymy presented in the video of an "extraordinary life" waiting in South Africa, serves as a bridge through which the tourists are able to access their ideal world (at least partially) escaping from their everyday life.

As stated above, Corrigan (1997) points out that ideals can be displaced across time and spaces, we identified that both elements have been cleverly employed in this video. On the one hand, the narrative voice refers to the past when it articulates "the chief whose ancestors have lived above the Wauyana river for a thousand years" (exact transcription of the original audio in the video, seconds 17 to 22) recalling the heritage of the country. Likewise, the verb form future simple is inserted in the script in several occasions, the words "you will" are pronounced six times during the course of the video (seconds 09, 13, 24, 27, 30 and 32), positioning the receiver in a desirable future time away from its present day. On the other

hand, the spaces as another means for the displacement of ideals are clearly displayed in the video through various iconic signs of natural landscapes. Images of waterfalls, mountains, rivers, forest, savanna, beaches, lakes and ocean are exhibited in the eighty percent of the video scenes, this aims to establish a categorical distinction between the tourist's place of origin and the South African landscape. The relevance of making this notorious differentiation of spaces is that enables tourists to visualize themselves escaping from their daily life. Furthermore, the deployment of nature in tourism advertising is extensively used (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010) because it represents a getaway to the "pure" natural world which works as a purge of the "artificial" industrialized world in which we lived (Corrigan, 1997). Regarding this relationship between the artificiality and authenticity of the places, MacCannell (1973, cited in Corrigan, 1997) coined the terms *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, the former related to the genuine cosy countryside and the latter with the alienated and impersonal large cities. According to Corrigan (1997) the postmodern tourists seek to experience authenticity rather than the fake reality of the *Gesellschaft* because being constrained within bureaucratic social structures has drained them the sense of reality.

By cleverly combining the two dimension of the displacement of ideals –time and space-through images, audio and text; South Africa creates a system of signs highly appealing for tourists, as highlighted by Corrigan (1997: 133):

Towns that can provide both nature and history, of course, will be more attractive for tourists than those that can provide only one or the other: one can escape from today's everyday life in the two dimensions of time and space and, presumably, find a higher and more authentic degree of reality through such otherness, the first otherness by Father Time and the second by Mother Nature.

## Seducing the cosmopolitan inside us

We uncovered that South Africa is appealing to the myth of cosmopolitanism to seduce the tourists. Overall, the mixture of signs found in the narration and images deliver a clear message: traveling to South Africa is a life changing experience; as a matter of fact, the climax of the plot is based on this message which is clearly displayed when the narrator articulates the words "the you who leaves South Africa won't be the same you who arrived because none of it, not one little bit is ordinary" (exact transcription of the original audio in

the video, seconds 39 to 50). This idea of personal transformation supposes an open receptive individual who has sunk in the authenticity of the culture in a reflective manner, embodying the myth of being cosmopolitan. Thompson and Tambyah (1999) assert that cosmopolitans are distant from the leisure tourists because the formers consume cultural differences in an intellectualized form whereas the latter remain in the superficiality of the parochial. Similarly, Corrigan (1997) points out that cultural capital plays a relevant role in traveling practices because it seems to exist different "types" of journeyers in relation to their cultural capital, the 'travelers' are the sufficiently educated elite who appreciate the joys of -travel while the 'tourists' are the lower-class of excursionists (Corrigan, 1997). This distinction between high and low culture certainly creates different status among tourists, in which 'traveler' might be the desirable one, because after all, who wants to be the 'vulgar tourist'. This distinction is ingeniously introduced in the beginning of the video 'Meet South Africa' when the narrator articulates "South Africa is different, because you don't just visit South Africa, you will meet South Africa" (exact transcription of the original audio in the video, seconds 01 to 11), here the denote signs 'just visit' are connoting a superficial visit which can be related with the 'vulgar tourist' whereas the signs 'you will meet' connote a profound experience in that culture alluding to the myth of the 'cosmopolitan traveler'; thereby appealing to the cosmopolitan side of the postmodern excursionists.

## 4.2.2 Video 2: Inspiring New Ways

Creator: Brand South Africa; Duration 1:03 minutes; Launched on July 04, 2012.

The advertisement was launched by *Brand South Africa*, which is the government agency in charge of managing 'South Africa' nation brand. This advertisement features twenty-three South African men and women who are considered successful in their fields, in other words 'South African success stories' and was broadcasted on the national television and online.

# **The Story Plot**

The video features twenty-three South African men and women who are considered successful in their fields. The narrative of the video consists in one sequential script broken in short sentences which are articulated from different characters, one fundamental characteristic of the video is that the scenarios match with the profession of the characters for instance when the astronomer Simon Ratcliffe is speaking he is located in an astronomical observatory. The video has three parts, the first part elapses from second 01 to 30 in which twenty different characters speak out loud the prejudices and obstacles they had to overcome to achieve success, for instance the plot starts with the boxer Baby Jake displayed on a ring box wearing a rope with the colors of the South African flag while he articulates the words "They said I was too small" (seconds 00 to 02); another example is the scene with the comedian Trevor Noah standing still in front of the Hollywood Mountain pronouncing "I was told I wasn't black enough" (seconds 04 and 05). After these twenty short testimonials, eight characters articulates in a more energetic manner the following line "And I said / excuse me/but I respectfully disagree/I can prove them wrong/don't underestimate South Africans / we go up against the odds all the time / we just sometimes have to fight a little bit harder to get it done" (exact transcription of the original audio in the video, seconds 31 to 41), the slashes represent that each piece of the dialog is pronounce by different characters. The video reaches its climax from second forty-two to fifty-six when six personages assert that "South Africans are / courageous / hard-working / successful / optimists /and inspirational" (seconds 42 to 47), these six scenes are followed by the close-up of the singer Toya de Lazy lying on the grass while she articulates "We don't think we can change the world" (seconds 52 and 54), immediately after she pronounces this sentence the comedian Trevor Noah finishes the sentence with the affirmation "We know" while he is nodding his head; at the same time the incidental music reaches its peak. The plot ends displaying the flag of South Africa over a black background, which after three seconds is transformed in the logotype of Brand South Africa; the written slogan Inspiring new ways and the website www.southafrica.info are also exhibited in these last six seconds.

## **Semiotic Analysis**

We found in our semiotic analysis that South Africa aims to boost the local pride through the employment of national symbols along with public figures marked with a positive reputation. In this advertisement, South Africa is presented as a hotbed of talented people who are able to achieve success not only inside the country but also in an international scenario alluding that South African citizens are as proficient and skilled as the inhabitants of developed countries, hence connoting South Africa as being on the same level of as a developed country. Overall, we identified two primary semiotic themes: 1. A Hotbed of Success Stories and 2. Boosting the Local Pride which are presented in detail below.

#### **Semiotic Themes**

## A Hotbed of Success Stories

We uncovered that the government of South Africa is appealing to the myth of the success story to strengthen its national identity. Through the individual stories of twenty-three salient personas the video aims to provide a clear message: South Africa is a hotbed of success stories. This message is cleverly communicated through the visual mixture of iconic and indexical signs while the audio reinforces it by using symbolic signs, put it in other words, -the scenarios (iconic sign) displayed objects associated with the character's profession (indexical sign), while the protagonists pronounce words (symbolic sign) to denote the message. For instance the South African fashion designer David Teale is displayed in a location that resembles a studio design in which visible elements alluding to his profession are exhibited such as dresses sketches, photographs of catwalks and various samples of fabric; at the same time he articulates the line "What kind of boy is gonna be making clothes?" (Exact transcription of the original audio in the video, seconds 10 to 13). This combination of signifiers facilitates for the audience to links tacitly the personage with the professional field in which she or he has succeeded, enabling them to contextualized these success stories in a reachable terrain which they can access; the connoted message here is that the video introduces the possibility that each individual in South Africa can become a success story. This message is reinforced for the conspicuous variety of characters displayed in the video which features twenty-three personages from diametrical spheres; we identified both public figures such as athletes, writers, comedians, musicians and fashion designers as well as ordinary people such as entrepreneurs, executives, pilots and scientists among others. Through presenting this wide repertoire of success stories in different domains the unspoken message of the South African government is that the country is advancing holistically in terms of social development on account of that the government is setting the groundwork for the progress of all South African citizens; this holistic approach is displayed in the video not only -with the inclusion of success stories in different spheres but also for the selection of the protagonists which are conspicuously different in terms of gender, age range and racial physical characteristics; connoting that the South African government grants equal conditions for all the inhabitants.

## **Boosting the Local Pride**

We found that South African government aims to reinforce the national pride through the video 'Inspiring new ways', in which twenty-three prominent South African citizens are feature to publicize their success stories. Overall, we identify that the tone of the video is rather nationalistic due to the frequency of national symbols displayed along the plot, for instance the South African flag is exhibited in four scenes of the video; firstly in the uniform of the boxer Baby Jake (seconds 00 to 02), secondly on the surfboard of the athlete Shaun Thomson (seconds 08 to 10), on the third occasion the flag occupies the foreground of the shot when is displayed waving over a black background (seconds 55 to 58) and fourthly in the last six seconds of the video as part of the logotype Brand South Africa. Similarly, the national colors are exhibited in several objects such as medals, fabrics and cup. Although, these elements are carefully distributed in the scenes in order to avoid visual saturation, they are cleverly displayed as unspoken signs to connote nationalism during the course of the video. Additionally, this connotation is reinforced by various rhetorical tropes in the script, for instance a the astronomer Simon Ratcliffe uses a metaphor to describe the citizens of South Africa, he articulates "a force to be reckoned with" (seconds 46 to 48), this figurative language associates South Africans with a 'force', notion that is link to centralized power, thus this line claims that South Africans are united and powerful. Likewise, the motorbike rider Greg Minnaar articulates a synecdoche when he claims "It's the South African in me that keeps me fighting" (second 49 to 52) in which he attributes his personal motivation to the generic form of South African nationally. Comprehensively, the semiotics signs found in the video connotes a mirror relation between the country and its citizens in which the former transfer the achievements of the latter to construct a favorable national identity.

#### Part 2

# **4.2.3** Lexical Semantic Analysis of Online Dialogue

Through the examination of the online discourses we identified the primary perceptions associated with developing countries as brands in online communities, in order to unveil whether these countries carry tacit stigmatizations for being labeled as 'developing' or if they remain perceptually unaffected for being allocated in this categorization. In the case of South Africa, we found that the studied online community perceived this country primary as a nation afflicted with high rates of violence and crime follow by entries related with poverty, racism and sexually transmitted diseases. Specifically in this case, we identified that the country carries a strong historical burden on account of its past racial segregation, the term 'Apartheid' is recalled in the great majority of expressed opinions. In general, the tone of voice of the analysed comments connotes a negative perception towards South Africa (fifty per cent) and is noteworthy that only seventeen per cent of the comments express implicitly or explicitly positive opinions. Overall, we identified three primary themes: 1. A Country Plagued with Social Problems; 2. A Country with Historical Burden; 3. A Country with a Charismatic Ambassador. Following we developed these themes in depth. Additionally, in order for the reader to have a better representation of the findings we present a semantic grid which is a visual support comprehending the categorization and labelling of the main entries regarding South Africa.

# Participants tone of voice

Interpretation

Online comments

Categories

Social problems			
Crime & Violence	"Intense violence. Source: my South African girlfriend."	Negative	Recurrent presence of harmful physical force, belief based on a person of reference
	"violence, very high crime rate"	Negative	Qualifying the recurrence of offenses against the law
Poverty & Inequality	"wealthy gated communities and extreme poverty" "severe economic inequality"	Negative Negative	Conspicuous disparity in wealth distribution among social classes Critical attribution of the disparity in distribution of wealth
Diseases	"very high AIDS infection rate" "Dirty, diseased, famine,"	Negative Negative	Association with condition for AIDS virus propagation Unsanitary conditions and people without proper health conditions
Sexual assaults	"rape capital of the world"	Negative	Use of a metonymy that associates South Africa with recurrent sexual assaults
	"ludicrously high rates of sexual assault,"	Negative	Indignation associated with the recurrency of sexual assaults
Racism & Discrimination	"Extreme segregation between the black and white population."	Negative	Racial segregation that exceed the bounds of moderation
	"minority white control/racism"	Negative	Imbalance in power relation based on racial differences
National History  Apartheid	"Apartheid :( "	Negative	Negative association with the past racial segregation
Apartileid	"Past racial segregation."	Negative	Racial segregation as historical burden
Colonization	" the Boers" "Apartheid, Charlize Theron, and Boers"	Neutral Neutral	Reference germanic ethnic group associated with the colonial period The country is associated with two historical periods: colonialism and past racial segregation
Ambassador			
Nelson Mandela	"Mandela and ANC"	Positive	Prominent Social leader, head of the political opposition of the Apartheid
	"Madiba."	Positive	Positive reputation through the prestige of a social leader
Other peronas	"Pistorius Trial" "Oscar pistorious"	Negative Negative	Public figure associated with a famous tragic event Famous tragic event related with a South African public figure
Nature	osem pistorious	riogaaro	Tanous dagle event reacted wan a south Timean public light
Natural Landscapes	"mountains around Cape Town" "Savannas"	Positive Positive	Reference to a specific location in the country Association of the country with a specific ecosystem
Fauna	"great white sharks"  "elephants, zebras, amazing scenery"	Positive Positive	Attraction towards endemic fauna Attraction towards natural biodiversity
Political Issue			·
Government	"useless government" "Corrupt government" "pathetic liberals clamoring for "divestment"	Negative Negative Negative	Distrust in the government system  Dishonesty in the government system  Judgement of governors and putting into question their decisions
Corruption	"Corruption" "people taken advantage of you"	Negative Negative	Distrust about the ethical values of the South African society Judgment of the dishonesty of South African citizens
Economy		-8	
_	"one of the country's thats in the top of the continents living standard."	Positive	Regional positioning as a country with high standars of living
	"most developed country in Africa"	Positive	South Africa as the economic powerhouse of Africa
Economic disparity	"profound economic disparity" "Economical segregation"	Negative Negative	Country with a deep rooted disparity in distribution of wealth Country with disparity in distribution of wealth
Developing country	"south Africa is not "developing" " "poor economy"	Negative Negative	Alluding that South Africa has no progress in development Scarcity of economic resources

Figure 4 Semantic Grid of South Africa

## **Themes**

# A Country Plagued with Social Problems

We found that South Africa is primarily perceived by the online community as a country afflicted with numerous social conflicts. The most recurrent semantic field found in the comments is 'social problems' which encloses entries related with crime, violence, poverty, inequality, sexual assaults, racism and discrimination. From the totality of stated opinions contained in this category forty-nine percent are concerned with crime and violence which are displayed in three different forms, the most recurrent arrangement is when participants add an adjective to emphasized their opinion such as "high crime", "intense violence" or "heavy crime" (exact quotations of Reddit); the second form is when they articulate the word alone without any context or qualification for instance "crime", "criminals", "violence" and "Dangerous" (exact quotations of Reddit) and; the third form is when the users did not articulate the words 'crime' or 'violence' but wrote down an opinion alluding to a violent or criminal atmosphere, for example one of the participants used an analogy with the video game Far Cry to describe South Africa: "I imagine south Africa like far cry, but with little to no green" (Reddit User KA133). At first glance, this comment may not seems related with violence or crime and even the participant's tone of voice is rather neutral, however, if one is acquainted with Far Cry video game it is evident that this user perceived South Africa as lawless country ruled by violence; in order to help the reader to understand this point, we included an screenshot of the website's front page of this video game:



Figure 5 Far Cry Illustration

The image above depicted a conflicted scenario in which a dark skin man is displayed on several television screens surrounded by fire and chaos, this type of images are used as background along this video game, hence, although the participant did not expressed explicitly that he associates South Africa with violence or crime, the use of the analogy with Far Cry connotes an abstract association between this country and a state ruled by violence. Whether the participants expressed their opinion explicitly or implicitly, the most salient perceptions among the studied community towards South Africa are violence and crime.

The comments related with violence and crime are followed by poverty, diseases and sexual assaults. We identified that poverty and inequality are the second recurrent social problems associated with the image of South Africa, however, these two issues are expressed in contrasting forms, on the one hand poverty is articulated by the participants unaccompanied for adjectives or subjects, the word "poverty" is displayed alone and usually as part of a list of several associations such as "violence, poverty, very high crime rate, HIV and AIDS" (Reddit User twogunsalute), on the other hand inequality is communicated in an implicit fashion for instance the user GhoolsFold write down "Shanty towns and sky scrapers" (Reddit User GhoolsFold) to highlight the inequality in social classes in which 'shanty towns' is associated with marginalized areas and 'sky scrapers' with bourgeois zones. These differences in semantic signs connote two levels of overtones, the former is to express a characteristic of South Africa and the latter to evidence a dichotomy: poor and rich. In addition, a surprisingly number of the entries linking South Africa with sexual assaults and HIV were expressed by the online community, these opinions were stated in a clearly negative tone of voice conveying disapproval towards the recurrence of these social problems in that country. For example, the user Judewilli stated that one of his/her initial thoughts about South Africa is "rape capital of the world" (Reddit User Judenwilli); after a semantic deconstruction of this statement we found that:

Capital → Primary center of the countries

Capital of the world → Primary center of the world

Rape capital of the world > Primary center of sexual attacks of the world

South Africa as the rape capital of the world > South Africa is the primary center of sexual attacks in the world

Through the metonymy 'capital of the world' the respondent expressed figuratively that South Africa is the primary center of sexual attacks in the world. Overall, we identified that the primary perceptions of the studied community regarding South Africa are negative, expressed in explicit or implicit forms and linked with various social problems.

## A Country with Historical Burden

One clear theme we uncovered is that South Africa is strongly associated by the analyzed participants with its historical background, specifically with the episodes of the Apartheid and the colonial period. Undoubtedly, the historical past of racial segregation is one of the most salient themes expressed by the participants, the text 'Apartheid' is the most frequent word found in the comments. Although, the Apartheid can be seen as a dark period in the history of South Africa that might affect negatively the image of the country, we found that it was expressed with an ambiguous connotation among the studied community. Put it differently, the word "Apartheid" was articulated by the participants in several occasions, but largely, without an adjective, context or any symbol to help identify clearly the authors' tone of voice. Likewise, the references about the colonial period found in the entries are linked with *The Boers* (Dutch colonizers who preceded the English colonial period in South Africa), these comments were articulated by the participants in a similar fashion of the 'Apartheid', namely that the text 'Boers' or "the Boers" were displayed isolated of adjectives or context that allowed to identify the tone of voice of the user. Even though, the comments related with the past racial segregation and the colonial period were expressed in a rather neutral tone of voice, the conspicuous frequency of apparition connotes that the analyzed participants perceived South Africa as a country with historical burden.

## A Country with a Charismatic Ambassador

Notwithstanding that South Africa is predominantly perceived by the online community as a country with various social conflicts and an historical burden, a charismatic leader of the country were not overlooked by the respondents. From the comments identified with a positive tone of voice (17% in total) the nighty-five percent are linked largely with Nelson Mandela and in a minor stance with the natural landscapes of South Africa. Although, a number of public figures were pointed out by the participants such as Oscar Pistorius and Charlize Theron; the primary ambassador of South Africa is Nelson Mandela which is

articulated in distinct forms for example "Madiba", "Mandela", "Nelson Mandela" and "Mandela and ANC" (exact quotations of Reddit), in despite of these citations were referring to the same individual the semiotic analysis uncovered three different connotations. The first form is when the participant mentioned 'Mandela' or 'Nelson Mandela' which involves that the user expressed in a general manner his or her awareness of this public persona; the second form 'Madiba' indicates an emotional factor because Nelson Mandela received the name of 'Madiba' recalling his clan name and as a sign of respect and; the last form in which Nelson Mandela is linked with the word 'ANC' implies that the respondent is informed about the personal story of this leader and his achievements because 'ANC' is the acronym of African National Congress which is the political party in which Nelson Mandela was part of. Although these three semantic forms demonstrated that the spectrum of awareness within the studied community regarding this South African persona is varied, it is also a confirmation that Nelson Mandela is a truly ambassador of his country.

# 5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this section we will discuss the findings resulting from the analysis of the empirical data from a critical theory perspective aiming to contribute to our research purpose namely the investigation of nation branding strategies adopted in a developing country context in light of the tacit stigmatizations carried by these nations. Finally, we will draw our conclusions and contributions as well as the limitations and guidance for further research.

## 5.1 Discussion

In answer to our first research question which is "How do emerging countries attempt to craft a desirable brand through video campaigns?" We found that both Mexico and South Africa aim to establish a sense of likeness between the targeted stakeholders and the country brand through connotative and denotative signs. In the case of Mexico we identified that in the campaign targeted towards external stakeholders it portrays itself as a developed country, in the touristic video 'Live it to believe it' Mexico City is displayed as a westernized metropolis in which the life style presented visually emulates those in the developed countries, this is even more stressed by the customization of traditional objects such as food and jewelry adapted to western standards and the conspicuous absence of locals in the video. On the other hand, in the video targeted to internal stakeholders 'Se puede' Mexico aims to position itself as a country proud of its citizens and its historical uniqueness recalling various signs to denote the distinctiveness of the Mexican culture. Through the employment of national symbols such as the national flags and the national seal this country intends to unite its citizens by creating iconic representation of the values and goals connoting that a unified Mexico is able to overcome the adversities that afflict the country.

In the case of South Africa, we found that it intends to establish a bond with external stakeholders appealing to westernized visions. In the touristic video 'Meet South Africa' this country is presented as a getaway to the "pure" natural world in which tourists can escape from the "artificial" industrialized western metropolis. Through recalling the myth of the cosmopolitan traveler, South Africa portrays itself as a life changing destination in which the visitors are able to transform themselves by fully experiencing the authenticity of the South

African culture rather than remaining in the superficiality of the parochial. This is marked by the peculiarity of the South African characters presented in the video as in the case of the *shebeen queen* and *the chief*. Moreover, in the video targeted to internal stakeholders 'Inspiring new ways' we found that South Africa aims to boost the local pride through the employment of national symbols along with public figures marked with a positive reputation. In this advertisement, South Africa is presented as a hotbed of talented people who are able to achieve success not only inside the country but also in an international scenario alluding that South African citizens are as proficient and skilled as the inhabitants of developed countries, hence connoting South Africa as being on the same level of as a developed country.

With regard to the second research question which is "How do online users perceive emerging countries as a brand?" we found that the online community perceived both Mexico and South Africa as underdeveloped economies plagued with social problems and surrounded by cultural stereotypes. In the case of Mexico, we identified that the members of the online community link this country primarily with drug trafficking followed by entries connected with social problems such as poverty, crime and violence. In this particular case we uncovered that media serves as an instigator of a wide assortment of stereotypes ranging from physical characteristics i.e. 'big moustaches', 'short' and 'overweight' to behavioral features such as 'lazy people'. Overall, the tone of voice of the analyzed online dialogues were mainly negative (fifty per cent) whereas only a small proportion of them were associated with positive connotations (thirteen percent), the rest of the comments were classified as neutral because the participants expressed them without a positive or negative connotation. In the case of South Africa, we found that the studied online community perceived this country primary as a nation afflicted with high rates of violence and crime follow by entries related with poverty, racism and sexually transmitted diseases. Specifically in this case, we identified that the country carries a strong historical burden on account of its past racial segregation, the term 'Apartheid' is recalled in the great majority of expressed opinions. In general, the tone of voice of the analyzed comments connotes a negative perception towards South Africa (fifty per cent) and is noteworthy that only seventeen per cent of the comments express implicitly or explicitly positive opinions which are largely linked with Nelson Mandela.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

In the formulation of the research problem, we asserted that developing countries carry a tacit mark of inferiority compared with developed nations, which allocates them implicitly in a disadvantageous position in terms of consolidating a desirable brand image, affecting their attractiveness for investment, tourism and human resources. The outcomes resulting from the analysis of the empirical data confirm that the two studied cases -Mexico and South Africaare indeed perceived unfavorably by the investigated online community. From the total of expressed opinions, the great majority connoted negative associations regarding these countries and even the entries classified as 'neutral' were more recurrent than the positive ones which only account thirteen percent for Mexico and seventeen percent for South Africa. Although, this research does not pursue to make a comparison between the two cases, it is revealing that the analysis conducted independently have yielded similarities. For instance, in spite of the considerable contextual and geographical differences among these nations, both countries have been outlined by the members of the online community with close resemblance on account of the primary associations that these countries evoke. These two countries are related mainly with various social problems including themes such as poverty, crime, inequality and violence. This can be read as a stereotyped perception of the so called 'developing countries' rather than refer to the specific local conflicts, in other words, the generic term 'developing country' is already linked with social troubles such as poverty, crime and inequality; therefore, every country categorized as 'developing' most likely tacitly carries these associations.

This is related with an unexpected outcome identified in the analysis, in which some of the members of the online community openly recognized that they are aware about having a stereotyped perception regarding Mexico and South Africa, however, they still consider it as a valid illustration of these countries. This involves the legitimation of the established social arrangement in which the developing countries are laden intentionally or unintentionally with social stigmatization. Under these circumstances, underdeveloped countries not only have to craft a desirable brand image but rather re-brand it in order to dilute the existent negative burden that they have. However, this supposes various implications, in an instrumental level

this process might be difficult because the brand image suitable for one group of stakeholders may be inappropriate for other groups (Bennett & Savani, 2003), similarly the intents of rebrand a nation have been criticized considering that the resources and efforts channeled into this project could be better use in the crucial needs of the country such as security, education and public health (Akinola, 2013). Nevertheless the main repercussions are the ethical implications involved in re-branding a country because this process compromised the inner identity of a nation and its inhabitants in response to the demands of the globalized world. Our suggestion to overcome the existent stigmatization that developing countries carry without jeopardizing the nation genuineness, is to infuse reassuring messages regarding social problems which are the roots of their negative perceptions. This can be achieved through the implementation of *symbolic actions*, which according to Anholt (2009:13) are structural and purposeful acts with an "intrinsic communicative power" demystifying the burden of negative stereotypes.

## 5.3 Contribution

This research has the capacity to critically inform practitioners and scholars in their examination of place branding adopted in a developing country context considering the preexistence of tacit stigmatizations carried by these nations. We aim to reach especially the decision makers of governments of developing countries involved in the design and promotion of the country brand, because these countries are the ones who precisely face the effects of the established social arrangement in which the underdeveloped countries are laden intentionally or unintentionally with social stigmatization. In this study, we have uncovered that there are significant differences between the brand image projected by the governments of the analyzed countries (brand position desired) and the brand image perceived by external stakeholders (brand position perceived). This implies that the studied countries either are unaware of how their country brand image is perceived by the stakeholders or they are neglecting the existent brand image. Therefore, our main contributions are in the first place to inform country strategists of developing countries that the practice of nation branding within their context is closely related with the preexistence stigmatization that they experience for being labelled as 'developing'; hence their attempts to craft a desirable brand

image to attract investment, tourism and human resources have necessarily to deal with these stigmas. Secondly, this study contributes with the exploration of nation branding through the lenses of critical theory in which we have unveiled that country brands are not merely the results of a well implemented marketing strategy but rather a manifestation of the existent power relation between developed and underdeveloped countries.

## **5.4 Limitations and Further Research**

This research was subjected to a number of limitations that must be exposed. Although we attempted to embrace a comprehensive approach of nation branding through the exploration of its various dimensions, we acknowledge that the present research has a narrowest scope that the originally intended due to the focalization in only two (tourism and people) out of the six dimension of this field of study comprehending also investment & immigration, governance, exports and culture & heritage (Nation Brand Hexagon; Anholt, 2005). This decision derived from the constrained time range in which the research had to be conducted —ten weeks- as well as the relatively limited experience of the researchers within this domain of study. Therefore, further exploration regarding the unattended dimensions of place branding is needed to advance in the holistic understanding of how developing countries undertake the practice of place branding considering their preexistent stigmatization burden. Similarly, it is important to point out that 'tourism' which is one of the selected dimension of this study has been studied previously from a number of scholars and practitioners, however, their approach has been rather instrumental unlike this thesis which analyzed nation branding from a critical theory perspective.

Another limitations lies in the methodological decisions undertook in this research. For instance, even though the choice of selecting an online community to explore the external brand image proved to be a useful vehicle to access frank opinions about how developing countries are perceived by the members of this community, the format of the online conversation did not allow to interact extensively with the users disabling the researcher to gain deeper insights. Within the exploratory purpose of the research this method of data collection was suitable to gain an overall understanding of the stigmatization that developing

countries carry tacitly, however, if further investigations are intend to study extensively the perceptions of a country brand image, perhaps in-depth interviews are more suitable to access deeper insights. In addition, the characteristics of the online platform in which part of the study was conducted did not allow to select nor to identify the demographical distribution of participant users, inhibiting the researcher to contextualize the expressed opinions which is relevant to construct a comprehensive semantic connotation.

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### 7. Appendices

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### **Appendix A:** Video Campaigns Description (1/4)

## Video: 'Mexico City: Live it to believe it'

Creator Mexico Tourism Board Duration 1:08 minutes Published September 7th, 2013.

The advertisement is part of the campaign Mexico – Live it to believe it composed of five videos promoting different Mexican destinations namely: Los Cabos, Riviera Maya, Vallarta-Nayarit, Mexico City and Yucatan. This campaign does not address Mexico as a nation instead it is divided in touristic destinations at a regional level. We opted to analyzed Mexico City as a representative sample of Mexico due to its greater political and economic influence internally and internationally. The campaign was launched in September 2013 in The United States of America and Canada followed by The United Kingdom in November 2013

#### Westernization



#### Submission of local dwellers in a contrasting country



### **Appendix A:** Video Campaigns Description (2/4)

## Video: 'Se puede'

Creator Mexican Government Duration 1:02 minutes Published December 4th, 2012.

The advertisement is part of a communication campaign executed by the Mexican Government. It was published on the 4th December 2012 shortly after the appointed President Enrique Peña Nieto took office on the 1th December 2012 following the 2012 general election. The language of the video is Spanish because it was directed to an internal audience. Therefore we translated and contextualized the entire discourse. The campaign is composed of two video Se puecle and Impulso both advertisements aim to formulate the future vision of Mexico from the Government perspective. After a preliminary audit we decided to analyze the first video in virtue of richer and deeper semiotic meanings employed in the commercial

#### Green vs Grey: Two Sides of the Same Coin



#### Together, where there's a will there's a way



## **Appendix A:** Video Campaigns Description (3/4)

## Video: 'Meet South Africa'

Creator Brand South Africa Duration 1:00 minute Published March 20th, 2013.

This advertisement was launched by the South Africa's Tourism Office targeting an international audience. The aim of this video is to attract visitors through the illustration of the country's resources, both human and natural.

#### Power relation between foreigners and locals



Escaping from the ordinary life



Seducing the cosmopolitan inside us



## **Appendix A:** Video Campaigns Description (4/4)

# Video: 'South Africa: Inspiring New Ways'

Creator Brand South Africa Duration 1:03 minutes Published July 4th, 2012.

The advertisement was published on the 4th July 2012 by Brand South Africa, which is the government agency in charge of managing "South Africa" nation brand. This video was broadcasted on the national television and online. This advertisement features twenty-three South African men and women who are considered successful in their fields, in other words "South African success stories"

#### A Hothed of Success Stories



### Boosting the Local Pride



## Appendix B: Screenshots of Online Dialougues from Reddit

4		[-] schmidtybang [punteggio nascosto] 24 minuti fa	
		I want to go swimming with sharks in seth efrica	1
	ı	permalink salva segnala <mark>dona gold</mark> rispondi	_
4	F	[-] Xantham_Gum_Holocaus [punteggio nascosto] 19 minuti fa	
1		South Africa: apartheid, pathetic liberals clamoring for "divestment"; high crime, thick accents, racism, Kaffirs, Nelson Mandela.	2
		permalink salva segnala <mark>dona gold</mark> rispondi	
4	F	[-] alittlemoremusiciany [punteggio nascosto] 13 minuti fa	
7	F f	If I have no social connections. If I have no social schema relative to people in my life with anecdotes about either place (for instance: heritage, interesting trip, facts that I've remembered), then my associations of any place are relative to the news media. For instance, I have a student that just went on a trip to South Africa to see family. I love the kid, so hearing his stories permanently associates south Africa with him. As for Mexico, I have no one, good or bad, to relate mexico to. Therefore, my association is only from news media, it is detached, perhaps dehumanized. I think violence, drug wars, and titties on spring break, but not much humanizing factorsAnyways, genuine answer, hope that is articulate enough to help in some way.	3
		permalink salva segnala <mark>dona gold</mark> rispondi	
	4	[-] Jewels_Vern 3 punti 2 ore fa	
	÷	I know it's dum, but when I think of South Africa I get an image of an island about a half mile wide with the world's biggest gold mine in the middle. And nothing else. Most people in the USA think Africa is a little town in a jungle. They ask about "African cuisine".	4
		permalink	
	4	[-] Huntorbehunted 3 punti 2 ore fa	
	÷	Mexico- drug cartels, cheap alcohol, mass migrations. South Africa- high crime, scenic cities (Cape town comes to mind), Oscar pistorious, oh and district 9.  permalink	!
		[-] joeuhavenofriends 2 punti 2 ore fa	
	-	Mexico- drugs. violence, corruption, high crime rate and a ahit- load of people that ddont want to be there. oh, and its hot.	6
		permalink	
	4	[-] <b>Dophilus</b> 2 punti 1 ora fa	
	÷	To frame this, I'll mention that I'm from the US:	
		Mexico - hard workers who don't get a lot of recognition, chili peppers, tight families, drug gangs who collect human heads (yes, I know that's like one millionth of all Mexican people, but for right or wrong, that IS what comes to mind)	7
		South Africa - Mandela, click languages, great white sharks, ludicrously high rates of sexual assault, Oscar Pistorius, rugby, mining, and places that have a lot of the letters 'j', 'v', and 'aa' in their names. I know more South African people than most Americans do and they're awesome, so I have a very favorable impression of the place, but the country does get a lot of bad press over here, especially about crime. I suspect it's not actually that bad (I've never been there), but again, you're asking for impressions, even if I don't think that they're accurate.	

▲ [-] AttentionSpanZero 1 punto 1 ora fa For Mexico I immediately think of Mexican food (the only kind of food I could eat every day of my life), then I think 8 of Salma Hayak (all I can say is mmmmmm...). For South Africa I picture the mountains around Cape Town - I've never been there though. ♠ [-] limegreenscene 1 punto 1 ora fa Both countries seem to be "just passing" in terms of international social acceptedness. They are both clearly liberal democracies by the standard definitions of the word. However, they both have underlying factors that will eventually bubble over and put an extra strain on their democracies. For South Africa, this is race and inequality. I believe a major rural-urban divide still exists there, in terms of not just social class, but industry structures, etc. In Mexico, a rural-urban divide exists as well, but their main issue is drug cartelling and lack of efficient governance. The lack of leadership allows other developments (social programs, urban development, etc) to fall behind or 9 cease to exist, while negative issues (corruption, drug industry, etc) start to flourish in this environment. They are both large countries, however, which I think most people are aware of. Therefore, stereotypical ideas shouldn't be generalized for the whole country. (Also, these are mainly conclusions drawn from my academic studying, I have never been to South Africa and only went to Mexico once for a vacation several years ago and did not adequately get to see much of the country) Another thought- both states (maybe moreso Mexico, from being so close to the US?) get a lot of income from tourism. This allows these problems to continue because there is little incentive to fix anything while there is still a steady stream of tourist \$\$ entering the country. Best of luck on the paper---this seems like a really interesting topic! permalink ♠ [-] rolo\_i\_am 1 punto 8 giorni fa 🤟 South Africa - 2010 world cup, very high AIDS infection rate, Afrikaans, severe economic inequality, broke military (just read an article about it the other day), Mandela, and for some odd reason the band Seether (Shaun Morgan is 10 permalink ♠ [-] crow\_baby 1 punto 4 giorni fa Mexico-Earthy, spicy 11 South Africa-Hot, cloying [-] uttercaution 1 punto 4 giorni fa 12 Mexico - wide beaches, ramshackle houses on hillsides, friendly people, colorful markets, drug cartels, crooked cops. [-] iam4real 1 punto 8 giorni fa south Africa is not "developing" 13 Again patronizing permalink genitore [-] Smackstainz 2 punti 17 giorni fa Mexico= the cartel and poverty South Africa = starvation, people living in the desert/savanah and mosquito's 14 permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi [-] KA1337 1 punto 17 giorni fa 15 I imagine south Africa like far cry, but with little to no green and a lot of starving people. permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi [-] invade china 4 punti 17 giorni fa 16 Tacos and Diamonds. permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi [-] Kusferosh 2 punti 17 giorni fa My perception of both is that they are countries in which the citizens actually possess more firepower than the 17 government. Although I'm basically blindly projecting what I know about Mexico onto South Africa, because to be honest I don't know anything about South Africa. permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi

[-] StewieBanana 1 punto 10 giorni fa Mexico: Tacos and Speedy Gonzales	18
South Africa: The movie District 9	10
permalink salva segnala <mark>dona gold r</mark> ispondi	

↑ [-] OneSingleMonad 1 punto 10 giorni fa  Well in that case, when I think of Mexico I think of the drug cartel problem, 12-14 year old kids risking their lives to cross the border into America and have seen more shit by their 18th birthday than most kids born in America, the Mayan civilization. When I think of South Africa I think of Bruce Brown's endless summer and the longest wave in the world, apartheid, imperialism.  permalink salva genitore segnala dona gold rispondi	19 e
[-] Lascondes 1 punto 10 giorni fa  Mexico - drug carets, guns, death, beach, tequila, in that order.  South Africa - Apartheid, crime, elephants, zebras, amazing scenery, food.  That is what first comes to mind but I know that both countries have a lot more to them.  permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	20
[-] pfootie 1 punto 10 giorni fa  Mexico: Cartel South Africa: Apartheid  permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	21
[-] shinra528 1 punto 10 giorni fa  Mexico: heavy corruption, drug cartels, siestas, Catholic, beaches, tequila, cervesa.  South Africa: I have no idea. 80s/90s America pop culture?  permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	22
[-] DarkBowels 1 punto 10 giorni fa  Mexico: Cartel, Economic Monopoly (That telo-communications guy who was the richest guy in the world),  Struggling economy  S. Africa: Apartheid/minority white control/racism, Mandela, Diamonds, Rich but highly morbid  permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	23
[-] AbortedCatFetus 2 punti 6 giorni fa  Both:  Dirty, diseased, famine, poor economy, crooked government, crooked police, terrible education system, harmful infliction of religious indoctrination upon the impoverished, lack of natural resources, unstable families, poor healthcare systems.  permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	24

[-] Moronic_Monday 2 punti 6 giorni fa	
	25
Mexico. Short, lazy people sleeping under a sombrero or sitting on a donkey.  South Africa. Kruger rands, dutch people, apartheid, a lot of violence.	25
permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	
[-] cazz61 2 punti 6 giorni fa South Africa: Aids and orphans	26
permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	
[-] spliced1 2 punti 6 giorni fa  South African here. SA = greatest place in the world. Yes' there is crime but there is breathless beauty. We have a useless government but that will change in years to come when younger generations take the reigns and leave the past behind. In one sentence, SA has the most potential for brilliance.	27
Mexico = tequila and a sense of being kinda aimless.	
permalink salva segnala <mark>dona gold r</mark> ispondi	
[-] Transformer6 2 punti 6 giorni fa	
south africa- racism ,rape, people taken advantage of	28
mexico drug cartels ,poverty,guns	
permalink salva segnala <mark>dona gold r</mark> ispondi	
[-] ZergKnight 2 punti 6 giorni fa	
Mexico	
Poor people, drugs, shithole	29
South Africa	
Prawns, rednecks, AIDS	
permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	
[-] ulobmoga 2 punti 6 giorni fa	
Mexico: Drug Cartels, cheap goods, disease, kidnappings	30
South Africa: Apartheid	
permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	
[-] rahaws 2 punti 6 giorni fa	
Mexico: drug cartels, hookers, heavy crime, tequila, awesome food and beaches I can't get to because of drug cartels.	31
	31
cartels.  South Africa: heavy crime, slavery, bigotry, white people who move to the states from here love to be called African	31
cartels.  South Africa: heavy crime, slavery, bigotry, white people who move to the states from here love to be called African American.	31
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[-] yeanobro 2 punti 5 giorni fa Mexico- tacos 35 South Africa- white people in Africa permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi [-] Willamaxj 2 punti 5 giorni fa 36 Mexico-gangs South africa-mandela permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi [-] spitf1re 2 punti 5 giorni fa It's always nice to hear outsiders' perspectives on your county - especially since we're rather reliant on those 37 perceptions (tourism, foreign investment etc) Let me know if you need any help from a normal middle class South African guy. permalink salva segnala <mark>dona gold ri</mark>spondi ▲ [-] spitf1re 2 punti 5 giorni fa ➡ That's great, although July/Aug is the worst time to be here - everywhere that's not cold and wet is cold and dry! You should try come Sept-Apr on your next trip - it will be like a different country! So glad you came though. 38 Is Oklahoma massively different to our cities here? I feel a similar vibe here compared to some UK and continental European cities I've been to (I suppose it's our attempt at westernization). I haven't been to the States yet, and barely know where I should start! permalink salva genitore segnala dona gold rispondi ♠ [-] Cav-Medic 1 punto 5 giorni fa ➡ I loved it all the same, but wish I could have spent more time in Joburg and seen Durban. Oklahoma is quite different, but my father was a Doctor Without Borders in Swaziland for two years before I was born so I grew up learning about siSwati and South Africa. Oklahoma is flat, plains and red clay and cowboys and mostly white people that are the nicest people you'll ever meet when we're not stabbing each other over football or running each other over when we're drunk. I live on the edge of Oklahoma City, thirty minutes from Downtown where the Devon Tower soars up 850 feet in the air, and fifteen minutes from the little country barn where we board our two horses. Country and city really mix in Oklahoma, and we build out, not up. Johannesburg surprised me with just how small Johannesburg was for how many people lived there, it looked condensed from the air but bigger on the ground. South African Airways was 39 phenomenal by the way, US air carriers could learn a lot from them. Anyways, I was just passing through when I got there, taking a combi over the border to Swaziland at night. That was fun. Did our construction and our medical services there for several weeks and got to take our time on the way back. Spent two nights in Krueger Park which was fantastic! Spent them both in a little walled village that for the life of me I can't remember the name of at the moment. The only complaint I have is that the whole country seemed overrun with New Zealanders. Seemed I couldn't turn around without running into a Kiwi, and lord, some of them don't like Americans. Never met a South African I didn't like though, including the Rugby goons my friend and I scrapped with our last night in Joburg while waiting for our flight. That was one of the more fun nights I've ever had, bar hopping all over Kempton Park. I even bought four post-cup vuvuzelas that were the terror of my school's football games for a year until I broke them. There were some parts of the city we didn't want to go to on account of them being too rough, and you're right it was dry but we're used to that here. On the whole, I loved it, and I really can't wait to go back, hopefully soon! permalink salva genitore segnala dona gold rispondi [-] JustTooMuchConfusion 2 punti 5 giorni fa\* (ultima modifica 5 giorni fa) Mexico - Dry, cartel, poverty, sombreros, poverty. - This is probably what comes to mind due to the fact that it's 40 mostly what is portrayed in film and other media. South Africa - Corruption, slow internet, crime, a lot of security and fences, unreliable government services. - I live in South Africa, and that is largely what I think of when thinking of home. permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi [-] Cav-Medic 2 punti 5 giorni fa South Africa: Contrasts. The lights of Johannesburg and the absolute, tranquil darkness of Krueger Park. The stadiums and the slums, high rises and diamond mines, beaches and savannah, whites and blacks, AIDS and that 41 wonderful accent. Also rugby, Kudu burgers with Monkey Gland Sauce, drunken scraps with goons in Pretoria and the splendor of the bushveld. Fuck I need to go back to South Africa. permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi [-] Schafer7 1 punto 5 giorni fa Mexico-Tacos, drugs, and cartels 42 South Africa- Apartheid, Charlize Theron, and Boers permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi

[-] ImportantPotato Ostwestfalen-Lippe 2 punti 2 giorni fa*	
What first comes to my mind:	
Mexico: Nice food, fat people, sombreros, Mexico City, football (soccer), westerns (movies), Aztecs, drug lords, extreme violence (drug cartels)	43
South Africa: WC 2010, African wildlife, Criminals, Dutchman, most developed country in Africa, Nelson Mandela, racism.	
permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	
[-] July042012 1 punto 2 giorni fa	
When I think about Mexico I think of deserts and my coworkers; I work in a restaurant in California. The first things that come to my head when I think about South Africa are the Boers from Michener's novel "The Covenant" and apartheid.	44
permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	
[-] Judenwilli 1 punto 2 giorni fa	
Mexico:	
First thing I think about is the war for drugs and the Mexican cartels but also mariachi bands and tequila/sombreros.	
South Africa:	45
Initial thoughts are Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu and the first african World Cup. Also, rape capital of the world and the apartheid.	
permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	
[-] WendellSchadenfreude 1 punto 2 giorni fa	
Mexico: Food - Spicy food with names I never can remember. Aztecs.	46
SA: The Cape. Black&White population.	
permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	
. [-] GhoolsFold 4 punti 1 giorno fa	
Mexico- Tequila, drug cartels (very dangerous), colourful skulls, day of the dead and other whacky pseudo Christian things. Churches where you're cured by burping. Cactuses. Singing, big hats, and delicious spicy food.	47
South Africa- Getting more and more dangerous, Boers (uncivilised!), wildlife (under pressure). Shanty towns and sky scrapers. Table Mountain. I always think of it a bit sadly because they ended apartheid so excellently peacefully but I think it's a bit of a mess now and getting worse.	47
permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	
. [-] thetafferboy 3 punti 1 giorno fa	
Mexico - scuba diving, relaxed, drugs cartels, spiders.	48
South Africa - Great white sharks, getting killed for your shoes, FUCKIN PRAWNS.	40
permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	
. [-] Bedlamite13 2 punti 1 giorno fa	
Mexico - sombreros, burritos, cheese, Speedy Gonzales, deserts	49
South Africa - apartheid, Nelson Mandela, springboks	49
permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	
. [-] _khalilio_ 2 punti 1 giorno fa	
After living in south Africa for one year and counting I can give you a perspective of ignorance (before coming here) and a perspective of insight (living here).	50
Ignorant: crime, Mandela, apartheid, hot, safari, rugby, world cup	50
Insight: diverse, friendly, braai (BBQ), clean, advanced, potential, so many animals, beach, scenery, so much rain lol	
permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi	
. [-] DrPubertybeard 2 punti 1 giorno fa	
Mexico: 1910 revolution, Zapata, Diaz, Pancho Villa, oil, burritos, federales	51
I wrote my dissertation on Mexico!	

[-] twogunsalute 2 punti 1 giorno fa Mexico - great food, drugs, violence, sombreros, soap operas, Catholicism, bumblebee man. All mostly from media. South Africa - rainbow nation, Mandela and ANC, corruption, violence, poverty, very high crime rate, HIV and AIDS, 52 nice weather, rugby and cricket, biltong and cream soda. Mostly media but some from friends and acquaintances from South Africa. permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi [-] dwair 2 punti 1 giorno fa Mexico - Not good stuff. Scary guys in leather jackets with big moustaches doing shady stuff. Dusty shit hole towns with manky looking prostitutes and fat children. Greasy food. From media (and hopefully a very long way from the truth) South Africa instantly brings to mind Sunshine, surf, braai, dusty roads in land rovers, camping in the bush, great 53 rock climbing, Pick & Pay supermarkets, crime rate OK for Africa, Hillbrow, weird gated white people ghettos with lots of barbed wire. Nice lager & good steak, Table Top mountain and scary insects. From personal experience - lots of extended trips / sort of lived there on and off over the last 15 years. Now I want to go back again after thinking about it. permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi [-] Professional\_Bob 2 punti 1 giorno fa Mexico - Good Food, drug cartels, strong Catholic culture, desert, aztecs, hard workers 54 South Africa - Corrupt government, lots of crime, inequality, District 9 permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi [-] GavChap 1 punto 1 giorno fa Mexico - Mexico City, slums, drugs, highly religious, speedy gonzalez, tacos, three amigos. 55 South Africa - Dangerous. That's it for SA. permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi [-] threesquares 1 punto 1 giorno fa Mexico - Tequila, colour, hot, dry, friendly, dios los muertos, bars, touristy, cactus. South Africa - red, black, yellow, green, Cape Town, Table Mountain, smart bars, relaxed, Oscar Pistorius, sporty, 56 Both of those are from personal visits to those countries and a little bit of media influence. permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi [-] Wabbithunter68 1 punto 1 giorno fa Mexico - violent crime, droopy mustaches, mariachi bands, sombreros and ponchos, poverty, colourful, Day of the Dead, the food. 57 South Africa - wealthy gated communities and extreme poverty, terrible crime, beautiful flora, sunshine, dried meats, weird accent, dangerous. I presume that it comes from the media. permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi [-] bestfomert 1 punto 1 giorno fa 58 Mexico: drugs, alcohol, drug cartels, nachos, extreme violence permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi [-] Kubrick\_Fan 1 punto 1 giorno fa 59 South Africa: Intense violence. Source: my South African girlfriend. permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi [-] txteva 1 punto 1 giorno fa I generally know most from media so very stereotypical I know 60 Mexico - Tequila, drug crime, big hats, sun, holidays, hammocks, mangroves South Africa - Violence, racism, Mandela, Biltong, carjacking, shanty towns [-] BonzoTheBoss 1 punto 1 giorno fa Mexico: Mexico city, slums, "sterotypical" Mexican things (tequila, sombreros, cacti), drug cartels, Aztec ruins... 61 South Africa: District 9, Johannesburg, corruption, violence...

permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi

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[-] Oppfinnar-Jocke 6 punti 1 giorno fa
Mexico: Big moustaches. Probably got this from wild west movies.
                                                                                                                                       62
South Africa: Fookin' prawns!
permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi
[-] 🔀 linkanson 4 punti 1 giorno fa
Mexico:
 · Tacos (Best food in the world)
                                                                                                                                       63
 · Drug cartels

    Beer

South Africa:

    Apartheid

permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi
[-] backelie 4 punti 1 giorno fa*
Mexico:
 • Tijuana (TV/Movies)
 · Juarez (News)
 · Cartels (News)

    Sombreros

    Tacos

    Aztecs

                                                                                                                             64
 · Sid Meier's Colonization.
South Africa:

    Apartheid

    Afrikaans

    Murder

permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi
[-] dr_root 4 punti 1 giorno fa
Mexico: Sombreros.
                                                                                                                                65
South Africa: Vuvuzelas.
Happy to be of service.
permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi
[-] Bobloblawblablabla 4 punti 1 giorno fa
mexico: an acceptance of that death is uncontrollable, presence in life. ( I've fallen in love qith tje country through
                                                                                                                                 66
some too good litterature) southafrica: apartheid
permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi
[-] Indekkusu 4 punti 1 giorno fa*
Mexico:
Drug Cartels - Media
Corruption - Media
Violence - Media
Migration to USA - Media
                                                                                                                                 67
Mexican cuisine - Restaurants
South Africa:
Apartheid - literature, Media
Reverse Apartheid - Media
Corruption - Media
Poor working condition - Media
ANC - Media, literature
Nelson Mandela - Media
```

permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi

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[-] 📉 Grumpuff 3 punti 1 giorno fa
 Mexico: tacos, drugs and people escaping to USA
                                                                                                                               68
 SA: Nelson Mandela, apartheid, wine, warm.climate, football and one of the country's thats in the top of the
 continents living standard.
 permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi
 [-] 🚺 alachua 2 punti 1 giorno fa
 Mexico: Spanish
 People jumping the border to the U.S.
 Tortillas
 Coca Cola (yeah, that's all you drink....)
 Drugs
 Drug wars
 Corruption
 Friendly people
 South Africa:
                                                                                                                                69
 Aids
 Rape
 Apartheid
 Boers
 Coloureds
 White flight
 Segregation
 Poverty
 Safari
 Mandela
⊾ [−] LillHagelin 2 punti 1 giorno fa
                                                                                                                                70
Mexico: Tacos, South Africa: Savannas
 permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi
[-] Rovanion 2 punti 1 giorno fa
Mexico: Drug lord related mass murder.
                                                                                                                                71
 South Africa: Extreme segregation between the black and white population.
 permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi
, [-] Greatoffence 2 punti 1 giorno fa
Mexico: cartel, tacos and Herman Cortez
                                                                                                                                72
 South Africa: Apartheid: (, Fotball and the Anglo Zulu war.
 permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi
🖫 [-] 🔣 Cooster_Rockburn 1 punto 1 giorno fa
Mexico:
 Corruption - Media
 Drug Cartels - Media
 Violence - Media
 Migration to USA - Media/Literature
 Sombreros - Literature, Media, Cartoons and so on.
                                                                                                                                  73
 Tacos!!
 South Africa:
 Apartheid - Internet(wiki and such), literature, school
 Poor working condition - Media
 Wierd drugs - Media(Vice)
 Nelson Mandela - Media, literature
 Mining - Media
 Edit: Tacos
```

permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi

```
[-] 🔀 burkiish 2 punti 1 giorno fa
 South Africa: Braai
                                                                                                                                                          74
 Mexico: Sombrero
 permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi
 [-] gravestoneddd 1 punto 1 giorno fa
                                                                                                                                                          75
 Mexico - Cartel Cartels, Violence, Mexican Immigrants
 South Africa - Apartheid
 permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi
 [-] ImSwedishGiveUpvotes 1 punto 1 giorno fa*
 Mexico: Weird fashion trends. Extensive drug/cartel violence. Lots of narcotic exports. Sketchy government past but
 still a democracy. Dangerous environment for journalists. Seemingly large population of youth who reside to
 emigration and illegal activities to reach success.
 South Africa: Pistorius Trial. Worst football world cup ever. Violence deeply rooted in the society. Reckless criminals. High rate of drug abuse. Shooting of mine strikers. Sharpeville massacre. Necklacing. The beautiful language of
                                                                                                                                                         76
 Afrikaans. Economical segregation. Past racial segregation.
 Most of my knowledge and whatever interest I have of South Africa stems from just reading history and personal
 opinion. My image of Mexico, on the other hand, has been influenced by American media, pop culture, social media
 and news from various sources.
 permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi
 [-] Classicshave 1 punto 1 giorno fa
                                                                                                                                                          77
 Mexico: Big hats. South Africa: Plains and sand.
 permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi
 [-] vattenpuss 0 punti 1 giorno fa
 Mexico: militarised drug cartels (media)
                                                                                                                                                          78
 South Africa: apartheid (literature)
 permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi
       ♠ [-] weroafable 1 punto 1 giorno fa
                                                                                                                                                              79
       What about ancient ritual sacrifices during precolumbian history.
           permalink salva genitore segnala dona gold rispondi
[-] kulturen -2 punti 1 giorno fa*
Mexico:
  * Drug cartels (media)
  * Gang wars (media)
  * Cut off penises (media)
  * Beer (friends)
                                                                                                                                                              80
  * Poor country (media, literature)
  * Corruption (media)
  South Africa:
  * Wine (advertising)
  * Apartheid (media, literature)
  * Simple gun laws (media)
  permalink salva segnala dona gold rispondi
```

## **Appendix C**: Online Dialogues Analysis (Mexico)



Word Cloud resulting from Online Dialogues. Elaborated with Nvivo software

Categories	Recurrence
Social problems	44
Food & Drink	34
Stereotype	17
Nature	15
Cultural	12

Words	Recurrence
drug	38
cartcle	31
food	12
sombocros	12
people	11
tacos	11
toquile	9
violence	9

Tone of voice	Percentage
Negative	50%
Neutral	37%
Positive	13%

Quantification conducted with Nvivo software

## Appendix D: Online Dialogues analysis (South Africa)

