

The Impact of Audiences in Public Diplomacy on Japan Nation Brand

A case study on Japan Nation Brand and the way both Japanese embassies in Saudi Arabia and US promote different images to their audiences through their twitter accounts

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis was to find out how different actors in nation branding, the Japanese embassies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and in US under this research, could promote different nation brand images. These two embassies both practice public diplomacy and promote Japan's image. This thesis argues that both embassies promote the different images because of their respective audiences' impact. Nation branding literature suggested promoting a unitary image for one global audience in a global market. This resulted in inconsistency in the images promoted by the different actors and a nation branding strategy. This thesis claims that audiences make segments that impact these actors; it opposes the globalized view of the audience. Therefore, it claims that more segmentation is needed in a nation branding strategy so that it takes into consideration the different identities of audiences. This will reduce the inconsistencies in nation branding. The findings showed that the impact of audiences resulted in the differences in the promoted images. They have been reached to through applying qualitative content analysis and concepts from nation branding literature, segmentation, and competitive advantage.

Keywords: Nation branding, Public diplomacy, Segmentation, Nation brand identity, Nation brand image, Competitive advantage

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Contents

I- Introduction	1
Research gap and academic contribution	2
Research questions	2
Disposition.....	3
II- Literature Review	5
1- Introduction	5
2- Nation branding & soft power	6
3- Origins of nation branding and its competitive advantage	6
4- Nation brand perception.....	7
Perception and competitive advantage	7
Perception and stakeholders.....	7
5- Nation branding and audience segmentation.....	8
6- Problematization of market and audience segmentation.....	9
7- The segmented audiences from a public diplomacy perspective	10
Establishing the relationship between public diplomacy and nation branding	11
A public diplomacy perspective on audience segmentation and its relation to nation branding.....	12
8- Literature review on nation branding in Japan	13
The unitary image of Japan	13
The unitary image and audiences in a globalized economy	13
Nation brand competitiveness and audience segmentation in ‘Cool Japan’ brand	14
Localization of Japan’s nation brand to arguably segmented audiences.....	15
The complexity of Japanese nation branding under cultural policies	15
The need for “a more entrepreneurial mindset”	16
III- Conceptual Framework.....	18
1- Introduction	18
2- Nation brand (identity, image and positioning)	18
Identity	19
Image.....	20
Positioning.....	20
Dinnie’s “conceptual model of nation brand identity and image”	20
3- Market segmentation and audience segmentation	21
4- Competitive advantage (Differentiation strategy)	22

Differentiation: Resource-based competitive advantage	23
IV- Methodology.....	25
1- Epistemological and ontological positioning.....	25
Epistemological Considerations	25
Ontological Considerations	25
2- Research method	26
3- Research Strategy.....	27
Comparative Design and Case Study.....	27
Case Selection	28
Data Collection	29
Sample size.....	29
Sampling.....	30
Data Analysis	30
4- Practical considerations	32
5- Ethical Considerations.....	32
V- Findings and Analysis	33
Introduction	33
1- A Japanese NB-ID that has no evident audience impact on the image.....	33
2- A Japanese NB-ID has <i>a favorable image within the audience</i>	37
3- A Japanese NB-ID has <i>a hybrid image</i>	41
4- A Japanese NB-ID has <i>a symmetrical image</i>	46
5- Discussion on image variations	49
VI- Conclusion.....	52
Bibliography	54

Acronyms and Abbreviations

NB:	Nation Branding
NB-ID:	Nation Brand Identity
NB-IM:	Nation Brand Image
NB-P:	nation brand positioning
MOFA:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
METI:	Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan
KSA:	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Embassy in KSA:	Japanese Embassy in KSA
Embassy in US:	Japanese Embassy in US

I- Introduction

Many theorists such as Dinnie (2016, p. 6) argue the benefits of nation branding in achieving “nationally important objectives in terms of trade, investment and tourism.” Japan has already achieved an increase in the number of overseas tourists visiting Japan which equals 243.73 % between 2007 (8 346 969 tourists) and 2017 (28 691 073) (JNTO, 2018) . Also, it aims at increasing the number of tourists to 60 million annual visitors by 2030 (Sugiura, 2019). That makes one of the reasons for which Japan has been working on improving its image through nation branding strategies. Nation branding in Japan came in consequence of Japan’s postwar economic success, in the context of the sustained criticism by foreign commentators on Japan’s allegedly insular and closed behavior (Dinnie, 2008, p. 4). Accordingly, Japan has made “significant efforts to brand itself and project its attractive qualities to the outside world” (Dinnie, 2008, p. 10). McGray argues that “Japan has moved from being an economic power in the 1980s to being a cultural superpower in the twenty-first century” and that its “spontaneously produced culture” has led to the emergence of “Cool Japan Brand” (McGray, 2002). “The Japan Brand Strategy was first introduced in 2004 as a part of the annual update of the Intellectual Property Strategic Programme which had been started in 2002” (Valaskivi, 2013, p. 487). There have been several stages in brand strategy since 2004 (Daliot-Bul, 2009, p. 248). The Cool Japan promotion office was established in 2010 by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), when there had been no “coherent cultural policy” (Iwabuchi, 2015, p. 423). Eventually, two Japanese ministries have carried out most of the conscious nation branding projects, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and METI (Valaskivi, 2013, p. 491). In addition to the two ministries, the Cool Japan Advisory Council also had members from other ministries and governmental bodies such as the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) (Valaskivi, 2013, p. 491).

Nonetheless, Japanese nation branding has been criticized for trying to promote a unitary image of Japan for all its audiences by commentators such as Iwabuchi (2015, p. 420). In other words, Japan promotes certain images of Japan that do not reflect every side of the country and that do not take into consideration the variations within audiences. The unitary image for all audiences accords with Dinnie’s definition of a nation brand as “the unique, multidimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance *for all of*

its target audiences” (2016, p. 5). The participation of many governmental bodies such as MOFA, METI and JETRO in Japanese nation branding intensifies the dispute on promoting the unitary image for all the audiences, since *each of them has their own goals and working mechanisms*. This thesis assumes the infeasibility of applying the unitary image. This thesis narrows these participants down and provides an empirical example of two Japanese embassies – one in US and the other in Saudi Arabia- that work under MOFA to study their role in nation branding. It assumes that they produce different images for different audiences through their twitter accounts. Furthermore, it views that the audiences have impact on the promoted images. Still, those embassies practice both nation branding and public diplomacy simultaneously because of the development of modern communication channels such as social media. This justifies the use of public diplomacy for understanding nation branding.

Research gap and academic contribution

Japanese nation branding under the unitary image has looked at its audiences as one big group of audiences in a global market (Dinnie, 2016, pp. 8-9). This view does not take into consideration the cultural particularities of the audience and presupposes that the unitary image will be accepted by all of its target audiences. Furthermore, it does not recognize the impact of audiences on the images promoted by the Japanese governmental bodies (both Japanese embassies in this thesis) participating in a nation branding strategy. This thesis assumes this impact will lead to variation and even differences in the images promoted for the audiences. Thus, this results in inconsistency between the unitary image and the images promoted by the participants in a nation branding strategy. If the impact appears to be evident, it implies that there should be a move from the unitary image to more segmented images that take into consideration the cultural particularities within the audiences. Consequently, the audiences are to be segmented so that it reduces the inconsistency in nation branding.

Research questions

This thesis questions *how both Japanese embassies in US and KSA promote different nation brand images of Japan for their respective audiences in their twitter accounts*. For answering

this question, this research hypothesizes that *both Japanese embassies promote different images of Japan for their respective audiences through the practice of public diplomacy because the audience impact the choice of these images*. Furthermore, this thesis poses the following three sub-questions for testing the hypothesis:

Sub-question (1): What are the images that both Japanese embassies promote in their twitter accounts because of the audiences' impact?

Sub-question (2): How is both embassies' choice of these images impacted by the audience? This thesis hypothesizes that the impact occurs when each embassy appropriates images to its respective audience. Furthermore, this implies that the audiences are segmented through this process.

Sub-question (3) how are these images different in respect to each embassy's audience?

Disposition

This thesis text is divided under six chapters. *Firstly, the introduction* presents the Japanese nation branding context, the way many Japanese governmental institutions are involved in Japanese nation branding and the relationship between nation branding and public diplomacy in promoting Japan. Also, it poses the research gap and contribution in emphasizing the impact of audience in nation branding. Moreover, it poses the research questions and hypotheses. *Secondly, literature review* discusses the academic arguments within nation branding with focus on Japan. It shows that nation branding is a form of soft power. It goes further to show the competitive advantage of a nation brand. Also, it explores the role of audience's perception of a nation brand in creating the competitive advantage as well as the role of stakeholders in creating this perception. Then, it problematizes the segmentation concept in nation branding literature to show that it can be the solution for the inconsistency in nation branding strategies. Further, it shows the segmented audience from public audience perspective which contradicts with nation branding. The final part of the review presents the arguments on the empirical example of Japanese nation branding in relation to the previous parts of literature review. The unitary image of Japan through nation branding is the most central to this thesis. *Thirdly, the conceptual frameworks* are explained. They are concepts that have been used within nation branding literature and that are

used for analysis in this thesis. *Fourthly, methodology* frames the research strategy and comparative design. It justifies the use of content qualitative research method and outlines the analysis process. *Fifthly*, the analysis finds out the four themes under which variations in nation brands occur because of the impact of audiences. Finally, the conclusion is the summary of findings.

II- Literature Review

1- Introduction

Although the literature review has looked at audiences as one global market that is addressed by a unitary image, concepts from competitive advantage, marketing & business, public diplomacy literature and empirical research show an interest in addressing the audiences as separate groups. Therefore, the concept of audience segmentation has been problematized in this research to develop the literature on nation branding. Firstly, the literature review discusses that nation branding is a form of soft power and, thus, aims at influencing the audience for obtaining outcomes. Secondly, it shows that nation branding *differentiates* own nation within target audiences so as to obtain a competitive advantage. Thereupon, the audience's perception of a nation brand is what creates this competitive advantage. Thirdly, it discusses the role of stakeholders, which are Japanese embassies in KSA and US in this research, in creating the different perceptions of a nation brand. Fourthly, it examines the concept of segmentation. In fact, most literature on nation branding looks at audiences as one *homogenous* and enormous group rather than segmented. This thesis will problematize the segmentation concept in order to show that audiences are not group but rather segmented. This argument poses that nation brands should be designed on segmented basis such as regional basis. Most importantly, it poses that that the audiences' identities have impact on nation brands and that a nation brand strategy should be appropriate to be suitable for the particular identities of its audience. This has anticipated benefits in reducing the level of inconsistency in nation branding strategies between the different stakeholders and in avoiding contradictions between the promoted brands and the culture of the audience. Fifthly, it highlights the relationship between public diplomacy and nation branding for two reasons. The first one is that public diplomacy, as a stakeholder in nation branding strategies, promotes images of Japan; the Japanese embassies in KSA and US are the stakeholders in this thesis. The second one is that the concept of audience has been disputed within public diplomacy literature. Finally, the literature review discusses arguments on the empirical example of Japan.

2- Nation branding & soft power

Nation branding is a soft power that aims at affecting audiences. In fact, when nations hold a nation branding strategy, they pursue to increase their soft power. According to Nye's definition (Nye, 2008, p. 94), nation branding is a form of soft power since it makes an "ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment." Furthermore, both soft power and nation branding utilize *culture* (Nye, 2008, p. 94); (Dinnie, 2016, p. 5) to affect the audience to obtain outcomes. The claim that nations brand themselves "to fulfil nationally important objectives" (Dinnie, 2016, p. 6) corresponds with Nye's definition of soft power "the ability to obtain the outcomes one wants" (Nye, 2008, p. 94); both imply that nations aim to achieve national interests through attracting their target audiences (Nye, 2008, p. 94). The relation between soft power and nation branding with their audience is represented in figure (1).

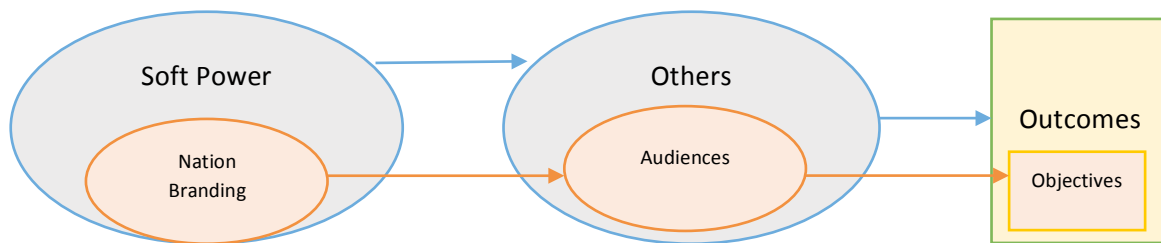


Figure 1: Nation branding is a form of soft power

3- Origins of nation branding and its competitive advantage

Nation branding, which has its roots in marketing, aims to distinguish a nation within its target audiences for creating a competitive advantage. Competitive advantage is a concept that has been appropriated from "marketing, branding and business literature" (Dinnie, 2016, p. 3). Branding in marketing is about distinguishing one's own product(s). Doyle (1992) defines a successful brand as "a name, symbol, design, or some combination, which identifies the product of a particular organization as having a *sustainable differential advantage*." Furthermore, the branding practice has been defined as "the process by which companies distinguish their product offerings" from competitors' (Jobber & Fahy, 2003). Dinnie (2016, p. 6) sees that nation branding was founded when nations aimed to distinguish themselves as a consequence of a more globalized economy so as to achieve a competitive advantage (Dinnie, 2016, p. 6). The main

argument is that globalization has led to the “*homogenization of markets*” and nations needed to distinguish themselves by promoting their national identity (Dinnie, 2016, p. 8). Concepts of “country of origin” literature have become the technique for differentiation (Dinnie, 2016, p. 8). To put it differently, “*nation branding* has emerged as countries turn to brand management techniques in order to compete effectively on the world stage” (Dinnie, 2016, p. 9). The main critique is that certainly has globalization led to more “homogenization of markets” (Dinnie, 2016, p. 8), but it does not eliminate the differences between audiences.

4- Nation brand perception

Perception and competitive advantage

The audience’s perception of a nation brand is critical for nation branding to have a competitive advantage. This originates from marketing; for example, Chernatony and Mc Donald (2003) warn that it is imperative to recognize that it is “the buyer or the user who forms a mental vision of the brand” (Dinnie, 2016, p. 5). In this respect, three central concepts that originate from business branding and that are pivotal in nation branding underpin the perception of a nation brand, namely *nation brand identity (NB-ID)*, *nation brand image (NB-IM)* and *nation brand positioning (NB-P)*. For the sake of nation branding distinguishing, Dinnie explains that identity “refers to what something truly is, its essence” and that image “refers to how something is perceived” (Dinnie, 2016, p. 9). Furthermore, positioning is “related to identifying the desired associations of the brand in the minds of target audiences” (Dinnie, 2016, p. 33). In this, positioning is key-element in achieving the competitive advantage through differentiation (Anholt, 1998); (Gilmore, 2002); (Konecnik Ruzzier & De Chernatony, 2013); (Yousaf, 2014); (Dinnie, 2016, p. 7).

Perception and stakeholders

Audience perception of a nation brand is influenced not only by a nation branding strategy but also by the stakeholders involved in nation branding. Stakeholders, according the stakeholder theory in place branding, are the ones who “must be involved in any project’s planning and

implementation” (Currie, et al., 2009); (Murphy & Murphy, 2004); (Sautter & Leisen, 1999); (Simpson, 2001); (Dinnie, 2008, p. 188). In this thesis, the stakeholders are the Japanese embassies in KSA and US that work under Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Both Anholt (2007) and Dinnie (2008, p. 127) agree on that a “nation branding strategy can only succeed if it is voluntarily endorsed and agreed upon by a critical mass of stakeholders.” In fact, stakeholders have their own interests and working conditions within different cultural and political contexts; *this can lead to the variation of images and, consequently, different perceptions*. This thesis argues that an audience’s relation to a stakeholder impacts the stakeholder’s branding choices.

5- Nation branding and audience segmentation

The impact of audience on nation branding has been mostly marginalized in nation branding literature. Nation branding has looked at audiences as one enormous group that is mostly granted a passive position in relation to a nation branding strategy; the audiences are passive receivers of a nation brand and they do not have any influence on it. In other words, the different characteristics of audiences such as cultural particularities do not influence the choice of a nation brand. This view is contradicted with marketing branding which takes into consideration the different characteristics of its consumers. The main conceptual contradiction between nation branding and marketing branding is that the first looks at the market as more “*homogenous*” while the later looks at it as more “*heterogeneous*.” For example, “Cool Japan” is a Japanese nation branding strategy that has been designed to address all the global audience. Still, does “cool” mean cool for all audiences? Such strategy is too generic and it addresses all world audiences as one audience. This implies that audiences’ perceptions of “cool” are not taken into consideration. What can be considered as “cool” in Japanese culture, is not necessarily cool within the culture of the target audience. An example of this view in nation branding is Dinnie’s definition of a nation brand as “the unique, multidimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance *for all of its target audiences*” (2016, p. 5). On the other hand, marketing branding has looked at audiences as *different groups* whose needs are to be satisfied; *audiences are not passive* since their needs affect the branding strategies.

Hence, the concept of segmentation is central to the debate. In principle, market segmentation means dividing market into segments of consumers that have similar characteristics. Wendell Smith (1995, p. 64) and Reynolds (1965, p. 107) defined a market segmentation strategy as merchandising to a "heterogeneous market by emphasizing the precision with which a firm's products can satisfy the requirements of one or more distinguishable market segments". Also, in marketing branding, "segments may be chosen based on demographics, psychographic, behavioral or geographic location" (Gichuru & Limiri, 2017, p. 545). In summary, the emphasis of the idea of market segmentation results from that audiences have different characteristics; in simpler terms, a western or American audience have different cultural characteristics than a Middle Eastern audience. Hence, this concept of the relation between market segmentation (and, in other words, audience segmentation) and nation branding is what makes the dispute in nation branding literature.

6- Problematization of market and audience segmentation

The importance of segmentation is to acknowledge the distinguished characteristics of the audiences in impacting nation brands. Actually, if segmentation occurs within the two cases of this thesis, it implies that the audience has impact on nation branding. The two cases that will be studied in this research will supply an empirical evidence on this claim. Also, the anticipated benefit of this concept is to encourage more segmentation strategies in both academic research and in empirical practice.

Nation brand scope and nation brand positioning are two concepts that tackle segmentation of audiences in nation branding literature. These two concepts are borrowed from marketing "*brand Scope*" and "*brand positioning*" (Roll, 2006); (Dinnie, 2016, p. 34). Dinnie claims that "*Nation Branding Scope*" outlines "the industry sectors and target markets in which the nation brand can effectively compete" and it includes "segmentation strategies" for sectors such as tourism, inward investment, education, etc. (Dinnie, 2016, p. 36). There are two points of interest

in this claim. The first is that it segments the market on bases of “industry sectors,” but not on audiences’ cultural identities. The second is that there should be “segmentation strategies” which are based on “segmentation analysis” (Dinnie, 2016, pp. 38-39). Still, this does not go deeper than analysis. In this concern, this thesis contradicts this view; it claims that segmentation should be based on the audiences’ cultural characteristics (not on industry sectors) and that nation branding literature should further include more segmentation literature. Also it contends that understanding the targeted segment (of audience) is one way to achieve a competitive advantage for a nation branding itself. In other words, regional or cultural segmentations for target audiences that have similar characteristics can lead to more efficient nation branding. The other factor is “*brand positioning*”. Positioning is “the act of designing the company’s offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the mind of the target market” (Kotler & Keller, 2006); (Dinnie, 2016, p. 42). This poses many questions such as “if a nation is branding itself, how can it expect the same effect on each on different target audiences?”, as well as, “can nation branding strategies that succeed in one target market succeed in the other?” In fact, they might even have paradoxical effect in certain cases of cultural contradictions between a nation branding strategy and a target audience segment. This contradicts the inclusive view of nation branding that was stated by Dinnie. He claims that business “brands” can focus on one or more segments and alienate the others (Bauer, et al., 2006), (Dinnie, 2016, p. 42), while it is “much more daunting for a nation brand to consider alienating” (Dinnie, 2016, p. 42). For example, a luxury brand car can attract rich buyers and exclude middle class ones, but a nation brand cannot; this explains why nations brands such as Trump’s “America First” has led to a ranking decline (Anholt, 2017). This thesis claims that a nation brand segmentation or modifying a nation brand can solve the debate.

7- The segmented audiences from a public diplomacy perspective

The aim of this section is to justify the use of public diplomacy for understanding the impact of audience within nation branding.

Establishing the relationship between public diplomacy and nation branding

Both public diplomacy and nation branding promote own nation's image for the target audiences. The functional similarities between the two concepts has led some writers such as Gyorgy Szondi to ask for more integration and cooperation between nation branding and public diplomacy "to achieve better synergy" (2008, p. 38). Although there is no consensus on a definition of public diplomacy yet, it can be attributed as having three elements, *those who are being represented, their interests and relations with people* in a country. These elements have been derived from Paul Sharp's conceptualization of public diplomacy as 'the process by which *direct relations with people* in a country are pursued to advance *the interests* and extend the values of *those being represented*' (Sharp, 2005, p. 106). In an approximation of the two concepts of public diplomacy and nation branding, those who are being represented make the whole nation and their interests make the national interests. Although public diplomacy has more focus on building relations with people in a country, the development of social media communication channels, such as Facebook and twitter, has become a new way to both brand a nation and communicate with audiences. On the other hand, from a nation branding perspective, public diplomacy bodies such as embassies are stakeholders that participate in creating perceptions about a nation brand. The empirical example of this thesis is about two Japanese embassies; hence, they are stakeholders that promote Japan's image and, consequently, brand Japan.

Both public diplomacy and nation branding share *the usage of information and promoting symbols in addressing the different publics or audiences* (Tam & Kim, 2019, p. 30). According to Golan (2015) as well as Tam & Kim (2019, p. 30), "nation branding via advertising and marketing is one of three *antecedent* that form the *relationships* between countries and foreign publics (an equivalent to audiences) in public diplomacy. In public diplomacy literature, nation branding is a form of public diplomacy that is "built on information" (Grunig, 1993a); (Grunig, 1993b); (Grunig & Hung-Baesecke, 2015); (Tam & Kim, 2019, p. 30). Public diplomacy and nation branding communicate with the audience through creating symbols which are based on the promoted information. (Tam & Kim, 2019, p. 30). Hence, social media (twitter in this thesis) is a crossing point between public diplomacy and nation branding; it is both information based

and creates symbols for publics. That is, while both Japanese embassies address the publics in their respective countries, they are in fact executing both public diplomacy and nation branding. Nation branding is made of symbols which are the nation brands promoted for the audiences. Both public diplomacy and nation branding interact in promoting these symbols (Tam & Kim, 2019, pp. 30-31); (Grunig & Kim, 2011).

[A public diplomacy perspective on audience segmentation and its relation to nation branding](#)

Tam and Kim (2019) claim that “publics” in public diplomacy- an equivalent to audiences in nation branding- are to be segmented. This claim has come to confront the prior conceptualizations of publics as “global constituents” (Tam & Kim, 2019, p. 28), a view which has been shared with nation branding. Their argument is based on the assumption that “not all foreign publics are the same” and that “they represent a collection of separate public opinions” (Tam & Kim, 2019, p. 28). Furthermore, they contend that “foreign publics need to be segmented and differentiated in order for countries to strategically invest their resources and optimize public diplomacy outcomes.” This holds true for nation branding which regards audiences as one global block of audiences. Therefore, this thesis shares Tams and Kim’s view (2019, p. 28) that not all audiences are not the same and they need to be segmented.

In public diplomacy, Tam and Kim (2019) contend that publics (or audiences) are not passive actors. This concept from public diplomacy is both appropriated to nation branding and central to the research question on the impact of audiences. Tam and Kim (2019, p. 28), as well as Dean and Marina (2005), agree on the difference between publics in public diplomacy and markets in marketing and business. They claim that publics in public diplomacy are active members and are “affected by decisions and behavior” while in in marketing audiences are understood as “as passive audiences accepting messages”. The segmentation of publics comes as a necessity for holding effective programs that do not deem audiences as one group. Grunig goes even further in considering segmentation as dividing a population “into groups whose members are more like each other” (1989, p. 202) (Tam & Kim, 2019, p. 29). In public relations approach, “in order to increase the effectiveness of communication programs, it is essential to divide a population into segments” (Grunig, 1989); (Tam & Kim, 2019, p. 29). On the other hand, nation branding has

initially assumed that a nation brand would work for all the audiences, such as in the case of ‘Cool Japan.’ This assumption has ignored the differences between audiences and attributed them as ‘passive audiences’ that do not impact the promoted nation brands. It considers that a nation branding strategy will work for all the audiences. Nonetheless, the image of “cool” for instance has not proved to be effective for audiences in countries where there are political disputes with Japan such as in the case of Korea; the ‘comfort women’ dispute and the colonial heritage of Japan still prevail over cool.

8- Literature review on nation branding in Japan

The unitary image of Japan

Japan has aimed at promoting a unitary image for all its target audiences. Iwabuchi (2015) has discussed this condition in the context of pop-culture diplomacy. According to him, the “international projections of a unitary national image” has created problems “at the expense” of “cultural diversity within national borders” (Iwabuchi, 2015, p. 420). Also, he considers it as “no further than a one-way projection of Japanese culture” (Iwabuchi, 2015, p. 420). This image is a one-sided process where the audiences represented as passive receivers of a brand. This leads to questioning the legitimacy of Japanese cultural policy in Asian countries and poses another perspective to the debate. Can Japanese cultural policies such as ‘Cool Japan’ work for different audiences in the world? “Cool Japan” itself has been founded on the perception of Japan in the west. For example, Iwabuchi’s claim that “ ‘Cool Japan’ discourse has been capitalizing on the popularity of media culture notably in Euro-American markets as a part of global markets” (Iwabuchi, 2015, p. 422) signals that markets are different and that the main focus of this strategy is to suit the perceptions of the west.

The unitary image and audiences in a globalized economy

The unitary image of Japan is based on the globalized view of audiences. Valaskikvi (2013) considers that the *audiences make one big group rather than segments in a globalized world*. She approaches nation branding with Taylor’s concept of social imaginary and applies it to “Cool

Japan” brand. She limits the role of audience to a component of *a globalized market* that is targeted by the unitary image of Japan. Valaskikvi (2013, p. 489) as well as Aronczyk (2008) and Aronczyk & Craig (2008) claim that “the transnationally circulating practice of nation branding” in Japan takes place in circumstances of global economy. This argument has been built on Anholt’s claims on globalization:

“Today, the world is one market. The rapid advance of globalization means that every country, every city and every region must compete with every other for its share of the world’s consumers, business and leisure visitors, investors... and the people of other countries” (Anholt, 2007, p. 1).

Still, globalization has not proved to eliminate cultural differences between nations (or in other words audiences) which are considered as one globalized market by Valaskivi and Anholt.

Nation brand competitiveness and audience segmentation in ‘Cool Japan’ brand

The practice of nation branding is seen first and foremost as an effort to enhance the nation’s competitiveness (Anholt, 2007); (Aronczyk, 2008); (Aronczyk & Craig, 2012); (Daliot-Bul, 2009); (Kaneva, 2011); (Kaneva, 2012); (Valaskivi, 2013, p. 489). Still, rather than the unitary image with its globalized view, this thesis argues that segmentation of audiences will create a more competitiveness in nation branding. Many writers in nation branding literature have limited the role of nation branding to promoting images and then it is the role of marketers to hold on the process of nation branding. For example, Valaskivi views that market segmentation is not essential to nation branding, but that it comes out of practice and marketing strategies. She claims that creating a New Japan Proposal “tends to focus more on practical measures and marketing strategies” (Valaskivi, 2013, p. 491). Also, she enhances the role of marketers rather than a nation branding theory. Valaskivie states that “many governmental bodies were represented in the Cool Japan Advisory Council, but the main body of representatives consisted of business executives” (Valaskivi, 2013, p. 491). Rather than limiting the role of nation branding and granting the execution of a nation branding strategy to marketers, this thesis claims that more marketing literature needs to be integrated into nation branding literature.

Localization of Japan's nation brand to arguably segmented audiences

Huang (2011) argues the localization of Japan's nation brand to its audience in Taiwan. He sheds light on the cultural policies of Japan on a regional level. The empirical value for of his research in this thesis lies in two implications. Firstly, it studies nation branding on a regional level which is an initial segmentation of audiences, albeit, he uses terms such as "global market" and "globalization" (Huang, 2011, p. 3). Secondly, it discusses the role of audiences in nation branding. What he terms as a "receiving country" is an initial implication of the importance of audiences in the nation branding process; it can be looked at as part of segmentation on a state basis. Furthermore, his argument that "nation-branding is appropriated by a receiving country as a pattern of consumption" (Huang, 2011, p. 3) makes a relevance to the idea of this thesis, since it explains that a receiving country can adjust itself to a nation brand. Nonetheless, this article has not gone as far as to examine the reasons why some parts of a nation brand can't be appropriated. Also, quoting Morley and Robin (1995), he claims that cultural products are *global products* that appeal to people's shared habits and tastes. (Huang, 2011, p. 4). If this claim is to be debated, it is infeasible to define people's shared habits and tastes and make a strategy that suits all of them. Huang's assumptions don't go as far as understanding the impact of audiences' values beliefs and rituals in appropriating a cultural product, albeit recognizing them. Otherwise, utilizing Robertson's (1992) concept of "global localization," Huang claims that it is not a brand that needs to be appropriated to audiences but rather cultural products are appropriated to the taste of a market. Huang (2011, p. 4) and Kraidy (2005) contend that global localization "helps foreign marketers to connect their commodities with local communities." Still, this assumption takes it for granted that a nation brand is already accepted by the audiences of other countries and it is just a matter of which products are to be selected.

The complexity of Japanese nation branding under cultural policies

Japanese cultural policies involve multiple stakeholders that participate in promoting Japan's image. In principle, a cultural policy is the governmental actions to promote the culture of one's country. Both nation branding and public diplomacy aim at promoting Japan's image by implementing own cultural policies. Hence, it is unrealizable to separate Japanese nation branding from its public diplomacy since both participate in promoting this image. In fact,

Japanese branding programs are affected by the multiple stakeholders in public diplomacy *resultant in “incoherent and contradictory policy actions”* (Aronczyk, 2013); (Iwabuchi, 2015, pp. 425-426). For example, “Cool Japan” has come within the discourse of “nation branding” (Iwabuchi, 2015, p. 422) and it is used as a tool in public diplomacy. This leads to promoting different and even inconsistent images of Japan. For example, although with different working mechanisms, “the aspiration of boosting the nation’s brand image” through “the promotion of Japanese media culture” is shared by both MOFA and METI (Iwabuchi, 2015, p. 424). Therefore, it is “hard to make judgements on how media culture result in the success of a nation brand” (Fan, 2010) (Anholt, 2013); (Iwabuchi, 2015, p. 424); (Watanabe, 2011, p. 191). This debate relates to the thesis, since it presents an empirical example of two Japanese embassies that utilize cultural policies for promoting Japan’s image. They promote promoting Japan’s nation brand and practice public diplomacy simultaneously.

The need for “a more entrepreneurial mindset” (Dinnie, 2008, p. 12)

Dinnie (2008, p. 12) draws future paths for nation branding in Japan and he encourages utilizing a marketing mindset. He highlights “the various nation branding activities engaged in by the Japanese government” and explores “potential future paths” (Dinnie, 2008, p. 4). According to him, the success in Japanese nation branding has depended very much on the multiple stakeholders’ collaboration. He suggests three potential future paths for this collaboration (Dinnie, 2008, pp. 11-12). The first path is to have “a more coordinated approach between the different organizations engaged in various components of the country’s overall nation branding strategy” (Dinnie, 2008, pp. 11-12). The second one is “a more entrepreneurial and publicity-oriented mindset” to “be encouraged amongst *Japanese diplomats* as part of ongoing development of public diplomacy strategy”. Thirdly, “Japan is supremely well placed to leverage the soft power potential of food and drink” (Dinnie, 2008, p. 12). This thesis admits the importance of this collaboration, but it goes one step further to ask for more harmonization in nation branding strategies. For example, public diplomacy bodies such as Japanese embassies in this thesis are stakeholders in nation branding strategies and they promote Japan for their local audiences. The nature of their work involves being in direct contact with their audiences and requires different working mechanisms. This results in inconsistency between the images

promoted by them and the ones promoted by other stakeholders such as METI. Furthermore, it implies that even two embassies can promote Japan differently for their respective audiences. Therefore, this thesis suggests more audience segmentation for avoiding this inconsistency. It does not eliminate Dinnie's concept that diplomats should have a more business oriented mindset, but it grants the diplomats a more coherent strategy to work on. The concept of segmentation itself comes from business and marketing literature.

III- Conceptual Framework

1- Introduction

This research aims at understanding how the Japanese embassies in US and KSA promote different images to their respective audiences. It has been hypothesized that it occurs because of the impact of the audiences on the selected nation brand images. Therefore, this thesis uses a comparative design for the two cases and three conceptual frameworks for data analysis. Firstly, nation branding concepts of identity, image and positioning shape the backbone of this research. They make the basic units of analysis that other analyses are built on. They are designed to find the answer to the first sub-question i.e. what the promoted images are. The Japanese embassies promote certain NB-IDs in order to create images within the audiences. Hence, understanding the relationship between these NB-IDs and the audience is vital for understanding differences in images. Second, segmentation concept is used to understand how the audience impact the promoted images. This is related to the second sub-question. It has been hypothesized that impact of audience occurs when each embassy appropriates images to its respective audience. Thirdly, competitive advantage is used to explain the way the images vary when the two Japanese embassies choose particular cultural resources and differentiate them to achieve the competitive advantage within their audiences.

2- Nation brand (identity, image and positioning)

These three elements constitute the basic units of analysis within this thesis. They aim at answering the first research question. Their correlation with the audience is the key factor for finding out the images where the audience has the impact. They are in fact used for both analysis and data sampling. While sampling is based on the images where the audience has impact, analysis is based on understanding the relation between an NB-ID and the audience in the promoted images. Furthermore, variations in images means that the Japanese embassies promote particular NB-IDs to audiences rather than others. If the audience has impact on them, it implies that those NB-IDs, and not others, were promoted because of this impact. Thus, after an NB-ID

and an NB-IM analysis in relation to audience will have been performed, the kind of positioning is discussed.

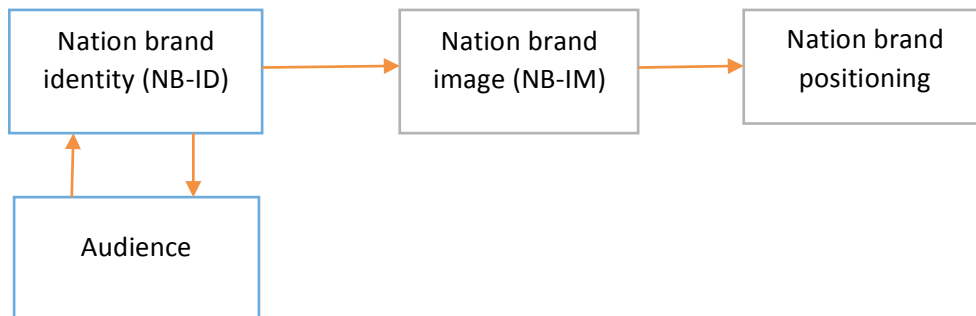


Figure 2: Nation brand analysis and audience impact

Nation brand identity, image and positioning are tools for theoretical reflections. Dinnie (2016, pp. 34-42) has presented a simplified explanation for these concepts that will be used in this research. Firstly, identity is “what something truly is, its essence.” Secondly, image is “how something is perceived.” Thirdly, positioning is “the image or images that occupy a place in the mind of a certain audience”. In the light of these concepts, the gap between NB-ID and NB-IM, has caused a disturbance in the nation branding research (Dinnie, 2016, p. 34). Many nations are perceived by the other parts of the world not as they are truly are (Dinnie, 2016, p. 34). The correlation between the audience and NB-ID in the promoted image can reduce the gap since it narrows the scope down. Here below is a more is more detailed explanation of these three element.

Identity

An NB-ID cannot represent every aspect of a national identity. The task of practitioners in nation branding is to create an NB-ID that contains “selected” elements of national identity (Dinnie, 2016, p. 37). This research will focus on the promoted NB-ID elements for each audience; they form the basis of image variations.

Image

Factors that make the perceived image are various (Dinnie, 2016, p. 38) such as the stakeholders in nation branding and the media. In this research, the Japanese embassies in US and KSA form the images through the projections of NB-IDs in their twitter accounts. This thesis assumes that the practice of both stakeholders (both Japanese embassies) in promoting Japan leads to the segmentation of images. On the other hand, images can have many levels, for example a Swedish company abroad will have both the political image of its country and an image of the Swedish products. This research has limitations in explaining the many levels an NB-IM can project; it needs whole market research for deciding on the different levels of images a nation brand has. It will rather focus on basic explanation of images in relation to audience.

Positioning

Dinnie (2016, p. 42) , as well as Kotler and Keller (2006), state that “positioning is the act of designing the company’s offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the mind of the target market.” It initially means that one group of audiences will have a different version of images than other groups. This research assumes that audiences themselves impact nation branding strategies, and, consequently, images are positioned differently within each audience. Positioning is the key concept in explaining the variations in images produced by both embassies.

Dinnie’s “conceptual model of nation brand identity and image”

This research has questioned how both embassies promote different images for their respective audiences and hypothesized that this takes place because of the audience impact. Hence, it is crucial to find out the identities and images that exist, as well as, the way in which images are formed. For this, Dinnie’s “conceptual model of nation brand identity and image” (2016, p. 41) as in figure (3) will be used for reference in the analysis. Key components from the model are quoted and two identity components are added, namely people and traditional garments. They are utilized as units of analysis and their relation with the audience will be analyzed. Moreover, the *communicators* of NB-ID are limited to “government foreign policy” and “marketing communications” through twitter accounts. Also, the audiences are reduced to the external

consumers of the Japanese embassies in US and KSA. Thus, the analysis will focus more on the identity components and audiences and less on the communicators.

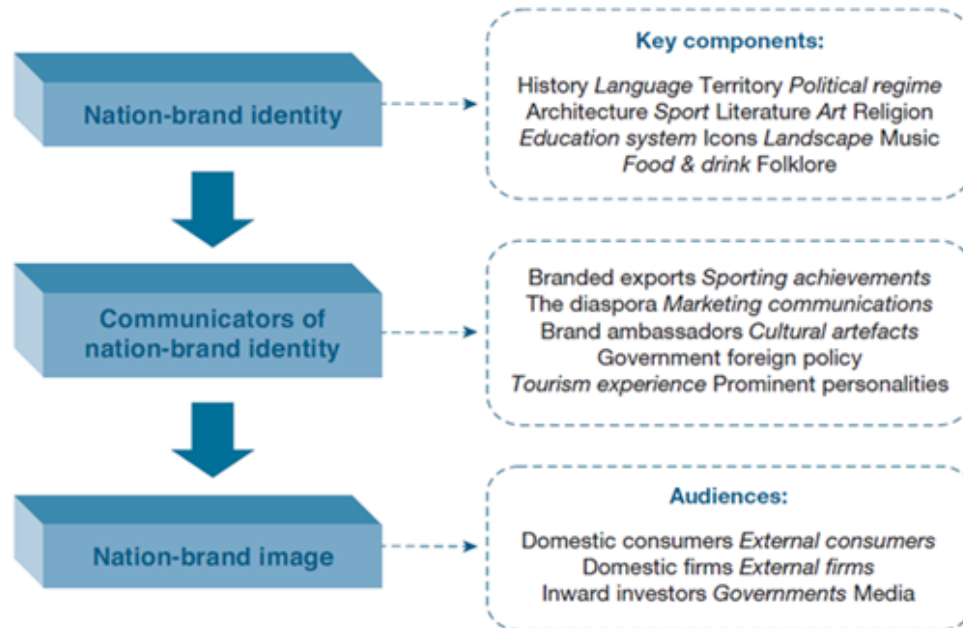


Figure 3: Dinnie’s “Conceptual model of nation brand identity and image (Dinnie, 2016, p. 41).

3- Market segmentation and audience segmentation

This framework aims at answering the second research sub-question. This thesis has hypothesized that the audiences’ impact occurs when each embassy appropriates images to its respective audience. If this hypothesis holds true, it implies that the embassies are segmenting their audiences. Therefore, the cultural particularities of the audience will have impact nation brands. The inconsistency in nation branding emerges when both embassies, as stakeholders in nation branding, segment their audiences while nation branding literature looks at audiences as one big market that is addressed by the unitary image. Achieving more consistency legitimates the demand for more segmentation of audiences.

Segmentation is *the basis for delivering appropriate nation brands* to different audiences who have different cultural characteristics. Smith (1956) presents the first formal definition of

segmentation as being “based on the development of the demand side of the market and represents a rational and more precise adjustment of products and marketing efforts to consumer or user requirements” (Sharma & Lambert, 1994, p. 51). Although this definition can be considered as obsolete, the controversy of re-conceptualizing market segmentation is held within the academic field (Wind & Bell, 2008, p. 240). Many ideas which are central to market segmentation can be extracted from this definition. It focuses on *market segmentation* depending on the *customers’ needs* and it poses *the adjustment of products* to meet these needs. The cultural differences between audiences in nation branding create different needs for different segments. Understanding the specific characteristics of each of the audiences and creating “homogeneous segments” (Wind & Bell, 2008, p. 222) lead to an effective nation branding strategy through customizing cultural products. In contrast to the globalized view of nation branding, this thesis considers that the cultural differences in audiences are still critical for nation branding. Globalization, which can be defined as “a situation in which available goods and services, or social and cultural influences, gradually become similar in all parts of the world” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019) does not eliminate local cultures.

4- Competitive advantage (Differentiation strategy)

This framework aims at answering the third research sub-question. It is utilized to explain the way the promoted images are different. This thesis assumes that Japanese embassies in both US and KSA employ cultural resources that make a resource based competitive advantage within their audiences; thus, different images about Japan emerge. The choice of certain cultural resources for one audience but not of other is based on the audiences’ preferences. Resources result in competitive advantage because they create a core competence for each embassy. (Holmes & Hooper, 2000); (Dirisu, et al., 2013, p. 258).

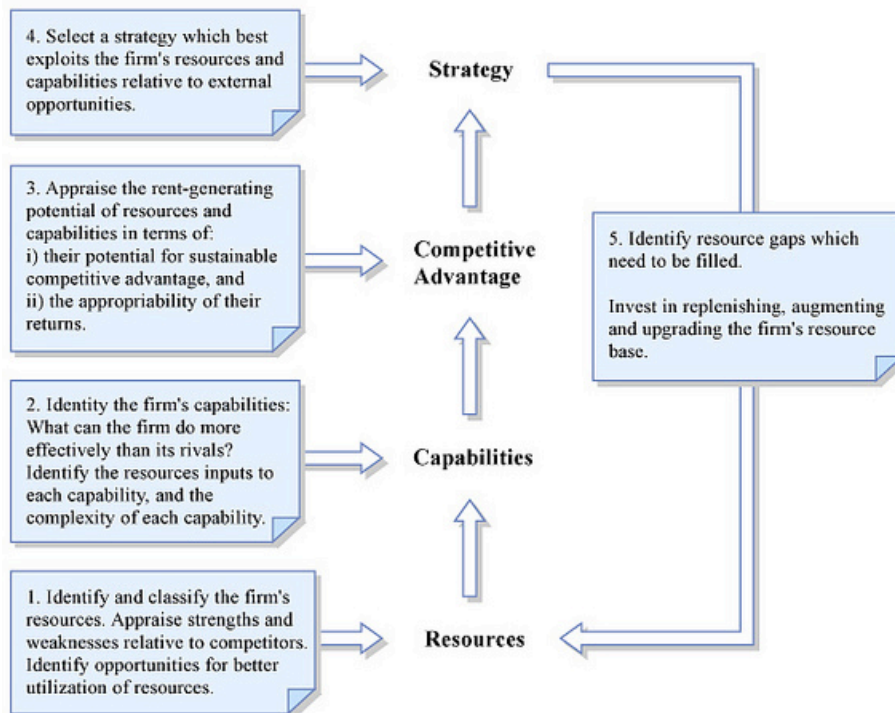
This thesis utilizes differentiation approach of competitive advantage. It is directly connected to brand studies, since a “differentiation strategy is usually developed around many characteristics such as brand image which must be difficult for rivals to imitate” (Moses, 2010); (Wang, et al., 2011, p. 101). Japanese Embassies in US and Japan differentiate their cultural resources, which

are represented by the NB-IDs, to have a competitive advantage in the promoted images within their audiences. Thus, the correlation between the competitive advantage and the audience results in images variations. A differentiation strategy is a competitive advantage because of “its ability to create entry barriers to potential entrants by building customer and brand loyalty through *quality offerings, advertising and marketing techniques*” (Wang, et al., 2011, p. 101). Such barriers result either from a firm’s power or from the resources that a firm has. (Barney, 1991); (Wang, et al., 2011, p. 101).

Differentiation: Resource-based competitive advantage

In this research, Robert Grant’s Practical framework (1991, p. 115) is used for analyzing the causes of image variations.

Figure 4: A Resource-Based Approach to Strategy Analysis: A Practical framework (Grant, 1991, p. 115)



The application level of concepts in Grant’s framework depends on the availability of data found within the twitters content. Firstly, the resources that will be used are primarily the ones which exist within the audience context. For example, Judo, which has a Japanese sport identity is one

of the cultural resources for the Japanese embassies in KSA and US. Secondly, the capabilities, in this research, is mainly concerned with the acceptance or even the popularity of a nation brand within the audience. For example, when there is an institution within the audience that is specialized in Judo, it means that it is accepted and even popular within the audience. Thirdly, the rent generating potential is concerned with the benefits the Japanese embassies can obtain from the used resources and not from others. Fourth, the competitors will be of less focus since it exceeds the limits of twitter content.

IV- Methodology

1- Epistemological and ontological positioning

This research is one step towards developing a theory in nation branding. Therefore, it keeps an inductive approach (Bryman, 2016, p. 16).

Epistemological Considerations

This research utilizes a comparative research method and apply qualitative content analysis to shed light on the way two audiences of two Japanese embassies in KSA and US impact the images promoted through twitter content of both embassies. In other words, it shows how this impact results in image variations. The comparison aspires to *account for facts*” (Durkheim, 1938, p. 139) on nation branding.

Both Saudi and American audiences’ perceptions of Japan’s NB-IM is constructed through the embassies’ participation in promoting images. A comparative design is utilized to find out how images are constructed for both audiences and how each audience impacts these images. Furthermore, an interpretative approach has been used for analyzing the variations in images. The “subject matter of the social sciences-people and their institutions- is fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences (Bryman, 2016, p. 26). The researcher’s personal experience in living in more than one country has formed his conceptions about Japan; there are different social facts about Japan within different countries. Thereof, the researcher attempts to grasp the subjective meaning of Japan images in both USA and KSA; this accords with interpretivism that “requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (Bryman, 2016, p. 26). Nations brand themselves to create desired perceptions within their audiences. Still, if each embassy is promoting different images of Japan for its respective audience, it means that each audience has a different perception of what Japan is.

Ontological Considerations

Ontological issues are related to “whether the social world is regarded as *something external to social actors* or as something that people are in the process of creating” (Bryman, 2016, p. 16) .

How “Japan” is perceived is a social construct of reality; it is an outcome of social actors that create these images. Although objectivist elements are found in this research mainly in utilizing NB-IDs, this research takes a constructivist stand in explaining how different images are being created about Japan. “Objectivism implies that *social phenomena* confront us as *external facts* that are beyond our reach or influence (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). The relationship between external facts and constructed realities make the legitimation for the use of the objectivist elements in this research. The constructivist stand “asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors” (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). NB-IDs are not constant as a result of the impact of audiences and the participation of the Japanese embassies in producing them. These images lead to different perceptions which are “in a constant state of revision” (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). The researcher’s own perception of “*what Japan is*” and “*how Japaneseness is perceived*” is a social construct as he tries to present a “specific version of social reality” (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). These socially constructed concepts are the result of the many social actors that project and perceive them. “Constructionism is presented as an ontological position in relating to social objects and categories” (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). Not only the audiences, but also the Japanese embassies are social actors that take part in creating the reality of the social world. This assumption is built on many studies such as King’s, et al’s (2010, p. 290): Coleman’s (1982), (1990); and Perrow’s (2002):

King et al. “propose two assumptions that underlie their conceptualization of organizations as social actors: external attribution and intentionality” (2010, p. 290).

The interaction of Japanese embassies with their audiences creates the social reality (Bryman, 2016, p. 30).

2- Research method

This research follows a qualitative research method for two cases. It emphasizes “words rather than quantification in the collection of data and analysis” (Bryman, 2016, pp. 33-32). The steps that have been utilized for each case in this research are based on “the main steps in qualitative research” as stated by Bryman (2016, pp. 378-381). Firstly, it frames the research question(s) which are based on the hypothesis that both embassies promote different images on Japan because of the audiences’ impact. Secondly, “relevant site(s) and subjects” are selected. This

research is conducted on the twitter accounts of two Japanese embassies. Thirdly, the researcher has aimed at finding out the images that are promoted by each embassy through its twitter account and that included audience impact. This has been done with reference to nation branding literature. In steps four and five, the found data is interpreted and analyzed in the light of the conceptual frameworks. The sixth step is writing up the findings and conclusions.

3- Research Strategy

Comparative Design and Case Study

This comparative design is essentially a case study for two cases. Bryman (2016, p. 68) states that “a comparative design is frequently an extension of a case study design” in qualitative research. This “entails a detailed and intensive analysis” for both cases in order to find out how differences in the promoted images emerge (Bryman, 2016, p. 60). The comparative design will alienate the similarities between the images promoted by the two embassies, in order to grasp the differences (Bryman, 2016, p. 39). Differences are put under themes in reference to nation branding literature. This is performed by drawing tables within MS Word and classifying the information. Accordingly, the “distinguishing characteristics” of both cases will guide the “theoretical reflections about contrasting findings” (Bryman, 2016, p. 68). This is achieved by utilizing the conceptual frameworks. This research has intended to use cases where there are obvious differences in audiences, primarily cultural differences, a Middle Eastern culture and a Western one. Therefore, each case is considered as a representative or a typical case. ‘The objective with each case is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or common place situation’ (Yin, 2009, p. 48). In such a way, each case ‘exemplifies a broader category of which it is a member’ (Bryman, 2016, p. 62). The rationale behind choosing a representative cases is that “they allow the researcher to examine key social processes” (Bryman, 2016, p. 62). Furthermore, this research can also be considered a cross-national one since it seeks to find out “*social reality in different national contexts*” (Hantrais, 1996) (Bryman, 2016, p. 65). Here below, figure (5) outlines the comparative design of this thesis.

Figure (5)

Comparative Design	
Selection of cases A and B (in relation to contexts)	
Case A: Twitter account of Japanese Embassy in KSA	Case B: Twitter account of Japanese Embassy in US
Data collection Based on nation brand identity and image and where the audience has impact	Data collection Based on nation brand identity and image and where the audience has impact
Results: Themes	
Qualitative Content Analysis	
1- Nation brand (identity, image and positioning)	
2- Segmentation	
3- Competitive advantage (Resource based view)	
4- Discussion	
Conclusion	

In comparing these two cases, a better understanding of nation branding, which is still a concept seeking its theory, will be realized. Theory building, in a comparative design, is one way to “establish the circumstances in which a theory will or will not hold” (Eisenhardt, 1989), (Yin, 2009), (Bryman, 2016, p. 67).

Case Selection

The selection of relevant cases is crucial for the comparative design. This selection is based on three criteria. The first two focus on the similarities between the two cases for separating them from the factors that lead to promoting different images about Japan. The third one is the difference in audiences. This aims at studying the audiences’ impact as in the hypothesis. The first one is the organizational similarity between the two embassies; they work under the supervision of the Japanese Foreign Ministry. Both of them promote Japan’s images as a part of the nation branding strategies through public diplomacy practice. There will be less focus on the organization similarity since it is self-evident and superfluous for the research. The second criterion is the political and economic settings. It has been utilized to ensure that both embassies

work within favorable working environments that will not lead to variations in images because of political or economic disputes. Both USA and KSA are of the six priority areas for Japanese foreign policy (MOFA Japan, 2018, pp. 2-9). Also Japan has cooperation with both countries in peace, security, and economics (MOFA Japan, 2018, pp. 2-9). The third criterion is the difference in audiences based on their cultural settings. Each embassy is branding Japan for an audience with distinct cultural characteristics. For example, the first is a Middle Eastern culture and the second is a Western one. Hantrais (1999, p. 100–101), Esser and Vliegenthart (2017, p. 5) argue that “any similarities or differences revealed by a cross-national study may be no more than an artifact of the choice of countries.”

Data Collection

The data are collected from primary resources which are the twitter accounts of both embassies. Bryman states that social media is an area where virtual documents may be found and subjected to analysis (2016, p. 556). The data collection can be slightly attributed as structured in the way it looks for the differences in images about Japan, but it is principally unstructured because of the nature of unstructured data in the wide range of information the twitter accounts comprise. It, then, “can entail different sorts of approach in terms of how structured or open-ended the implementation of the method is” (Bryman, 2016, p. 10). The process has been achieved through systemic reading of tweets to answer the first sub-question: “what are the images that both Japanese embassies promote in their twitter accounts because of the audiences’ impact?” Any images that are similar in both twitter accounts are disregarded since they are not in focus of this research. Furthermore, Dinnie’s “conceptual model of nation brand identity and image” (2016, p. 41) is utilized to detect the NB-IDs and NB-IMs which are promoted within the twitter accounts.

Sample size

The choice of two embassies with different audiences is an appropriate size for this research. It is suitable for performing an intensive study of both cases. Also, it is appropriate for executing a qualitative research rather than quantitative one, since the differences need to be looked at within cultural reflection. It is sufficient to explain the way the differences in images emerge, in particular within a limited time frame for accomplishing this research (Bryman, 2016, p. 417).

The content of both embassies' Twitter accounts are reviewed. It includes the tweets from January 2013 to 17 Apr 2019 (the date of writing this research). 700 tweets from the Embassy in USA and 250 ones from the embassy in KSA were collected. The choice of dates and numbers of tweets was constricted to data reduction in US case and to the availability of data in the KSA one. In the US case, the number of tweets exceeded 7000 thousand and was reduced to 700 by the date of this research. In the KSA case, the number of the available tweets did not exceed 270 and 250 of them were selected.

Sampling

The data collected from twitter accounts are classified into themes. They are based on the one hand on nation brand concepts of identity and image (4) and on the other hand on the impact of audiences on these images. This results in answering the first sub-question. Although fundamentally based on nation brand identity-image concepts, the themes have evolved through the sampling process (Bryman, 2016, p. 410). The sampling process has stopped after theoretical saturation of themes has been achieved. The basic components that are used within the different themes are NB-ID elements which include “History, Language, Territory, Political regime, Architecture, Sport, Art, Religion, Education system, Icons, Landscape, Music, Food & drink and Folklore” as in figure (4). In this sampling, I have intended to achieve a “*Maximum variation*” to “ensure as wide a variation as possible in terms of the dimension of interest” (Bryman, 2016, p. 409) i.e. I have chosen to include the categories where evidence of dissimilarity can be noticed. All of this accords with Bryman’s claim that “the researcher will want to sample in order to ensure that there is a good deal of variety in the resulting sample” (Bryman, 2016, p. 408).

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis is one of the possible approaches to interpret documents, including virtual documents. (Bryman, 2016, pp. 556-562). It comprises a searching out for underlying themes in the materials being analyzed (Bryman, 2016, p. 563). Therefore, coding is executed to find out *the underlying themes* within both embassies' tweets. This will be applied for both cases

equally. The initial coding contains the NB-ID elements that are found in Dinni's Conceptual Model as in figure (4) such as sport, art etc. These promoted NB-IDs form the basis for finding out the images that the embassies promote about Japan. This accords with Bryman's suggestion of "using social scientific concepts as a springboard for themes" (2016, p. 586). Afterwards, a search for an evidence on the role of audience within these codes is carried out. This results in new codes which involve the audience. Furthermore, for reducing the number of codes, a search for "common elements in codes" is performed to raise the level to "higher order themes" (Bryman, 2016, p. 588). After the final themes will have been found out, the conceptual frameworks are applied to each theme. They aim to explain the impact of the audience on promoted images. Also, this will lead to findings that show how these images are different because of this impact.

The research questions will be answered through the conceptual frameworks that have been discussed in the previous chapter. This is achieved by the following process. The themes will make the different sections of the analysis. Each of them represents an answer to the first research question on the type of images that are impacted by the audience. Each section will have the following parts. *The first one* will show the findings of both cases. *The second part* will present the analysis of findings under "Identity-Image-Positioning" framework. This aims to show how the theme is reached and the results of the analysis. In other words, the findings and interpretation are brought together (Bryman, 2016, p. 565) under this part. This establishes the basis for the next analyses. *Thirdly*, audience segmentation analysis is fulfilled to find out how audiences impact the promoted images. This aims at answering the second research question. If both Japanese embassies appropriate the promoted images to their respective audience, it means that the audiences have impact on them. Furthermore, it implies that both Japanese embassies address segmented audiences rather than one huge audience in a globalized market. This proves that there are differences in the promoted images for each audience. *Fourthly*, resource based competitive advantage analysis is performed to answer the question on the way "these images are different in respect to each embassy's audience." *Fifth*, a discussion is presented at the end of each theme in the light of literature review. Finally, a discussion on image variations is presented under a separate section.

4- Practical considerations

There has been no research on the impact of audiences on nation branding strategies. Also, nation branding is still an emerging field of study where no consensus over a theory has been reached. According to Bryman (2016, p. 36), “if a researcher is interested in a topic on which little or no research has been done in the past, quantitative research may be difficult to employ, because there is little prior literature from which to draw leads.” Hence, a qualitative research strategy has been taken. When such a strategy tries to catch all the images, it can create infeasibility in covering the huge amount of data about one nation or, in this case, two nations, but the in-depth understanding of cases is essential to the research for a better understanding of the concepts. Hence, this method has been used (Bryman, 2016, p. 36).

5- Ethical Considerations

The research has used information taken mainly from official twitter accounts of Japanese Embassies in USA and KSA respectively. Twitter is an open space, but this does not mean that there is no ethical consideration. “The distinction between public and private space on the Internet is blurred and contested” (Bryman, 2016, p. 139) . There has been no claim about the use of information about the use of twitter account. Hewson et al. (2003) suggest that “data that have been deliberately and voluntarily made available in the public Internet domain can be used by researchers without the need for informed consents, provided anonymity of individuals is protected” (Bryman, 2016, p. 139). Also, information on the official website of Japanese foreign ministry are open for public and items that were declared as not-for publishing have been avoided. Still, the sensitivity of the information is under debate (Bryman, 2016, p. 139). The identity of participants and samplings are only used for academic purposes, otherwise, they should not be published for public.

V- Findings and Analysis

Introduction

The analysis chapter aims to show how the Japanese embassies in KSA and US promote different images to their respective audiences because of the audiences' impact. Also, it aims to answer the research questions through conceptual frameworks. The analysis does not only show that the emerging images are different, but it goes deeper to show the way they are different. In simple terms, the differences in images can be taken as the difference in the promoted NB-IDs for each audience. For example, when the Japanese embassy in US promotes Sake for the American audience, the embassy in KSA does not for the Saudi one. Still, this kind of difference is too simplistic since it does not grant an explanation for the way they are different. Also, it does not explain why both embassies choose to promote a cultural product for one audience and not for the other or even for both of them. Furthermore, this kind of explanation dismisses the impact of audiences on the promotion of these cultural products. Both Japanese embassies in KSA and US promote images that can look similar to each other, since they have the same NB-ID, but, in fact, they are different because of the particularities of each audience. For example, as will be seen in the analysis, both embassies promote the national identity element of calligraphy, but it has different images for both audiences.

The impact of the Saudi and American audiences on NB-IDs that was found in the tweets content can be observed under the themes in the following sections. The images that had many NB-IDs in the content have been disregarded since they exceed the research limits.

1- A Japanese NB-ID that has no evident audience impact on the image

The NB-IDs under this theme are wholly Japanese and no evident audience impact can be noticed. They are usually new images introduced to the audience. In fact, this theme is included since it is useful for comparison; an NB-ID that appears here for one audience can appear for the other audience under another theme. For example, Ikebana appears for Saudi audience under this theme, but it appears for American audience under the next one. The contents of tweets have shown many examples.

Embassy in KSA

One prominent example is ikebana which has a Japanese identity of art. A tweet on the 7th of June 2013 introduces this art: “Ikebana is Japanese traditional art of flower arrangement” (Embassy of Japan in KSA). This tweet and other tweets on ikebana do not show an evident impact by the audience on NB-ID. It introduces this art for the audience and such tweets can be attributed as rather descriptive of the cultural product. Another example is cherry blossom. Tweets such as on the 2nd of April 2019 “cherry blossom season in Japan!” (Embassy of Japan in KSA) promote images that describe or introduce the NB-ID where the audience does not have any evident impact.

Embassy in US

Many representative examples fall under this theme such as “manga and anime,” “Origami” and “calligraphy” in art, different kinds of Japanese food and drinks, and traditional dresses such as kimono. The content of these tweets has not shown any impact by the audience, but rather the focus has been on Japanese national identity elements. Manga and anime include Manga awards, calling for manga artists and manga artists’ visits. A tweet on the 11th of February 2019 states that “artist Naoki Urasawa brings his internationally acclaimed manga art to Hollywood for his first North American exhibit” (Japan Embassy DC). Such tweets promote Japanese people and do not show any impact by the audience. Another example is calligraphy. As in a tweet on the 23rd of March 2018, it is presented as a pure Japanese art performed by Japanese calligraphy artists (Japan Embassy DC). This example is mentioned here because it can be compared with the image of “calligraphy” which is promoted for Saudi audience as it will be seen under the fourth theme. The first is presented as a form of contemporary art with music and dance while the other is presented as a traditional one.



23 Mar 2018, calligraphy , Calligraphy takes the stage

At National Cherry Blossom Festival's Tidal Basin ANA Performance Stage

Also, many examples within the “food and drink” NB-ID have been evident. Regardless of the audience’s impact, these tweets have focused on the cultural product itself. Thus, many of them are rather introductory or descriptive of the features of these products. For example, a tweet on the 20th of November 2017 promotes “a great chance to learn about Japanese cuisine” (Japan Embassy DC). Another example is the way Japanese fish is promoted as in a tweet on the 11th of October 2017 which describes the “cutting edge freezing techniques” of fish (Japan Embassy DC). Many examples of food and drink are presented under the “Taste of Japan Awards Event” as in the tweet on the 24th of February 2017 where Japanese fruits were introduced (Japan Embassy DC).

Identity-Image-Positioning analysis:

The identity elements promoted under this theme do not show any substantial impact by the audience. This does not necessarily deny the relation between the audience and the images promoted, but within the content of tweets no fundamental evidence, that can show this relation, have been found. Thus, they have been classified as pure Japanese images that represent Japanese identities regardless of the audience’s impact. Those images can be both randomly or purposely promoted by the Japanese embassies in KSA and US, but analyzing the motives behind selecting these images is far beyond the research limits and the content of the tweets. Still, they make a part of nation brand positioning and the perceived images by the audience.

Audience segmentation analysis:

It is infeasible to perform audience segmentation analysis at this stage, since the relation between the audience and nation brands is not constructed yet. It requires a deeper analysis of the cultural context for each audience that exceeds the content of tweets. Also, this theme is included because it is used as a signboard for comparison. Still, comparing some of the NB-IDs mentioned under this theme with others mentioned under other themes presents a more concrete understanding of these identities.

Resource-based competitive advantage

The resources that make the variance in this research are the local cultural resources that both Japanese embassies have within their audiences and that make the competitive advantage for each embassy within its working environments. Still, as in the identity-image analysis, the local cultural resources that both Japanese embassies have within their audiences are not evident since the relationship between the audience and the nation brands is not established under this theme. This does not contradict with that both Japanese embassies have cultural resources that are not related to the audiences. Examples of these include all NB-IDs that were promoted for being Japanese.

Discussion

The cultural images which were promoted make a form of soft power; they make a form of attraction. Also, since these images do not show an impact by the audience and since they can be considered as the generic ones, they don't contradict with the view shared by nation branding literature that the market is more homogenous. They are images that are promoted regardless of the audiences' different characteristics or preferences. Moreover this theme represents the possibility of applying the "international projections of a unitary national image" that were disputed by Iwabuchi (2015, p. 420).

2- A Japanese NB-ID has a favorable image within the audience

Both Japanese embassies promote NB-IDs that their audiences show a favorable image for. The audiences usually have well-established images of these NB-IDs. This can be observed in the twitter accounts when, for example, the audiences participate in activities that promote a certain NB-ID, when the audiences have well-organized institutions that promote an NB-ID or when popularity of an NB-ID is evident. For example, Judo is a well-developed sport within both Saudi and American audiences because it has well-organized institutions and because it has popularity within the audiences. The audiences are familiar with these images of NB-IDs. Thus, rather than creating these images, both embassies work on boosting or modifying them through their twitter accounts. Also, these images keep their Japanese identities. For example, Judo is taken for granted as a Japanese sport.

Embassy in KSA

The Japanese embassy in KSA promotes NB-IDs that the Saudi audience show a preference for. For example, the tweet content shows that a local organization such as “Saudi ComicCon” (Embassy of Japan in KSA, 2018) holds activities for promoting Japanese art of manga and anime. Furthermore, embassy in KSA promotes the Japanese sports of “Judo” and “Karate” since they are well-developed sports and they have well organized-institutions within the audience. For example, the twitters content shows that the “Saudi General Sports Authority, Saudi Olympic Committee, Saudi Judo Federation” cohost Judo events such as the “Ambassador's Cup of Judo” with the Japanese embassy (Embassy of Japan in KSA, 2019). The content shows similar results for Karate. It is a well-established sport in Saudi Arabia where institutions such as Saudi Karate Federation participate in activities related to this sport. The resulting images out of the audience’s impact do not change their Japanese nature. For example, the Japanese embassy promotes Karate as a pure Japanese cultural product, albeit, the audience has well-organized activities for this sport.

Embassy in US

The Japanese embassy in US promotes NB-IDs that the American audience show a preference for. Representative NB-IDs from the content include the art of Ikebana, the landscape and icon of cherry blossom, the sport of Judo, and the drinks of Sake. For example, the embassy in US promoted Ikebana under many tweets because of the international Ikebana organization and its founder “Ellen Gordon Allen.” A tweet on 15 November 2017 states that Ikebana’s “worldwide expansion has its roots in Washington DC!” and that “Ellen Gordon Allen founded the very first chapter of Ikebana International in DC 60 years ago” (Japan Embassy DC). On the other hand, Japanese cherry blossom is one of the most promoted NB-IDs by the embassy in US. It already exists within the landscape and history of the local American audience. A tweet on the 27th of March 2019 states that “today in 1912, the first 2 of 3,000 Sakura trees gifted from Tokyo were planted at DC's Tidal Basin” (Japan Embassy DC). Another tweet on the 4th of April 2019 narrates the history of Sakura trees in US: “These trees were gifted to the U.S. from the Mayor of Tokyo, Japan in 1912” (Japan Embassy DC). Also, the embassy in US promotes this NB-ID element because of its popularity within its audience. For example, the twitter content shows a part of the audience’s participation in the annual cherry blossom festivals. It can be observed in VIP guests, such as in the visit of Ivanka Trump (Japan Embassy DC, 2017), the competitors for and the winners of the titles of Cherry Blossom princesses, junior princesses and Cherry Blossom queens.



May 23, 2018, Japan Embassy DC (twitter)

the 2018 National Conference of State Societies Cherry Blossom Queen

Equally, sake, in “food and drinks,” is one of the most promoted NB-IDs by the embassy in US. The twitter content shows the activities of the “Sake School of America” as on the 7th of February 2019 (Japan Embassy DC) and the participation of the audience in Sake events as on the 18th of December 2018 “Miss Sake USA,” and “Sake Samurai” (Japan Embassy DC). Judo is

another example that the embassy in US promotes because of the impact of audience. This can be noticed in the tweets on the work of “US Judo Community” as on the 24th of October 2017 (Japan Embassy DC). Another tweet on the 25th of June 2018 mentions that it has long history in Washington DC and it shows “President Theodore Roosevelt training at the White House” (Japan Embassy DC).

Identity-Image-Positioning Analysis

The identity elements promoted under this theme show that Japanese Embassies in KSA and US choose to promote images that are already accepted and assumed by their audiences. The choice of these elements is a solid basis for both fostering and promoting images that will not contradict with the cultural norms and characteristics of each audience. These images are already positioned within the audience; still, promoting these images, in one way, confirms their Japanese identities and, in another way, contributes to positioning and repositioning them to occupy the desired “distinctive place” (Dinnie, 2016, p. 42).

Audience Segmentation Analysis:

The Japanese embassies’ choice to promote these NB-IDs is impacted by the NB-IDs that can have favorable images within their audiences. Each embassy adjusts the cultural products that can be accepted by its audience. This accords with segmentation definition which is based on “a rational and more precise adjustment of products to consumer” (Sharma & Lambert, 1994, p. 51). The choice of these NB-IDs can be observed in promoting the NB-ID elements of manga & anime and Judo & Karate for the Saudi audience and in promoting the NB-ID elements of Ikebana, Judo, Sake and Cherry Blossom for the American audience. The impact of the audiences is observed in the content in three ways. Firstly, the popularity of these NB-IDs within the audiences, such as enthusiastic members of the audience as in the case of Mrs. Ellen Gordon Allen and the cherry blossom queens. Secondly, the audiences’ local institutions that have activities related to a Japanese NB-ID such as in the cases of Judo and Karate. Thirdly, the Japanese cultural elements that are found within the audience such as Cherry Blossom trees in

DC. Many of these Japanese NB-IDs were accepted and had popularity by the audiences even before nation branding literature has evolved.

Resource-based competitive advantage

Both embassies choose the cultural resources that make the competitive advantage for them within their audiences. These resources can be noticed in the different NB-ID elements that were promoted for each audience. The most prominent capability is the acceptance by the audience. This can be noticed in the work of the local institutions, the enthusiastic audience and the Japanese cultural elements that are found within the audience. Example of local institutions include Saudi Judo Federation, and Saudi Karate Federation in the Saudi case and international Ikebana organization and US Judo Community in the American one. Examples of enthusiastic audience includes the participants in the various Japanese events such as Ambassador's Cup of Judo in the Saudi case and Cherry Blossom Festival in the American one. An example of cultural elements that are found within the audience is the cherry blossom trees in DC. The nature of these brand identities which is attributed as Japanese and the acceptance (and even popularity) these images by the audience form a “differentiation advantage” since they “deliver benefits that exceed those of competing products” (Wang, et al., 2011, p. 100) and since they are developed around brand image” which “is difficult for rivals to imitate” (Moses, 2010); (Wang, et al., 2011, p. 101).

Discussion

When both embassies promote NB-IDs that are already accepted by their audiences, they either try to keep or increase Japan’s soft power. Promoting a Japanese identity that has a favorable or popular image within the audience or that has well established institutions is a secure tool for keeping or increasing this power. Both embassies which are stakeholders in nation branding and which practice public diplomacy, boost or modify the perceptions of Japan within their audiences. Furthermore, by prompting images that are accepted or favorable by their audiences, each embassy is in fact promoting different images of Japan. Also, this means that each audience has a

different perception of Japan. This contradicts with the unitary image of Japan that was criticized by Iwabuchi (2015, p. 420) and contended by Valaskivi (2013, p. 491).

3- A Japanese NB-ID has a hybrid image

Both Japanese embassies promote NB-IDs that can be added to the audiences' national identity elements. The resulting images are hybrid ones. The content has shown the following findings.

Embassy in KSA

The Japanese embassy in KSA promotes NB-IDs that are added to the Saudi audience's national identity elements. One example is integrating Japanese NB-ID elements with Saudi women's traditional garment (Abaya). Embassy in KSA introduced Japanese art of origami and traditional garment of Kimono side by side with the Saudi traditional garment of Abaya. In 2016 Abaya competition, Japanese art of Origami was the theme for the Abaya design (Embassy of Japan in KSA). Also, Japanese traditional garment (Kimono) was introduced as a part of the Saudi traditional garment (Abaya) in 2015 Abaya competition (Embassy of Japan in KSA).



April 21, 2016 : Abaya Competition 2016

Embassy of Japan introduced Origami – Japanese Art of Paper folding, which was the theme of inspiration for Abayas designs at this year's competition



April 22, 2015, Abaya Competition 2015

Embassy of Japan opened a cultural booth of introducing Japanese Kimono

Similarly, embassy in KSA promoted the NB-ID of Japanese people with inclusion of the audience's national identity of religion. A video published on the embassy's twitter account on the 9th of September 2018 shows a group of Japanese Muslim pilgrims voluntarily clean out one of the sacred sites for Muslims in KSA during the pilgrimage season (Embassy of Japan in KSA). Other tweets document the journey of Japanese pilgrims from Japan to Saudi Arabia.



9 Sep 2018, Pilgrimage Event

A group of Japanese pilgrims collect the scattered garbage in one of the holy sites in KSA

Embassy in US

The Japanese embassy in US promotes NB-IDs that are added to the American audience's national identity elements. One of the examples is promoting Japanese cherry blossom (Sakura) as an icon of Japanese Landscape through integrating it with Jazz which is a part of the

American music. The Japanese series of Jazz events is presented under the title “Blues Alley Japanese Jazz Series” where Japanese musicians perform Jazz concerts for American audience. A tweet on the 22nd of March 2018 states that “there’s something for every DC-area music fan at this year’s Blues Alley Japanese Jazz Series!” (Japan Embassy DC). It also promotes Japanese Jazz musicians such as “Akiko Yano,” “Eri Yamamoto,” “Yoko Miwa” and “Senri Oe.”



22 March 2018, Japanese Jazz Series

Part of the 2018 National Cherry Festival

Also, Japanese gardens, as parts of Japanese landscape, are promoted within the context of US landscape. Three examples of these gardens are “Zen Garden inside New York's Grand Central Terminal,” “Portland Japanese Garden,” and “Japanese garden in Jackson Park.” A tweet on the 9th of March 2017 promotes a Zen Garden inside New York's Grand Central Terminal for announcing the beginning of “Japan Week NY” (Japan Embassy DC). Moreover, a tweet on the 3rd of August 2018 presents Portland Japanese Garden on its 55th Anniversary Gala as “a symbol of the growing partnerships between Japan and communities across the US” (Japan Embassy DC). Another example tweet on the 15th of April 2019 shows Japanese officials visiting “the Japanese garden in Jackson Park” (Japan Embassy DC).

Identity-Image-Positioning Analysis:

Japanese NB-IDs are perceived as parts of hybrid images. This implies that a Japanese brand image is positioned together with the audience's national identity elements. Also, this process entails that the chosen Japanese NB-ID is appropriated to the national identity within the audience. Thus, it impacts both Japanese embassies' selection of the Japanese NB-IDs to be promoted. For example, the promotion of a Japanese Kimono within the context of Saudi Abaya makes an adequate choice for the hybrid image.

Audience Segmentation Analysis:

Both Japanese embassies in KSA and US select NB-IDs that can be appropriated to national identity elements within their audience in order to create hybrid images. The adjustment of Japanese NB-ID elements with the Saudi national identity elements has been evident in adjusting Origami and Kimono to the Saudi women's traditional garment Abaya and in adjusting the Japanese identity of people to the Saudi identity of religion. Equally, the adjustment of Japanese NB-ID elements with the American national identity elements has been evident in adjusting Japanese cherry blossom "Sakura" to jazz and in adjusting Japanese gardens to American landscape settings. Certainly, the hybrid image, as in the example of Japanese gardens can result out of other different factors such as their location, but this does not discard that the resulting image is a hybrid one and the fact that these images are promoted for American audience and not for Saudi Audience because of their physical existence in US but not in KSA. Hereupon, as in Sharma & Lambert definition (1994, p. 51) of segmentation, the promoted images result from the rational adjustment of NB-IDs to the audiences. Also, this implies that the promoted cultural products should accord with the audiences' cultural characteristics.

Resource-based competitive advantage

Both embassies choose the cultural resources that can have integration capability with their audiences' culture. These resources, which are the promoted NB-ID elements, make the competitive advantage for both embassies within their audiences. Examples from the embassy in KSA include origami in arts kimono in traditional clothes and Japanese people. Examples from the embassy in US include Japanese cherry blossom and Japanese gardens in landscape. The

choice of these NB-ID elements is based on the capabilities to promote them. Under this theme, it is the integration capability of these NB-ID elements with a national identity element within the audience. The strengths of these NB-IDs comes from being perceived as Japanese and from the assets they have. This creates a variation in the promoted images depending on which asset each embassy has within its audience. For example, embassy in US has historical and physical assets that embassy in KSA does not have; this can be evident in the Japanese gardens within American landscape and in their history. For this, a focus on Japanese landscape has been more evident in the US case but not in the KSA one. The tweet on the 3rd of August 2018 shows the Japanese garden as a part of Portland landscape and its history which goes back for 55 years. Finally, the Japanese nature of these NB-IDs, their integration capabilities and the assets they have form a “differentiation advantage” since they “deliver benefits that exceed those of competing products” (Wang, et al., 2011, p. 100) and since they are developed around brand image” which “is difficult for rivals to imitate” (Moses, 2010); (Wang, et al., 2011, p. 101).

Discussion

The Japanese soft power is represented by the cultural policy that was chosen by each Japanese embassy for promoting Japan (Nye, 2008, p. 94). The integration capability is a main characteristic under this policy. Furthermore, each embassy, as a stakeholder has chosen to promote different NB-IDs which can be adjusted to national identities within the audience. Thus, different perceptions of Japanese nation brand are created. This asserts the relation between the promoted NB-IDs and the cultural characteristics of the audience, albeit, the need for more analysis to detect the level of this relation. This differences between the images that are based on this relation highlights that audiences are more heterogeneous. The brand scope, that nation brands can compete in, under this theme, is the audiences’ cultural elements which afford the integration capability of NB-ID elements (Roll, 2006); (Dinnie, 2016, p. 34). Furthermore, the practice of public diplomacy in branding Japan has proved to be more diverse than the “unitary national image” that has been disputed by Iwabuchi (2015, p. 420) as in the example of Muslim Japanese.

4- A Japanese NB-ID has a symmetrical image

Both Japanese embassies promote NB-IDs that are similar to the audiences' national identity elements. This results in symmetrical images. An example is calligraphy in both Japan and KSA. Findings from the content show the following examples.

Embassy in KSA

An example of the hybrid images is the Japanese and Arabic calligraphies. They consist of two identities that are similar to each other; they make a form of traditional art that represents two different cultures. While Japanese calligraphy can be realized as a part of the Japanese culture, the Arabic calligraphy can be realized as a part of Saudi and Arab one. Still, both of them represent separate but similar identities that are presented together as one image. An example of the content is a tweet on the 24th of October 2016 which advertises “Calligraphy Demonstration: Japan and Saudi Arabia” (Embassy of Japan in KSA).



24 October 2016, Calligraphy Demonstration: Japan and KSA

Horse-riding is a national sport in Saudi Arabia and is a part of the Bedouin culture. In fact, it is rather related to the Arabian horse which is deeply rooted in the Saudi culture and history and which has its origins there (Khan, 2013, p. 470). Still, Japan has the same sport, albeit, not deeply rooted in its culture. An example tweet on the 19th of Mar 2016 states that a “race was organized by Riyadh Equestrian Club in cooperation with the Japan Racing Association (JRA)” (Embassy of Japan in KSA). Both Japanese and Saudi horse-riding identities represent a hybrid image under this theme.



April 4, 2015, Introduction of Japanese Culture at the 14th Japan Cup at Riyadh Equestrian Club

Embassy in US

Baseball, which is originally an American sport, is a very popular in Japan and it has become a part of its national identity. For example, Perry (2013, p. 32) considers that “the traditional culture and national identity embodied in Bushido lives on today in Japanese baseball.” It is one of the few sports that were imported to Japan and that obtained a Japanese name (野球) “yakyuu.” According to Japanese National Tourism Organization (JNTO, 2019), “while at first glance” this sport “may not seem so different from the American game, just like convenience stores and Christmas, it has definitely been Japanified.” Baseball is “arguably Japan’s most popular” sport (JNTO, 2019). Furthermore, Japanese baseball has a shared history with US. A tweet on 16th of July 2018 presents this relation; “since baseball was first introduced to Japan by an American professor in 1872, the sport has crisscrossed the Pacific, building friendships wherever it landed” (Japan Embassy DC). Another tweet on the 18th of July 2018 states “learn more about the amazing story of Japan-US baseball ties!” (Japan Embassy DC). The following image is a representation of this similarity.



Jun 12, 2018, twitter, Japan Embassy DC

"A New League" Baseball exhibition event

Identity-Image-Positioning Analysis:

Japanese NB-IDs are perceived as parts of symmetrical images. This implies that a Japanese brand image is positioned together with the audience's national identity elements, not as a part of the image as in the case of hybrid images, but rather as two parallel images. Also, this process entails that the chosen NB-ID element should be appropriated to the national identity within the audience. This impacts both Japanese embassies' selection of the Japanese NB-IDs to be promoted; this selection depends on the similarity characteristics. Thus, it is impacted by the national identity elements within the audience. For example, the focus on promoting Japanese calligraphy is a fit for the Arabic calligraphy national identity element within the Saudi audience.

Audience Segmentation Analysis:

Both Japanese embassies in KSA and US select NB-IDs that are similar to national identity elements within their audiences in order to create symmetrical images. Consequently, the promoted images for each audience are different since they mirror the national identity elements within the respective audience; each embassy is promoting Japanese images that have equivalent images within its target audience. This accords with Sharma & Lambert definition (1994, p. 51) of segmentation in that the promoted images result from the rational adjustment of NB-IDs to the audiences. Also, this implies that the promoted cultural products should accord with the audiences' cultural features. The identity similarity is a factor for choosing the images to be promoted to one audience but not for the other and vice versa. The adjustment of Japanese NB-ID elements is evident in calligraphy and equestrian sports for Saudi audience and in baseball for the American one.

Resource-based competitive advantage

Both embassies choose the cultural resources that have the capability of being similar to cultural elements within their target audiences. These resources make the competitive advantage for both embassies within their audiences are the promoted NB-ID elements. Examples form the Saudi

case are evident in calligraphy and horse-riding and the example from the American case is evident in baseball. A major weakness is that the Japanese identity within them might not be noticed, because of the similarity with audience's identity as in the example of equestrian sports. Still, a major strength is that the similarity with the audiences' national identity elements can make it harder for competitors to imitate as in the case of calligraphy. The imitation probability depends on the nature of the branded identity itself. For example, horse-riding is an international sport; it is easier for competitors to imitate. Another strength is the assets an NB-ID has within the audience. For instance, the history of baseball in US and Japan is an asset that has been used in promoting this sport. The tweet on the 18th of July 2018 is one example that promotes this history. The symmetry and the shared identity between Japan and its audiences make it difficult for competitors to imitate (Moses, 2010); (Wang, et al., 2011, p. 101).

Discussion

Soft power is represented by the cultural policy that was chosen by each Japanese embassy for promoting Japan (2008, p. 94). The similarity is the main characteristic under this policy. Secondly, each embassy, as a stakeholder, has chosen to promote different NB-IDs which can be similar to national identities within the audience. Thus, different perceptions of Japanese nation brand are created. This asserts the relation between the promoted NB-IDs and the cultural characteristics of the audience, albeit, the need for more analysis to detect the level of this relation. This differences between images that are based on this relation highlights that audiences are more heterogeneous. Furthermore, the practice of public diplomacy in branding Japan has proved to be more diverse than the "unitary national image" that has been disputed by Iwabuchi (2015, p. 420) as in the examples of horse riding and baseball.

5- Discussion on image variations

Both embassies promote various and even different images for their respective audiences under four themes. This appears in the focus on one nation brand within one audience but not in the other or in the presence or the absence of a nation brand for one audience but not for the other. The embassies' promotion of nation brands is impacted by the audience in three themes, when

the audiences have favorable images, when a Japanese nation brand can be integrated with the audience's culture or when the Japanese nation brand has similarity with the audience's culture. This implies that a nation brand should be appropriate to the national identity of the audience.

The content has shown nation brand identities that had focus on one audience but not on the other because of the audiences' impact. For example, the American audience's favorable images of ikebana has impacted the embassy's choice of this NB-ID element. Also the historical relation between US and Japan has raised the value of this cultural product. On the other hand, ikebana was of less focus, since the audience had no impact on the embassy's choice in the Saudi case. Another example is "calligraphy". While it is presented as a modern art for American audience, it is presented as a traditional art for Saudi Audience. The focus on this art within the Saudi audience comes from the similarity both Japan and KSA have in this NB-ID. Furthermore, the choice to promote cherry blossom is due to the popularity of this NB-ID within the American audience. Also, the history and the existence of cherry blossom landscape within the American audience's landscape was one more reason to focus on this aspect of Japan. On the other hand, it was presented to the Saudi audience with just descriptive tweets and images. One further example is Judo. It was promoted equally for both Saudi and American audiences, since both audiences had favorable images of this sport that was evident in the work of the different institutions and the participating audiences.

The content has shown nation brand identities that appeared for one audience but not for the other because of the audiences' impact. In food and drink, Sake was promoted for the American audience who had a favorable image of this Japanese product. On the other hand, it was not promoted for Saudi audience because it contradicts the national identity of religion within the audience. The two nation brand identities of sport, namely horse-riding and baseball, appeared for one audience but not for the other. While the first is popular and represents a part of the national identity of Saudi audience, the second is popular and represents a national identity element of the American one. Another example is Muslim Japanese. It was promoted only for Saudi audience, because of the importance of the nation identity of religion for this audience. The example of Japanese gardens appeared only in the tweets promoted for the American

audience, because many Japanese gardens existed within the American landscape but not within the Saudi one.

VI- Conclusion

The twitter content shows that both embassies' choices of the promoted images were impacted by their respective audiences. This is evident in the content under the last three themes, while it is not under the first one. Qualitative content analysis of both embassies' twitter content shows the following results. Both embassies promote NB-IDs that their audiences have favorable images for, that have the integration capability with audiences' national identity elements to create hybrid images, and that have the similarity capability with audiences' national identity elements to create symmetrical images. This has led to variations and even differences in the images promoted for each audience such as in the case of promoting Muslim Japanese to the Saudi audience and promoting baseball to the American one. Consequently, this answers the research question and confirms the hypothesis that the differences in images occur because of the audiences' impact. Furthermore for answering the research question, three sub-questions were posed. Firstly, the researcher looked for the images that audiences had impact on. Secondly, the researcher looked for the way these images were impacted by the audiences. Thirdly, the researcher has found evidence that many of these images either had more focus or were promoted to one audience but not for the other because of their competitive advantage within the respective audience.

Those findings have implied that each Japanese embassy promotes different variations of images to their audiences. Both Japanese embassies adjusted their NB-IDs to their audiences. Consequently, it means that the audiences are segmented. Those two embassies brand Japan and practice public diplomacy simultaneously. The role of public diplomacy in nation branding has been evident; this adds to the complexity of executing a nation branding strategy. Anholt's and Dinnie's agreement on that a "nation branding strategy can only succeed if it is voluntarily endorsed and agreed upon by a critical mass of stakeholders" is contradicted because of the working mechanisms of those stakeholders. Thus, more segmentation can reduce the inconsistency between the images promoted by the stakeholders. Still, the level of segmentation is debatable. It can be somewhere in between a fully globalized market and a country level segmentation, for example a regional one. Still, it should take into consideration the cultural particularities of the audiences. This pushes forward the research within nation branding

literature to include more literature on segmentation and design more effective strategies. The results of this research accords with Iwabuchi's criticism of the "unitary national image." Furthermore, the audience is not only a passive receiver of a nation brand, but it impacts the embassies the choice of which nation brands to promote. The audiences' national identity elements have proved to affect these choices. Finally, the view of nation branding literature that it is "blend of elements" for all the "target audiences" and that was stated by Dinnie can be noticed only under the first theme of analysis. It is when a Japanese NB-ID has no evident audience impact on the image. Still, this makes only a part of the promoted images. This can be a part of nation branding, but it does not represent the whole nation branding literature.

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