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Article

Country branding research: a decade's systematic review

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Country branding research: a decade's systematic review

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ABSTRACT

The concept of country branding, also referred to as nation or place branding, involves the creation and management of a nation's image and products to promote various aspects of its identity. This study conducted a systematic review of country branding studies based on articles published between 2010 and 2020. A total of 59 papers were obtained from electronic databases such as Scopus, search engines like Google Scholar, and publishers including Taylor and Francis, Emerald, Elsevier, and Wiley online, using a specific search criterion. Of the 59 articles, only 44 met the inclusion criteria and were included in this review. The results were organised using the theory, context, characteristics, and methods (TCCM) organising approach for systematic literature reviews. The study revealed two dominant research themes: 'national branding campaign' and 'country of origin (COO)'. Most studies did not use any specific model and the qualitative method was the dominant research method used. The findings of this study provide a roadmap for understanding the literature on country branding and offer directions for future theory building.

IMPACT STATEMENT

The concept of country branding emerged as a way for countries to showcase their identity and appeal to tourists. Specifically, positive worldwide perceptions can be created by country branding, which in turn encourages exports and draws in visitors, investors, and new residents. Most importantly, nation branding persuades other actors to accept and adopt certain thoughts and behavior through the use of reasoning or argument. This research examines the literature on the topic of country branding, also known as nation branding, from 2010 to 2020. The study's overarching goals are to advance scholarship on country branding and to inform branding efforts in different nations. With the themes that have been identified in this study, this research has the potential to better inform policymakers and practitioners on the nature of country branding. The importance of a nation's brand was emphasized as a major factor for governments to think about.

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SUBJECT

Technology; Computer Science; Management of IT; Social Sciences; Economics, Finance, Business & Industry; Business, Management and Accounting; Marketing; Marketing Communications; Marketing Management; Retail Marketing; International Business; Research Methods in Management; Strategic Management; Tourism, Hospitality and Events; Hospitality; Marketing Communications; Tourism; Tourism Marketing

1. Introduction

International marketing has grown into a complex and multifaceted discipline that encompasses a broad range of topics. This field is closely related to the broader subject of international business, which evolved from its initial focus on export operations and marketing to cover a wide range of issues. Prior international marketing studies have typically explored themes such as buyer behaviour, marketing strategy, product/brand policy, and external environmental variables (Donthu et al., 2020). The discipline has moved through a stage of development characterised by the maturation of its subject matter. According to Samiee and Chabowski (2012), topics such as internationalisation, marketing strategy, performance, and relationship marketing have continued to be of interest to academics; however, in recent years, themes such as consumer behaviour, consumer hostility and ethnocentrism, country branding, and

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destination branding have gained greater significance. The field has expanded beyond its origins in international trade to address a variety of concerns, with branding issues including country branding becoming increasingly prominent. Indeed, country branding has been the focus of increasing research in recent years.

The term 'country branding' is often used interchangeably with 'nation branding' (Dinnie, 2016; Rasmussen & Merckelsen, 2012). According to Anholt (2005), national branding refers to a country's identity, as perceived by an international audience. Other researchers, such as Mihalache and Vukman (2005), define country branding as the use of a country's image, products, and attractiveness to promote various aspects of a country's identity and image to appeal to tourists and foreign direct investors. Bigi et al. (2011) view country branding or nation branding as the primary tool marketers use to differentiate products and services. As cited in Bigi et al. (2011), the American Marketing Association defines a brand as a name, symbol, design, sign, or a combination of these terms used to identify the goods and services of a seller in a competitive environment. Successful brands often create value for consumers and investors in the form of brand equity, which includes intangible assets such as customer preference, performance, social image, and trustworthiness as well as more tangible assets such as financial gains appraised from increases in firm value (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). Consumers attach emotional value to a product or service in their country (Shimp et al. 1993). Hence, a nation's brand may either add or subtract perceived value from a purchase (Bigi et al., 2011).

The promotion of 'country branding' is a vital aspect of many nations' efforts to establish effective governance and promote sustainability through the development of guidelines for environmentally friendly business practices, compliance, and sustainability rules (Frig & Sorsa, 2020; Varga, 2013). This form of branding serves as a valuable platform for nations to shape and influence their public image and contend with other countries in the global marketplace (Gudjonsson 2005). Of particular importance is the ability of country branding to persuade other stakeholders to adopt specific behaviours and beliefs based on rational arguments or evidence (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). Nation-branding also has the power to create a sense of national identity for domestic audiences by providing a tangible representation of their country's culture, values, and history (Kaneva, 2011; O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2000). For international audiences, a strong country brand can enhance a nation's soft power, boosting its credibility, political influence, and ability to form strategic partnerships (Fetscherin & Toncar, 2010; Kaneva, 2011). Specifically, country branding can stimulate exports, attract tourists, investors, and immigrants, and create a positive international reputation (Fetscherin & Toncar, 2010; Stock, 2009). Given the numerous benefits associated with country branding, it is unsurprising that countries invest considerable resources in this area (Fetscherin & Toncar, 2010; Kaneva, 2011; Merckelsen & Rasmussen, 2015). Governments also rely on data from country brand indices to inform their decision-making processes (Merckelsen and Rasmussen, 2015).

In recent years, country branding has garnered significant attention as a critical element of public diplomacy and academic research (Varga, 2013). Despite the growth and impact of country branding, academic studies on this topic are still in their initial stages (Sun et al. 2016). To advance the field, a systematic approach to categorising the various contributions to country branding research is necessary. However, efforts to create a comprehensive and all-inclusive body of knowledge on this subject have been inadequate. This review aims to increase the comprehension of country branding by recognising the theories, methods, frameworks, and techniques used by prior studies on the topic. To understand the goal of this review, three specific objectives were set: (1) to identify the themes discussed in country branding research, (2) to identify the research methods used in country branding research, and (3) to identify areas for future research regarding country branding research. This approach was adopted because it helps both researchers and practitioners to gain an exhaustive overview of current research on country branding. Moreover, it evaluates the progression of knowledge in the field of country branding and reveals understudied and emerging areas. It aims to identify the themes, relationships, and characteristics discussed in country branding research, recognise the methods employed in country branding research, determine the areas and contexts that warrant further exploration. Furthermore, it provides information on the year of publication, level of analysis, and models and frameworks utilised.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The methodology section shows the process that was applied in carrying out this systematic review. It also touches on the inclusion and exclusion criteria

for the selection of papers that were used in the final analyses. The next section presents and discusses the results of the study. This is followed by discussion on directions for future research. The final section concludes presents the limitations and recommendations for future research in this field of study.

2. Methodology

A systematic and structured approach was employed to identify the relevant articles for the literature review. Initially, academic databases were selected, and relevant papers were extracted using specified keywords. Subsequently, the papers were scrutinised to ensure that only related journals were included, thereby avoiding exclusion of pertinent or relevant papers. The TCCM framework for conducting domain-based reviews (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019) was used as the organising framework for this systematic review. Theories refer to the diverse theoretical perspectives employed to elucidate the linkages between constructs, while context pertains to the research setting. Characteristics relate to the elements of a construct and its relationship with other variables, and methods encompass the specifics of the research design, approach, and analytical tools. This framework was chosen because of its comprehensibility and versatility in enabling researchers to identify and organise the relevant details of theories, data sources, journals, contexts, themes, and methods (Paul et al., 2023). In addition to the conventional dimensions of the TCCM framework, the authors also assessed trends in yearly publications, levels of analysis, and publication outlets to provide a more comprehensive view of the literature.

2.1. Data collection

The search for articles was limited to publications published between 2010 and 2020, with a focus on journals. Consequently, other document types such as books, theses, magazines, conference proceedings, notes, and reports were excluded from the review process. Data were obtained from the Scopus and Web of Science databases, which contain the most popular journal quality lists and spans across multiple disciplines. This enabled researchers to access high-quality journal articles.

Articles were also retrieved from publishers such as Emerald, Elsevier, Wiley, Springer, and Sage, as well as from search engines such as Google Scholar. Google Scholar was selected because it quickly indexes a wide range of scholarly publications and is freely accessible (Paul et al. 2021). The search was limited to papers containing the keywords 'country branding' OR 'nation branding', which are common terminologies in national branding. We selected these two keywords to ensure manageability. The figure below shows the frequency and trends of publications related to country branding. Articles were manually examined to identify relevant contributions, and after removing duplicates, 44 relevant papers were obtained.

2.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

This study was restricted to articles published between 2010 and 2020. The authors opted for this time-frame for several reasons. First, the systematic literature review aimed to synthesise current evidence on country branding, and thus, limiting the search to this period was necessary. Second, country branding is a rapidly evolving field and research findings can quickly become outdated. By limiting the search to a 10-year range, the study ensured that it focused on the more recent literature. Third, limiting the review to a 10-year range allowed for timely completion of the study. Finally, older articles may not accurately reflect current issues, technologies, or practices, which could limit the generalisability of the findings.

Furthermore, only papers with full-text in English were considered. The inclusion of journal articles was based on their rigorous peer-review process compared with other document types, such as conference papers, books, book chapters, reviews, editorials, and doctoral theses (Herrera-Franco et al., 2020). Additionally, only English-language journal articles were considered because English is the most widely used language in scientific publications (Cisneros et al., 2018). This study excluded duplicate studies from the same study.

2.3. Data synthesis

The primary aim of this stage was to develop extraction forms that accurately captured the information from the selected papers. Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and words were utilised to integrate the relevant data into various categories, including trends in publication, research themes, methods and theories, level of analysis, countries, and publication outlets.

3. Findings and discussions

The subsections presented in this section are theories, research contexts, characteristics, methods, publication outlets, level of analysis, and publication trends.

3.1. Underlying theories

To gain a comprehensive understanding of country branding, we conducted a review of the theoretical foundations employed by the authors in their studies. As depicted in [Figure 1](#), the theoretical underpinnings of these studies encompass consumer intentions, projection of a particular image, social identity, social influence, and social interaction. A detailed analysis of the papers revealed six fundamental lenses serving as guidelines for conducting the studies. These lenses include the 'Product-Country Image (PCI) Framework', 'Categorization Theory', 'Country Branding Framework', 'Bourdieu Sian Theory', 'Theory of Reasoned Action', and 'Conceptual Model'. Studies that did not utilize any theoretical framework were classified as 'Not applicable'. It is worth noting that most of the studies, amounting to 24 (54.5%) papers, did not employ theories. Conversely, 14 (31.8%) studies utilised conceptual models. The remaining studies used theories such as the 'Product-Country Image (PCI) Framework', 'Categorization Theory', 'Country Branding Framework', 'Bourdieu Sian Theory', and 'Theory of Reasoned Action'.

For instance, Mody et al. (2017) leveraged the Product-Country Image (PCI) framework to develop a model to examine tourists' loyalty towards responsible tourism operators by integrating two streams of literature. Similarly, Sun et al. (2016) utilised the country branding framework to respond to the call for

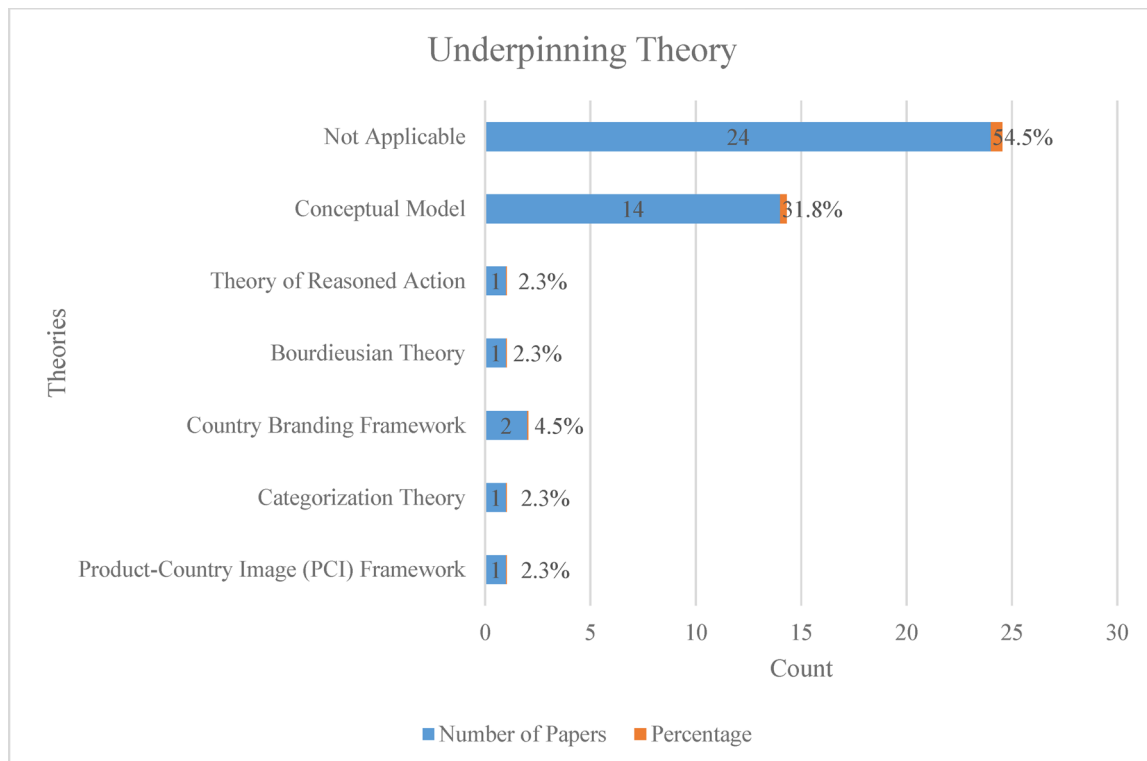


Figure 1. Theoretical foundations for the studies.

increased research on how countries can employ their institutions and resources to enhance their globalisation efforts. They specifically investigated the interrelationships between country institutions and resources, country image, and exports, based on institutional theory and resource advantage theory. However, despite the prevalence of the traditional Product-Country Image framework and related concepts such as the country branding framework, no theoretical perspective has gained dominance. There is a notable lack of a clear conceptualisation of country branding, leading to the proliferation of numerous divergent theoretical perspectives that originate from diverse disciplines, including psychology and marketing.

3.2. Context

The studies included in this research were categorized based on their geographical context, which was referred to as the 'Geographical Context of the Study'. The results shown in [Table 1](#), indicated that most of the studies were conducted in multiple countries and were classified as 'Cross-Country', with China, Korea, Denmark and Finland, Romania and Bulgaria, and the United States, the United Kingdom, and Spain. Studies that did not focus on a specific country were classified as 'Not applicable', while the remaining countries were identified. In the case of the three leading countries, 10 (22.7%) were classified as cross-country, six (13.6%) were not applicable, and four (9.1%) were from India. However, there is a noticeable lack of literature on the African context. Many studies have been conducted on emerging and developing markets in Asia. Nevertheless, emerging markets differ significantly in terms of their characteristics, culture, and perceptions. Therefore, the scarcity of literature on other geographical contexts represents a significant limitation of existing studies as it does not account for potential differences in geographical contexts, which may limit the generalisability of the findings.

3.3. Characteristics

The primary objective of this section is to investigate the knowledge landscape of country branding using research themes. The following themes were identified: factors affecting branding image, renaming/rebranding, talent retention, public diplomacy, consumer learning of brands, luxury branding, international marketing, internationalisation, authenticity of brands, football marketing, purchase intention, soft power, online engagements, competitive advantage, branding strategy, brand documents and campaign artefacts, national branding campaigns, country of origin (COO), and cultural identity. Additionally, a theme called 'general' was included, which represents articles that do not relate to any specific research theme but aim to provide an overview. As shown in [Table 2](#), the dominant themes were national branding campaigns and country of origin (COO), with eight (18%) papers each, followed by branding strategy and the theme categorised as 'general', with five (11%) papers each. For instance, Brodie and Benson-Rea (2016) provided a strategic perspective that integrates extant views of COO branding based on identity and image with a relational perspective based on a process approach to developing collective brand meaning. Therefore, given the significance of COO as a theme for study by many researchers in the field of country branding, it can be inferred that most scholars are interested in exploring the places where goods are made, grown, produced, or from which services are supplied. Although the research identified various conceptualisations of country branding, it also found evidence that country-of-origin perceptions have a significant influence on consumer behaviour.

3.4. Methods

The analysis of the studies included in the study revealed six distinct methodologies: qualitative, quantitative, mixed-method, systematic reviews, bibliometric reviews, and conceptual studies. Of these, qualitative methodology was the most used, accounting for 21 (48%) studies, followed by quantitative methodology with 16 (36%), mixed method with seven (17.9%), systematic reviews with two (5%), and bibliometric reviews and conceptual studies with one (2%) each. These findings indicate that most of the studies utilised a quantitative methodology, followed by a qualitative approach. Tiberghien and

Table 1. Country context in which the studies were conducted.

Country-specific focus	Number of papers	Percentage
United States of America	1	2.3%
Finland	2	4.5%
Kazakhstan	1	2.3%
United Kingdom	2	4.5%
China	3	6.8%
Russia	1	2.3%
Malaysia	1	2.3%
Ghana	1	2.3%
Italy	2	4.5%
Korea	1	2.3%
Pakistan	1	2.3%
Poland	1	2.3%
Denmark	1	2.3%
India	4	9.1%
Cross-Country	10	22.7%
Sweden	2	4.5%
New Zealand	1	2.3%
Columbia	3	6.8%
Not Applicable	6	13.6%
TOTAL	44	100.0%

Table 2. Emerging themes.

Theme	Number of Papers	Percentage
Factors affecting branding image	1	2%
Renaming / rebranding	1	2%
Talent retention	1	2%
Public diplomacy	1	2%
Consumer learning of Brands	1	2%
Luxury branding	1	2%
International marketing / Internationalization	2	5%
Authenticity of brands	1	2%
Football marketing	1	2%
Purchase intention	2	5%
Soft Power	1	2%
Online Engagements	1	2%
Competitive Advantage	1	2%
Branding Strategy	5	11%
Brand documents and campaign artefacts	1	2%
National Branding Campaign	8	18%
Country of Origin (COO)	8	18%
Culture Identity	2	5%
General	5	11%
Total	44	100%

Garkavenko (2013) employed a qualitative approach in their exploratory study to record and evaluate the perceptions of community members, policymakers, and tourism developers regarding the authenticity of eco-cultural tours in Central Kazakhstan. This study aims to understand how authenticity can contribute to Kazakhstan's position as a tourism destination and strengthen its brand equity in the international tourism market. These findings suggest that conventional research approaches are commonly used in country branding research. However, there are opportunities to incorporate sophisticated methods, such as sentiment analysis and text mining, into country-branding studies.

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of studies based on the research methods employed.

3.5. Trend in Yearly publications

The classification of papers by year of publication indicated a declining trend in the number of publications over the past decade (2010-2020). Specifically, 2010 had the lowest number of publications, while 2016 and 2018 had the highest number of publications. The number of publications during this period varied between three and four. However, it is important to recognise that the papers utilised in the analysis were collected until November 2020, resulting in an increase in the number of papers in December of that year. Figure 3 shows the number of papers published per year.

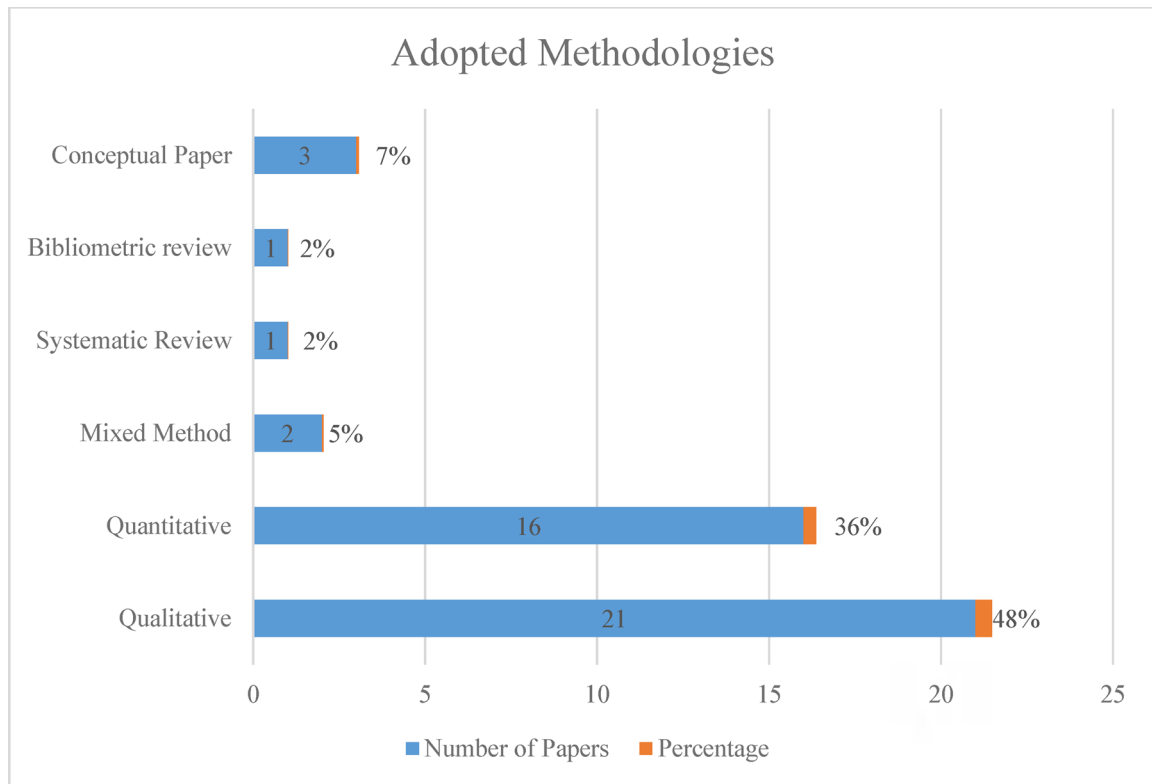


Figure 2. Classification of papers based on the research methods that were used.

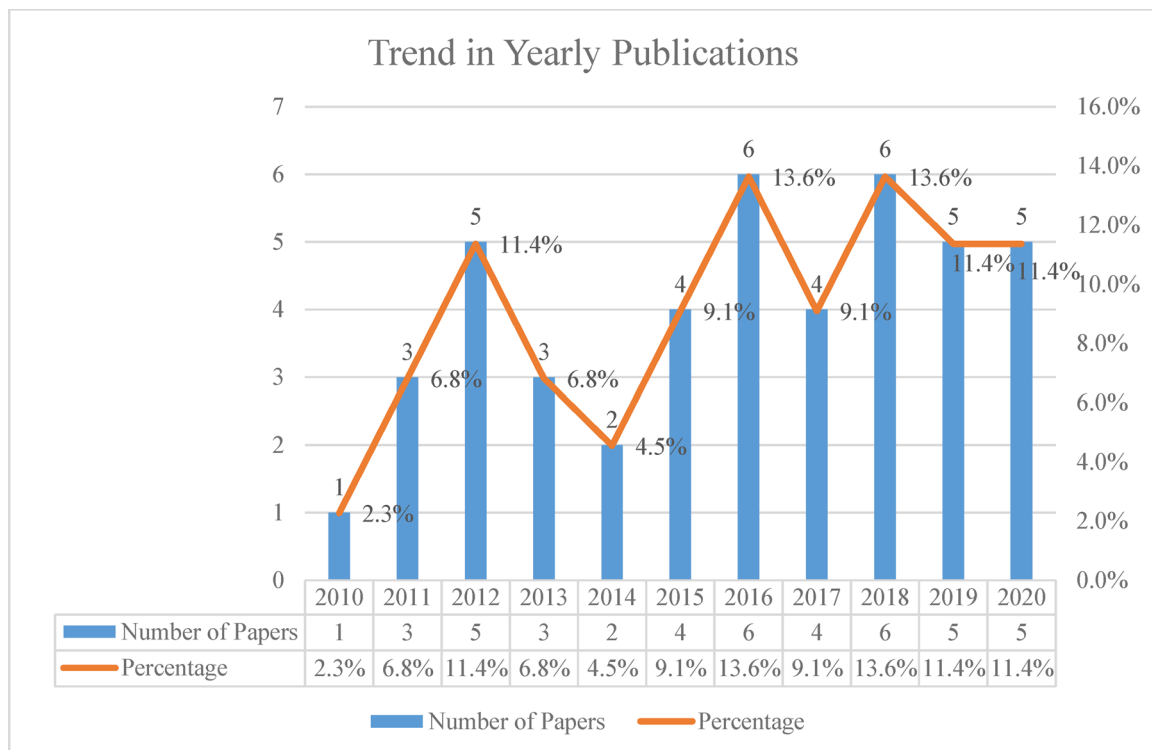


Figure 3. Trend in Yearly publications.

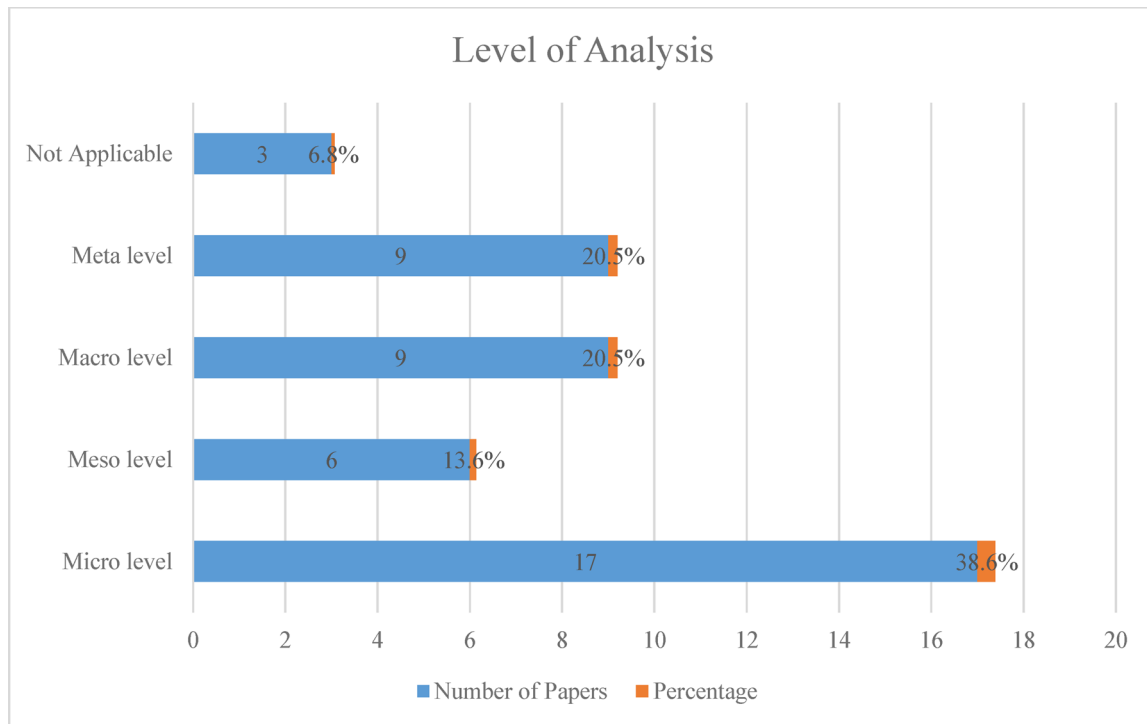


Figure 4. Levels of analysis in country branding research.

3.6. Level of analysis

The classification of the studies revealed four levels of analysis, as shown in [Figure 4](#). These levels comprised micro (individual level unit of analysis), meso (organizational level unit of analysis), macro (national or country-level unit of analysis), and meta (regional, cross-country, or global level unit of analysis). As illustrated in the figure, the majority of the papers, 17 (38.6%) were micro-level papers. For instance, Che-Ha et al. (2016) investigated the elements of country branding from the perspective of a country's citizens at the micro level. Macro- and meta-level papers comprised nine (20.5%) papers each. Six (13.6%) papers were classified at the meso level. The remaining three (6.8%) papers were categorised as 'Not Applicable' and could not be assigned to any of the four previously mentioned units of analysis.

3.7. Publication outlets

This research sought to determine the journals in which the articles were published, and the top ones identified were the *European Journal of Cultural Studies* and *International Marketing Review*, with three papers (6.8%), followed by the *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, *Asian Marketing Journal (AMJ)*, *Journal of Business Research*, and *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, each with two papers (4.5%). The results are presented in [Table 3](#). It is not surprising that the *European Journal of Cultural Studies* and *International Marketing Review*, as well as the *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, are major outlets for authors to publish their work given the nature of the topic, which focuses on country and cultural identity, and the observation of tourism across international jurisdictions.

4. Identified gaps for future research

The research papers that have been evaluated reveal several areas that require further investigation by future researchers. In this section, these gaps are examined and discussed in relation to the four themes identified. This analysis will be beneficial in directing future researchers to study country branding. [Table A1](#) in the appendix summarizes the findings and research gaps in the papers reviewed.

Table 3. Publication outlets.

Name of Journal	Total	Percentage
International Marketing Review	3	6.8%
Journal of Product & Brand Management	1	2.3%
Journal of Consumer Behaviour	2	4.5%
Communication, Culture & Critique	1	2.3%
Journal of Public Affairs	1	2.3%
Business & Society	1	2.3%
Philosophy & Social Criticism	1	2.3%
Journal of Micromarketing	1	2.3%
East European Politics and Societies	1	2.3%
Journal of Vacation Marketing	2	4.5%
European Journal of Cultural Studies	3	6.8%
International Journal of Cultural studies	1	2.3%
Global Media and China	1	2.3%
Journal of International Marketing	1	2.3%
Journal of Destination Marketing & Management	1	2.3%
Journal of Business Strategy	1	2.3%
European Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation	1	2.3%
Journal of Global Marketing	1	2.3%
Marketing Intelligence & Planning	1	2.3%
Journal of Brand Management	1	2.3%
Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ)	2	4.5%
Journal of Business Research	2	4.5%
Tourism Management Perspectives	1	2.3%
Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences	1	2.3%
Procedia Economics and Finance	1	2.3%
Educational Practice and Theory	1	2.3%
Business History	1	2.3%
Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research	1	2.3%
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	1	2.3%
Korea Observer	1	2.3%
Competitiveness Review: An International Business Journal	1	2.3%
Journal of Place Management and Development	1	2.3%
Journal of Marketing for Higher Education	1	2.3%
The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research	1	2.3%
Tourism Planning & Development	1	2.3%
Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal	1	2.3%
Total	44	100.0%

4.1. Theories

Regarding conceptualising country branding, Brodie and Benson-Rea (2016) presented a strategic perspective that integrates prevailing views on COO branding, which are rooted in identity and image, with a relational perspective grounded in a process-based approach to developing collective brand meaning. Although their study provides empirical evidence to support the proposed theoretical framework, it is limited to a specific industry within a country and does not encompass the national branding of the entire country. Therefore, the authors suggest that further research is needed to explore the application of this framework to country branding. They proposed that this could be achieved through a case study that focuses on the 'New Zealand story' and the shift from branding based on identity and image to collective branding processes that facilitate the co-creation of meaning within New Zealand's industries and export market networks. Moreover, the authors recommend conducting research to develop a set of comparative country case studies.

4.2. Exploring other country context studies and populations

Further research could explore other contexts, including corporate branding, which provides a strategic perspective for an enterprise and serves as an umbrella brand for its product brands (Balmer & Gray, 2003). Vecchi et al. (2020) also proposed a framework suitable for assessing how a nation-branding campaign could promote cultural identity. They called for future research that relies on rigorous research into branding to be effective and achieve the desired outcome. Their study focused only on Colombia; therefore, to fully assess the robustness of their proposed framework, it would be useful to replicate the analysis across a broader range of countries and address a broader range of polarisation issues. He et al. (2020) also examined public opinion on China, as reflected by the questions and answers on social media using content

analysis. However, their study focused on only one platform and the subjects were limited to one country. They suggested further studies that examine the condition of other social media platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) and the use of countries other than China for comparative analysis. Williams et al. (2012) explored the application of the renaming process model, which illustrates the key components that impact the organization brand renaming process, in the context of the renaming of the African Higher Educational Institution (HEI) Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). However, they suggest the need to collect relevant data from all stakeholders in various African countries to explore renaming efforts that can strengthen brand equity within those contexts.

Exploration of the branding strategies employed by countries in conflict warrants further investigation. One study that has shed light on this issue is Lim et al. (2022), who examined the impact of the Russia-Ukraine War on businesses and society. The authors find that brand associations play a crucial role in understanding the effects of war on business. They observed that several nations engaged in corporate social responsibility initiatives to enhance their brand image by supporting the country that is being invaded or dissociated from the invader through divestment. This finding suggests that maintaining a positive brand image is crucial during a crisis. Future research should examine the implications of these activities for both businesses and consumers.

4.3. Characteristics

The recent trend of de-internationalisation in global businesses warrants further investigation, particularly in relation to its association with country branding. Although there is extensive literature on internationalisation, there is a scarcity of research on country image in the context of de-internationalisation, and the defining acts and characteristics of such acts are not well understood. Therefore, it is crucial for future studies to address this knowledge gap.

The global business environment has become increasingly complex, volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, posing challenges for firms, and prompting them to evaluate and adopt devolutionary measures in their global operations, such as overseas divestment and export withdrawals. This can occur in a specific foreign market, such as the China-US trade war, or across international markets, such as the border closure and industry shutdown caused by COVID-19. Therefore, it is important to assess how de-internationalisation affects brand management.

Future studies can explore how nation-branding impacts innovative marketing plans in the context of major crises and examine B2B trajectories in relation to brand image problems during such crises. This can provide valuable insights into the usefulness of various elements of country branding in achieving transformative marketing objectives before, during, and after a major crisis.

4.4. Methods

Regarding the adoption of other methodologies and the use of larger sample sizes, researchers such as Andéhn et al. (2016), in their study that tested the relative evaluative relevance of product category with respect to estimates of brand equity across a variety of product categories, invite future research that replicates the findings of their study using population stimuli other than Sweden. In their view, such a study would provide some indication of the robustness of their results. Che-Ha et al. (2016) also examined the elements of country branding from the perspective of Malaysian citizens. Their findings indicate that Malaysia can be portrayed favourably through exports, human capital, culture and heritage, and political efforts. While some elements (human capital, culture, heritage, and politics) are important in fostering positive emotions among its citizens, others (exports, human capital, and politics) are considered as key tools to build competitive advantage. They call for the use of a comprehensive sample that may uncover other factors that are important in building a country's brand. Hence, in their view, there is a need for future research to include views from returning visitors and tourists to Malaysia to strengthen the factors that drive country branding. They also propose future research that considers qualitative approaches, such as face-to-face interviews, to explore in-depth studies on the aspects of country branding related to emotions, which may not have surfaced using the self-administered survey questionnaire.

5. Conclusion

Over the last decade, country branding has developed with increasing marketing strategies around the world. The goal of this study was to provide a systematic literature review based on an analysis of 44 journal publications on country branding since 2010. To understand country branding, three research objectives were set: (1) to identify the themes discussed in country branding research, (2) to identify the research methods used in country branding research, and (3) to identify areas for future research regarding country branding research. Additionally, the study presents the year in which the papers were published, levels of analysis, and models and frameworks used in the studies.

Regarding the themes that have been discussed regarding country branding, the three dominant themes identified are on 'national branding campaign' and 'country of origin (COO)' followed by 'branding strategy' and 'general' discussions on country branding. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches have been identified for the research methods used in country branding research. Systematic reviews, bibliometric analyses, and conceptual studies were also conducted. However, qualitative methods are dominant. Regarding the areas for future research on country branding, as discussed in the papers, the findings point to three themes. The first theme is for researchers to use other methodologies and study country branding using large sample sizes that can provide proper generalisation. The second theme is for future research that explores other country-context studies and populations, while the third is for future research to develop models or adapt models, frameworks, and theories to country branding research.

Analysis of the data demonstrates that the most significant number of papers were published in 2016 and 2018. However, it is important to note that the data collection was completed by November 2020, which indicates that 2020 experienced an increase in the number of published papers. The studies were conducted at various levels, including micro-, meso-, macro-, and meta-levels, with most studies conducted at the micro-level (individual level). The majority of studies were not conducted under the framework of any theoretical model or theory, although some known theories or models have been used. These include the product-country image (PCI) framework, categorisation theory, country branding framework, Bourdieu–Sian theory, and the theory of reasoned action. Many of the studies were conducted across multiple countries (cross-country). In addition, most papers were published in the *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the current state of research in cultural studies.

5.1. Implications

This study has several implications worth considering. First, it adds to the existing body of literature on country branding by making significant contributions to the field. Second, it provides a solid foundation for future research by identifying gaps in existing research. Policymakers and practitioners can use the findings of this study to better understand the nature of country branding and the themes that have been identified. Furthermore, this study highlights areas that require further exploration, such as the use of theories and methodologies in country branding research. However, there is a noticeable lack of research on country branding, which is supported by frameworks, theories, and research models. Most studies conducted in this area have not used any such frameworks or models, which is a significant gap that needs to be addressed in future research.

5.2. Limitations

This study, like many others, had certain limitations. First, while the review was comprehensive, it was not all-encompassing, as some potentially relevant studies may have been omitted because of the databases used and filtering process. Second, the research only considered journal articles and excluded other sources, such as conference proceedings, monographs, dissertations, chapters, and books. Third, the review did not conduct a bibliometric or scientometric analysis, which would have enabled a more detailed analysis of the intellectual structure of country-branding research. Fourth, owing to the constraints of the research sample size, the themes identified were not meant to be definitive or mutually exclusive. Despite these limitations, this study identified gaps in the country-branding literature and suggested new directions for future research.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendix

Table A1. Systematic literature review on published journal articles.

No	Author(s) / Level of Analysis / Theme	Title & Focus of Paper	Method / Country / Theory	Findings	Proposed Future Research
1	Author: Hao, A. W., Paul, J., Trott, S., Guo, C., & Wu, H. H. (2019). Level: Not applicable Theme: General	Title: Two decades of research on nation branding: A review and future research agenda. Focus: To review and synthesize nation branding research and to provide directions for future research	Method: Systematic review Country: Not applicable Theory: Not applicable	The field of nation branding is fragmented and has developed in the course of the last two decades in different directions. This paper identifies key publication outlets and articles, major theoretical and methodological approaches and primary variables of interest that exist in the nation branding literature. The findings also highlight several research themes for future research.	While this review presented strong coverage of publications related to nation branding, a meta-analysis of existing studies would enable scholars to determine which factors affect various aspects of nation branding. Also, due to sample size restrictions as used in the study, the themes identified are not intended to be definitive and mutually exclusive. Future research is therefore suggested to frame the review's results in terms of theoretical focus and identify distinctive thematic areas of research.
2	Authors: Vecchi, A., Silva, E. S., & Angel, L. M. J. (2020). Level: Macro Theme: Culture identity	Title: Nation branding, cultural identity and political polarization – an exploratory framework Focus: The objective of this research is to propose a framework which is apt to assess how a nation branding campaign could promote cultural identity by ultimately curbing political polarization.	Method: Mixed-method approach Country: Colombia Theory: Conceptual framework	From the findings, it emerges that a campaign based on nation branding and targeting domestic citizens could curb political polarization within Colombia, by also fostering cultural identity.	The managerial implication stemming from the findings is that a carefully targeted country branding campaign can indeed reduce polarization within a country. However, it needs to rely on rigorous research into branding in order to be effective and to reach the desired outcome. The study considers only Colombia. To fully assess the robustness of the framework it would be useful to replicate the analysis to a broader range of countries and to address a broader range of polarization issues. Further research should explore and refine the theoretical framework in other research contexts. This could initially be in other food and beverage categories, which can theorize why COO continues to matter, but with a more nuanced understanding of when it matters. Further research could also explore broader issues in respect of branding influencing self and collective interests in business relationships and industry networks, drawing on the conceptual work of Medlin (2006).
3	Author: Brodie, R. J., & Benson-Rea, M. (2016). Level: Not applicable Theme: Country of Origin	Title: Country of origin branding: an integrative perspective Focus: A new conceptualization of the process of country of origin (COO) branding based on fresh theoretical foundations is developed. This paper aims to provide a strategic perspective that integrates extant views of COO branding, based on identity and image, with a relational perspective based on a process approach to developing collective brand meaning.	Method: Qualitative Country: New Zealand Theory: Conceptual framework	An illustrative case study provides empirical evidence to support the new theoretical framework.	The study focusses on the role of COO branding for a particular industry within a country and not the national branding of the country as a whole. Thus, further research needs to explore the application of the framework to country branding per se. A useful case study would be New Zealand's country branding strategy based on the 'New Zealand story' and the shift from branding based on identity and image to collective branding processes that facilitate the co-creation of meaning within New Zealand's industries and export market networks. Further research could also develop a set of comparative country case studies. A case of particular interest would be the COO branding for Switzerland, as coordinated by a government agency such as Presence Switzerland. When investigating these comparative country case studies, further research could investigate how national effects can also apply more specifically to different export sectors that leverage the generic COO branding for a country. Organization coordinates the branding activities relates to a variety of other conceptualizations for collective branding. Further research could explore other contexts, including corporate branding which provides the strategic perspective for an enterprise, and is an umbrella brand for the enterprise's product brands (Balmer & Gray, 2003).

No	Author(s) / Level of Analysis / Theme	Title & Focus of Paper	Method / Country / Theory	Findings	Proposed Future Research
4	Authors: Andén, M., Nordin, F., & Nilsson, M. E. (2016). Level: Micro Theme: COO	Title: Facets of country image and brand equity: Revisiting the role of product categories in country-of-origin effect research. Focus: The present study provides further insight into how this particular effect can be understood. Drawing on a novel conceptualization of how country image and product categories interact, this study tested the relative evaluative relevance of product category with respect to estimates of brand equity across a variety of product categories.	Method: Quantitative Country: Stockholm, Sweden Theory: Conceptual framework	The findings suggest that facets of a country's image that are more closely related to the evaluation situation exert a greater influence on the evaluation of brands. This result encourages scholars as well as practitioners to re-evaluate which situations might cause the country of origin effect to hold managerial relevance and paves the way for new paths toward a more comprehensive understanding of the effect.	A key limitation of the present study is the representation of brands generated by the selection strategy used and the impact on generalizability. Future research that attempts to replicate the findings of the current research, using an alternative population of stimuli is recommended. This could give some indication of the robustness of the results. Another aspect of this study that warrants further examination is its design, which grouped together several categories, brands, and countries in order to examine the relationships on an aggregated level
5	Authors: Kim, S. J., Choi, Y. K., Kim, K. H., & Liu, H. (2015). Level: Meta Theme: COO	Title: Country of origin and brand image influences on perceptions of online game quality Focus: The authors of this study investigate online game consumption in Korea and China, the two key Asian markets, to analyze relationships among country of origin (COO), brand image, belief toward online games, and perceived game quality.	Method: Quantitative Country: Cross-country (China & Korea) Theory: Theory of reasoned action	The authors survey 355 Korean and Chinese online game users and find that brand image influences quality perceptions directly or indirectly through brand belief. Compared with brand image, COO seems to have indirect and weaker effects on perceptions of game quality. The multi-group research model reveals several cross-country differences. COO significantly affects beliefs in China but not in Korea. Brand image more highly impacts brand beliefs in Korea than it does in China.	None explicitly identified
6	Authors: Edwards, L., & Ramamurthy, A. (2017). Level: Macro Theme: Political campaign	Title: (In) credible India? A Critical Analysis of India's Nation Branding Focus: The study offers a political-economic, postcolonial interrogation of nation branding based on the Incredible India campaign	Method: Qualitative Country: India Theory: N/A	The study shows how the discursive violence inherent in nation branding promotes internal hegemonies and external market interests at the expense of cosmopolitan ideas of belonging and community. In Incredible India, colonial identities are re-inscribed, peripheralizing India in line with the demands of global markets, privileging Western desires and imagination. Internal political hegemonies promoting India as a Hindu nation are also reflected in the campaign, marginalizing minority groups. However, the attempt to construct a unitary nation simultaneously reveals the presence of the 'other', contesting the narrative's boundaries.	None explicitly identified
7	Authors: Bigi, A., Planger, K., Bonera, M., & Campbell, C. L. (2011). Level: Macro Theme: Political economy	Title: When satire is serious: how political cartoons impact a country's brand Focus: This article examines the case of Italy's Mr. Berlusconi's indiscretions and the effect his scandals have played in the decline of the Italian national brand.	Method: Qualitative Country: UK Theory: N/A	From this investigation done in this study, the authors conclude that a country's political leader's negative image and reputation can have a large negative impact on national brand equity abroad.	None explicitly identified
8	Authors: Frig, M., & Sorsa, V. P. (2020) Level: Meta Theme: :branding communication	Title: Nation Branding as Sustainability Governance: A Comparative Case Analysis Focus: This article studies how nation branding communication can govern businesses toward sustainable business, legitimizing these qualifications, and attaching national aspirations to business conduct that meets these qualifications.	Method: Qualitative Country: Denmark and Finland Theory: N/A	Both countries emphasize principles of efficiency and renewability in their sustainability qualifications. However, while Finland clearly seeks to attract firms to the local business environment to increase exports and improve the local economy, Denmark ascribes more heterogeneous value to sustainable business.	A more detailed discourse analysis of nation branding materials might be done in future research to provide a more nuanced account of claims and their justifications.

(Continued)

Table A1. Continued.

No	Author(s) / Level of Analysis / Theme	Title & Focus of Paper	Method / Country / Theory	Findings	Proposed Future Research
No	Author(s) / Level of Analysis / Theme	Title & Focus of Paper	Method / Country / Theory	Findings	Proposed Future Research
9	Authors: Varga, S. (2013). Level: N/A Theme: Political economy	Title: The politics of Nation Branding: Collective identity and public sphere in the neoliberal state Focus: This article attempted to provide a novel understanding of Nation Branding – a recent but widespread phenomenon that is taken to be the continuation of public diplomacy.	Method: Qualitative Country: N/A Theory: Conceptual	However, in this article it is argued that Nation Branding displays characteristics that make it constructive to analyze in terms of an implicit cultural policy.	None explicitly identified
10	Author: Kerrigan, F., Shivanandan, J., & Hede, A. M. (2012). Level: Macro Theme: National branding campaign	Title: Nation Branding: A Critical Appraisal of Incredible India Focus: This commentary explores the Incredible India Campaign, a Nation Branding campaign which has been running in India for approximately ten years. In doing so, nation branding is considered as a mechanism for communicating between a nation and the rest of the world.	Method: Qualitative Country: India Theory: N/A	In addition, this study highlights the internalization of a post-colonial image of Tourist India within Indian respondents. The authors argue that the IC shifted from trying to show them what they are like through a series of images of India and Indian life and people, to finding connections between the target markets and India as a real or imagined place.	The authors propose that nation branding campaigns can tell us much about imagined identity of those 'being branded' about the focus of this imagination, and that there is a need to carefully consider the relationship between the images employed, those being branded and the target for these images of the nation.
11	Authors: Surowiec, P. (2020). Level: Micro Theme: Documents and campaign artefacts	Title: Between Europeanization and Corporatisation: Poland's Nation Branding and Soft Power for Public Consumption Focus: Focusing on the 'state' rather than the 'nation', this article explores the interplay between nation branding and Poland's soft power statecraft. Contextualized by Poland's European orientation in foreign affairs, this Bourdieusian study focuses on the field of diplomacy and statecraft, particularly its communicative practices for the articulation of soft power.	Method: Qualitative Country: Poland Theory: Bourdieusian theory	The key findings emerging from the study rests on the cultural conditions and ideological effects of nation branding on the field. On the one hand, the author find, these effects advance the process of 'corporatization' of Poland's soft power statecraft. On the other hand, the embeddedness of nation branding in Poland marks a cultural shift in soft power statecraft towards technocratic and transactional promotional culture.	None explicitly identified
12	Author: Herstein, R. (2012). Level: N/A Theme: branding strategy	Title: Thin line between country, city, and region branding Focus: The purpose of this conceptual paper is to describe a new approach of re-branding countries strategy in accordance to two dimensions: the geography of the country vs. the range of ethnic groups in the country.	Method: Conceptual paper Country: N/A Theory: N/A	The findings emerging from the study is that these two dimensions (the geography of the country vs. the range of ethnic groups in the country) create four types of positioning strategies that reflect the tight linkage between country branding, city branding and region branding. Each of these positioning strategies is discussed and examples to this linkage are provided.	None explicitly identified
13	Authors: Che-Ha, N., Nguyen, B., Yahya, W. K., Melewar, T. C., & Chen, Y. P. (2016). Level: Micro Theme: competitive advantage	Title: Country branding emerging from citizens' emotions and the perceptions of competitive advantage: The case of Malaysia Focus: This article aims to examine the elements of country branding from the perspectives of a country's citizens.	Method: Quantitative Country: Malaysia Theory: Country Branding framework	Findings indicate that Malaysia can be portrayed favorably through export, human capital, culture and heritage, and political efforts. While some elements (human capital, culture and heritage, and politics) are important to foster positive emotions among its citizens, others (export, human capital, and politics) are considered as key tools to build competitive advantage. Implications exist for tourism marketers and policy makers, as the study highlights the importance of branding toward a country's citizens and revealing the specific preferences affecting the citizens' emotions and perceptions toward competitive advantage.	The use of comprehensive sample is suggested in future research to uncover other factors that are important in building a country brand. Also, future research should include views from the returning visitors/tourists that have been to Malaysia. Analyzing these groups of customers' can strengthen factors that drive country branding. The study used a survey approach. Future researchers may consider qualitative approaches, such as face-to-face interviews, to explore more in-depth the aspects of country branding relating to emotions, which may not have surfaced using the self-administered survey questionnaire. Further, effective implementation of tourism marketing requires an understanding of the level of impact that each of the country-branding elements exerts on different groups. While the elements are a cause for inciting emotions and perceptions, future studies should investigate whether certain elements exert more influence than others. Finally, there is the need for more research into the development of country branding, and, in particular, this area of 'internal' country branding, by incorporating the literature from human resources management and internal marketing, which may provide different views in this interesting area.

No	Author(s) / Level of Analysis / Theme	Title & Focus of Paper	Method / Country / Theory	Findings	Proposed Future Research
14	Author: Pamment, J., & Cassinger, C. (2018). Level: Macro Theme: marketing campaign	Title: Nation branding and the social imaginary of participation: An exploratory study of the Swedish Number campaign Focus: This article conducts a case study of the campaign in order to explore the ways in which media technologies were used to circulate tropes originating in the official nation brand in the service of a commercial interest.	Method: Qualitative Country: Sweden Theory: N/A	The Swedish Number campaign relied on a developing heritage of Swedish nation branding initiatives. Its modus operandi was to use media technologies to encourage citizen participation, primarily for the purpose of generating publicity.	None explicitly identified
15	Author: Bolin, G., & Miazhevich, G. (2018). Level: Meso Theme: Branding campaigns	Title: The soft power of commercialised nationalist symbols: Using media analysis to understand nation branding campaigns Focus: This Special Issue is set to remedy this omission and to contribute to clarifying the roles that media and communications play in the branding of nations as organisations (such as CNN, Euronews, BBC, Time and Newsweek) and as specific technologies (television, Internet and press), as well as in the generation of meaning as sign systems.	Method: Conceptual paper Country: N/A Theory: N/A	Findings not explicitly presented	While there is a need for a more theoretical conceptualization of the relationship between media and nation branding, there are also numerous practice-based avenues for further research in the field. This might include an analysis of how the citizens of the branded nation perceive and respond to the centralized mediated nation branding initiatives, going beyond strategic campaigns into the understudied realm of popular culture and less 'orchestrated' nation branding. Finally, following a critical cultural studies approach (Kaneva, 2011), more research into how transnational media flows and the cross-cultural flow of meanings complicate the nation branding strategies is needed.
16	Author: Miazhevich, G. (2018). Level: Meso Theme: Online audience engagement	Title: Nation branding in the post-broadcast era: The case of RT Focus: The article examines Russia's international multinational broadcaster RT (formerly Russia Today), which was launched in 2005 with the direct support of the Russian government. This article goes beyond RT's branding to explore the broadcaster's nation branding of Russia. It considers the range of strategies used by RT, placing these within RT's change of mission – from 'informing others about events and life in Russia' to comprising those 'who question more' post-Communist Romania and Bulgaria	Method: Conceptual paper Country: Russia Theory: N/A	This analysis also revealed that RT's nation branding strategies tread a fine line between freedom of expression and subversive manipulation of information. It reflects Russia's instrumental approach to its reputation management. Furthermore, the study showed that the audience value RT's counter-hegemonic approach, moving from impersonal bureaucratic broadcasts to a more personalized approach which is unstable and inherently problematic.	Indeed, issues around controlling the message and the logic of co-producing a shared narrative via new media-enabled platforms remain open to negotiation and exploitation. Audiences' virtual engagement via social media platforms entails an integral tension between consuming, subverting and appropriating broadcasters' narratives for their own ends. The question is at what point does public involvement turn into an 'invasion' and gain control over the framing? RT currently utilizes the tactic of somewhat distancing itself from the audience's co-produced meanings and over-relying on experts' opinions instead. It remains to be seen how RT's move to repackage its content for contemporary networked cross-media practices will play out.
17	Author: Kaneva, N., & Popescu, D. (2011). Level: Meta Theme: Campaigns	Title: National identity lite Nation branding in post-Communist Romania and Bulgaria Focus: This article examines the efforts of post-communist Romania and Bulgaria to reinvent their national images through the use of nation branding.	Method: Qualitative Country: Romania & Bulgaria Theory: N/A	The authors find that the campaigns appropriate national identity for the purposes of neoliberal globalization.	None explicitly identified
18	Author: He, L., Wang, R., & Jiang, M. (2020). Level: Macro Theme: soft power	Title: Evaluating the effectiveness of China's nation branding with data from social media Focus: In this article, the authors scrutinize the public opinions toward China as reflected by the questions and answers on social media (quora.com in this case), using content analysis.	Method: Qualitative Country: China Theory: Conceptual	As the findings show, the ranking of effectiveness of the different aspects of China's nation branding is as follows: (1) history, (2) place, (3) language, (4) political and economic systems, (5) culture, (6) people, (7) infrastructure, and (8) social institution. Based on the results of the study, a model for evaluating the success or effectiveness of nation-branding campaigns was proposed.	The study was conducted using an analysis on only one platform and the subject was focused on one country. Future studies may look further into the condition of other social media platforms, that is, Facebook, Twitter, and so on, or use another country or several countries for comparative analysis. In addition, the authors mostly conducted only qualitative analysis on the data with descriptive statistics; more quantitative and inferential analysis will help to further test the theory proposed in this research.

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No	Author(s) / Level of Analysis / Theme	Title & Focus of Paper	Method / Country / Theory	Findings	Proposed Future Research
No	Author(s) / Level of Analysis / Theme	Title & Focus of Paper	Method / Country / Theory	Findings	Proposed Future Research
19	Author: Balabanis, G., & Diamantopoulos, A. (2011). Level: Micro Theme: COO/ Purchase intention	Title: Gains and Losses from the Misperception of Brand Origin: The Role of Brand Strength and Country-of-Origin Image Focus: In this study, the authors investigate the consequences of brand origin misclassification and non-classification on consumers' brand image evaluations and associated purchase intentions	Method: Quantitative Country: UK Theory: categorization theory	The results show that both misclassification and non-classification have mostly adverse consequences on both brand evaluations and purchase intentions. The findings further show that strong brands are not immune to misclassification and stress the importance of ensuring that consumers are aware of a brand's true COO.	It will be worth questioning what happens to brand image perceptions and purchase intentions if consumers are alerted to the fact that they have misclassified the COO and are subsequently informed of the brands correct origin. Experimental research aimed at establishing the extent to which consumers are willing to update their brand evaluations and buying intentions and the magnitude of any adjustments undertaken would be most welcome to shed light on this important research question.
20	Author: Bassols, N. (2016). Level: Macro Theme: Terrorism in Tourism	Title: Branding and promoting a country amidst a long-term conflict: The case of Colombia Focus: This paper examines Colombia as a practical case of branding and marketing within the context of conflict-ridden destinations. This paper presents an account of how Colombia has reacted to this situation: it will show the efforts put into brand building and tourism promotion that has succeeded, inter alia, in attracting more tourists to the country in recent years	Method: Systematic review Country: Colombia Theory: N/A	First, the promotional efforts have been studied from the 1960s to the 1990s, before the creation of a country brand. The authors have also seen the creation of a first brand in the last decade was also noted, which was primarily aimed at tourism and at improving the nation's self-esteem. A second brand came out in 2012, which is geared towards a larger audience, both domestic and international. However, Colombia is still far away from the best brands in the region like Brazil, Argentina, or Mexico. As for the current tourism brand, it must be underscored that it performs wonderfully, as Colombia is enjoying its ever-largest expansion in the hospitality industry.	None explicitly identified
21	Author: Dinnie, K., Melewar, T. C., & Fetscherin, M. (2010). Level: Meta Theme: country brand strength	Title: The determinants and measurement of a country brand: the country brand strength index Focus: A strong country brand can stimulate exports, attract tourism, investments, and immigration. The purpose of this paper is to construct and present a country brand strength index (CBSI) which assesses the strength of a country brand based on objective secondary data.	Method: Quantitative Country: Cross country Theory: N/A	The results show that the countries with the strongest country brand are smaller, developed countries in Europe. The proposed index leads to results similar to the widely-used Anholt GfK Roper nation brand index (NBI), which measures perceptions of a country brand based on subjective survey data. Countries that are perceived positively (based on NBI) have a stronger country brand (CBSI) and countries perceived negatively (based on the NBI) have a weak country brand (CBSI).	None explicitly identified
22	Author: Chanavat, N. (2017). Level: Meta Theme: Football marketing	Title: French football, foreign investors: global sports as country branding Focus: During the 2015-2016 season, PSG generated €520.9m in revenues. The club is 6th among the 20 most powerful football clubs in the world (Deloitte, 2017) and feeds legitimate ambitions, both in sport and financial arenas. These powerful data encourage further reflection on the marketing of football and the need to analyze marketing strategies of professional football entities. Therefore, this research examines the fundamental elements associated with PSG's marketing strategy, the globalization of the club brand, and the role of Qatar.	Method: Qualitative Country: Cross country Theory: Conceptual	PSG's international initiatives even before the sponsorship of Qatar laid the groundwork for the arrival of QSI. The analysis highlights the consistency of deployed marketing actions to structure and develop the marketing aspects of the club in a logic of globalization.	None explicitly identified

No	Author(s) / Level of Analysis / Theme	Title & Focus of Paper	Method / Country / Theory	Findings	Proposed Future Research
23	Author: Tiberghien, G., & Garkavenko, V. (2013) Level: Macro Theme: authenticity of brands	Title: Authenticity and eco-cultural tourism development in Kazakhstan: A country branding approach. Focus: The proposed exploratory study aims at recording and reviewing through semi-structured in-depth interviews the perception of authenticity of community members, policy makers and tourism developers of eco-cultural tours in Central Kazakhstan. In particular, the research relates to how the concept of authenticity can contribute to position Kazakhstan as a tourism destination and develop its brand equity on the international tourism market.	Method: Qualitative Country: Kazakhstan Theory: N/A	The notion of authenticity is deeply linked with the eco-cultural tourism practices and tours offered in the country. As former nomads used to live in harmony with the nature in a sustainable way, their lifestyle is deeply engrained with the steppe landscapes and this blend creates a unique tourism experience for international visitors who often had no previous knowledge about the traditional nomadic culture before arriving in the country. In particular, the 'kyzylarai' tourism (eco-cultural tourism can be presented as a concept in which ecological and cultural aspects of a landscape are combined to create a site for tourists, mixing ecological and cultural aspects of the Kazakhstani landscapes.	None explicitly identified
24	Author: Sun, Q., Paswan, A. K., & Tieslau, M. (2016). Level: Meta Theme: International marketing	Title: Country resources, country image, and exports: country branding and international marketing implications. Focus: There has been a call for more research on how countries can use their institutions and resources to enhance their globalization efforts. This study intends to fill this gap by examining the relationships between country institutions and resources, country image, and exports based on institution theory and resource advantage theory.	Method: Quantitative Country: cross country Theory: Country Branding framework	A country also can utilize its resources to create and sustain its competitive advantages in the world market, with one twist; i.e. a country also must be cognizant of its institutions to be competitive in the world market.	One limitation of this study is the selection of the countries. 24 countries were used for the model development. The relative non-randomization of the country selection could bias the finding from the model. There is a strong need to expand the selection of countries to include more countries, especially under-developed or developing countries. For example, inclusion of more countries from Africa and South America is desirable. There also is a need to include more recent data in the model to explore the relationships so that it can take into consideration important industrial developments that occurred in some developing countries such as China, and explore the impact of major economic crises in 2008. In addition, the critical factors identified in this study are not an exhaustive list of all relevant factors of nation branding due to the unavailability of data for some factors. Other factors, such as per capita
25	Author: Hakala, U., Lemmetyinen, A., & Kantola, S. P. (2013). Level: Micro Theme: Awareness on country image	Title: Country image as a nation-branding tool Focus: The purpose of this paper is to examine the country image of Finland among potential travelers and potential consumers of Finnish products. Three research questions are addressed, each of which contributes to the overall aim: What is the level of awareness about Finland among the respondents? How is the awareness constructed in terms of dimensions? Where does the image stem from (the source)?	Method: Quantitative Country: Finland Theory: conceptual	Awareness is a key indicator of people's knowledge about the existence of a country. Branding may be an elementary tool in enhancing awareness as well as altering or reinforcing stereotypical views. The results of this study bring out the cross-cultural aspects.	None explicitly identified
26	Authors: Sun, Q., & Paswan, A. (2012). Level: Micro Theme: General country branding	Title: Country branding through Olympic Games Focus: This study investigated whether hosting a major international event impacts the host country's brand image among individuals living outside of the host country.	Method: Quantitative Country: US Theory: conceptual model	The results indicate that hosting the Olympic Games had direct and indirect effects on purchase intention due to the change in country brand image. The influence on intention to purchase was greater for unfamiliar products compared with familiar products from the host country. The findings of this study have important implications for country brand image and country branding, as well as for the export of products and brands.	Extant research has showed the positive impacts of the Olympic Games on the CI of major developing nations such as China and South Korea, but no study has been directed at developed countries with existing more favorable images. A comparative study would be helpful to substantiate the persistent effects of the Olympic Games on country branding initiatives. Finally, a major limitation of this study is that it did not use actual Chinese brands such as Haier, Tsingtao beer and Lenovo to examine the event's impacts on the participants' willingness to purchase these brands. Future research on mega events should use actual brands from the host country to provide more meaningful results.

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No	Author(s) / Level of Analysis / Theme	Title & Focus of Paper	Method / Country / Theory	Findings	Proposed Future Research
27	Authors: Heine, K., Atwal, G., & He, J. (2019). Level: Micro Theme: luxury branding	Title: Managing country-of-origin affiliations for luxury brand-building in China Focus: Findings stemming from a conceptual research and an explorative study are used to develop a conceptual model for managing COO affiliations for hybrid brands within the context of Chinese luxury brands.	Method: Qualitative Country: China Theory: conceptual	The findings of the research study suggest that the emergence of hybrid brands marks a new stage in the evolution of COO research and is apparent within the Chinese luxury start-up segment.	Future studies should enlarge the scope of the study to other consumer segments (e.g. to the premium/mass-market or concentrate on specific luxury consumer segments such as Millennials, the newly rich, the super-elite, etc.) and to other regions in China (e.g. second and third-tier cities or special administrative regions such as Macau).
28	Authors: Eng, T. Y., Ozdemir, S., & Michelson, G. (2016). Level: Micro Theme: COO	Title: Brand origin and country of production congruity: Evidence from the UK and China Focus: This study extends past studies on the COO effect to examine whether a negative COO affects consumer product perception and consumer purchase decision of a well-known brand. Hypotheses are tested empirically against survey consumer data from the UK (developed country) and People's Republic of China (developing country) using Sony as a global brand.	Method: Quantitative Country: UK Theory: N/A	The main findings show that both brand origin and COP are particularly important for consumers in a developed country in their product evaluations while perceived brand image of a developing country and price are key factors for consumers in a developing country. In addition, knowledge of the extent of consumer ethnocentrism can be a major determinant for branding decisions related to using product information cues about country of production and/or an international brand image.	There are a number of limitations in this study, which present opportunities for further research. This study is limited by the characteristics of the sample, which consisted of Chinese and British consumers in major cities and in two countries. Further research could use a more comprehensive sampling of the population as well as comparison of international brands from a developing country. The two socio-demographic characteristics (age and gender) were not found to have a significant effect on purchasing decisions of a Sony product. Future work might include socio-economic variables such as occupation and income of respondents, which may reveal characteristics of consumers' preferences for import brands. The data analysis could be extended to incorporate two models of different structures: one with fixed coefficients of the data and the other based on a hypothesized normal distribution of random draws. This would allow assessment of the 'goodness-of-fit' statistics between fixed coefficients and simulated random draws, which may further highlight heterogeneity of consumers between two countries. None explicitly identified
29	Authors: Mody, M., Day, J., Sydnor, S., Lehto, X., & Jaffé, W. (2017) Level: Micro Theme: Product-Country Image (PCI)	Title: Integrating country and brand images: Using the product—Country image framework to understand travelers' loyalty towards responsible tourism operators Focus: While much research into loyalty has been conducted at the destination level, tourists' loyalty towards their intermediary has not been considered. To address this gap, the present study develops a model of tourists' loyalty towards responsible tourism operators by integrating two streams of literature.	Method: Quantitative Country: India Theory: PCI framework	The study advances the PCI framework in the context of tourism, thus contributing to the literature on image measurement and also extending place image theory. The findings have important product development and positioning implications for operators and destination marketers in India.	
30	Authors: Hu, L., & Checchinato, F. (2015). Level: Meso Theme: COB	Title: The country of brand communication in the retail setting: An analysis of Italian products in China Focus: The aim of this paper is to investigate the role of country of brand (COB) communication within the retail environment of emerging markets.	Method: Quantitative Country: China Theory: Conceptual		In the future research, findings of this exploratory research on COB in the fashion retail environment should be verified in the context of other sectors and other markets. Moreover, the consumer's perception and attitude towards the brand and purchase intention related to the COB communication in store represent an interesting aspect to analyze. In this case, an ethnographic approach could be considered since it allows to record human action in natural settings (Fielding, 1993), which are characterized by deeply embedded sociocultural patterns that are resistant to transfer to other research settings. By analyzing the natural setting of the topic of interest, ethnography would be able to offer valuable insights into the market and consumer behaviour, for which empirical evidence are not well established yet.

No	Author(s) / Level of Analysis / Theme	Title & Focus of Paper	Method / Country / Theory	Findings	Proposed Future Research
31	Authors: Panda, R. K., & Misra, S. (2014). Level: micro Theme: COO - Brand equity	Title: Impact of Country-Of-Origin Image on Brand Equity: A Study on Durable Products in India Focus: To satisfy the objective the brand equity of some durable brands in India was examined. Three contributory dimensions of brand equity i.e. brand awareness; brand loyalty and brand distinctiveness were refereed.	Method: Quantitative Country: India Theory: conceptual	Findings from the study indicate that brand's country-of origin image positively and significantly influences dimensions of brand equity. Again the brand's country-of-origin image influences brand equity, either directly or indirectly, through the mediating effects of the three dimensions.	Companies should also build long-term relationship by providing quality products, services and after sales services to their customers which will ultimately enhance brand equity. Marketers of brands from countries with favorable image should also utilize on the good image in positioning strategy by emphasizing on the superior product quality that originate from the same country. This may be helpful for consumers in generalizing product information across different country's brands. Future research on this pertinent issue may incorporate some new moderating factors like such as tradition and culture, consumer psychographics which significantly contributes to the attitude and perception of consumers. Again this study may be extended to different industries like services, automobile etc. to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed model.
32	Authors: Adina, C., Gabriela, C., & Roxana-Denisa, S. (2015). Level: Micro Theme: General	Title: Country-of-Origin Effects on Perceived Brand Positioning Focus: This article reviews the main country-of-origin moderating factors and analyzes their influence on consumers' brand perceptions at a cognitive, affective and normative level. The authors explain country-of-origin effects on the buying decision process from the means-end-theory perspective.	Method: Quantitative Country: N/A Theory: N/A	On a cognitive level, a product's country-of-origin image influences the product's perceived quality, affecting perceptions about functional attributes, such as reliability, safety or performance. Emotional connotations related to a certain country-of-origin can leverage the product a specific personality, including psychological and social traits like power, social status and specific lifestyles. If the country, product and consumer personalities are in sync, consumers feel an affinity to the product, while country-of-origin animosity or negative bias may lead to product avoidance. Country affinity and animosity are related to entrenched personal values and social norms. Normative variables such as ethnocentrism and dis-identification affect the overall perceptions of products from a specific country and consumers' willingness to buy. These documents prove to follow an essentialist and somewhat ethnocentric approach to the 'intercultural' and contradict somewhat the silencing of this problematic treatment of self and other as found in the policies. The University under review seems thus to be torn apart between different perspectives on internationalization, which is representative of the global neo-liberal zeitgeist	One of the avenues for future research is to analyze country-of-origin effects not only as a quality cue, but also as a complex construct based on the interaction of a wide range of cognitive, affective and normative connotations. Thus, a model is needed to further clarify and explain the interaction of country-of-origin effects on these three levels from the means end-theory perspective. Moreover, further analysis is needed to reveal the relevant consumer range of means-ends which can be affected by a product's country-of-origin and to create a segmentation basis according to these means-ends. Finally, it is proposed that a study on the competitive environment influence of the country of origin effects, taking into account besides economic development, the role of culture and technological development.
33	Authors: Dervin, F. (2015). Level: Micro Theme: Internationalization	Title: Country 'Hyper-branding' and the Internationalization of Higher Education in Finland: Is the (R) evolution of Interculturality Coming? Focus: In this article I use the current (revolution of interculturality to examine the logics, discourses and situated practices of internationalization in Finnish Higher Education	Method: Qualitative Country: Finland Theory: N/A	These documents prove to follow an essentialist and somewhat ethnocentric approach to the 'intercultural' and contradict somewhat the silencing of this problematic treatment of self and other as found in the policies. The University under review seems thus to be torn apart between different perspectives on internationalization, which is representative of the global neo-liberal zeitgeist	None explicitly identified
34	Authors: Pinchera, V., & Rinallo, D. (2020). Level: Meso Theme: General	Title: The emergence of Italy as a fashion country: Nation branding and collective meaning creation at Florence's fashion shows (1951–1965) Focus: The study analyses the emergence of Italy as a fashion country with a reconstruction of the history and impact of the collective fashion shows that Giovanni Battista Giorgini organised in Florence in 1951–1965.	Method: Qualitative Country: Italy Theory: N/A	Specifically, the study shows how Giorgini strategically differentiated the emerging 'made in Italy' fashion from French haute couture, by keeping the needs of the North American market clearly in mind and building on existing material and cultural resources. As a result, the idea of an Italian fashion built on the Renaissance tradition and which could be an alternative to French fashion, was firmly established in the discourse and practices of foreign buyers and journalists. Giorgini's success, however, triggered various tensions and rivalries between Italy's many potential fashion capitals.	None explicitly identified

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35	Authors: Dubinsky, Y. (2019). Level: Meta Theme: General	Title: Analyzing the Roles of Country Image, Nation Branding, and Public Diplomacy through the Evolution of the Modern Olympic Movement. Focus: The purpose of this study is to analyze the different facets of country image through the evolution of the Olympic movement.	Method: Qualitative Country: cross country Theory: N/A	This article identified different periods through the Modern Olympic Movement that had a common link that applies to country image and that can be analyzed through some related fields of research. Every era discussed in this study is influenced by the previous era.	None explicitly identified
36	Authors: Erdem, T., & Chang, S. R. (2012). Level: Meta Theme: Consumer learning of Brands	Title: A cross-category and cross-country analysis of umbrella branding for national and store brands Focus: The purpose of this work is to extend previous work by Erdem (1998) and Erdem et al. (2004) to study the learning spillover effects of umbrella brands across multiple categories for both national and store brands.	Method: Quantitative Country: cross country (United States, the United Kingdom and Spain). Theory: N/A	The results indicate that consumer learning occurs across categories for both brands. The authors did not find any significant differences in cross-learning effects between store and national umbrella brands.	The study opens up some opportunities for future research. The current study does not analyze the factors underlying consumers' correlated priors about quality across different product categories or umbrella brands. Such correlations exist across some categories, but not between others; the strength of these associations varies by product category and country. Although perceived fit is deemed to be a critical factor in branding literature (Keller, 2002), more research in the context of learning models is needed to study such factors underlying perceived fit and association transfer.
37	Authors: Ayhan, K. (2018). Level: Meso Theme: Public diplomacy	Title: Branding Korea as 'My Friend's Country': The Case of VANK's Cyber Public Diplomats. Focus: This study explores how Voluntary Agency Network of Korea (VANK), a Korean NGO, conducts public diplomacy and nation branding of Korea based on its members' relationships with foreigners. To gain an in-depth understanding of VANK's activities from the perspectives of public diplomacy and nation branding, this study follows an exploratory single case study method.	Method: Qualitative Country: Korea Theory: N/A	The findings of this article suggest how VANK and similar non-state actors offer potential for public diplomacy and nation branding that can be utilized also by state agencies.	This explorative case study has yielded new insights into public diplomacy and nation branding of non-state actors. Future studies can accumulate on the findings of this study and examine the impact of VANK members' promotion of Korea through relationship management with foreigners on the attitude and behavior change of the latter.
38	Authors: Sivaramakrishnan, S., & Carvalho, S. W. (2019). Level: Micro Theme: COO	Title: The implication of country disposition in consumer response to ingredient branding strategies. Focus: In this research, the authors examined the effect of the country of origin (COO) image of an ingredient brand on consumers' evaluation of a host brand	Method: Quantitative Country: Brazil and Canada Theory: N/A	Results show that a local host brand from a country with a favorable COO image (Canada) is unaffected by an ingredient brand from a country with an unfavorable COO image (Brazil), whereas a local host brand from a country with an unfavorable COO image is benefited by an ingredient brand from a country with a favorable COO image.	As only a limited number of countries were considered, further research could examine other favorable and unfavorable COO image countries.
39	Authors: Silvano, S., & Ryan, J. (2018). Level: Micro Theme: Talent retention	Title: An investigation into the core appeals for nation branding to attract and retain talent to enhance a country's competitiveness Focus: The paper evaluates more closely how the image or brand of a country as a destination for talent compares to its actual performance at attracting and retaining it. This provides useful insights into whether, and to what extent, relocation branding, or elements thereof, might work for the distinct but related purposes of attracting and retaining talent. To that end, it is essential to develop a clearer understanding of which appeals specifically matter for attracting and, just as importantly, retaining talent	Method: Quantitative Country: cross country Theory: N/A	The study finds that the two most important factors for ensuring that a country is maximizing its potential to attract skilled professionals are the availability of employment and the degree of ethnic and cultural diversity within the host country. The most important factor for ensuring that a country is maximizing its potential to retain talent, the study finds, is the availability of employment. This does not mean that other factors do not matter, but employment and diversity are crucial for attracting talent from abroad.	It must be acknowledged that the model this study is based on – with ten hypotheses – may not account for all the reasons that countries fail to capitalize on their existing images and brands to attract and retain skilled professionals. It is important to note that the reasons why some countries may appeal to some internationally mobile skilled professionals more than others can be highly subjective and personal. The findings of this study could therefore be enhanced by in-depth interviews with skilled professionals living and working abroad concerning why they decided to move to the country where they are working and what the most important considerations were for them. The findings of this study are quite general but they do stress that employment and ethnic diversity are absolutely key considerations for skilled professionals wishing to live and work abroad for extended periods.

No	Author(s) / Level of Analysis / Theme	Title & Focus of Paper	Method / Country / Theory	Findings	Proposed Future Research
40	Authors: Yousaf, S., & Hualibin, L. (2014). Level: Micro Theme: Cultural values	Title: Branding Pakistan as a 'Sufi' country: the role of religion in developing a nation's brand Focus: This paper seeks to explore the influential role of religion in developing a nation's brand and discusses the possibility of re-positioning the brand Pakistan as a 'Sufi country' that is coherent with the cultural values and social realities of the country.	Method: Qualitative Country: Pakistan Theory: Conceptual	The negative image of Pakistan is gaining worldwide currency due to the absence of proactive management by government and relevant stakeholders. Pakistan as a Sufi brand has a potential to grow into a strong country brand. Branding Pakistan as a Sufi country would not only pave the way for forming a different set of associations that would be positively contradictory to the current militancy and extremism oriented perceptions associated with Pakistan, but it would also benefit her as a tourism destination. The Roll-Out Activities consisted of a quick change of anything having to do with the old name. Thus the new brand identity was established by the HEI and the new name would utilise branding to reinforce the image in the eyes of the consumer. After time a new brand audit would evaluate the effectiveness of the brand management at KNUST, and alteration could be made to then reinforce the brand.	None explicitly identified
41	Authors: Williams Jr, R., Osei, C., & Omar, M. (2012). Level: Meso Theme: renaming / rebranding	Title: Higher Education Institution branding as a component of country branding in Ghana: Renaming Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Focus: This conceptual paper plans to explore the application of the Renaming Process Model which depicts the key components that impact the organization brand renaming process, regarding the renaming of the African HEI Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST).	Method: Qualitative Country: Ghana Theory: Conceptual	This article is positioned to highlight the gap in the literature on renaming Higher Education Institutions and rebranding Africa, and should also spark discussions to help understand issues relating to the global impact of an emerging Africa. Collecting relevant data from all stakeholders in various African countries to explore renaming efforts in order to strengthen brand equity should also be explored. This case also highlights some of the issues involved in service industry brand management, and can be a source of further investigation and validation.	None explicitly identified
42	Authors: Aichner, T., Forza, C., & Trentin, A. (2017). Level: Micro Theme: Purchase intention	Title: The country-of-origin lie: impact of foreign branding on customers' willingness to buy and willingness to pay when the product's actual origin is disclosed Focus: This study contributes to the knowledge on the role of products' origins on customers' WTB and WTP.	Method: Mixed method Country: Italy Theory: N/A	The results of the study suggest that foreign branding may be a successful strategy for companies to increase their customers' WTB and WTP. At the same time, the results raise concerns about the suitability of foreign branding as a long-term marketing strategy, unless a company can successfully maintain its foreign image. Future research opportunities include the choice of consumers with a different cultural background, of other hedonic products or of utilitarian products.	None explicitly identified
43	Authors: Echeverri, L., ter Horst, E., Molina, G., & Mohamad, Z. (2019). Level: Micro Theme: Factors affecting branding image	Title: National Branding: Unveiling Factors that Affect the Image of Colombia from a Foreign Perspective Focus: National Branding	Method: Quantitative Country: Colombia Theory: N/A	Studies on country image require deeper research. In the case of Colombia especially, little exists on the approach, the country image and the effects that positive or negative perceptions have on the country branding strategy. If a country image has proved efficient in one market, this can be transferred to other markets. An example of this would be the use of a positive positioning in established markets as a reference for new markets. For example, it can learn from the positive relationships found in the analysis to design improvements for the negative ones. When studying the context of a country image, it is necessary to understand the factors and the methodological considerations that influence the assessment. All attributes that affect the individual perception must be identified and assigned in the evaluation process of Colombia's country image.	None explicitly identified

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44	Authors: Richelieu, A. (2018). Level: Meta Theme: branding strategy	Title: A sport-oriented place branding strategy for cities, regions and countries Focus: How could a city, a region or a country succeed in its attempt to use sport to (re-)define, position and promote itself? Consequently, what do jurisdictions and brand managers need to consider when using sporting events as a leverage to market themselves abroad? The paper aims to discuss these issues.	Method: Conceptual Country: N/A Theory: conceptual	Managers and politicians of cities, regions and countries should espouse a holistic approach when developing their place branding strategy through sport. This holistic approach can be articulated around four dimensions: sport, economic, commercial and social.	The paper makes two key contributions. First, in articulating a thorough synthesis of the literature on place branding, in general, and on place branding via sport, in particular. Second, in laying down the foundations of a framework that could help nurture the reflection on place branding strategy in sport. In this regard, future steps could include the study of specific cases of jurisdictions and analyze how these fit within the proposed conceptual framework (the 'diamond'). For instance, could other items and sub-items be considered? In addition to these questions, we could propose the following research topics. One of them relates to how certain countries use sport to establish their legitimacy, gain international respectability, increase their influence in world affairs and build a 'soft power' Through sport. The authors introduced the case of Qatar when they mentioned the concept of 'diplomacy branding'. Another avenue would be to analyze the socio-economic legacy of sporting events and sport infrastructures by taking into account the five social impact (social capital, well-being and collective identities, sport participation, human capital, and urban regeneration). Case studies comparing different events, infrastructures and countries could be very informative and help us draw further lessons for managers and policymakers. In fact, we already plan on looking at the Sydney Olympic Park 2020 initiative, in Australia[4], which could represent an example of the convergence lifestyle hub of the future, similar to the Singapore Sports Hub, but at a larger scale.