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## CULTURE AS A NATION BRANDING TOOL WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL INTERACTION SYSTEM

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The purpose of the study is to clarify the role of culture as a tool for nation branding development, as well as national brand's building and promoting within the global context of the national discourse. To reach the aim of the research, there was carried out the systematisation of the "nation branding" and "nation brand" concepts, as well as the analysis of theoretical and practical aspects of both nation and cultural brand and image of the country in the context of international cooperation. The research methodology consists in using general methods of empirical and theoretical research based on analysis, synthesis and concretisation. It is to analyse and summarise the results to reveal the "culture" factor's importance in the nation branding development as an externally oriented phenomenon, in the context of international interaction providing information about what the country is. The scientific novelty of the study is to clarify the cultural constituent's role in the process of the nation branding development in the context of the "State policy in the field of nation branding"; with the carrying out the analysis of the "culture and heritage" component as a criterion influencing the "Nation Brands" world reputation indexing; looked into the strategies for the Ukrainian culture development as an axis of building a nation brand and international image of Ukraine in the context of cultural diplomacy and intercultural dialogue; with paying attention to the content of the "Study of Ukraine's perception abroad" results as an indicator of the world awareness of Ukrainian culture in the nation branding context. The conclusions point out that today in the system of international cooperation, culture: cultural heritage, cultural diversity and cultural potential of the country – is gaining importance as a tool for building a national brand and is the most effective means of creating a country/state's positive international image in the long run. A successful nation branding allows increasing the level of the state's political influence in the international arena and strengthening international ties, etc.

*Keywords:* culture; nation branding; nation brand; international image; cultural brand of the country/state; international relations; international interaction; strategy for the development of Ukrainian culture

## Introduction

Nowadays, there is a huge potential for cultural attractiveness in international relations. Thus, we can see an active cultural sector involvement in the foreign policy of different states and international organisations. Moreover, there is a growing European and Ukrainian researchers, philosophers, and politicians' interest in studying and interpreting the "culture" phenomenon in the context of building the nation brand and international image, in particular.

The state is a highly complex object for branding. It is caused by the difficulty of building a positive and holistic image of its perception by target audiences. At the present stage, there is no ready-made universal template for building a nation branding strategy. As states have relatively recently joined the process of conscious nation branding, they are only developing different strategies to achieve their goals. However, there are also some basic, mandatory components of a branding strategy, such as internal and external analysis (to identify current competitiveness), analysis-based strategy planning, and implementation — implementing that strategy in the proper direction.

There are different perspectives on nation branding, such as economic and functionalist, political, and cultural-critical. From these points, nation branding is:

- “– discourses and practices aimed at reconstituting nationhood through marketing and branding paradigms;
- means to build and maintain a country's strategic advantage with the purpose of economic growth;
- a powerful political tool to strengthen a country's economic position and to compete against economic, financial or military clouts of superpowers” (The Place Brand Observer, n.d.).

While the nation brand is a set of emotional and rational ideas that influence a certain image's formation of the country. When compared with the national image, the nation brand is more stable. The national image is a variable component of the nation brand (Parshykova, 2020).

The purpose of the nation branding is to ensure the nation brand presence in the global information space, to contribute to the state's recognition on the international arena, to facilitate the inflow of financial resources into the territory through transmitting national decisions and initiatives. Thus, a nation branding must ensure its identification both inside and outside the country. It should be a reflection of the best mentalities and traditions of the country's population, perform an ideological function, thus uniting the population to implement common tasks. In essence, nation branding is the quintessence of the state's mission and development strategy, including the cultural one.

The international relations practice shows that countries with a negative or insufficiently formed holistic national image have certain limitations or difficulties in diplomatic and/or foreign relations and cannot effectively achieve their international success. Creating, developing and implementing a nation branding strategy and building a state's international image require an integrated coherent policy, meaning the ability to act and inform in a coordinated

manner, constantly emphasising key information messages and topics that are of priority for the country.

Foreign and domestic scientists are engaged in the scientific development of the nation branding, nation and cultural brand, as well as building a state's image and reputation. These are the studies by S. Anholt (2002), pointing out the state/country perception indicators; W. Ollins (1999), underlining the key idea's importance as a nation brand development basis; G. Szondi (2008), paying attention to the nation branding as a means of public diplomacy; Y. Fan (2010), clarifying the notion of nation branding when building an international image of the state; O. Shevchenko (2003), drawing attention to PR-technologies used in nation branding; G. Tulchinskyi (Tul'chinskii, 2013), dwelling about the brands' role in modern business and culture; M. Chernets (2017), looking into the aspects of developing cultural capital as a nation brand development, and others.

### **Purpose of the article**

The research is aimed at looking into "culture" as a tool for the nation branding development within the international interaction system, as well as to substantiate the theoretical and practical aspects of the cultural brand and national image building in the context of the nation branding.

### **Main research material**

Scientists have different interpretations of the "nation branding" concept, as it depends on the state's goals and the results of this process. Some of the research findings consider nation branding in the context of the national identity transformation; others emphasise the strengthening the country's competitiveness to be a priority goal of the state branding process. At the same time, the others express their opinion that nation branding is used to change, improve, and increase the country's international image and reputation.

The nation branding is not associated with the economic level of the state's development but with its ideological policy or historical events. It is caused by the fact a brand not being a static phenomenon. It is challenging for the national brand to be changed, so sometimes it is easier to build new associations with a particular state than to change or destroy the old ones.

The concept of "nation branding" was introduced by S. Anholt (2017), who was the first to use it in the late 1990s. According to him, "nation branding" is a systematic process of harmonising actions, behaviour, investments, innovations and communications of the state to implement the strategy of national security and competitive identity. "Although the term "nation branding" been frequently associated with the act of creating favourable images of countries through marketing communications", the author also points "how the "nation brand" can really be enhanced through strategy, substance, and symbolic actions" (Anholt, 2013) and offers the following typology of the national brand (Anholt, 2007):

- the country's brand as the image of its first person;
- the country's brand as a model of reliability (its investment in climate, role status in international partnerships, political stability);
- the country itself as a brand of its national production (economic goods and services, haute couture, world intellectual potential, research projects);
- the country's brand as a prospect of its scientific technologies and military-industrial complex;
- the country's brand as a tourist attraction.

In addition, the writer points out that the national image is created by the country itself, its governmental agencies in cooperation with other organisations, while the reputation is built outside the country, though the latter been perceived by people around the world, often depending on their own cultures. S. Anholt calls the need for preliminary analysis and assessment of the state's reputation as it is a crucial element in planning a strategy for shaping the state's international image (Anholt, 2007). In addition, the researcher says the globalisation to have turned the world into a giant supermarket, where countries compete with each other, and governments resort to branding techniques to distinguish their country on the world arena (Anholt, 2002).

The nation brand is made up of a set of characteristics (name, term, sign, symbol, image, slogan, etc.) that sum up the country's idea about itself, contain its exclusive and positive characteristics and distinguish it from other countries (Shevchenko, 2003, p. 62). It can be considered in two dimensions — individual and public. The first one concerns the individual perception of the state, and the latter (public) — the collective perception of the state. The nation brand perception varies even in different social groups belonging to one country. It can be caused by various factors, such as personal contacts with a particular country, stereotypes, hostility, devotion to nationalist ideas and one's own culture, and strengthening of ethnocentric tendencies.

Y. Fan notes that the “nation branding” concept can be referred to the process when, through addressing marketing technology, the government influences the state's image building to fill it in with positive content. Therefore, the nation brand is a general set of the nation (country) perceptions in the minds of the international stakeholders. It consists of the following elements: people, places (territories), culture and language, history, food, fashion, famous people, global brands, etc. (Fan, 2010, p. 98). According to the author, the “nation brand” concept can be interpreted at seven levels, including a simple visual symbol, a slogan, an umbrella brand that supports the components (tourism, exports), the country's image and reputation, its position in the international arena, national competitiveness, the country's “soft” (intellectual, programme, intangible components), and national identity (Fan, 2010, p. 99–100).

G. Szondi (2008) believes that nation branding is a strategic self-presentation of a country in order to build a reputation capital by promoting economic, political and social interests at home and abroad.

That is why the choice of tools for creating a state's international image, as a nation branding's constituent, depends on the preliminary analysis results of the country's reputation, whether it is deserved (caused by negative phenome-

na in the country) or not (caused by lack of sufficient information). In the first case, there is a need for the country to change its behaviour and carry out internal changes radically. If the reputation is negative, but undeserved, there is expediency in a demonstration (product trial), tourism promotion, and increase in goods and services exports, diplomatic and business visits, cultural and sporting events.

There is a close relationship between culture and brand. The target audience perceives any territory brand as a symbolic embodiment of a country, city or region. Since each geographical area has its own unique culture, the brand, being part of the particular culture, at the same time becomes a kind of its broadcaster. It results in the cultural component impact on the brands' consumer. Thus, in its "summative" aspect, culture becomes a set of material, ideal and spiritual values, representing a specific state of society. In other words, it is a particular characteristic, a community's parameter.

From the cultural point of view, the nation brand is a country's national spirit and cultural values manifestation. It promotes the people's national identity, embodies the harmony of the state's tangible and intangible assets, and indicates the level of the country's cultural industry development. That is why cultural brands play a leading role in nation branding today. These brands are actively used to demonstrate the state's cultural values and their dissemination (Tul'chinskii, 2013, pp. 9–10).

However, the 21<sup>st</sup> century active involvement of culture in international relations has led to the change in the very concept of culture. It has become a hybrid construct when the same perception and understanding of culture operate within the nation state and international organisation (local — state — regional — global level) with almost the same form been explicated externally on the international arena (building an international image, implementing cultural diplomacy, developing cultural collaboration, etc.). With culture being a vital element, nation branding has become an inseparable part of many countries' modern political practice (the USA, Great Britain, Japan, France, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, etc.).

In this context, culture and heritage is a criterion for the states international indexing. These are the Nation Brand Index and the Country Brands Index, which are considered to show the states' reputation level. The first one uses six criteria for brand indexing, such as tourism, exports, governance, culture and heritage, tourism, and immigration/investment. The second one addresses to the hieratical model of the brand evaluation, such as awareness, knowledge/acquaintance, associations, thoughts, decision about visiting, the respondent's desire to share his/her knowledge about the country.

The Nation Brands 2020 results demonstrate the general decline in the nation's reputation perception with some countries retained their leading positions and others marked by gains and losses. In spite of COVID-19 pandemics, Germany tops the list and ranks #1 out of 50 nations, the UK gains the second position, then there go Switzerland, the USA, Canada, Singapore, Japan, Denmark, France, and the Netherlands (pic.1).

Pic.2 shows how the leading countries are allocated on their sub-categories rating results. With paying attention to the "culture and heritage" criterion that

	<b>1</b>	Germany
	2020: 84.9	AAA
	<b>2</b>	United Kingdom
	2020: 83.0	AAA-
	<b>3</b>	Switzerland
	2020: 82.9	AAA-
	<b>4</b>	United States
	2020: 82.8	AAA-
	<b>5</b>	Canada
	2020: 81.7	AAA-
	<b>6</b>	Singapore
	2020: 81.1	AAA-
	<b>7</b>	Japan
	2020: 79.5	AA+
	<b>8</b>	Denmark
	2020: 79.3	AA+
	<b>9</b>	France
	2020: 79.1	AA+
	<b>10</b>	Netherlands
	2020: 78.6	AA+

Pic.1. Top Strongest Nation Brands. Source: Nation Brands 2020.

includes such factors as being influential in arts and entertainment, food the world loves, a great place to visit, rich heritage, an appealing lifestyle, leadership in sports, we may see that Italy tops the list of 2020 culturally branded countries, the second position goes to France, the UK occupies the third position, then there go Germany and the USA.

In turn, the Nation Brands Index, having been held for more than 15 years with “culture and heritage” being one of the global state reputation’s decisive criteria, contributed to the EU countries made culture a key objective of their soft power as the one benefiting to a strong nation brand.

In 2016, the European Union approved a new strategy for international cultural relations development, with culture been given a special role. The EU was responsible for the innovative methods of cultural diplomacy development, for cooperation in the field of education and science, for intercultural dialogue building. The adopted strategy’s key objectives include (European Commission, 2016):

- to enhance the Member States and the EU’s capacity to exploit the economic potential of the creative industries sector, in particular, to stimulate the sustainable development model promotion and to create favourable conditions for investment and new jobs;
- to promote cultural policy both as a factor of peace and social and economic development in the third countries and as a tool for preserving diversity and cultural pluralism;
- to make the EU a stronger global player in the international arena, to use more effectively the historical levers of European “soft power”.

 Exports	 Governance	 Culture	 People	 Tourism	 Immigration/Investment
					
					
					
					
					

Pic.2. Leadership in Image Sub-Categories Source: Nation Brands 2020.

Later in March 2017, Florence hosted the first G7 International Summit on Culture, with the Florentine Declaration signed. It is a basic document that enshrines culture as a tool for dialogue between peoples that can help coordinate actions to strengthen the cultural heritage protection ("Europa Nostra Welcomes", 2017).

Based on the analysis of various strategies and declarations in the field of culture, we may conclude that today's culture structurally includes all the "peaceful" means of implementing domestic and foreign policy.

Ukraine has not stayed away from these processes. On 1 February 2016, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the "Long-term strategy for the Ukrainian Culture Development". It is aimed to ensure the leading role of culture in building the future of Ukraine, including all forms of art, cultural expression, cultural heritage and cultural industries, ...which will lay the cultural policy basis of the European level democratic state for the next ten years. The strategic priorities particularly include (Kabinet Ministriv Ukrainy, 2016):

- development of cultural exchange, cultural diplomacy and means of a national culture promotion;
- support for both governmental and non-governmental initiatives that contribute to building and promoting Ukraine's image as the country with original historical culture and a strong creative potential;
- study and adaptation of the international expertise;
- the widest possible presentation of the Ukrainian culture in international dialogue programmes;
- creation of a special institute for spreading Ukrainian culture globally, cultural diplomacy development and international programmes implementation.

This "Long-term strategy for the development of Ukrainian culture" has resulted in establishing the Ukrainian Institute (Ukrainian Institute, n.d.), which is an expert, sustainable and authoritative organisation with playing a systemic role in the international representation of Ukraine through the potential of culture. The main tasks of the Ukrainian Institute are:

- raising recognition of Ukraine through the disseminating knowledge about Ukraine;
- popularisation of the Ukrainian language and culture abroad;
- building international dialogue by supporting international exchanges, ensuring Ukraine's participation in cooperation projects in the field of creative industries, culture, education, science, economy, etc.;
- dissemination of the Ukrainian experience in developing a civil society, state formation, commitment to the values of freedom, democracy, national unity.

With Ukraine ranked 55<sup>th</sup> one according to the Nation Brands Index 2020, the Ukrainian Institute has recently carried out a comprehensive project "Research on the perception of Ukraine abroad" (Ukrainian Institute, 2021). For the first time, through in-depth expert interviews with foreign institutions representatives in the field of culture, education, science, civil society, and local and central government, diplomatic corps, international organisations, etc., it has

studied the attitude and expectations of the foreign audiences to Ukraine, the culture and opportunities for cooperation, their awareness of modern culture and cultural heritage of Ukraine. In total, the study covers seven countries — France, Germany, Poland, the USA, Japan, Turkey, and Hungary.

On 24 March, 2021, the Ukrainian Institute presented some results from this series of researches, revealing the attitude to and a level of awareness about Ukraine and Ukrainian culture in Japan, the United States and Turkey. The “Analytical Report: Perception of Ukraine Abroad” shows that when it comes to awareness, interest, general characteristics of the Ukrainian culture, respondents note that (Ukrainian Institute, 2021):

- in general, they perceive Ukrainian culture as Eastern European culture;
- sometimes refer it as being a part of the post-Soviet one;
- point out Ukrainian cuisine, as food/cuisine is now gaining momentum;
- emphasise the generally insignificant awareness of Ukrainian culture and blurred images;
- express a special narrow interest in and demand for Ukrainian culture;
- state that supply creates its own demand, due to lack of information about Ukrainian culture, nothing peaks the interest.

## Conclusions

In the context of globalisation, building a nation brand and national image is a complex process that requires comprehensive research and analysis. Based on a territory’s positive image, nation branding is aimed at conveying the idea of the state’s uniqueness and attractiveness to the target audience, both domestic and foreign. The successful nation branding allows not only to improve the external image of the country, but also to increase the level of the state’s political influence in the international arena, strengthen international ties and partnerships, stimulate a sense of national identity, and increase its overall competitiveness.

Culture seems to be the most effective means of influence in the long run, including in the political sphere, not addressing violent methods or unconventional methods of pressure on public relations. Moreover, in the context of developing international cultural relations, culture is a priority in the national strategies of the state and regional organisations.

The Nation Brands Index shows that leading states worldwide pay special attention to the “culture” component as a tool for their nation branding nowadays. Culture is considered a driving force in building a positive international image and nation brand, more and more countries, including Ukraine, are developing new strategies for strengthening and promoting their cultural brand, addressing to innovative methods of cultural diplomacy development, broadening international cultural relations.

Thus, symbolism, language, cuisine, patterns of behaviour, historical heritage, arts — all this is an inexhaustible resource of the nation’s cultural potential, aimed at consolidating society within the state and creating a favourable country’s image abroad. Therefore, culture is becoming an important tool for



nation branding. It is one of the most important modern policy tools, both domestic and foreign, promoting a positive image of the country abroad, resulting in the state's reputation increase on the international arena and raising its political influence and global recognition within international interaction, distinguishing the country on the world arena.

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## КУЛЬТУРА ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОГО БРЕНДИНГУ В СИСТЕМІ МІЖНАРОДНОЇ ВЗАЄМОДІЇ

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Мета дослідження полягає у з'ясуванні ролі культури як інструменту побудування національного брендингу, а також розвитку та просування національного бренду в глобальному контексті національного дискурсу, задля чого проведено систематизацію понять «національний брендинг» і «національний бренд», а також аналіз теоретичних та практичних аспектів формування як національного, так і культурного бренду та іміджу країни в контексті реалізації міжнародної взаємодії. Методологія дослідження полягає у використанні загальних методів емпіричних і теоретичних досліджень, що базуються на аналізі, синтезі та конкретизації, і зводяться до розгляду та узагальнення отриманих результатів із метою розкриття значення фактора «культура» у формуванні національного брендингу держави як зовнішньо орієнтованого феномену, що в умовах міжнародної взаємодії надає інформацію про те, якою є країна. Наукова новизна дослідження полягає у з'ясуванні ролі культурної компоненти формування брендингу держави в контексті «Державної політики у сфері національного брендингу», аналізі

складової «культура та спадщина» як критерію, що впливає на формування світового репутаційного рейтингу «Nation Brands», а також розгляді «Довгострокової стратегії розвитку української культури» як вісі побудування національного бренду та міжнародного іміджу України в контексті розвитку культурної дипломатії та реалізації міжкультурного діалогу. Звернено увагу на результати «Дослідження сприйняття України за кордоном» як показника світової обізнаності про українську культуру в аспекті національного брендуювання. У висновках зазначається, що сьогодні в системі міжнародної взаємодії культура — культурна спадщина, культурне різноманіття та культурний потенціал країни — набуває великого значення саме як інструмент формування національного бренду та є найбільш ефективним засобом створення позитивного міжнародного іміджу країни у довгостроковій перспективі. Успішний брендинг держави дозволяє підвищити рівень її політичного впливу на міжнародній арені, зміцнити міжнародні зв'язки тощо.

*Ключові слова:* культура; національний брендинг; національний бренд; міжнародний імідж; культурний бренд країни/держави; міжнародні відносини; міжнародна взаємодія; стратегія розвитку української культури

## **КУЛЬТУРА КАК ИНСТРУМЕНТ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОГО БРЕНДИНГА В СИСТЕМЕ МЕЖДУНАРОДНОГО ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ**

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Цель исследования — определить роль культуры как инструмента построения национального брендинга, а также развития и продвижения национального бренда в глобальном контексте национального дискурса. Для достижения поставленной цели проведена систематизация понятий «национальный брендинг» и «национальный бренд», а также анализ теоретических и практических аспектов формирования как национального, так и культурного бренда и имиджа страны в контексте реализации международного взаимодействия. Методология исследования заключается в использовании общих методов эмпирических и теоретических исследований, которые базируются на анализе, синтезе и конкретизации, и содержатся в анализе и обобщении полученных результатов с целью раскрытия значения фактора «культура» в формировании национального брендинга государства как внешне ориентированного феномена, что в условиях международного взаимодействия предоставляет информацию о том, какой является страна. Научная новизна состоит в определении роли культурной компоненты формирования брендинга государства в контексте «Государственной политики в сфере национального брендинга», анализе составляющей «культура и наследие» как критерия, влияющего на формирование мирового репутационного рейтинга «Nation Brands», а также рассмотрении «Долгосрочной стратегии развития украинской культуры» как оси формирования национального бренда и международного

имиджа Украины в контексте развития культурной дипломатии и реализации межкультурного диалога. Обращено внимание на результаты «Исследования восприятия Украины за рубежом» как показателя мировой осведомленности об украинской культуре в аспекте национального брендинга. В выводах отмечается, что сегодня в системе международного взаимодействия культура — культурное наследие, культурное многообразие и культурный потенциал страны, — приобретает всё большее значение, а именно становится инструментом формирования национального бренда и является наиболее эффективным средством создания положительного международного имиджа страны в долгосрочной перспективе. Успешное построение брендинга государства позволяет повысить уровень его политического влияния на международной арене, укрепить международные связи и т. п.

*Ключевые слова:* культура; национальный брендинг; национальный бренд; международный имидж; культурный бренд страны/государства; международные отношения; международное взаимодействие; стратегия развития украинской культуры