

BEYOND MARKETING AND DIPLOMACY

Exploring the Historical Origins of Nation Branding

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This book examines the significance of nation branding for international history. The authors investigate the roots of national branding practices and critically discuss concepts of image production in international history. They do not aim to promote nation branding as a current form of national policy; rather, they wish to take stock of its historical development. In Part I “Branding the Nation and Selling the State: Case Studies,” the contributors consider individual case studies from the US Civil War to recent Polish image campaigns in the context of nation-branding concepts, thereby tracing their genesis and development since the mid-nineteenth century. In Part II “Promises and Challenges of Nation Branding: Commentaries on Case Studies,” a leading nation-branding scholar and two well-known historians of different specializations comment on the case studies while reflecting notions of nation branding. Finally, three authors present specific sources they uncovered during their research and explain their analytical potential for historical research in the section “Annotated Sources.”

Nation branding represents a deliberate, collective effort by multiple constituencies to generate a viable representation of a geographical-political-economic-social entity. The examples in this book deal with national-level efforts, but the concept and techniques apply to subnational regions and places as well. Governmental and nongovernmental actors contribute to forging an amalgam of

practices, policies, values, and aspirations designed to attract internal and external audiences. Successful branding enables people at home and abroad to view a state as legitimate and credible, thereby meriting their allegiance and support. Once thus acknowledged, states can wield influence as legitimate performers on the world stage: administering citizens, collecting taxes, drawing borders, inviting investment, soliciting tourists, attending international conventions, and so on. Since the rise of the nation-state in the nineteenth century, the perception of “the people” constitutes a critical element of this visibility-legitimacy-empowerment nexus. Those who deploy nation-branding techniques seek to control and channel information, to manipulate the resulting imagery, and sometimes, to bring domestic societies more in line with internationally accepted norms. Nation branders create and promote an attractive package for domestic and international consumption.

Nation branding seeks to enhance international credibility, draw foreign investment, create international political influence, charm tourists, intensify nation building, attract and retain talent, and, often, change negative connotations in regard to, for example, environmental or human rights concerns. Inspired by the conviction that there is a link between national characteristics (such as cuisine or music) and a nation’s image abroad, governments and marketing experts develop nation-branding strategies. Both have an impact on each other and both can be used to boost each other. Experts in nation branding juxtapose the national interest of international self-representation with market-oriented advertising strategies. They study both foreign images and self-perceptions of individual states and, in particular, the—occasionally stark—incongruity between the two.¹

The concept of nation branding does not distinguish between “good” cultural diplomacy and “bad” propaganda. Because democratic and authoritarian states likewise pursue nation-branding strategies, this practice is also indifferent to the political ideology of a state and does not analyze or judge the legitimacy of the sender or their initial intention. Those who create effective nation-branding strategies consider all components—true or false—contributing to the image of a nation abroad, including sports, exports, tradition, heritage, and culture. The initiators of branding campaigns cooperate with agents of several institutions and organizations—domestic and/or foreign—who act on behalf of a specific country in a common quest to create what they perceive as a more positive image. These actors can be government officials, members of civil society, or

transnational organizations. Their relation to state and society as well as their intention, conviction, and media are secondary. The most important criterion remains the process through which the image of a country changes and improves in the perception of other states and people.²

In the last fifteen years, most nations have engaged in nation branding efforts, and as a result, nation brands today have high policy value. They create and relate to images and reputations that are deeply anchored in the minds of consumers and audiences. For example, the United States is commonly seen as a brand of democracy, while Chinese branding stresses the country's ancient culture. These are sensitive issues: once a brand is violated, foreign and domestic protests abound and far exceed global reactions to similar instances in other places. Thus, global protests against US breaches of civil rights far exceed those expressed whenever China disregards such rights. The US brand relates to law and liberty whereas the Chinese brand does not.

The Origin of Brands and Branding as a Practice

The word *brand* originates in the attempt to mark ownership. Originally, a brand was a piece of charred or burning wood, or a mark made with a hot iron, used by farmers to identify their stock.³ As such, brands and branding are no recent phenomena. Karl Moore and Susan Reid show that in the Early Bronze period the Harappan civilization used animal seals on their trade goods, conveying the identity of the sender and transmitting information for manufacturers, re-sellers, and government authorities.⁴ Philip Kotler, Kevin Lane Keller, Mairead Brady, and others perceive medieval guilds as one of the earliest instances of branding: craftspeople put trademarks on their products to “protect themselves and their customers against inferior quality.”⁵ All these authors agree that brands in premodern times functioned as conveyers of information on the origin as well as on the ownership of goods.

What exactly constitutes a brand in the modern world? According to the American Marketing Association (AMA), a brand is a “[n]ame, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers.”⁶ This definition stresses distinction as well as the complexity of concrete and intangible elements, both of which characterize a brand. On a more general level, a brand constitutes an idea: it

lives in the imagination of the audience and encompasses feelings, perceptions, and mental associations. As such, a brand reflects an emotional relationship between brand owners and prospective customers.⁷

The action of creating a brand—the process of branding—describes practices and tools related to the creation of a brand: it generates a positive image of a product and stimulates a desire to own it by way of consumption. “Branding,” writes J. E. Peterson, “is the application of a story to a product ... It is the story that makes one identify or desire a brand, more so than the product ... itself.”⁸ Jill Avery and Anat Keinan suggest that “building a brand refers to the process of establishing and maintaining a perceptual frame in the minds of consumers, both individually as well as collectively.”⁹ Hence, branding not only creates distinctiveness, but also involves the audience in the process of branding. A brand can be perceived differently by different people, but it is also part of collective discourse.

In the modern era, branding is first and foremost a business practice. Branded goods—products that vendors promote via advertising tools—have multiplied since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.¹⁰ The rise of department stores furthered retail trade on a large scale. At the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, producers showcased consumer goods from all over the world. Unlike bulk goods, producers packaged, promoted, and labeled retail goods with a proper name. Mid-nineteenth century brand names now stood for quality and appealed to consumers’ trust. Advertising agencies became mediators between the media, the advertiser, and the consumer. As Stefan Schwarzkopf shows, during the early first half of the twentieth century, advertising practitioners engaged in the creation of brands, often providing them with a unique image and personality—an approach that enhanced prior practices.¹¹

In the 1950s and 1960s, the demand for consumer goods exploded and led to intense competition among brands as well as a boom of the advertising industry, first of all in the United States. Marketing experts now sought to differentiate products from one another by giving products distinct identities. Experts also strove to understand consumers by expanding their perspective to consider consumers’ motivations and perceptions.¹² Pierre Martineau, one of the protagonists of motivation research in advertising, wondered about how to create an image or personality for products that exceeded mere tangible qualities. In his idea, a brand image consisted of a set of symbols, feelings, and psychological meanings.¹³

At the same time, a number of influential businesses paved the way for today's branding practice: the brand consulting firm Landor, founded in 1941 by Walter and Josephine Landor in San Francisco, set out to create logo designs and marketing consumer orientation. In 1965, advertising executive Wally Olins and designer Michael Wolff founded the business Wolff Olins in London. Olins eventually engaged in nation branding and became one of its most prominent propagators. In 1974, John Murphy founded Interbrand, focusing on brand strategy and design. During the following decade, branding as a tool to provide products with an emotional dimension became a widespread practice in advertising.¹⁴ Scholars of media and cultural studies like Liz Moor, and marketing experts such as the aforementioned Kevin Lane Keller believe that the term "branding" as we understand it today emerged in the early or mid-1990s.¹⁵

Branding consultancies emanated from different fields, including design, the development of corporate identities, and advertising. Advertising executives then integrated branding into marketing and business strategies, which led to the emergence of professionalized branding consultancies and to the conceptualization of branding in marketing theory. Today, branding has also gained great popularity in public discourse. Branding has been associated with universities, museums, churches, and entire states; religious groups engage in "faith branding," coaches advising professionals recommend "personal branding," and governmental leaders embark on nation-branding campaigns.

Identifying the Nation

Defining the term *nation* has kept scholars busy for quite some time and for good reason. Literally, the word *nation* derives from the Latin expression *natio* and means "the people" or denominates a tribe with a common derivation, language, and customs. In his inaugural lecture "Qu'est-ce qu'une Nation?" at the Sorbonne in 1882, Ernest Renan argued that the nation was a spiritual principle. It resulted from profound connections in the past and was based on "the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form."¹⁶ In other words, the nation yields nationalism. One hundred years later, this approach had changed profoundly. In 1983, Ernest Gellner stressed the importance of the human will and shared

culture that finds expression in political units.¹⁷ According to Gellner, nationalism is an integral part of modernity and therefore a result of the transformation to an industrial society: nationalism, Gellner held, creates the nation.

One of the most popular turns in the debate stemmed from political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson. In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Anderson outlined an interpretation of the nation as a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of the group.¹⁸ Anderson emphasized the role of the media in creating communities through spreading images. The nation constituted not only a product of nationalism, but also complicated networks of communication along with visions of individual and group desires.

Following Anderson, a younger group of historians, such as Jakob Vogel, Svenja Goltermann, and Sabine Behrenbeck, have elaborated on the specific icons inspiring these “imagined communities,” ranging from battlefield heroes to body builders to public holidays.¹⁹ These different approaches all provide hints about the characteristics of a nation and present different, yet interrelated ideas of the nation. For the purpose of this book, following one or another school of definition is less important than understanding that the nation cannot exist without performance and self-representation. It is therefore especially important to grasp not only the imagery but also the actors and mechanisms entailed in this process: how are images crafted, who does the crafting, and what methods are being used?

The Application of Branding to Nations

State authorities and their allies deliberately engaged in building nation brands long before there was such a term as “nation branding,” and for at least one hundred years some authors have scratched their heads over this phenomenon. These individuals did not consider themselves scholars of international history or international relations, but they were all concerned with the interplay between countries and products. As early as 1896, journalist Ernest Williams stated in his pamphlet *Made in Germany* that the label of origin, be it a country or a city, had an effect on the customer’s buying decision.²⁰ In 1947, Arthur Lisowsky, a professor at a Swiss commercial college, studied the overlap of nations and the

promotion of brand-name products. Lisowsky stressed that principles of *Markenbildung* (branding) could also be applied to tourism advertising.²¹ In the 1960s, a number of scholars began to analyze the impact of any given country's image on the perception of a product and its provenience—the so-called “country of origin effect.” Here, experts studied how consumers' general perceptions of a country created a collective image that specifically related to the products of that country.

In a gesture to this emergent field, Per Hansen has recently shown how in Denmark export goods, such as furniture, and the country's image are often closely related.²² The central idea here was to switch causality around: if the sale of products profited from their origins—e.g., “made in Germany”—one could also conclude that these goods likewise coined the image of Germany. Notably the tourism sector traditionally sought to “sell” nations to tourists by associating countries with good feelings, experiences, services, and desirable products.

Nation branding's breakthrough as a term came about in the United Kingdom in the late 1980s and 1990s with a profound reconceptualization of what branding could do for people, products, and policy. During this decade, British marketing experts collaborated with policymakers to rebrand the UK's image. By ushering in Margaret Thatcher's administration, the population of the UK had elected a right-wing neoliberal government. The Iron Lady's program diminished the role of the state and cleared the way for privatization. Her policy influenced the development of branding in two ways: first, neoliberal policy led to new forms of competition; second, Thatcher used public diplomacy to improve strategies of political communication. This very strategy, argues historian Nicholas Cull, paved the way for later branding initiatives.²³

After the long premiership of Conservative Party politicians Margaret Thatcher and John Major, in the mid-1990s the Labour Party desperately sought to regain British voters' confidence. Tony Blair played a central role in rebranding the party, because he emphasized a new course for Labour that eschewed the socialist credo of state ownership in favor of the free market. Blair thus stood for a third way that contrasted sharply with previous patterns of leftwing or rightwing politics, and he accompanied this new orientation with a comprehensive rebranding campaign. The party now was called *New Labour*, a party that stood for a *New Britain*. To boost the campaign, professional designers developed a logo and changed communication strategies. The incorporation of marketing and

public relations had an innovative function in Labour's campaign to win back voters' trust.²⁴

When the British electorate chose Blair as prime minister in 1997, the Labour Party continued its rebranding campaign. That year, the think tank Demos published a report considering the tools shaping a new identity for the entire nation. Its author, Mark Leonard, observed that the United Kingdom's image abroad was unfavorable. Most foreigners, Leonard stated, associated the country and its people with backwardness. Worse, British products were perceived as "low tech and bad value,"²⁵ businesses appeared to be "strike-ridden,"²⁶ and most British people did not take pride in their country anymore.²⁷ To overcome this negative reputation, the Blair administration expanded the rebranding process—originally created for the Labour party—to include all of the United Kingdom. The result was the Cool Britannia campaign, aimed at domestic as well as foreign audiences, and designed to project a new sense of pride in British accomplishments in the world of music, media, and the arts.²⁸

Cool Britannia does not reflect the first attempt to rebrand a country, but it has been, in recent years, perhaps the most important one. As a result of this experience with rebranding the UK, the British public as well as international observers began to pay attention to the issue of nation branding. The Demos report and Blair's activities spread branding vocabulary far beyond offices of consultancies and led to a conceptualization of nation branding in general, as we shall see below.

US rebranding campaigns after 9/11 marked another important cornerstone in the development of contemporary nation branding consulting as well. Likewise, they enhanced the scholarly debate around nation branding and public diplomacy. After the terrorist attacks by al-Qaeda, the Bush administration wondered why parts of the world had developed such a hatred against the United States. As a consequence, they hired advertising expert Charlotte Beers as Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs to build a new Brand America.²⁹ Beers's Shared Values Initiative targeted on Muslims worldwide with a special focus on the Middle East. Although the campaign received negative comments in the news, was abandoned in 2003, and criticized for ethical shortcomings by scholars,³⁰ it showed the degree to which advertising practices and politics were now interlinked.

Practice and Scholarship: Conceptualizing Nation Branding

Concurrent to the rebranding experiment in the United Kingdom in the 1990s, marketing experts linked the idea of branding to places. In 1993, US marketing luminary Philip Kotler and his colleagues Donald H. Haider and Irving J. Rein postulated that cities, regions, and countries in crisis could learn from brand businesses facing economic downturns and communicate their special qualities to target markets more professionally.³¹ Kotler, along with Somkid Jatusripitak and Suvit Maesincee, refined this idea in 1997 in a publication tellingly titled *The Marketing of Nations*.³² In 1998, independent British marketing and policy adviser Simon Anholt coined the term *nation brand* in an effort to measure and increase a country's reputation by focusing on distinct characteristics.³³ Anholt has published widely on the topic and advised countries all over the world on how to develop a respectable nation brand and competitive identity. Wally Olins likewise contributed to the development of the nation-branding concept. Olins served as a consultant notably to countries that were either unhappy with their (typically negative) images, or tried to put themselves on the map, such as Poland, Northern Ireland, and Lithuania.³⁴

Since the year 2000, there has been no shortage of institutions dedicated to promoting nation branding and publications pertaining to the subject; indeed, the recent rise of the concept of nation branding in politics and advertising has initiated a flood of academic research projects. European and US think tanks and academic institutes such as the German research center "Nation Branding" at the Hochschule RheinMain in Wiesbaden, have developed numerous research and consulting projects. They study how states culturally interact with others, and how the efficiency of such a dialogue could be maximized in terms of political credibility, diplomatic cooperation, trade opportunities, and economic investments. Websites and journals, such as *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* (originally founded by Anholt), explore issues relating to reputation, image management, consultancy, and the interplay of politics and branding.

It is thus not surprising that in the last fifteen years, scholars, too, have begun to investigate nation branding in conjunction with international relations and public diplomacy. A large part of the literature is concerned with political legitimacy and technical measures in the service of promoting national reputation. Some scholars

of marketing communications and related fields, such as Jami A. Fullerton and Alice Kendrick, functioned as both scholars on nation branding and academic policy advisors. They “try to step outside the stereotypes and traditional paradigms to understand the milieu in which global citizens form impressions of faraway places.”³⁵ Yet, a number of scholars laboring in the fields of anthropology, cultural studies, and media studies have recently expressed strong reservations regarding this phenomenon. Borrowing from critical theory, these studies often draw a connection between nation branding’s imagined discourses and practices on the one hand, and “real” contemporary national identities, culture, and governance, on the other. They argue that nation branding does not merely constitute an instrument of image boosting but, in fact, represents a struggle over what the nation is, to whom, and why, among local, governmental, and nonstate actors and organizations. Scholars like Nadia Kaneva, Melissa Aronczyk, Peter van Ham, and others study the meaning of contemporary nation branding for the collective identity of a nation and its position in the international arena.³⁶

The creation of a nation’s image has also appealed to scholars of media and communication studies like Michael Kunczik, who dedicated a part of their scholarship to the history of public relations and image making in the international arena.³⁷ Conceptually international public relations and public diplomacy somewhat overlap, but they do differ in their ultimate goal. As Guy J. Golan and Sung-Un Yang point out, whereas public relations cultivate reciprocal advantageous relationships in the interest of consumerism or philanthropy, public relations underline or enhance goals of foreign affairs.³⁸

Nation branding, it is safe to say, serves as an umbrella term for all activities addressed in this literature. It includes nonstate actors along with the ensuing cooperation and conflicts over who is in charge of branding the nation and which image will prevail. Whereas public diplomacy often focuses on political goals, the ambitions of nation branding strategies frequently emphasize economic goals. Therefore, the concept of nation branding stretches concern beyond diplomacy in the sense of state-centered actions. It investigates situations where the state has—quite frequently—a minimal role, where other actors complement or even substitute the state. Actors can be institutions of the state or closely related to it, but they can also be institutionally as well as financially independent from the state. Strategies of nation branding are focused less on mutual understanding and more on image management via positive aspects of the respective nation. Furthermore, this approach

helps to explain the domestic processes of setting an agenda for a specific campaign. In doing so, nation branding reflects the process of power distribution within societies “doing the brand” and the impact that these struggles have on relationships with international actors.

In sum, there is a rich literature spanning across communication studies, anthropology, political science, and marketing studies and it is marked by three themes. First, scholars agree that the political context and its impact need to be analyzed in tandem; they also agree that nation branding is a challenging or even dangerous phenomenon. Some argue that contemporary nation branding symbolizes neoliberal understandings of the nation in the context of global markets. In that interpretation, nation branding poses as an instrument to prevent, or at least delay, the demise of the nation-state. By focusing consumers’ and citizens’ attention on political and economic appeal as well as cultural distinction and economic independence, the government stresses the ongoing significance of the nation. At the same time, nation branding has produced some powerful examples of good practice, including a number of awards, websites, and blogs highlighting the cooperative power branding can bring to national and regional communities. The second unifying theme in this kind of literature is a common conviction that nation branding is a novel phenomenon: either it poses as the (un) wanted child of the love affair between the post-Cold War neoliberal state and twenty-first century corporatism; or, it embodies a new chance to create partnerships with civil society concentrating on values and enterprises within the national community, all of which will presumably lead to more political, diplomatic, environmental, and corporate responsibility. Finally, a third collective issue is that it is almost completely ahistorical, a point which we wish to elaborate on and critically assess below.

Foreign Relations and Imagery in History

Missing from the scholarship to date is a historical investigation of the roots of nation branding beyond regional and temporal confines.³⁹ Although some experts admitted their interest in history (such as advertising expert Wally Olins), historians themselves have been conspicuously absent from the entire debate outlined above. This is all the more surprising given that nation branding addresses a number of terms familiar to scholars of global and international

history, including *stage*, *desire*, and, most notably, *recognition*, *credibility*, and *legitimacy*.

At the same time, historians have grappled with cultural imagery and international history to a significant extent. Readers of the present series *Explorations in Culture and International History* know that for at least the last twenty-five years, cultural and public diplomacy—the informal and formal use of culture in the context of international relations and policy making—has been a powerful parameter in the study of foreign relations, most notably, but not exclusively, in the context of the East-West conflict.⁴⁰ Notably after 9/11, the discussion about public diplomacy gained momentum in political science and beyond. Scholars like Jan Melissen enriched the debate on a “new public diplomacy,” which included different strategies of official communication toward and relations with foreign publics, be it pursued by a government or by semistate or nonstate actors that have a close relationship with the state.⁴¹ Numerous case studies on cultural or public diplomacy, ranging from transatlantic marriages to public diplomacy in the nonaligned states during the Cold War, have shown the diverse functions of state and nonstate actors in shaping cultural images that, in turn, have had an immediate effect on the conduct of diplomacy and international relations at large.⁴²

In addition to the study of cultural and public diplomacy, since the 1990s historians have been fascinated with the genesis of what political scientist Joseph Nye describes as “soft power,” that is, a country’s “ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences of others.” Nye believes that public diplomacy can be seen as an instrument to mobilize soft power. Soft power essentially signifies an actor’s reputation in the international arena. To Nye, “[t]he ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with intangible power resources such as an attractive culture, ideology, and institutions.”⁴³ Thus, an international actor does not need to use measures of hard power, when soft measures like cultural impact can influence the addressed actor as well. A respectable image can help to accommodate opposing sides at least as much as a nuclear arsenal.

Nation Branding and International History

The present volume seeks to address the gap outlined above while simultaneously tying in the present literature dedicated to culture

and international history. Indeed, most of the contributors in this book have, in the past, published widely on public and cultural diplomacy, international cultural relations, as well as soft power and its history. Thus, this volume aims to reflect the emerging debate about the various approaches on nation branding among scholars and practitioners. It focuses on the nexus between cultural marketing, self-representation, and political power by examining current nation branding initiatives as well as historical predecessors. Part I “Branding the Nation and Selling the State: Case Studies” investigates diverse instances of nation branding campaigns in Europe, the United States, Asia, and South America beginning with the US Civil War and ending with the reconsolidation of Eastern European national sovereignties after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The selection is preliminary and not inclusive as this is quite literally a new field in the making.

William McAllister jumpstarts the volume by presenting *The Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) series as a multi-faceted, mid-nineteenth-century form of nation branding. By publishing key official government documents in the Civil War era, and by disseminating them to domestic and foreign audiences, US government agents such as Secretary of State William Seward intended to illustrate the administration’s policies and to promote its accountability to Congress and the public. McAllister emphasizes the importance of drawing on unique national characteristics and promoting the essential values of a state at home and abroad. As states will only exist if others recognize their legitimacy—particularly in times of civil war, when the very existence of the nation is challenged—nation branding serves as a means to gain international postwar recognition. Thus, by creating and promoting the image of a credible, democratic “Union brand,” the FRUS volumes represented a deliberate effort to brand the United States as a powerful, resolute nation and the constitutional-republican system as its rightful and legitimate expression.

Oliver Kühschelm then links the nation-branding initiatives of Austria and Switzerland by comparing their different traditions in extensive tourist advertising, export promotion, and buy national campaigns, since the early twentieth century. Switzerland appeared as a role model in exercising nation branding since the interwar years when authorities created a Swiss brand based on national characteristics such as neutrality, humanitarian commitment, and high-quality products. Austria later followed in its footsteps when nation branding became a prominent feature of Austrian nation

building, which aimed at re-establishing a separate state after having been part of the National Socialist Deutsches Reich after World War II. Kühschelm sees a profound change in strategy, target audience, and approach to nation branding in both countries: those strategies developed from buy national campaigns in the 1920s and 1930s closely linked to moralizing patriotic consumption, into campaigns dedicated to tourism and export promotion in the 1950s and 1960s highlighting the superior quality of national products. They increasingly took account of the importance of foreign audiences to whom the national image or brand was sold.

Ilaria Scaglia sheds light on the cultural interplay of nation branding and internationalism in the interwar period. At the center of her essay is the 1935–36 International Exhibition of Chinese Art, which was the first of its kind to be hosted by both Chinese and British government officials. Scaglia argues that both countries used the exhibition for their own ends in order to brand the national image—China as the rightful and legitimate heir of the glorious Chinese past, the United Kingdom as a center for international cooperation—through a public display of internationalism. More importantly, internationalism itself came to be defined by the nation branding process. The Chinese and British need for nation branding as well as for selling the national image to a foreign audience influenced the way internationalism and internationalist ideas were exercised. Thus, internationalist practices accompanying the exhibition turned to predominantly symbolic forms of international cooperation at the expense of less publicly visible ones to serve the nation branding purposes.

John Gripenotrog then turns to the nation branding process in times of crisis and its limits in overcoming negative images abroad. In the wake of the Manchurian crisis, Japanese nation branding initiatives were directed at the US public to prevent imminent political isolation. By establishing the Society for International Cultural Relations (Kokusai Bunka Shinkōkai, or KBS) in 1934 in order to promote the image of Japan's high culture, Japanese officials aimed to restore its political credibility within the international arena, thereby countering the images associated with Japan's military activities in China. Moreover, branding the image of a highly civilized state served Japanese imperialist ambitions by introducing Japan's culture into foreign countries. Gripenotrog also points to the limits of Japan's positive nation branding initiatives in the face of Japanese military aggression since 1937, only to re-establish the brand image in the years following 1945.

Carolyn Viktorin likewise investigates the nation-branding efforts of dictatorships and their attempt to soften negative images in foreign countries. Viktorin looks at the promotion of mass tourism via international public relations by the Franco government in the United Kingdom as a form of nation branding. Spanish nation branding sought to counterbalance international criticism and to represent authoritarian Spain as a peaceful and welcoming European country. The extensive advertising and PR campaigns evolving in the 1950s and especially the 1960s were established by the Spanish Ministry of Information and Tourism (MIT) and strongly supported by a variety of British professional advertising companies, PR consultants, and journalists. Depoliticizing Spain's image in favor of building a nation brand predicated on culture and scenery was a strategy orchestrated by international public relations experts such as E. D. O'Brien who, in turn, were also deeply involved in the creation and shaping of the official brand itself. As Viktorin shows, the nation branding process—i.e., the promotion of mass tourism—and the ensuing transnational relations were to some extent able to address and overcome international resentments when foreign diplomatic relations remained deadlocked in Spain's political isolation.

Michael Krenn utilizes the concept of nation branding to shed new light on US international art exhibitions during the Cold War. In particular, he discusses the way in which nonstate actors and governmental officials both contribute to the creation of an "official" brand. To Krenn, the nation-branding concept allows scholars to shift focus from the foreign reception of branding campaigns and cultural diplomacy to the domestic arena. The case of the 1946–47 *Advancing American Art* exhibition shows that while the exhibition met with approval in Europe and Asia, it caused profound frictions at home, where many observers felt it represented neither a national identity, nor truly American values. Thus, Krenn demonstrates how a brand may fail if different actors cannot agree on, support, and live the national brand. Krenn explicitly encourages researchers to move beyond traditional studies of cultural diplomacy in an effort to understand the process of image-crafting for foreign and domestic audiences.

Rosemarijn Hoefte introduces us to the importance of nation branding campaigns for postcolonial countries. Hoefte specifically looks at Suriname in the years 1945–2015, and the country's attempt to "put itself on the map." Suriname developed nation-branding strategies such as the 2015 *We Are Suriname* campaign, orchestrated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to attract international

attention and promote foreign investment. The government also directed nation-branding initiatives at domestic audiences in order to address the nation's multicultural and pluralist makeup tinged by a Dutch colonial heritage. Emphasizing the dual purpose of Surinamese nation branding, Hoeffte shows how the processes of nation branding and nation building were intertwined to (re)define national identity: nation building in Suriname not only sought to build state capacity but also construct a society. Suriname used nation branding to represent itself as a diverse yet harmonious nation, encouraging citizens to come to terms with their own past and present.

Similarly, Beata Ociepka investigates the efforts of Eastern European states to (re)brand themselves in the transitional period of the postcommunist era. Focusing on Poland and the Baltic States at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the chapter looks at the nation branding campaigns of four countries. Ociepka discusses their different strategies in defining their new, postcommunist, national identity and positioning themselves within Europe. On a domestic level, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia included their long history and traditions in nation branding narratives in order to abandon their communist past and embody a Western (and in some cases Nordic) identity. Drawing on government institutions, professional advisers, and nation-branding experts while staging international cultural events such as festivals, exhibitions, or sports championships, the four countries targeted audiences in the European Union, the United States, and Russia to gain more visibility and attract foreign investment. In the end, Ociepka encourages us to view nation-branding campaigns in tandem with the geopolitical position of a state, given that both contribute to the perception of the state internationally and domestically.

Part II of this volume, "Promises and Challenges of Nation Branding: Commentaries on Case Studies," invites experts of history and communication studies to critically assess the individual findings presented in the preceding section. Justin Hart, an expert in the history of US foreign relations, discusses entanglements and differences between nation branding and public diplomacy within the historical sciences. Communications scholar Melissa Aronczyk emphasizes the origins of nation branding in marketing, while at the same time sharing critical thoughts on the possibility of historicizing the process of branding nations. Finally, Mads Mordhorst provides insights from the perspective of a business historian by considering the contemporary crisis of nation branding in the context of globalization.

In the volume's last section "Annotated Sources," John Gripenrog, Ilaria Scaglia, and Michael Krenn introduce three primary sources and offer analyses through the lens of the nation-branding paradigm. The authors explore different ways in which governmental and non-governmental actors implemented branding strategies; they highlight the instruments used to do so and explain how these shaped the implementation of specific strategies. The sources display a great variety regarding genre and origin, and provide new input for interpretation.

Three particular aspects emerge from the following essays that may help us to grasp the complexity of nation branding:

1. *Agents*. All authors grapple with the question of agency: what kinds of stakeholders can be identified? Who is involved in the creation, development, and execution of a nation's brand? In contrast to propaganda or cultural diplomacy, nation branding relied—and continues to rely—on both state and nonstate actors in order to develop the image of the nation that was being presented abroad. Over time, brand managers became highly professionalized. As the essays by Viktorin, Kühschelm, and Ociepka show, marketing experts and PR consultants were increasingly responsible for official branding campaigns, thereby introducing business practices into the self-representation of states. Finally, nation-branding campaigns were created and executed not only by fellow nationals. On the contrary, alongside professionalization, states tended to assign the development of the national brand to foreign marketing and nation branding experts. Thus, the self-representation of a state and the images constructed were often at least partially in the hands of internationally active professionals.
2. *Audience*. In the analysis of nation branding, all essays of the volume emphasize the importance of distinguishing particular addressees: who is the target audience? How does an individual target audience perceive an individual brand? What is the national population's opinion regarding these images? On the one hand, as Gripenrog and Viktorin show, nation branding generally reflected the state's intrinsic desire to influence foreign audiences—i.e., governments, organizations, or the public—through self-representation in order to gain political, economic, or cultural power. On the other hand, nation branding was directed at domestic audiences as well. Images

of self-representation were controversial more often than not, particularly in pluralistic societies where individual social groups protested against their exclusion from the projected brand. Both Hoefte and Krenn demonstrate that national public support of or antipathy toward the brand image could determine the success or failure of a nation-branding campaign.

3. *Measures.* All authors agree that measures, strategies, and scope of nation branding differed greatly according to their respective social, political, and cultural contexts, as well as the actors involved. In consequence, they all examine the strategies nation branders employed to promote a particular image. Some, such as Spain, Austria, and Suriname used specific national landscape imagery in an effort to promote mass tourism and to entice foreign investors (see chapters by Viktorin, Kühschelm, Hoefte). Others, including Japan, China, and the United States took advantage of their national culture and presented themselves as advanced civilizations by compiling art exhibitions or hosting garden shows, thereby establishing and improving international relations (see Gripenrog, Scaglia, Krenn). A third group, encompassing the United States and Switzerland, drew on specific (and unique) national characteristics such as freedom of expression, neutrality, or humanitarian commitment to advertise national political power and stability (see McAllister and Kühschelm).

In addition to these three specific characteristics in the history of nation branding over time, we can, moreover, distinguish three trends regarding the research of nation branding phenomena in this volume.

1. *Branding and Building the Nation.* There is, in the eyes of a number of authors, an apparent interplay between nation branding and nation building. To Hoefte, nation building in Suriname's pluralistic society functioned as a form of internal marketing of the constructed state and society that closely overlapped with the branding of the nation and the creation and promotion of a national image abroad. Kühschelm, on the other hand, detects in the branding of Austria's national products an effort to promote patriotic consumption as a prominent element of Austria's nation building after World War II. Both Hoefte and Kühschelm show how nation branding

fosters the construction of a national identity at home while promoting a specific national image to a foreign audience. In a curious twist, controversial discussions over the image of a nation (as portrayed by Krenn) are likely to impact understandings of identity, leading to a more detailed debate about national identities.

2. *The Politics of Rebranding.* Some of the authors in this book struggle with the tension between nation branding and propaganda as a tool of government policy. Viktorin shows that authoritarian dictatorships such as the Franco regime used nation branding as an instrument to bypass their own political isolation and to present themselves to European and US publics as major tourist destinations. Gripentrog retraces how, in the case of Japan, nation branding has been utilized to neutralize the political side effects of military campaigns by displaying high culture as a symbol of peacefulness and civilization. Ocieпка's chapter likewise demonstrates the ways in which postcommunist states worked to overcome negative past images and integrate themselves into the new European political and economic system. Thus, these authors see nation branding as a handy instrument to access "positive memories" from history and tradition in order to soften the blows of current political negative perceptions abroad originating from a state's authoritarian or fascist political system or military aggression.
3. *Branding Strategies of Legitimization.* A third group of authors sees nation branding as a distinct strategy to gain national and international recognition. As McAllister shows, the "Union brand" earned the republican form of government international recognition and endorsement as legitimate representative of the United States during the Civil War, while at the same time discouraging international powers from recognizing the Confederacy. In a similar vein, Scaglia identifies the ways in which nation branding served as an instrument for Nanjing China to present itself as both the legitimate heir of Chinese art, culture, and history, as well as the legitimate representative of Chinese civilization on the world stage. Krenn's essay on American art likewise shows that there is often great internal disagreement among domestic audiences regarding the legitimacy of the national image that is being produced by nation branding campaigns. In all three cases, nation branding served as state tool both to obtain

international recognition and to legitimate representative power at home.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that historicizing nation branding focuses on investigating the genesis of nation branding. It does not mean to uncritically hail the current nation branding industry. None of the authors in this volume seek to explicitly provide political advice, nor do they assert that nation-branding campaigns effectively “work” (or not). But as historians, we can use diverse sources, case studies, and actions on the part of a broad array of actors—from William Seward to Simon Anholt—as well as sources pertaining to branding activities ranging from antique artifacts to advertising manuals, in order to explore conflicting perspectives regarding the nation and its images. Collectively, the authors in this volume look at historical attempts to market a state to a specific audience by creating unique national selling points. On a conceptual level, they present the opportunities and challenges for scholars of history, sociology, or political science examining nation branding as a marketing technique, thereby adding new perspectives and tools for analysis to the current canon of cultural diplomacy or soft power history. If our selection is geographically illustrative rather than exhaustive, such limitation should be understood as an inspiration and call for further research to future historians working in this new and dynamic interdisciplinary field.

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Notes

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