NATION BRAND COMMUNICATIONS GO DIGITAL: CAN IT HELP TO GAIN NATION BRANDING GOALS?

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Globalisation and digitalisation blur the borders between countries and they lose their uniqueness. Relations between countries are becoming close; however, national priorities and ideas of each country are becoming less clear. Nation branding helps to bridge the gap between how a state positions itself and how it is actually perceived. Digital communication tools provide benefits for the realisation of a nation brand. The development of digitalisation as one of the priorities for a country as well as the growth of the number of "digital" audiences necessitate the use of digital communication tools in the implementation of nation branding. Although the use of digital communication tools is common in the commercial and non-commercial sectors, there is a lack of research establishing the relationship between the goals of nation branding and the relevant digital communication tools to achieve these goals. This article analyses the possibilities of digital communication tools in reaching the goals of nation branding. The concepts of a nation brand and nation branding are defined, and the main functions of nation branding are highlighted. There were selected five digital communication tools that are of the greatest interest for the implementation of nation branding; their advantages were identified. Digital communication tools are aligned with the goals of nation branding. The capabilities of digital communication tools to achieve the goals of nation branding are determined.

Keywords: nation brand, nation branding, digital communications, communication tools, nation branding goals, digitalisation.

INTRODUCTION

All countries compete to attract limited international resources to increase the country's exports [Loo, Davies, 2006; Papadopoulos, Hamzaoui-Essoussi, Banna, 2016], attract foreign tourists [Beverland, Lindgreen, 2002], increase foreign direct investment [Papadopoulos Hamzaoui-Essoussi, Banna, 2016], and increase the number of interna-

tional students [Martens, Starke, 2008]. A nation brand allows the management of the image of the country and helps attract the flow of limited resources, successfully competing with dynamically changing competitors.

Digitalisation significantly affects nation branding. The positioning of a country is moving towards digitalisation, which means, the idea of a "digital country" will become the basis for the positioning of countries [Korjus, 2017]. There is also a growing number of people for whom the main way of interacting is digital communication, and the communication tools of nation branding are being digitised. Nation branding includes and deals with a large number of stakeholders[1]. Interactions with all kinds of stakeholders should be realised through relevant channels with the help of relevant messages [Fan, 2010]. In this case, digital communication tools are becoming increasingly important.

Digital communication tools provide opportunities to quickly monitor, analyse, and control the effectiveness of interaction with the target audience, evaluate their requests and the level of satisfaction [Uzunoglu, Kip, 2014; Taiminen, 2016]. It is important to take into account the risks of using digital channels. Security risks, along with possible errors during implementation, can lead to a loss of trust[2] which is crucial for nation branding.

The development of digitalisation as one of the priorities for a country, as well as the growth of the number of "digital" audiences, makes it necessary to use digital communication tools in the implementation of nation branding.

The use of digital communication tools is still at the stage of development, as existing practices and research do not provide a clear answer to the effectiveness of such tools. The effectiveness of the implementation of nation brand communications is evaluated for the citizens of the country by the research of patriotism [Ishii, Watanabe, 2015], and for foreign stakeholders by the nation brand rankings [Mariutti, Tench, 2016]. There is a gap in the research concerning what goals of nation branding could be reached with a particular digital communication tool.

This article rethinks digital communications to form a classification depending on the relevance of digital communication tools in the process of the nation branding tasks realisation. The contributions of the project are twofold. First, the advantages of digital communication tools within the framework of nation branding are highlighted. Second, the opportunities of implementing the nation branding goals with the help of digital communication tools are identified.

The paper is structured as follows. Section one provides an analysis of the main approaches to the definition of nation branding and nation brand and identifies the

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[1] Within the framework of nation branding, stakeholders are accepted as those who can be influenced by the activities of the country and who themselves can influence the activities of the country. The main groups of stakeholders in nation branding are citizens, business representatives, government representatives, non-profit organisations, and tourists. Depending on whether the stakeholders are local or foreign, there is a distinction between external (local) and internal (foreign) stakeholders.

[2] Within the framework of this research trust is accepted as a variable that appear as a key to the development of a nation brand. Trust is a confidence that a brand has ability to deliver promises and brand trust provides a form of guarantee for quality [Anholt, 2003, p. 12]. Trust stimulates public support for different nation branding activities and communications.

main nation branding goals. Section two reveals the peculiarities of the nation branding communications, relevant digital communication tools and identifies the benefits of the selected tools, also identifies the most relevant tools for nation branding goals. Section three matches digital communication tools and nation branding goals. The research findings and directions for future research are summarized in conclusion.

NATION BRAND AND NATION BRANDING: DEFINITIONS AND GOALS

A nation brand increases the competitiveness of the country [Hassan, 2019] in the struggle to attract limited global resources [Steenkamp, 2019]. A strong positive image of the country attracts foreign investment, promotes business development, increases exports, and raises the level of confidence in nation products [Pop at al., 2020]. The most common reason for a country to develop a nation brand is economic factors [Anholt, 2004; Gudjonsson, 2005; Dinnie, 2008; Alam, Almotairi, Gaadar, 2013; Hao et al., 2021]. However, the nation brand increases the competitiveness of companies operating on the territory of the country, not only due to economic factors, but also social, political, cultural, etc. [Martens, Starke, 2008; Fan, 2010; Kaneva, 2011; Pop et al., 2020].

The image of a country is formed in the minds of people based on a set of associations based on various manifestations of the country. The process in which associations are the result of the purposeful management efforts to create specific meanings is called nation branding [Kotler, Gertner, 2002]. One of the most important features of nation branding is the involvement of government agencies, businesses, and local communities in the nation brand management process [Anholt, 2004]. Accordingly, nation branding is aimed at creating a certain image among external and internal stakeholders [Bolin, Stahlberg, 2010].

The manifestations of a country could be carried out by internal or external stakeholders and could be controlled or uncontrolled by the country. Those acts of communication between the country and the rest of the world that support and reinforce nation brands are called nation brand communications [Anholt, 2005]. That means that communications of nation branding imply managerial efforts, and a nation brand is not a spontaneously created entity and it could and should be managed.

Nation branding bridges the gap between how the country positions itself and how it is actually perceived. Communications become a tool for the development and promotion of values which are the fundamental components of the nation brand.

According to one approach, nation branding is derived from place branding and takes over the features of its implementation [Kotler, Gertner, 2002]. Place branding originates from the type of branding that is found in the commercial sphere and operates within the commercial concepts in branding, such as corporate identity, public relations, advertising and graphic design. But at the same time the aims of place and nation branding are different. Place branding is about promoting a product or service to the target audience. Nation branding is another direction, since there is no product or service to sell, no advertising purpose, and nation branding appeals to people to see the country

from a different angle [Fan, 2010]. For this reason, the copying of commercial methods and tools is not relevant for nation brands and cannot be used in the implementation of nation branding.

Place branding focuses on the import of foreign economic assets (for example, tourists, talents, investments, etc.), while nation branding also focuses on the export of domestic tangible goods and services. "Nation branding occurs when the public speaks to the public" [Anholt, 2003, p. 123] and it helps the country to protect national business activity, increase the value of national brands, improve the standard of living of its citizens and increase national prosperity [Gudjonsson, 2005]. Accordingly, nation branding has a positive effect on economic results. And this influence of the national brand on economic goals underlines its similarity to the place branding [Kotler, Gertner, 2002]. On the other hand, nation branding differs from place branding by taking into account political activity [Rodner, Kerrigan, 2018]. And in this aspect nation branding appeals to the idea that country images perceived by both internal and external audiences should be close to each other. That means all nation brand communications should be interconnected translating the same meaning by relevant tools.

A nation brand is mainly perceived as a way of recreating nations both through ideology and through actions. Nation branding is seen as a political tool to strengthen its economic position and compete with the economic, financial, or military influence of other countries.

Regardless of the idea the nation brand is based on, it is important to promote it purposefully and systematically to the world community [Olins, 1999]. That is why the process of communicating a nation brand is always preceded by careful and critical analytical work, which allows us to understand what the current ideas about this country are. And it also allows us to identify the main "carriers" of these ideas and to find out the reasons why such ideas are formed.
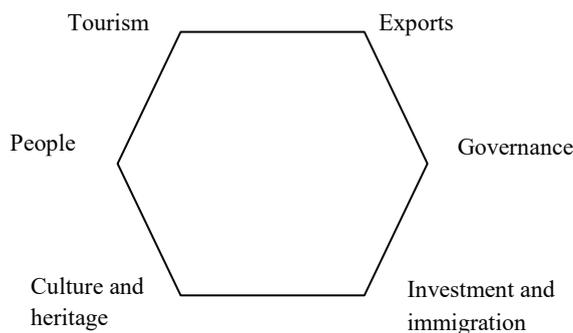
A successful nation brand allows to improve the external and internal political image of the country [Kaneva, 2011]. It could also increase the level of the country's political influence in the international arena, increase the volume of exports of branded goods and services, strengthen international interactions and partnerships, stimulate feelings of nation identity, and increase the overall competitiveness of the country. However, the lack of a link in the form of a single idea and set of values leads to the fact that all industries in the country work separately, form different meanings, and do not achieve a synergistic effect in creating a nation brand. All areas: business, science, population, and tourism should be linked by values and communicate the ideas of the nation brand to create synergy. It is also necessary to systematically cover all channels of mass communication, designed to enhance the promotion of a positive image of the country.

One of the most common concepts for developing, managing, and maintaining a nation brand is the nation brand "hexagon"[3]: a comprehensive, diversified approach op-

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[3] Nation brand hexagon, also known as the Anholt-GfK nation brands hexagon, is a visual metaphor of a concept developed to assess the nation brand across six main variables that identify country reputation and nation brand strength.

posed to one specialised and with a focus on a single aspect (e.g., tourism) [Anholt, 2005]. This model was created by S. Anholt, whose research interests cover both place branding and nation branding. The components of the nation brand hexagon form the method of accounting used in nation brand ranking "the Anholt Ipsos nation brands Index (NBI)". It is presented in the form of a hexagon that shows the six elements of a nation brand: tourism, exports, policy, investment and immigration, culture and heritage, and people (Figure).

Figure. Nation brand "hexagon"

S o u r c e: [Anholt, 2005, p. 297].

Six points of the nation brand are identified as follows [Anholt, 2005]:

1) *tourism.* This point of the hexagon determines the level of interest in visiting the country and the attractiveness of natural and cultural landmarks;

2) *exports.* This point means that the perceptions of goods and services from a country are established, when consumers purposefully use services from a particular supplier country. It is exports that determine the degree of interest of buyers who actively seek (or avoid) purchasing products produced from a particular country;

3) *governance.* This point reflects public opinion on the integrity, competence, and legality of the country authorities and describe the level of individual confidence in the government of each country. It also includes the perception of the government's policy on such global issues as democracy, justice, poverty, social policy, and environmental protection;

4) *investment and immigration.* This point appeals to the ability of a country to attract financial as well as human capital. Investment and related migration determine the attractiveness of a country in terms of living, working, or studying, and demonstrate the perception of the economic and social situation in the country;

5) *culture and heritage.* This point is aimed at reflecting the world's perception of the country's cultural heritage, assesses the modern culture, including cinema, music, fine arts, literature, and sports;

6) *people.* This point of the hexagon relates to human capital and measures the opinion on the level of education, knowledge acquisition, the skills of the workforce, the openness and friendliness of society, the hospitality of the nation, and non-discrimination.

Each element has a positive impact on the nation brand value, which means, the more successful the nation brand is, the more business investments it has, the more actively tourism develops, etc., and vice versa.

Based on the elements of the nation brand, the goals of nation branding are as follows: 1) attracting foreign investment, businesses and talents; 2) promoting the country's cultural heritage among internal and external stakeholders; 3) creating a positive image of the country's internal stakeholders; 4) boosting export trade; 5) increasing domestic and foreign tourism; 6) forming a positive image of the country's policy among external and internal stakeholders.

The overall nation brand is improved when all the elements of the hexagon follow a single strategy. It is less effective to reduce the nation branding campaign only to the promotion of one of elements of the nation brand hexagon since there may be dissonance in the perception of the nation brand.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION TOOLS: GAINING NATION BRANDING GOALS

The most common approaches to differentiating communication tools do not add value when it comes to the digital communications of a nation brand. Above the line (ATL), below the line (BTL), through the line (TTL)[4] combine all digital communications into an extremely large group [Burke, 2009; Iqbal, 2013]. The paid, owned, earned (POE)[5] model is not relevant to the country, since for the country, POE communication tools are grouped differently depending on the internal characteristics of the country, and "paid" communications are often perceived as propaganda [Pollay, David, Wang, 1990]. However, communications in nation branding are not identical to propaganda, because, according to the logic of nation branding, they do not communicate what is not true. The communications of the nation brand aim at reflecting relevant information to relevant audiences through relevant channels. Therefore, the role of digital communication tools in the formation of a nation brand in the modern world is significant.

Traditional digital communication tools (search engine optimization — SEO[6]) — digital banners, prerolls, etc. — are well studied in the context of nation branding [Dinnie, 2008; Vlasova, Kulikova, 2018; Papp-Váry, Farkas, 2019]. The implementation of na-

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[4] The division on ATL, BTL, TTL communications — an approach to differentiate communication tools. ATL communications focus at directing the communication towards the mass market. BTL communications are focused and directed towards specific groups of customers. TTL communications involves an integrated approach where both ATL and BTL are combined.
[5] POE model — an approach to differentiating content distribution tools based on the nature of the content origin.
[6] SEO — the science of improving a website to increase its visibility when people search for products or services.

tion branding communications has peculiarities due to the specific features of the nation brand itself. The basis for achieving the goals of nation branding is to build trust among various groups of internal and external stakeholders through communications [Olins, 1999; Anholt, 2005]. In addition, the nation brand, to a greater extent than product or corporate brands, depends on the reasons to believe (RTB)[7]. Every communication implemented by a nation brand through any of its representatives (business, government agencies, non-profit organisations, etc.) must be confirmed by RTBs. The brand does not allow false promises, because in this case, all its value for both external and internal stakeholders will be damaged [Olins, 1999; Fan, 2010]. The most important risk, in this case, appeals to the fact that the nation brand has a large number of stakeholders, and the effect of "breaking promises" will be large-scale, as it will affect all stakeholders and affect all the messages of the nation brand. For the same reason, translating the brand idea nation branding has limits in tools, channels, and methods of communications. Accordingly, the communications of the nation brand should be modern and at the same time patriotic, reflect the traditions and policies of the country, form a consistently positive image of the country, and maintain trust among external and internal stakeholders.

For the analysis, five digital communication tools were selected. These tools meet the requirements of nation branding, but the ways to implement them within the framework of nation branding are not obvious. Thus it is necessary to identify and reveal the opportunities selected tools create in the context of gaining nation branding goals. The selected tools are: 1) blogging and social networks; 2) video hosting; 3) digital TV; 4) eLearning; 5) In-game advertising.

Blogging and social networks. Social networks create a space where opinions are exchanged, where all sorts of events are discussed, and where public opinion is formed and can be influenced. Bloggers carry out their activities mainly on social networks. Today they are the media and are gradually replacing professional journalists. Journalists are obliged to state the facts, while bloggers have the right to express their opinion. They both find themselves in the digital space and the one who is listened to more and who influences the most people is the "right" one.

The boundaries between social networks and messengers are blurred and successfully executed features and directions are being implemented in various platforms. Messengers are turning into multifunctional platforms. So, for example, WeChat includes integrations with various companies and the user can interact with these companies through WeChat. Telegram provides the opportunity to conduct your own channel, filling it not only with text, audio, and video content but also with links, questions, voting, and other interactive tools.

The development of blogging, its formats, platforms and tools for its implementation have led to the emergence of influencers. Influencers in social networks are opinion leaders and reliable sources of information for their followers. They influence the

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[7] RTB — the grounds for assurance, the factors through which the brand confirms its promises to various stakeholders.

formation of the views and decisions of their followers [Magno, 2017; Kay, Mulcahy, Parkinson, 2020]. They strengthen the influence of the information they receive and pass on to others [Uzunoglu, Kip, 2014; Jalilvand, 2017]. The most important advantage of influencers is that they give access to a specific audience. This audience is relatively constant, so influencers carry out targeted communications.

Thus, social networks provide an opportunity to interact with different audiences, and to participate in the formation of public opinion. Influencers are able to communicate with a targeted, positive audience.

Video hosting. Video hosting is a platform that provides the ability to store video content. The most popular video hosting[8] service is YouTube. YouTube has more than 2 billion registered users, and people watch more than 1 billion hours of videos every day. Taking into account the reach, it is obvious that one of the main advantages of YouTube is access to a wide audience. YouTube provides various ways to interact with the audience, including not only uploading content to the platform but also advertising within someone else's content (for example, prepolls). Video hosting services have the advantage of creating audience engagement. Therefore, call-to-actions (CTA) can be implemented effectively, aimed at the transition of the audience to third-party organisations.

An important feature of video hosting is security. Although the posted content is stored on third-party resources, the video hosting service is responsible for its security. Video hosting also provides the opportunity to track statistics of how the audience interacts with video content and provides management tools [Lu, Cheng, 2020].

Video hosting platforms are developing in various directions. Some develop a variety of tools for interacting with the audience, while others transform themselves into online cinemas or digital TV. Remaining exclusively a video hosting service, YouTube has formed new areas of interaction with a young audience, and at present, for a young audience, it is the main source of information about the world [Chiang, Hsiao, 2015]. It is also used as a search engine.

Digital TV. The importance of brand promotion in movies and TV shows has been discussed for a long time. The Hobbit Trilogy brought significant effects on tourist arrivals in New Zealand [Li et al., 2017] and made it possible to form a New Zealand nation brand based on the landscape features of the country [Insch, 2013]. Digital TV at present is a serious competitor to the traditional film industry (which was made especially evident during the pandemic) and provides exceptional opportunities for communication not only for product brands but also for nation brands.

Among digital TV platforms, the trend towards own content generation is clearly noticeable. Digital TV platforms such as Netflix, Disney+, and Okko are not just video hosting companies, but also content producers. Content available exclusively in digital TV is not inferior in quality. Digital TV platforms give opportunities to evaluate objectively the effectiveness of content, interact more closely with the audience, instantly respond to requests and also track emerging trends. Knowing the mood of their audience,

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[8] Video hosting — a server on the internet that is used to store and deliver video-content.

such platforms can create relevant content, including the interests and values choosing them based on the data gathered about the audience.

Cinema has a significant impact on society. This impact is so high that it affects not only the psychology of an individual, but also forms a certain consciousness in society. The society in which politicians operate also determines how they use cinema for their own purposes. The more open and democratic society becomes, the more relevant it is to study the peculiarities of how films and their images influence the public consciousness and how film productions influence mass moods and mass behaviour.

Through the cinema, the character of the nation could be formed, and the guiding principles and values of the nation and the country as a whole could be reflected. Cinema is able to give an impulse to the development of various areas of a country's activity.

eLearning. eLearning is a separate communication tool since it creates interactions with wide and diverse audiences and is developing rapidly. Learning is a significant part of human life, and the pandemic has demonstrated a desire to learn something new [Paudel, 2021]. Educational content is actively developing, and traditional educational institutions are no longer the only channels for obtaining knowledge.

The boundaries of eLearning are wide, including massive open online course (MOOC) platforms, video content on hosting platforms, and educational content on the digital systems of companies and educational organisations. eLearning is not a digital analog of offline education, as it provides a personalised format of interaction, and the users choose their own path and speed of learning. In addition, eLearning creates a more comfortable learning environment, partially eliminates the stress associated with offline learning, and creates a healthy emotional environment.

eLearning as a communication tool is not well-studied at present. There are still many questions concerning the details of how eLearning should be used during the realisation of nation branding. Commercial brands do not have the answers either. This direction is still evolving, but the benefits that eLearning provides for interactions with a wide range of audiences is promising.

In-game advertising. In-game advertising is delivered dynamically and could be dependent on the time, the geographical location of the player, and other parameters that could be taken from, for example, the player's profile (gender, age, etc.). In-game advertising significantly increases the reach of the target audience. The gaming audience is diverse in terms of age, gender and geography, but the core of that audience could be revealed according to the game's theme and mechanics. A large number of games are aimed at a young audience. Introduction to esports gives an opportunity to "grow" a young audience from a young age and learn to speak the same language as them as early as possible.

The gaming audience is characterised by their high engagement and readiness for interactive communications [Zhang et al., 2017]. However, they need high-quality content and well-developed integrations. The necessary requirement for in-game advertising is the relevance of the content to the game and its audience. Therefore, this kind of communication can be implemented using a wide range of mechanisms and tools (since

communication is carried out in the game space) and can form a completely new consumer experience.

The practice of using games to achieve non-commercial goals is no longer a novelty. In an attempt to reach young people, the Obama re-election campaign placed ads in 18 games, including Burnout Paradise [Sinclair, 2008]. In-game advertising gives opportunities to manage image by forming positive associations. It also allows reaching a specific audience that is difficult or impossible with other communication tools.

Interestingly, the boundaries among the mentioned digital communication tools are blurring. For example, gaming is combined with eLearning, and in the Minecraft online game, universities hold various educational events[9]. Video hosting services are becoming digital TV, as, for example, ivi (LLC IVI.RU) which initially was a video hosting platform became an online movie theatre, and now it produces its own content and is one of the main players of digital TV platforms in Russia [Henni, 2019]. Since the digital space is practically unlimited, the integration of various digital communication tools provides broad opportunities for implementing relevant interactions with different audiences.

It is important to note that the mentioned digital communication tools belong, as a rule, to commercial organisations, universities, or individual entrepreneurs. And in any case, it is all about making a profit. Accordingly, providing these tools for use within the framework of nation branding implies the need to obtain benefits. But a successful nation brand creates a competitive advantage for organisations functioning in the country. And the management of the nation branding should include representatives not only of the government but also of business, non-profit organisations, educational institutions, and the population. The inclusion to the nation brand management committee, the organisations and people who could contribute to the communication of the nation brand will lead to a mutually beneficial partnership.

MATCH DIGITAL COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND NATION BRANDING GOALS

Selected digital communication tools generate certain benefits for brands in case of usage. These benefits relate not only to the scope but also to the capacity to form experiences and opinions. For nation branding, trust is of great importance, and it should be accepted as a fundamental principle of nation branding. The highlighted digital communication tools contribute to the achievement of nation branding goals in different ways. The most important characteristics are presented in the Table.

As illustrated by Table, selected digital communication tools could be used to achieve various nation branding goals. The advantage of the table is that it highlights the main principles that need to be taken into account when identifying appropriate communication tools for nation branding. The advantages of each tool should be compared not only with the results anticipated, but primarily with the nation branding goals. And the choice of the tool is based on its compliance with the goals that the nation branding follows.

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[9] For example: HSE Minecraft. URL: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8l-nftlzgfUp2R3Aeur2wg (accessed: 15.05.2022).

Table. **Digital communications tools in reaching the goals of nation brands**

Digital communication tool	Tool's benefit	Relevant nation brand's goal	Comment
1	2	3	4
Blogging and Social networks	Building trusted relationships with the audience Targeted communications	Attracting foreign investment, businesses, and talents Promoting the country's cultural heritage among internal and external stakeholders Creating a positive image of the country's internal stakeholders Boosting export trade Increasing domestic and foreign tourism	Less useful in: forming a positive image of the country's policy among external and internal stakeholders
Video hosting	Access to a wide audience Wide range of formats for interactions with the audience Targeted communications Audience engagement	Promoting a country's cultural heritage among internal and external stakeholders Creating a positive image of the country's internal stakeholders Increasing domestic and foreign tourism	Less useful in: attracting foreign investment, businesses and talents boosting export trade forming a positive image of the country's policy among external and internal stakeholders
Digital TV	Ability to form culture and rituals	Attracting foreign investment, businesses, and talents Promoting the country's cultural heritage among internal and external stakeholders Creating a positive image of the country's internal stakeholders Boosting export trade Increasing domestic and foreign tourism Forming a positive image of the country's policy among external and internal stakeholders	Usefulness depends on the platform

1	2	3	4
eLearning	Ability to form culture and rituals Personalised interaction Targeted communications	Attracting foreign investment, businesses, and talents Promoting the country's cultural heritage among internal and external stakeholders Creating a positive image of the country's internal stakeholders Increasing domestic and foreign tourism	Less useful in: boosting export trade forming a positive image of the country's policy among external and internal stakeholders
In-game advertising	Access to a specific audience Ability to form culture Image management Opportunities to create a brand-new consumer experience	Attracting foreign investment, businesses, and talents Promoting the country's cultural heritage among internal and external stakeholders Boosting export trade	Less useful in: creating a positive image of the country's internal stakeholders increasing domestic and foreign tourism forming a positive image of the country's policy among external and internal stakeholders

The other important advantage of the table is that it evolves an approach to communication tools with the focus on understanding aims that a tool is less relevant to gain. Communication tools in branding and especially in nation branding do not work separately. In a holistic manner they are used to achieve strategic goals [Dinnie et al., 2010]. Hence benefits and weaknesses of each tool should be revealed in context of gaining nation branding goals. The following sections present a closer look at the implementation features of the selected tools.

Blogging and social networks. Blogging and social networks could be used to achieve almost all the goals of nation branding due to the possibility of building trusting relationships with the audience. Influencers communicate with an audience that trusts them. It is important that this audience could be both internal and external for a nation brand. And this makes it possible to spread communications beyond geographical borders. Therefore, influencers can indirectly stimulate the development of exports.

In the context of nation branding, influencers stimulate the beginning of a dialogue between nation brands and audiences. Influencers do not carry out advertising or propaganda in its purest form. In their messages, there is no unnecessary obsession and there are no aggressive sales techniques. But there is a personal recommendation or review

from an opinion leader who is not directly related to the nation brand. Such content is often perceived as a reliable source of information. Therefore, influencers can communicate information about the advantages of the country to both external and internal stakeholders, stimulate the development of tourism, reflecting the attractiveness of the country as a tourist destination.

Influencers, to a lesser extent, are effective in forming a positive image of country policy, if they are not the kind of influencers whose main subject is related to politics. Influencers differentiate according to topics and have a trusting relationship with the audience and within a specific subject. Politics is a rather sensitive topic and the influencer risks losing the trust of his or her audience by getting involved in the communication of a certain attitude to politics. On the other hand, the use of this tool confronts nation branding, the corrective principle of which is to build trust among stakeholders.

Video hosting. Video hosting services provide access to a wide audience, attracting attention by video content. Most people perceive information primarily through vision. Therefore, in tasks of communicating information or persuading somebody, visualisation is one of the most effective tools. Video content is easy to distribute, and users actively share interesting and useful videos.

Video hosting services create less interactive communication with users, and due to this, they do not create trust. They affect the attraction of investment and boosting export trade. At the same time, they can support the attraction of talent as an advanced level of tourism development.

Video hosting services are less appropriate for the formation of attitudes towards the policy of the country. On such platforms, there is an abundance of communication noise with various kinds of content, themes, speakers, etc. To communicate a certain idea through such a level of noise, intensive communication is necessary, which in the case of nation branding, could be perceived negatively as pressure on opinions. Since trust plays a significant role in nation branding, video hosting should be used in moderation and within the framework of the goals for which it is relevant.

Digital TV. Digital TV is a relevant tool for all the nation branding goals mentioned before. The main thing here is that content producers use stereotypes while relying on public opinion surveys and other sources of information about nation characters. At the same time, movies, cartoons, and TV shows help the viewer to form an opinion about a particular nation, country, or phenomenon by using stereotypes. This helps to increase the ideological impact of film production, as it involves imitating the external and internal features of movie characters according to the principle "it is accepted so, it is right so". At the same time, stereotypes in the cinema are a socially significant phenomenon, since they are generated by the appropriate culture and are presented in the nation mentality.

Digital TV could stimulate the development of domestic and foreign tourism. And this is one of the most widespread nation branding goals that digital TV implements at present. In general, it can be noted that the opportunities of digital TV in promoting nation priorities are not used intensively by various countries, including Russia. Digital TV

is rapidly replacing traditional TV and even partly "stealing" cinema viewers (to which the pandemic made a great contribution). Accordingly, the possibilities of digital TV in the communication of certain values corresponding to the nation brand of the country are growing.

However, it is important to keep in mind that achieving the goals of nation branding depends on the choice of digital TV platforms. The values of the digital TV platform should not contradict the values of the nation brand. This does not mean that the brand of the platform should be based solely on the values of the nation brand. It is important that there should be no direct contradiction, as this leads to a blurring of the platform's brand. And also, such a kind of situation could lead to a decrease in the trust of the audience. Therefore, the choice of a digital TV platform should be based on the nation brand values.

eLearning. eLearning plays the role of useful video content. At the same time, it has the capabilities for personalised interaction. This feature of eLearning allows it to benefit in attracting business investment and talents. eLearning does not have territorial borders, but in itself reflects a certain country affiliation, which contributes to the promotion of domestic and foreign tourism.

Education is a significant part of society. Education translates the internal culture of the country and its heritage. The transition to digital technologies has not reduced the importance of education, so eLearning contributes to the promotion of the country's culture and heritage among internal and external stakeholders.

As mentioned earlier, the culture of electronic education has not yet developed, so the value boundaries of communication are not defined. This provides opportunities for nation branding to lay down a base of eLearning culture including its meanings and communication than through the framework of the electronic education processes. In other words, the nation brand can stimulate the "consumption" of eLearning, determine the rituals of eLearning implementation and traditions of the development of eLearning, not only among consumers, but also among the creators.

eLearning and education itself is not perceived by general public as a politicized tool. And the public is not afraid that eLearning can be aimed at forming an attitude to the country's politics. Accordingly, to a lesser extent, eLearning as a tool is relevant to the goal of nation branding related to forming a positive image of the country's policy among external and internal stakeholders. eLearning has a limited impact on exports, but this impact is usually associated with the export of educational materials. Since today, this is a rather narrow direction compared to other types of exports, eLearning is not effective enough in achieving the goal of boosting export growth through the framework of nation branding.

In-game advertising. In-game advertising is actively developing. For nation branding, the most important thing is that this digital communications tool provides access to specific audiences. As a rule, gamers are the audience that is difficult to identify in other channels. Interaction with them on "their territory" is effective and allows you to form positive experiences.

In-game advertising capabilities in creating a new consumer experience provide a wide range of opportunities for promoting a country's cultural heritage among internal and external stakeholders, as the boundaries of virtual reality are not limited.

As part of the virtual world, in-game advertising is less relevant to nation branding goals related to the real world. In-game advertising is not aimed at stimulating tourism. At the same time, in-game advertising allows attracting investment, businesses, and talent, as it indirectly reflects the level of development of the digital infrastructure. In general, the possibilities of implementing In-game advertising are quite wide, and modern practices demonstrate only a limited list of them.

CONCLUSION

Nation branding is aimed at developing the image of the country and its communication, both inside and outside the country, based on positive values and ideas about the country. And the nation brand is used as the semantic basis for targeted communication campaigns aimed at promoting trade, tourism, and domestic investment. In these processes, the role of digital communication tools is significant. They allow us to take a fresh look at the nation brand and provide opportunities for communicating the meaning of the nation brand, not only to internal, but also to external stakeholders. Digital communication tools are able not only to create personalised access to specific audiences, but also to manage communications and measure their effectiveness. The five digital communication tools analysed in the study stand out among other tools because they are able to form an image, can ensure the unity of the meanings of the nation brand, and also affect all six components of the nation brand.

To sum up, the study suggests that the use of digital communication tools not only encourages the development of the nation brand, but also contributes to the identification of new practices in the use of the tools themselves. Nation branding is not propaganda, so it is looking for creative ways to communicate nation priorities. Nation branding is different from corporate and product branding, so it pursues other goals related to building trust among internal and external stakeholders. And finally, nation branding promotes more than one of the country's industries or sectors, so the implementation of nation branding includes representatives of various areas of the country's activities.

As for directions for future research, we should note the study of the selected tools within the framework of product branding since their effectiveness seems relevant to evaluate on the example of product brands. Besides, the relationship between nation branding activities and the ratings of nation brands remains a big question. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assess the impact that specific digital communication tools of nation branding made on the various components of the nation brand`s value. Third, it seems interesting to study the factors that impact the effectiveness of various digital communication tools within the framework of nation branding. Finally, attention could be paid to the effect of sharing the usage of: 1) various digital communication tools, and

2) the combination of digital and traditional communication tools in achieving the goals of nation branding.

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КОММУНИКАЦИИ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОГО БРЕНДА ПЕРЕХОДЯТ НА ЦИФРОВЫЕ ТЕХНОЛОГИИ: ПОМОЖЕТ ЛИ ЭТО В ДОСТИЖЕНИИ ЦЕЛЕЙ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОГО БРЕНДИНГА?

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Рост глобализации и цифровизации приводит к тому, что границы между странами размываются и в результате утрачивается их уникальность. Взаимодействие между странами усиливается, а национальные приоритеты и идеи становятся все менее отчетливыми. Национальный брендинг помогает преодолеть разрыв между тем, что государство заявляет о себе, и тем, как оно воспринимается в действительности. Развитие цифровизации как одного из приоритетов для страны, а также увеличение числа «цифровых» аудиторий обусловливают необходимость использования цифровых коммуникационных инструментов при реализации национального брендинга. Несмотря на то что в настоящее время использование цифровых инструментов коммуникации широко распространено в коммерческом и некоммерческом секторах, существует недостаток исследований, в которых устанавливается взаимосвязь между целями национального брендинга и цифровыми коммуникационными инструментами для их достижения. В статье анализируются возможности цифровых инструментов коммуникации в достижении целей национального брендинга. Определены понятия национального бренда и национального брендинга, а также выделены основные функции национального брендинга. Выделено пять инструментов цифровых коммуникаций, представляющих наибольший интерес для реализации национального брендинга, и раскрыты их преимущества. Инструменты цифровых коммуникаций сопоставлены с целями национального брендинга. Определены возможности цифровых коммуникационных инструментов в достижении целей национального брендинга.

Ключевые слова: национальный бренд, национальный брендинг, цифровые коммуникации, инструменты коммуникаций, цели национального брендинга, диджитализация.

К о н т а к т н а я и н ф о р м а ц и я

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