



## Observing Nation Branding Campaigns through Social Media

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### Abstract

In a 2019 article titled "Evaluating the effectiveness of China's nation branding with data from social media", we looked into the perspectives and attitudes of the netizens on Quora to find out about their attitudes toward China's national image. A total of 7680 comments to hot topics on Quora were collected during a span of two years. The results of content analysis indicated that the ranking of effectiveness of the different aspects of China's nation branding is as follows: (1) history, (2) place, (3) language, (4) political and economic systems, (5) culture, (6) people, (7) infrastructure, and (8) social institution. Based on the results of the study, a model for evaluating the success or effectiveness of nation-branding campaigns was proposed.

**Keywords:** Nation branding; National image; Social media

### Description

Nation branding refers to the adoption of marketing and promotion strategies to raise public awareness about the national image of a certain country and to attract diverse customers, including citizens, tourists, and companies. In the geopolitical scenario of today, nation branding can be regarded as a source of soft power. Positive national image helps boost the soft power of a country. Therefore, it is a crucial strategy for conducting public diplomacy.

China has also hosted a series of nation branding campaigns in recent years to enhance its national image. In order to study and evaluate the effectiveness of China's nation-branding campaigns as well as how well the general public receives them, we need to look into the perspectives and attitudes of the populace to find out if they understand and accept such ideas. Therefore, this article scrutinizes the public opinions toward China as reflected by the questions and answers on social media in order to analyze

and evaluate China's nation-branding strategies and measures [1].

A theoretical framework with eleven indices were used as the basic criteria for evaluation. From December 2016 to October 2018, we selected 384 questions with over 1000 views and collected the top 20 corresponding answers with over 50 upvotes and included them in our corpus. We hired two annotators who were proficient in English and had in-depth understanding and mastery of Chinese economic, political, and cultural knowledge. In the precoding stage, the two annotators provided tentative coding such as "Chinese schools," "Chinese company," "Chinese food," and so on, to capture the specific meaning of an answer. Then in the first cycle coding, we further summarized the specific codes in the precoding process into the 42 codes with a broader meaning. Then based on the theoretical framework of the previous section, we further grouped these codes into eight categories in the second coding cycle. After the annotators finished coding, we further grouped those answers based on the categories of the framework set out in the "Nation-branding" section. For the answers in this research, they only represent eight categories, namely, social institution, infrastructure, people, culture, political and social systems, language, place, and history. In the next step, the percentage of positive, negative, and neutral answers under each category was calculated and the eight categories were ranked based on the percentage of positive answers to find out what aspects of China's nation branding were the most and the least effective.

As the findings show, the ranking of effectiveness of the different aspects of China's nation branding is as follows: (1) history, (2) place, (3) language, (4) political and economic systems, (5) culture, (6) people, (7) infrastructure, and (8) social institution.

Apparently, the kind of national image in the mind of the domestic audience differs greatly from that of the international audience, although there is a certain level of overlapping between them. For the domestic audience, as they are familiar with and even well-versed in the knowledge of their own country, it is usu-

ally much easier for them to receive well and accept the nation-branding campaign of their country and even be a part of it. In addition, as the domestic audience also witnesses the changes happening every day in their country, that is, they are more immersed in this environment and culture, it becomes very natural for them to adapt to it and to change with it.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The article provides the following conclusion: Policymakers need to take into consideration the needs and wants of the international audience and try to promote an image that fits in with their preconception of a country. Instead of always attempting to defy stereotypes, policymakers may as well take advantage of

them and reinforce such preexisting impressions to gain positive responses. If a nation is a product with a brand, the seller will need to understand what the consumer needs and then cater to this need for the best performance rather than trying to educate them with a whole new product that they don't need. Therefore, a successful nation-branding campaign is one that uses the audience's language and thinks just like the audience so it will more likely be accepted by them.

## References

1. He L, Wang R, Jiang M (2020) Evaluating the effectiveness of China's nation branding with data from social media. *Global Media and China* 5: 3-21.