

**How does the performance of a national football
team influence the external perception of a nation
brand?**

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**This dissertation is submitted in part fulfilment of the
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I declare that his dissertation is the result of my own independent
investigation and that all sources are duly acknowledged in the
bibliography.

Signed.....

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore how the performance of a national football team influences the external perception of a nation brand, which could give football a completely new dimension and importance, especially as it has a bigger audience than most other cultural and political activities and could tip the balance in favour of a nation.

After a critical literature review four experts in the field of football and nation branding are interviewed. Their selection was based on the social constructivist concept of thought collectives. All findings are interpreted against the backdrop of Spiral Dynamics.

The findings show that the performance of a national football team influences the external perception of a nation brand depending on the awareness, perceptions and knowledge that already exist in the mind of the audience. The stronger these are, the less the performance of a national football team influences the external perception directly.

Nevertheless slow gradual change can be achieved. The lower the levels and therefore, the less well known a nation is, the higher the impact of the performance of a national football team on the external perception.

The same formula is also valid in regards to internal perceptions, which means internal and external perceptions are linked and are influencing each other.

Participation in a football world cup, especially if repeated, can lead to lasting change for less well known nation states. This remains the case even if it is not followed up by further nation branding activities.

Nevertheless, the impact on the external perception will be multiplied if followed up by further nation brand activity.

The World Cup will become even more important for nation branding, as the media usage is expected to become more personalised and fragmented. Subsequently the building of a successful football culture becomes beneficial for any nation brand.

As the structure of the society is mirrored on the pitch, established traditional nation states will be the most successful football nations, while postmodern states will need to supplant their weakening structures with integration of foreign talent.

Increased heterogeneity and changed media consumption will put even more importance on the individual as a personalisation of the nation brand and on public diplomacy through interaction between citizens of different nations. The star player stands for the top down approach, the public diplomacy of the citizens is the bottom up one: the citizen becomes an increasingly important actor in nation branding, which signifies that successful nation branding needs to be built on pride, ownership and voluntary participation.

Subsequently any marketing and branding techniques and tools that are based on a homogeneous approach and the traditional sender-receiver relationship need to be adapted before they can be used for nation branding.

The dissertation is original in value in its conception as it links the performance of national football teams to the external perception of nation brands, introduces spiral dynamics as a useful approach to nation branding and focuses on the citizen as the main actor in a nation brand.

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Introduction

In the 1990 World Cup a goal celebration defined the image of a nation and burned itself into the memory of millions of people: every time Roger Milla scored a goal for Cameroon, he ran to the corner flag and simulated a belly dance. The pictures were repeatedly transmitted around the world and to the present day are included in any programme about the World Cup. Milla later put it into context: "It's thanks to football that a small country could become great" (Kuper, 1994, p.113).

On all continents people play football and billions watch events such as the Football World Cup in Germany this summer. Football plays an important part in the daily conversation between citizens and nations, generating emotions and creating perceptions that influence the nation brand.

A lot of research contributed to the understanding of the influence and impact of sport and football performance on the feelings and perceptions of the internal audience, the citizens of a nation. This dissertation, in contrast, focuses on the external audience – citizens of other nations – and its influence on the nation brand. It researches how the performance of a national football team impacts on the external perception of a nation brand. Subsequently it will explore the different factors of influence.

The critical literature review outlines and discusses the meaning and importance of nation and the pre-requisites, characteristics and importance of nation branding before discussing football and football events as important internal and external communication channels for nation branding.

Based on the social constructivist concept of thought collectives the research question was put to four experts in the fields of football and nation branding with the aim of establishing the influencing factors.

The last part of this paper analyzes the results and compares, contrasts and synthesises them with the findings of the critical literature review.

Critical Literature Review

On the 14th of January 2006 Gordon Brown, Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer, gave the keynote speech at an event titled "Who do we want to be? The future of Britishness". He outlined his vision and stated the three defining characteristics of Britishness and therefore the building blocks for his vision of a national identity: "Liberty for all. Responsibility by all. Fairness to all."

If Gordon Brown would have spoken to an audience of marketers he would have used the phrase "brand essence" rather than building blocks: "At the brand essence stage the management team work to identify the central characteristics that will define a brand" (De Chernatony, 2001, p.77). In other words, national identity can be compared to brand essence; do nations therefore become nation brands? And what is the impact of branding on nations and nations on branding?

Nations – embedded in imagination

Before covering the branding aspect of nations the term "nation" needs to be given closer consideration. A nation is defined as an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983), a "Erlebnismgemeinschaft" – a community of shared experiences (Sloterdijk, 2005), evoked and strengthened via shared values, a "sense of common belonging" (Blunkett, 2005) and

national identity. The meaning of nation crystallises when comparing it to a state: The state is a political entity, using laws and the monopoly of power;

“in a democracy the purpose of a state is to create a nation ‘to influence everything which has a significant bearing upon the social fabric, so as to create in men’s imagination a sense of participation which is no longer directly symbolized by any social structure.’”(Faure, 1996, p.83).

A citizen can easily change his passport to that of another legal and political entity, another state, but changing one’s nationality, and with it one’s national identity, is much more difficult, if not impossible as it is part of the emotional set-up, a central characteristic (Bragg, 2006). A nation, and with it nationality and nationalism, is therefore a sense that is unique to every individual and that can vary in strength, significance and meaning.

Other authors link nation to ethnicity and language. Some real life examples seem to substantiate this claim: Before its reunification Germany was divided into two separate states – the Federal Republic of Germany (or West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (or East Germany), the population of both states spoke the same language, shared the same ethnicity and the same traditions, which if nation would be defined along ethnicity and language would lead to two states but one nation. In a survey in 1972 only 31% of West German workers agreed

that East Germany was a separate nation (Bundesministerium for innerdeutsche Beziehungen, 1972 – Hobsbawm, 1992). This figure, however, needs to be seen in context: at the time of the survey the majority of Germans grew up with either only one state in existence or shortly after the separation, when Germans still felt as one nation. It is quite possible that this figure will have changed for those born after 1970. This would have also given both states time and possibility for inventing differing traditions.

Other real life examples contradict the definition such as South Africa: “one of the most complex nations in the international community, made up of many conflicting cultures, languages (eleven are officially recognised) and spaces.” (Keech, 2004, p.107). Even though the author calls South Africa a nation he also points out that it is “too early to define a one-nation identity” as the racial and cultural segregation lead to the co-existence of several sub-cultures. However “internationally, the ‘rainbow nation’ has become very much an imagined community, largely perpetuated by mediated images of triumphal sporting moments (Keech, 2004, p.107).”

Nations, therefore, can long-term and in a global interconnected world not be defined only by language or ethnicity. Ironically, if a nation would be based on ethnicity and one exclusive language it will lead to increased nationalism and xenophobia. Therefore bigger states with

pluralist societies will have higher regards and respect for different ethnicity and language (Hobsbawm, 1992).

Keillor and Hult (1999) researched the importance of the four components of national identity - Cultural Homogeneity, National Heritage, Belief Structure and Ethnocentrism – across five different countries. Cultural homogeneity and national heritage were the most important drivers with ethnocentrism featuring only lightly:

“One of the most striking findings in this study relates to the presence, or absence, of ethnocentrism within a culture. The data here reveals the possibility that high levels of national heritage and/or cultural homogeneity may be present within a particular national culture without corresponding levels of ethnocentrism being reported. (Keillor and Hult, 1999, p. 79)”

In other words it shows that the respondents across the different cultures are not particularly ethnocentric in their actions but pay attention and are sensitive toward their national heritage and cultural homogeneity (Clark, 1990).

Nations are based on cultural homogeneity and national heritage, which in reference to South Africa means that a nation yet needs to be established. Culture is seen as an important and key factor for defining nations (Skinner, and Kubacki, 2005). It also highlights that nation

building is a slow process and that it is important for states to plant and nurture “invented traditions” (Hobsbawm, 1992).

It is also interesting that citizens of newer nations have higher levels of pride in their country (Gilmore, 2002) – this might well be based on nationalism:

“However, in post-communist societies ethnic or national identity is above all a device for defining the community of the innocent and identifying the guilty who are responsible for ‘our’ predicament; especially once communist regimes are no longer there to function as scapegoats. ... But this is a universal rather than merely a post-communist situation. ‘They’ can be, must be, blamed for all the grievances, uncertainties and disorientations which so many of us feel after forty years of the most rapid and profound upheavals of human life in recorded history.”

(Hobsbawm, 1992, p.174)

To summarise: Nations are an “imagined community” with “invented traditions” to give a posteriori justification for its existence. The belonging to a nation, the imagined community, is therefore an emotional, nominalist state of mind that is the smallest common denominator shared to some extent with the majority of the citizens of a political state. By definition a nation’s make up depends on the distinct culture of the majority of the populace combined with a state that has the monopoly of

force. With the increase in dual or multiple nationalities the question arises if an individual can only truly have one national identity, the one to which he has an emotional link, which would therefore lead to interesting challenges on the development of a national identity and the fostering of social cohesion.

National identity – the glue of social cohesion

A nation cannot exist without a national identity and for a state it is important to guide its citizens in the development of national identity. Therefore national identity helps us define 'nation' from the perspective of the people, the citizens and the individual:

“National identity as a social phenomenon involves feeling proud to be the national of a particular country, appreciating the nation’s problems and participating in problem solving, believing the country is fulfilling its goals, taking personal pride and joy in achievements, introducing oneself openly as a national, and encouraging friends and close acquaintances to see one’s country in a positive light.” (Ikbioya, 2001, p.2)

Two particular attributes are connected with national identity – from an external perspective the relationship and differentiation to other nationals

and nations and from an internal perspective “its role in promoting solidarity within the nation” (Karakatsoulis, et al, 2005, p.581).

It becomes obvious that there is more than one identity. Balmer’s AC²ID test – “a tool that can detect conflicts between stakeholders’ perception and inconsistencies in official communications strategy ...and encompasses the notion of evolving image and strategy (Turman et al, 2001, p.323)” – explains the different identities: The actual (A), the communicated (C), the conceived (C²), the ideal (I) and the desired (D) one. Additionally, several communicated and conceived identities can exist, with the latter referring to “perceptual concepts. These are the perceptions of the company by relevant stakeholders.” (Truman et al., 2004, p.325). To differentiate and to attract inward investment, tourism and export revenues a nation needs to find its ideal identity with the best positioning in the market. The desired identity “lives in the hearts and minds of corporate leaders. It is their vision for the organization. Whereas the ideal identity normally emerges after a period of research and analysis, the desired identity may have more to do with a vision informed by a CEO’s personality and ego than with a rational assessment.”(Trueman, et al. 2004, p.325), which is possible for a company, more difficult however for a nation, especially as voluntary participation by the citizens is needed. A discrepancy between the conceived identities can occur, as it is not unusual for several identities to exist in a culture – “one more ‘international’ in origin, the other more domestic.” (O’Donnell and Blain, 1999, p.217).

The strength of feeling towards the nation fluctuates depending on economical performance – the better the performance the higher the national identity – and other influence systems such as media or family (Karakatsoulis, et al, 2005). Subsequently national identity is a personal experience dependent on interaction and can only be understood and interpreted in relation to the influences of the external environment.

To summarise national identity is important on three levels:

1. Sharing and helping each other – the glue that holds everything together, the social cohesion (Leonard 1997), “the mutual obligation and social solidarity” (Karakatsoulis, et al, 2005, p. 581).
2. Greater performance and productivity: “National identity, understood as patriotism that constitutes a source of happiness and self-fulfilment through altruism and voluntary contribution, could be a factor in greater performance and productivity.” (Karakatsoulis, et al, 2005, p.582)
3. Building and maintaining an active citizenship (especially in post-modern societies).

Different stages of development

According to Spiral Dynamics every aspect of life flows through a hierarchy of developments (see Appendix A), ever increasing in complexity and brought on by changes in the socio-bio-psycho environment (Beck and Cowan, 1996). So how do different development stages of the state influence the nation? And what are the challenges each one faces?

To create a nation and a national identity the state has to go beyond the stage of being a “premodern zone” (Cooper, 2002, p.12). In the premodern zone the state has yet to emerge or has ceased to exist. The monopoly on the legitimate use of force – Weber’s criterion for a state - is non-existent and/or is being actively undermined to ensure and maintain the strengthening of smaller groups be it ethical or criminal (Kaldor, 2002). In the spiral dynamic approach these zones would be described as either tribal (purple) and/or as the Hobbesian war all against all (red) (Beck and Cowan, 1996).

Only when this stage has been overcome, a shared identity can be truly established, as it will need strategic guidance from the highest order (Leonard, 1997) and active, voluntary buy-in by the citizens (Anholt, 2002/ Gilmore, 2002) – both these conditions are not fulfilled at this stage in the development, but are key in the development of a nation.

Once the state has become at least a “traditional ‘modern’ state...following Machiavellian principles and *raison d’etat* (one thinks of countries such as India, Pakistan and China)” (Cooper, 2002, p.12) or a “blue” state “protected by treaties and compacts, markers and armies” (Beck and Cowan, 1996, p.302), the creation of a nation becomes viable. As a consequence nation building and place branding in Europe started in the 19th century as both France and the British Empire were traditional modern states with an active interest in increasing its political and economical sphere of influence and both understanding that changing and enhancing perceptions are a key tool for this goal (Olins, 1999).

Internally the rise and fall of independence movements of nations such as Scotland or Catalonia is dependent on two factors: Economic performance and integration of the elites into the decision making process. If both are minimal the movement will increase in importance and weaken the feeling of belonging to the traditional nation state (Kowalski, 1994).

The political and economical success of traditional modern states leads to increased international interaction of both state and citizen, with rising educational and financial levels, increased inward investment and immigration. At this stage the national economy ceases to exist, national borders lose their relevance, national cultures merge with each other and national linguistic loses importance (Hobsbawm, 1992) – the traditional nation state is becoming obsolete. But let’s be clear: It is a

gradual and often painful transition, which faces lots of opposition due to changing the status quo and subsequently increased uncertainties. The definition of the nation by language, ethnicity and even culture becomes increasingly difficult. The nation brand experiences the following effects: its external reputation is rising and its internal identity is being strained. The modern state is transforming into a postmodern state.

The “postmodern” (Cooper, 2002, p.12) state (orange/green) (Beck and Cowan, 1996) has the following characteristics:

“

- The breaking down of the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs
- Mutual interference in (traditional) domestic affairs and mutual surveillance
- The rejection of force for resolving disputes and the consequent codification of self enforced rules of behaviour
- The growing irrelevance of borders: this has come about both through the changing role of the state, but also through missiles, motor cars and satellites”
- Security is based on transparency, mutual openness, interdependence and mutual vulnerability.” (Cooper, 2002, p.13)

The European Union is a good example for a postmodern system, which shows that this transition is not common place and a recent development. A part of society – the defenders of the status quo and traditional modern state (blue) - will feel threatened by this change and by the increased awareness and activity of globalisation. It increases the heterogeneity of society and can lead to conflict between the different value systems (Morgan, 2005) and consequently result in a decline in social cohesion. The citizens often experience multiple identities and supra- and infranational movements undermine the traditional nation-state (Hobsbawm, 1992). It can be argued that supra-national movements such as religion always existed (Burleigh, 2005), playing an important role throughout all the different stages. They are currently having a renaissance in postmodern states, especially in those value systems that feel threatened. This shows that religion is a socio-economic movement (Masani, 2001). More light needs to be shed on how supra-national identities such as religion impact on national identities and subsequently nation brands. As well as researching the impact of multiple identities - with individuals having multiple identities, does a hierarchy of identities exist and what triggers the superiority of one identity over another?

As a result local representation and communities (Stoker, 2000) – or as Anholt (2005b, p.226) calls it “distributed leadership” - as well as national identity will increase in importance, with the former supposed to strengthen active participations as people have a higher degree of identification with their communities and feel that they are in charge and

can make changes themselves (Crouch, 2000) and the latter needing a redefinition – consequently climaxing in a re-positioning of the brand – to include all the different value systems that exist in a postmodern society and therefore resolve the resulting disputes to build “the consequent codification of self enforced rules of behaviour” (Cooper, 2002, p.13) of the citizen and to reinforce or re-position its brand in relation to the interdependence with other postmodern states – the creation of a holistic brand with an awareness that everything communicates and therefore the internal and external brand developments overlap. The advent of the internet will put further strain onto the post-modern state as the definition of communities by proximity will become less and less accurate. Communities will become more international and will be built around shared interests instead of locality. They will decrease in size, but increase in numbers.

The nation brand of all states – be it modern or postmodern - has to follow the internal branding process of companies for the reasons mentioned above, and for the impact of the internal brand on the external perception.

Holding it together – the importance of identity

The brand building process always starts from within; as a brand can only be built on the current culture and the available resources.

Therefore every brand manager's aim is to achieve that "sense of participation which is no longer directly symbolized by any social structure" (Faure, 1996, p.83) in a company: "To ensure everyone really appreciates what the brand stands for, the components of the brand pyramid need synthesising into a short statement, the brand essence that hopefully motivates staff (De Cherantony, 2001, p.208). This is especially important as in today's knowledge and service society, brands are delivered through and represented by people (Simmons, 2003). Pride and ownership will grow the brand, influence the external representation positively and ensure a coherent brand experience.

In our society of different worldviews with its increasingly rapid shift from authority focused loyalists (blue) and egotistical orientated achievers (orange) to involved citizens (green) the sharing and living of brand values are crucial for a company to maintain the equilibrium between freedom and control, between engaging and policing. While decades ago an autocratic leadership style was effective and reflected society, nowadays leadership needs to be engaging, visionary and courageous (ThinqGlobal, 2002), so that people change from pure followers and order takers to responsible and enterprising co-members (Reed, 2002) and through their own inputs grow the company and therefore increase its competitive advantage (Beck, Cowan 1996/ Reed, 2002/ Morgan, 2004). People only change their minds, if they want to change their minds, to ultimately replace what they currently have "with something so much more interesting and captivating and yet equally portable" – this is

the task of effective marketing and branding and the only way to ensure engagement, loyalty and growth (Anholt, 2005a, p.106).

At the same time, understanding, living and sharing the same brand values provides a framework and a bond in which employees can make decisions freely whilst still knowing the boundaries. Being given this trust, the employee becomes the advocate of the brand and therefore ensures that the brand is striving and everybody acts according to the brand guidelines, including the leadership. In a way, the brand becomes a way of soft power versus the hard power of autocratic systems (Nye, 2002). This living system (De Geus, 2002) can welcome, absorb and integrate new influences, without losing its core beliefs and values (Gratton, 2000) as it is at the same time stable and flexible like a living organism. The brand can change and adapt its identity to external changes and through lessons learned and mistakes made that will be remembered and introduced by the collective consciousness into the brand's DNA. Additionally, the brand development not only attracts and retains top talent and therefore is core for building a successful company but through the engagement and the resulting self-governing of employees, it also reduces the overheads that would be needed to govern a company centrally and police every activity.

As employees (and to a lesser extent external stakeholders) are the defining factors of the corporate brand – they are the opportunity and the risk and the brand rises and falls with its people (Reed, 2002) - citizens

are the defining factors of nation brands (Gilmore, 2002). A nation brand is built on a national identity, and a national identity delivers all the features discussed above: a stable core of values and beliefs that translate into a common understanding and co-operation between the citizens, a pride of their brand, a desire to promote it positively, maintain and develop it, as well as enough confidence to agree trade-offs, integrate new influences, adopt new approaches in the face of external changes and confront challenges collectively that can arise from different sources, be it economical, political or social. This loyalty towards a nation brand is stronger than the loyalty to any service brand (Paswan et al, 2003).

The argument above suggests that nation can be branded or at least branding methods can be used in the context of nation building (Gudjonsson, 2005), nevertheless some pre-requisites are required to brand a nation, which will be discussed now.

Democracy as a prerequisite for successful nation branding

As discussed above, a brand lives through the people representing it, and if governed intelligently a feeling of pride and ownership will arise in the individual, which is an important component in the management of a brand's reputation and image. Consequently a truly successful nation brand can only be delivered in a society with freedom of speech and

freedom of choice. The citizens are essential to the brand's creation; they are the brand and at the same time they are the consumer experiencing the formal and informal side of the brand every day. This becomes even more evident when looking at the Top 10 nation brands, which are all democratic states and not surprisingly also birthplace of the most of the world's successful commercial brands: America, Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Scandinavia, Japan, Switzerland, Germany and South Korea. (Anholt, 2005a).

In autocratic societies, the governing elites use a top down approach to create a homogeneous society that follows one set of values while oppressing diversity with force. When this occurs, the brand cohesion is created through fear instead of voluntary participation. Often participation is not even wanted as the governing elites aim to control any change to ensure the consolidation and longevity of their influence. National identity is mistaken with a national image created for external perception, which can be positive in a first instance but proves difficult and costly – in financial and human terms – to control and maintain. However, if the discrepancy between the expectation of the brand and the actual brand performance is too wide, it will be a surprise for visitors due to the mismatch between brand performance and brand promise (Quelch and Jocz, 2005). The informal trust in the brand will be undermined, which is “a positive economic asset. If I have a reputation for honesty and fair dealing and you know that my product is something you can put your faith in, then you will be a repeat customer” (Fukuyama, 2004, p.5). Even

on a corporate level an autocratic approach will hardly lead to lasting brand success.

With the advent of the internet, telecommunication and with the increase in cross-national trade and travel (Westerbeek and Smith, 2003) a substantial part of the brand communication and experience will be delivered by the citizens as the ambassadors of public diplomacy (Leonard and Alakeson, 2000). The citizens need to want to live the brand instead of being forced to live it. Otherwise the brand becomes an empty and meaningless shell as the example of Argentina in 1978 shows:

“Only the generals had forgotten the cadavers. People can think. If they are poor, and frightened, and champions of the world, they are pleased to be champions of the world and upset to be poor and frightened... ’Our military never had to play politics. They have been brought up from the 1920s to believe, “You bark an order and everyone does as they’re told.” At the World Cup, they said: “Now you bloody well enjoy yourselves!” and they thought everyone would.” (Kuper, 1994, p.179)

Nevertheless there are non-democratic states that are considered a success at destination branding, which is closely related to nation branding, even though its primary focus is tourism (Morgan et al., 2002). An often cited example is Singapore: It is perceived as a soft authoritarian state, embracing external influences, new technologies,

international business opportunities and foreign cultures (Ooi 2002). Its society is seen as pragmatic (Chua, 1995), which is believed to mean accepting a trade off between freedom and relative luxury. Two components seem important: The size of the country, physically and by number of inhabitants (Singapore has only 680 square kilometres and four Million inhabitants (Ooi, 2002) as well as the changing grade of authority by the government. In Singapore's case even senior government officials recognise that a "representative government is perhaps the best way for a society to forge a new consensus between the people and a new generation of leaders. So the process of political development must continue if society here is to mature" (Fernandez, 2004, p.39). This judgement shows an acute sense of the shifts that occur in the value systems towards a "green" one. Luxury has been surpassed as the prime purpose by participation and self-government. Some questions remain: what economical and educational levels need to be achieved to produce a sizeable middle class (which is capable of solving conflict without violence) before a truly and stable civic society can be built? What are the preconditions for societies to acquire these "cultural habits" (Fernandez, 2004, p.38)? Is democracy culturally dependent?

Nation brands flourish best in democratic settings – or at least these of voluntary participation - and at the same time work as important nourishment for active citizenship in postmodern states. The danger is the creation of a nation brand, that "starts out as a noble intention to

come up with the idea that everyone loves ends up with the idea that nobody minds” (Anholt, 2005b, p.226) instead of being able to create a brand similar to successful corporate brands guided by the vision that is needed to build a striving, healthy and competitive nation brand, ready to face the future while remaining flexible and stable enough for unforeseen events and impacts.

So nation branding is only possible if the majority of a population agree to be part of this nation and therefore nation-state. Political correctness of the “mean greens” (Wilber, 2001) as well as loyalty of parties and media to its core voters/readers often leads to overrepresentation of minorities which can be counter-productive to the development and management of the national identity. Obviously, in contrast to companies, countries cannot sack citizens to achieve a cultural change (Anholt, 2004), whereby a company also cannot sack its consumers that interact with its brand and therefore have a strong influence of the brand. The nation brand and its future needs to be carefully negotiated without losing sight of the future competitiveness and developing a vision that is needed to be pushed beyond the point of impact, even if it is a painful process.

Like “imagined communities” and “invented traditions”, the brand is created in the mind of the consumer and is only relevant in context of the external environment. Brands can only be deemed successful if they connect and repeatedly interact with all stakeholders, receiving

acceptance and loyalty of the majority of their target market, which leads to the actual purchase and enhanced brand equity. It is interesting to note that the consumer increasingly becomes an actor who defines and to a certain extent owns the brand through interaction and participation (Salzer-Mörling and Strannegård, 2004). This trend will increase further with society shifting more towards a “green”, egalitarian value system. The consumer becomes actor and similar to citizen. Branding is reputation and image management based on interaction to create and strengthen ownership and pride, communicated via awareness, perception and knowledge; the same traits as national identity.

Nation branding can only happen, if:

- a) a state exists. This becomes more difficult to maintain in postmodern states, as citizens develop multiple identities. Regionalism is often the best way for moving forward. “Until the 1960s ‘Britishness’, in terms of law and administration, was a simple matter of being born to British parents or on British soil, marrying a British citizen, or being naturalised. It is far from simple matter today.” (Hobsbawm, 1992, p.190).
- b) The state is based on democratic or at least voluntary participatory principles.

Subsequently nation branding is not possible for every country. Before any nation brand can be developed the planners have to ascertain if the majority of the populace are voluntarily part of the nation or wish to be

part of a future nation. Or are they forced to belong to a state that tries to establish an imagined community. If nation branding takes part in these states, it can help cement authoritarian leadership and lead to a repressive system of majorities on part of minorities, which ultimately will lead to extremism. Nation branding has to turn national identity away from xenophobia into tolerance because of pride – to help a nation reach the next level in the hierarchy of developments, ascending from a traditionalist state to a postmodern state and from stopping a postmodern state of falling back into traditionalist state and exclusive nationalism.

Nation branding therefore needs an ethical approach and cannot only be based on increasing the standing of a state in the world. This approach would only lead to image management. Different measurements to the traditional ones of inwards investment (foreign direct investment), exports and tourism are needed such as perceived ownership of a nation which needs freedom of choice, speech and an inclusive, tolerant approach as well as increased educational and economical levels across the populace – both of which will be discussed below.

To summarise: A state without a nation equals a dictatorship as it does not have voluntary and active participation by the majority of its people and therefore the nation. This means, not every state has a nation and therefore nation branding cannot be universally used. A state's obligation in a democratic society is to create a nation – a shared identity

so citizens help each other and support the community. Therefore to create a nation one needs a top down approach (state) as well as a bottom up approach (people) – only when both work together can a nation flourish. Interestingly if they do not match or if the perception gap is too different the nation ceases to exist and no government can hold on unless via devolution or force.

Branding to revive democracy

In the postmodern state the national identity is an important driver for increased active participation in democracy, especially on a community and local level, as people will feel pride and want to maintain and grow the brand that they belong to. In our global, interconnected world, the importance of a responsible community will continuously grow, influencing people's behaviour from a pure demand driven one to a cooperative culture. This will be especially true the more the state and the government reduce centralisation and remove "red tape" from business processes. The reduction of central power is necessary for social cohesion and integration in a pluralistic society with members on different stages of the hierarchy of developments.

In the postmodern democratic state built on increased liberalism (Crouch, 2000) the vacuum that was created through increased privatisation of state run organisations and through the reduction of state

involvement from social duties (Blair, 1998) was not filled by civic action. Instead a new culture of consumerism replaced responsible and active citizenship: Citizens adopted the attitudes of consumers in all areas, encouraged by the media, accepted and fuelled by politicians and the political system of adversary (Russell, 2005), which is still more suited for a mainly authority seeking loyalist (blue – traditional state) society (Beck & Cowan, 1996) and as long as parties on both sides take this dualistic stance of left versus right, this will be hard to overcome. This is mirrored in proportional representational systems, in which the opposition party often just rejects any policy suggestions, and only the emergency of either a grand majority or a grand coalition overcomes this currently, as can be seen in Germany when comparing the current government to its predecessor.

Consumer-citizens want instant gratification and instant fulfilment of their wishes and single issues; they do not perceive a difference between a political and an economic leadership and take little notice of the scarce resources a government needs to balance between all the differing interests in a pluralist and multicultural society (Russell, 2005).

The consumer-citizen (supported and often led by media, political parties and political system) tends to engage in “negative activism of blame and complaint, where the main aim of political controversy is to see politicians called to account, their heads placed on blocks, and their

public and private integrity held up to intimate scrutiny” (Crouch, 2000, p.8).

This is seen as not enough in a democratic society, as Blair (1998, p.12) writes: “Strong communities depend on shared values and recognition of the rights and duties of citizenship – not just the duty to pay taxes and obey the law.”

To unfold and utilise the full potential of a democracy, citizens need to actively participate on an on-going basis in a positive way. This positive citizenship is defined “where groups and organisations of people together develop collective identities, and autonomously formulate demands based on them, which they pass on to the system” (Crouch, 2000, p.8). The ideal of democracy asks for participation of citizens; free elections are one part of the ideal of democracy but free elections do not equal democracy. If this participation is replaced by apathy, it is then likely that decisions in this post-democratic time are made only by an elite with economical interests (Crouch, 2000).

This balance of democracy and liberalism is only productive if a state minimises intervention and citizens are actively participating in democracy and therefore accepting their duties (Crouch 2000). To ensure this, a strong sense of community and therefore a national identity has to be forged (Blair, 1998; Crouch, 2000; Kumar, 2003; Blunkett, 2005).

At the same time a strong sense of community will not only ensure the active participation of its citizens but also overcome the insecurities that lead to an insular worldviews, hostilities to the European Union and to immigrants as such (Bragg 2004; Blunkett 2005). The national brand identity can minimise the impact of racist and exclusive organisations and create and “alternative identity that is diverse, outward-looking and inclusive.” (Bragg, 2004)

As people are representatives of a country, a strong national identity, a strong link to its community and a strong feeling of ownership of the nation brand can potentially influence behaviour, as seen in corporations (De Geus, 2002). In a democratic state and at our current level of development this can only be achieved with the soft power of attraction (Anholt, 2005). In an increasingly connected world the importance of institutions in the public diplomacy process will diminish while the importance of citizens as diplomats and key influencers will increase (Leonard and Alakeson, 2000).

Branding to support developing nations

Nation branding can also have a positive effect on the internal economical levels that are needed to establish a stable democracy. It

can also help developing nations to break out of the vicious cycle of being a producer supplying the brands of the developed nations.

Normally the story goes as follows: The brand owner moves production into developing countries because of their lower cost base but retains the brand identity. The majority of countries will welcome the investment. The local economy receives an influx of jobs, skills and money. However, at the same time, the local brands feel the pressure from the brands of the developed nations, therefore the newly acquired skills and money need to be invested in the development of local brands. Short term the gain might be minimal, but long-term the gain will be substantial – “since brands are the lifeblood of a developed economy...a successful economy requires strong brands” (Lim and O’Cass, 2001, p.136) A clearly defined and strong nation brand is needed to increase the attraction of home-grown brands.

Before outlining the process, the concept of Country of origin (COO) needs to be explained: COO research shows that people prefer home grown brands or brands from developed countries as they are seen as superior, while brands from emerging economies are evaluated negatively (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Cordell, 1992, Wang and Lamb, 1983, Papadopolous et al, 1991)). These perceptions are linked to the economic, cultural and political systems of the countries of origin (Wang and Lamb, 1983). COO is also seen as shorthand for perception of

quality of purchase (Khachaturian and Morganosky, 1990) and the perception of purchase value (Ahmed and d'Astou, 1993).

In more and more cases the country of origin (in this case country of manufacturer) is being replaced by country of brand origin (COBO) – “place, region or country where a brand is perceived to belong by its target consumers” (Thakor and Kohli, 1996, p.27). Even though differences between COO and COBO seem minimal, COBO is the preferred term as it highlights the importance of consumer perception, which is ultimately core to any brand activity and puts even more emphasis on the development of a nation brand.

Nation branding can help increase the awareness, knowledge and perception of a nation, communicate its stage of development and show the country as such in a positive light so that local brands are perceived more positively and more units are sold in the local and international market.

This leads to higher income for the brand owner and for the society. It also signifies higher exports and through those potential inward investments, ultimately resulting in a more stable, successful middle-class which does not feel threatened by immigration, globalisation and global brands, as they will no longer believe in one true way (the “blue” phase in Spiral Dynamics) and will move on to a value system based on ‘option thinking’ and initiatives (orange and green). This enables the

individuals to distinguish between government policies, culture and brands as well as between the shades within those. Nation branding can help minimise radicalisation of societies by stimulating increased economical and educational levels and increased interest and interaction between nations. Obviously government policies and societal developments need to support and drive this move as nation brands always need to be seen in context to national and international political and economical developments.

To maintain the development, the incoming funds need to be channelled into education, research and development plus further branding activities resulting in better product brands being created, which in turn have a positive influence on the nation brand. As nation brand and country brands are influencing each other positively, knowledge about the COBO influencing the image and therefore providing a competitive advantage (Aaker, 1998). The state has to support this development through policies that increase the freedom of the individual while building the nation brand. Only if this is happening can the nation brand move forward, driven by its population. Knowledge has to be imported and the country's society needs to embrace this development. Problems will be experienced most likely from the camp of the traditional, essentialist populace. Obviously if a positive effect can be created a negative effect can also be experienced (Paswan and Sharma, 2004).

Nation branding and investment in the areas mentioned above are crucial at this stage in the development of the economy and the country.

Once a country is at the level of brand development of the USA it is much more difficult to sink into a negative spiral. Individuals still want to buy America's brands (as they are from the most developed nation) and are able to separate US politics from USA brands and products (Paswan and Sharma, 2004).

A nation brand's and a product brand's influence on each other combined with the COBO effect increases the importance of Balmer's conceived identity by external stakeholders. A higher degree of education about a nation brand leads to more sales, which in turn means commercial brands need to educate consumers about country of brand origin and therefore have a massive importance and influence about a country's perception. Research by Paswan and Sharma (2004) has shown that more accurate knowledge about the country of brand origin is beneficial for the brand and that product brands are the creators of high COBO knowledge:

“Brands that manage to create higher levels of brand COO knowledge (Coke and Pepsi) are likely to have a more focused perception about the COO image, equally among consumers with accurate and inaccurate brand-COO knowledge” (Paswan and Sharma, 2004, p.149)

As expected, people with higher educational levels, and who have travelled more extensively display a more accurate knowledge about COBO,

“however, as multinational franchisors start to make a move towards down market, should they take extra care to educate the down market customers and other publics in general? Should they become true ambassadors of their home country? The results of this study indicate that they should. This would be particularly crucial for franchise organizations because they often operate at the grass root levels and are in close contact with the public at large” (Paswan and Sharma, 2004, p.150)

Goods and services can be important ambassadors for countries, as they educate people about the COBO and subsequently nation brands, especially as brands like Coca Cola and McDonalds have deeper pockets than most governments as can be seen in the case of Coca Cola and McDonalds (Reinhard, 2004). Nevertheless service and product brands are also dependent on the behaviour of its national governments. It even effects the mother of all brands (Anholt, 2004), the USA (Goodman, 2005), so the effect on brands from other nations will be even more significant. One should, however, never underestimate the preference of individuals to own and use the best products and services available. If these are American then the US politics will not have much of an effect. The education of the masses will even increase the positive

perception of American products. It would be an interesting research topic to discuss the impact of country of brand ownership in cross border merger and acquisitions - the research above indicates that the impact will be minimal as long as the local brand will not be changed or replaced by the foreign brand – and the impact of multiple identities, especially with dual nationality, as well as supra- and infra-national identities on the definition of home-grown or domestic brands and ultimately on nation brands with all its consequences.

In summary: the more people know about a nation brand, the more balanced their view of the product brand, which can be favourable for the product brand as it can make use of the nation brand equity while at the same time creating a distinction and therefore minimising the effect of government policies on product brands. The more people know about a nation brand the less they are swayed by messages and market communication, which in this instance also includes political and religious propaganda: thus increased education for the masses halts further radicalisation. This area would benefit from further research to establish the different pressures on brands and how government politics affect national brands and vice versa. It also shows that knowledge is more important than awareness, nevertheless for many developing nation and their local product and service brands, awareness is an important step - one that is too often taken hastily and without preparing the brand foundations, while mistaking branding with advertising and rushing into

promotional activities instead of understanding the consumer's mind and the different identities as identified by Balmer.

Hetero or homo – what's your preference?

Everything communicates, including products and services:

“...the way it promotes itself for trade, tourism, inward investment and inward recruitment; the way it behaves in acts of domestic and foreign policy and the ways in which these acts are communicated; the way it promotes and represents and shares its culture; the way its citizens behave when abroad and how they treat strangers at home; the way it features in the world's media; the bodies and organizations it belongs to; the countries it associates with; the way it competes with other countries in sport and entertainment; what it gives to the world and what it takes back. “(Anholt, 2005a, p.11)

Any nation brand's perception will get influenced by the behaviour of its citizens, be it positively, with English football fans visiting Portuguese schools during the Euro 2004 (Bragg, 2004) or negatively, with young British stating that when going abroad their favourite pastime is binge drinking, having sex and fighting (The Sunday Times, 2005).

All channels communicate and if a strong national identity is in existence every part is aware of its impact and influences the nation brand positively: Public diplomacy at its best:

“Scottish football supporters increasingly developed an image of themselves as representatives of the nation. They drank copiously, as always, and continued to sing and dance, as they sought to ‘entertain’ the locals. Yet they rarely, if ever, engaged in acts of vandalism. Its more mature members took responsibility for controlling any potential excesses” (Kowalski, 2004, p.77).

Ideally, every message, every action reinforces the brand while moving the audience to the desired vision – moving the audience from the actual identity to the ideal one – which is difficult in a democratic, heterogenic society and especially in larger, prosperous countries. Anholt (2005b, p.225) identifies two hurdles:

“a lack of patience stemming from the four-year event horizon of most elected politicians (and a perfectly understandable desire to show measurable results within the electoral term); and the political difficulty of imposing a shared purpose on the stakeholders of the national brand, many of whom are commercial and political competitors, and over whom only the head of government or the head of state can exercise direct authority.”

Anholt suggest two models that could be creatively integrated into a democratic brand leadership. Firstly the distributed leadership as shown by Al Qaeda – “semi-independent groups, each planning and carrying out its own activities and communications which are inspired by a commonly held belief in some simple, powerful mission” (Anholt, 2005b, p.226), which not only calls for more local and regional governments but also reflects the development of society in spiral dynamics to are more involved “green” one (Beck and Cowan, 2006). Secondly, the longevity of monarchies: “a royal family as naturally, committed, long-term guardians of the national brand strategy, an interesting role for royalty in the modern world being suggest itself (Anholt, 2005b, p.227).” Most important, however, in a democracy are politicians who are truly committed to the cause and not only interested in personal power. Instead they plan long-term by precisely using branding methods, they view the citizen as an actor rather than a consumer, they create a vision, that represents the majority of the citizens while outlining the implementation clearly with all its possible setbacks, they practising communication as a two- or more way conversation, which result in stability for the nation brand. The politician therefore overcomes the culture of adversity that currently hinders any long term planning; “Doubtless they were eager for official honours and decorations, but they were also devoted to the public cause” (Faure,1996, p.85). So while distributed leadership reflects changes in society, it is unclear if a monarchy, which is so clearly linked to traditional, blue nation-states, can actually benefit the creation of a postmodern state, especially with

increased immigration altering the make-up of society and therefore the underlying values. True nation branding can only be achieved in democracies, but are the current tools, process and traditions of a democratic system equipped to deal with the question of identity in a post-modern state? Another area for further research.

This nevertheless throws up the question if the same homogenous brand communication as desired by corporate brands can be achieved. And is it indeed a desirable vision to aim for? In a company employees are being paid to follow the brand (Anholt, 2004) – whereby even this seems to be a simplistic view, as it does not take into account the hard versus soft power argument and if put in action would possibly restrict the recruitment of top talent - but this is not the case on a national basis, as citizens are also the owners of the nation and therefore the brand. On a nation brand basis, the wide range of stakeholders, the diversity and conflicts of their objective, plus the lack of a coordinating function, prohibits the rollout of a homogenous marketing communication (Skinner, 2005). Instead a new approach is proposed that

“should reflect not only the diversity of the place brand itself and the diversity of those responsible for communicating the place brand, but also the diversity of the key target segments of intended message recipients. An approach, therefore, that challenges accepted marketing communications theory, an

approach that seeks heterogeneity rather than homogeneity.

(Skinner, 2005, p.314)”

One can also argue that increased heterogeneity is a sign of success and an indicator of the transition between modern and postmodern state, as higher education, foreign travel, immigration and knowledge intake will lead to different worldviews within a state and therefore to heterogeneity. The task will be to manage the transition without the break-up of the nation and to embrace the new heterogeneity and further it with national confidence instead of trying to prevent and subdue it with traditional nationalistic views.

To summarise: It is obviously difficult to have a homogeneous brand communication as a nation is permanently changing and the only realistic approach would be a heterogeneous approach. If the people feel pride and ownership the brand communication can be heterogeneous, which is even beneficial as it shows an open society and might lead to higher degree of positive perception and identification with the nation brand. It is also a sign of a democratic, pluralistic and postmodern society.

Additionally, nation brands can learn from corporate brands by adopting some of the process, tools and ideas used in corporate branding.

Corporate brands, however, should look at the challenges that nation brands face as these will be similar to the challenges they will face. The

consumer will increasingly become an actor and will therefore own the brand as much as a citizen owns the nation. Control will shift away from the company to the actor and communication needs to reflect this development and abandon the traditional sender-receiver relationship. Corporate brands will have to adapt their segmentation to reflect deep values and deal with this heterogeneity; otherwise the brand performance – repeated interaction and connectivity – will suffer. Any branding tool or process that is based around consumers instead of actors and built around the traditional sender-receiver relationship instead of two or many way conversation will need to be adapted to be useful in the nation branding process.

Sporting events as national brand stages

One of the areas of communicating a nation brand is through sport – internally as well as externally. In the area of multiple identities, sporting events such as the football World Cup and the Olympic Games fulfil two functions for the nation brand: internally, it emphasises national identity and increases the sense of pride, ownership and belonging, externally, it provides the opportunity to raise awareness, challenge perception and increase knowledge about the nation brand. Depending on the nation's status in the world a different mixture of the three is needed and different doses are needed for impact. This will be discussed later.

Via the internet and satellite television more international sports are accessible (Westerbeek and Smith, 2003), but two events are followed with more interest than any others and therefore have a much higher impact on nation branding:

“The World Soccer Cup and the Olympic Games are probably the two most visible events of international stature: they ignite passions, provide for communal focus and enable an otherwise much divided world to come together and celebrate the best that humanity has to offer (Yiannakis et al., 2003, p.2).”

Several research projects reveal that sport contributes to the quality of life (Sheppard, 1998) and influences the way individuals feel about “themselves, their state and their country”(Yiannakis, 1994, p.1). This dissertation, however, focussed on the external impact of sporting events and especially on the performance of a national football (as in soccer) team.

Football is the popular choice in most societies and nations, with the exception of the USA. Even this is changing, however, as football is the preferred sport of many South and Middle American immigrants. Staging the World Cup in 2002 for the first time in Asia and in 2010 for the first time in Africa will truly position football as the international and global sport. Nevertheless the allocation of qualifying berths for the world cup needs to be addressed to represent each continent more equally.

Football is played on every continent and the World Cup 2002 was watched by 28.8 billion people (WorldSoccer, 2006) and as Moorehouse (1996) writes, should therefore not be ignored in mainstream sociological analysis:

“While there is a lively sub-discipline, centring on football “hooliganism” most social analysis does not bother with one of the great pastimes of the people, one which as divided and united groups in socially significant ways , and one which commands popular attention in ways that institutions which are regarded as more socially important (and are much more studied) do not... Yet if understanding consciousness, meaning, perception and subjectivity is a vital key for decoding patterns of social structure and action, then it seems reasonable to insist that consideration of at least the most popular sport should be aligned more closely with many of the recurrent themes of social analysis than it is, and should not be ghettoized as a marginal field of study... Rather, given that sport is an activity with great cultural significance, football can enter into these political and economical relations, especially at the level of popular perceptions. If nations are ‘imagined communities’ then celebrations, events and incidents are needed to feed imaginations, especially those of the vast majority who are not university intellectuals.” (Moorhouse 1996, p.56-57)

Nevertheless, it has to be stated that football continues to be a male domain, even though female interest is generally ascending with the emergence of some female teams (Polley, 2004). It is believed that there is not a strong difference in the interest levels of homosexual or disabled people.

International football matches are one of the few occasions when national belonging and identity is displayed openly by the majority, especially in times of the Football World Cup, without negative connotations (Polley, 2004). At the same time national characteristics come under the spotlight and can be compared to those of other nations as racial, gender, age and socio-economic differences are being pushed into the background:

“At the game it is your shirt, not your face, that counts. We are therefore likely to be supportive, intimate and trusting of a fellow fan who we might completely shun in another situation) Levine et al., 2002). We may even sacrifice ourselves for strangers, for if that stranger is a fellow group member and if we define ourselves in group terms, then the fate of such strangers literally becomes our own fate. If they are hurt, we feel pained, if they are attacked we feel under attack. In this way, we may assault members of another group as an act of self-defence even if we personally are not threatened: what we are defending is our collective identity. (Reicher, et. al., 2004, p.561)”

Hosting Olympic Games or the Football World Cup has even more impact than just taking part and is beneficial on many levels:

“While the immediate economic benefits may not always be evident (in some cases the cost of producing such spectacles may be greater than the immediate economic benefits), the exposure that the host nation receives ultimately translates into a variety of both tangible and intangible benefits (Karakulouis, et. al, 2005, p.583).

They are very much aligned with the objectives and measurements of nation branding: increased tourism and exports, increased prestige and positive external perception, which leads to a stronger reputation and therefore enhanced political influence (Johnston, 1985; Ritchie and Lyons, 1990).

They also enable the host nation to raise not only awareness but also increase the knowledge about a nation brand, that, as discussed earlier is important as it increases a more stable positive perception of country of brand origin as well as the nation brand: “They may also help to educate the rest of the world about who you are, and what your country has to offer (Karakulouis, et. al, 2005, p.583).” This is especially true as the many visitors can experience the country first hand and not through the eyes of the media, who will normally use sport events to differentiate between nations and call up and reinforced constructed traditions and

stereotypes. Being able to show your nation directly is even more important as it minimises the impact of media opinions of the nation: "Our conclusion is that, in some countries, global sports are being used to reassert an intense form of national identity in opposition to further European integration. In addition, sporting contests tend to reawaken "sleeping memories" and rekindle deeply laden national habitus codes (Maguire, et al., 1999, p.439). This is especially true, if the media wants to highlight the blight or perceived injustice from a minority and is mainly still trapped in an adversary culture that shows insecurities to foreign influences. Some countries therefore use visiting dignities to help change perception, the German National Tourist Board, for example, has signed Sir Geoff Hurst - the famous English football hero - "to break-down British stereotypes of a nation full of 'humourless' people" in the attempt to increase Germany's standing as a destination brand and increase tourism (O'Connor, 2006). It would be interesting to see how this positioning and message was ascertained and if consistency exists between the different influencers in the external and internal environment.

The impact described above can only be achieved if the brand performance for the consumer, here the visitor, is positive. If it is negative it has a huge potential to damage a nation brand, which is especially hazardous for established nation brands. First reports suggest that the stadiums for the Fifa World Cup in Germany are not build with

the same quality engineering (Kicker, 2006) that ultimately describes the brand positioning of Germany. There are always two sides to the coin.

Besides the host nation, the nation that produces the winners, the world record breakers and outstanding style are the main beneficiaries resulting into high prestige that, as we have seen above, can translate into cultural, political and economical benefits as well as enhancing national pride and therewith giving national identity a boost (Calgary Report, 1988; Johnston, 1985; Ritchie and Lyons, 1990; Ikbioya, 2001). But every nation that participates in one of the two events benefits from it, more so if it is the Football World Cup as only 32 nations are under the spotlight instead of several hundred individual sportsmen and women representing a nation. Ikbioya (2001, p.3) has identified six reasons why nations participate in the Olympics which gain further importance for the reasons mentioned above when transferred to the Football World Cup.

“Reasons why nations participate in the Olympics include:

- Be known and recognised in terms of the nation’s unique attributes and status;
- Provide opportunities for political, social and economic diplomacy;
- Secure release from political, social, and economical problems – at least for the period the games last;

- Enhance image and credibility of national governments and their people;
- Be known as a sovereign and independent nation among other nations; and
- Show the world the nature and vibrancy of the nation's youth – men and woman of unique and superior state and influence in terms of vitality and versatility.”

Hobsbawm (1992, p.12) divides the roll out of a national idea and consciousness into three phases: “phase A was purely cultural, literary and folkloric, and no particular political or even national implications...In phase B we find a body of pioneers and militants of the ‘national idea’ and the beginnings of political campaigning for this idea....phase C when nationalist programmes acquire mass support”. Participating in the football world cup internally is phase C, externally however it is phase A as it has no direct political or national implications. However, when used by the pioneers of nation branding a transformation to external mass support or at least mass perception is possible. If the transformation does not take place and is supported from the top and the bottom, all that was achieved in raising awareness and perceptions that can easily disappear:

“So a country which wins the World Cup can enjoy a dramatically enhance reputation for sporting prowess – and all the positive attributes that go with this – but it seldom lasts even for the four

years until the next competition, unless the country works very hard to capitalize on the improved reputation and build it into something more solid. (Anholt, 2005a, p.117)”

This is clearly a generalisation as there are some examples indicating that external perception was maintained such as Cameroon’s after the World Cup 1990, whereby it has to be said that in these instances the perceptions were formed by style instead of victory, as “victories are ephemera, everything is style” (Archetti, 1996, p.205). The author states that for style to be a lasting and defining factor it always needs to be connected to personality, which is an interesting observation, especially in the area of global celebrities and opens up further research questions: how does celebrity (and in this case celebrity footballers) influence the external perception of national identity? Do they become the embodiment of the nation and does their impact overshadow the performance of the team?

Another interesting area of research, as Holmes and Storey (2004) discovered, is players with multiple national identities, as they were born in one nation but play for the national team of another one. This was common until 1960, especially with Argentinean players playing for Italy or Spain (Archetti, 1996), and rising in importance due to increased immigration and the ability for an individual to have dual citizenship and therefore nationality. How will dual nationality multiple identities effect the national identity and the nation brand and in regards to football, how

does the external perception change with naturalised players in the team, especially if they only chose the new nationality because they were approached by the football association or have only joined for professional and materialistic reasons?

To maximise the achieved positive awareness, its usage in communication and transfer this from sport into other areas such as tourism is crucial as highlighted by the story of Cameroon:

“Instead I spoke to David Douala Diboti, the civil servant in charge of promoting tourism. Had football helped? ‘Enormously! You see, many people do not know where countries like Senegal, the Ivory Coast and the Congo are. Often they do not even know they are in Africa. The World Cup put Cameroon on the map.’ How had the Ministry used the World Cup? He caved in. ‘I will be frank. We neglected to use it. We missed the opportunity. I regret that now.’ Had the Ministry produced a single item of publicity a poster for example, featuring the Lions? ‘Not one.’ ...”But imagine if after the World Cup, pictures of Roger Milla had appeared on the walls of European travel agencies: of Milla dancing by some corner-flag, grinning his gap-toothed smile, and enjoying, ‘Visit Cameroon!’ (Kuper, 1994, p.124)

The gap between perception and experience needs to be minimal if the best results are to be achieved (Quelch, 1995). On one side it should be

easy as players and fans are actual citizens of a nation, even though some might not live there any more. On the other the perception created through a negative display, be it by players or fans, not only negatively effects a country but also withdraws from the nation the possibility of showing their positive true colour as a negative perception has been created. One example is the image of Turkey in Europe after their qualifying match against Switzerland, which resulted in Turkey having to play the next six international home games on a neutral ground (Strittmatter, 2006). In the UK this image is even worse after two Leeds fans were killed in a UEFA cup match, which also shows that football clubs can be perceived as representatives of an entire country. The same happened to England, “where clubs have become – at least in the eyes of the government and the media – proxy representatives of all of England. When 39 spectators died as a result of crowd trouble between Liverpool and Juventus supporters at Heysel in 1985, it was English – not British – clubs who were subsequently banned from European football; and when any English club does well in Europe, national media coverage assumes that all English fans will want them to succeed. In reality, of course, this does not always work: but the tone of the media assumes that national identity in sport is flourishing (Polley, 1994, p.25)”.

So the behaviour of the supporters is as important as the behaviour of the players itself and in this sense performance goes way beyond the performance on the pitch. The majority of actual contact will happen off the pitch with stereotyped behaviour of supporters being immediately

covered by the media. The supporters become ambassadors for their nation as described above in the example of the West of Scotland Tartan Army, which travelled with 20,000 members, including many families, to the 1982 World Cup in Spain, embracing a “positive, ambassadorial nationalism” (Kowalski, 2004, p.78). Governments and regulatory bodies seem aware of the impact of supporter behaviour. The Institute for Public Policy Research published together with the FA the pamphlet “Ingerland expects: Football, National Identity and World Cup 2002”, outlining eleven policy proposals based on the principle of that supporters are ambassadors and therefore all carry responsibility for the national identity:

“Ingerland Expects explores an England fan culture with the potential to be inclusive and internationalist without losing any of its reputation for passion and commitment.” (Perryman, 2002)

The World Cup 2006 in Germany will see even more activity: The Football Supporter’s Federation published a travel guide and provides updates via a 24-hour text and telephone service to the travelling England fans. The British Government has launched a mobile embassy, which will accompany the English football team and provide supporters with information about the games itself as well as travel and sleeping arrangements. “It is hoped that a liveried fans’ embassy vehicle will provide a useful point of contact with officials, who could nip any frustration in the bud. (O’Connor, 2006)” Because if these frustrations

turn into confrontation, the external perception of the nation would be tainted. It would be interesting to understand how this proposal was rolled out to supporters and if any change in behaviour led to change in perception.

A study by Reicher et al. (2004) shows that in Euro 2000 England fans were perceived as a symbol of fear by the police in Belgium.

Interestingly, this led to the police behaving differently towards England (as well as German) supporters, in contrast to supporters that were perceived as more peaceful and potentially led to a vicious cycle of perceived aggression from both sides and ultimately conflict and violence:

“Nobody is seeking to deny that there are some deeply unpleasant individuals who exploit football contexts to engage in acts of violence. But if we are serious about our calls to eradicate their violence from the game a failure to understand that there is more to the problem than “them” is ironically, a means through which we can and do create the very platform these individuals seek to exploit.” (Stott, 2003, p.653)

This is also an important point why perception and influencing perception is crucial, in this case maybe even life-saving, and can lead to a vicious circle of perceived realities embedded in stereotypes that are difficult to change.

Even psychological crowd behaviour underlines two important principles that run through this dissertation and are core for nation building, branding and communication: Firstly, crowds (and therefore populations) are not in their nature homogenous, however they behave homogeneously when faced with an external attack (even a perceived one) on their values and beliefs. Secondly the importance of soft power:

“...public order policing has shifted from a focus on force to a focus on escalating force to a focus on negotiation – and moreover, on which appreciates the need to treat different sections of the crowd in different ways (Reicher, et al, 2004, p.565).

Creating positive awareness and external perception for a nation is desirable and can be positive as described above. It might even in the short term allow internal and external communities to turn a blind eye to problems, it nevertheless never eradicates them.

“Why should we try to win? Because that’s what the game’s all about, for heaven’s sake. Not to eradicate racial feelings from society, or poverty from the suburbs, or the virus of unemployment from the waiting rooms in the Job Centres. If all you needed to get rid of society’s problems was to become world champion, the

favelas in Rio would have been turned into paradise four times over” (Ouest-France, 12 July from O’Donnell, Blain, 1999, p.223).

Ultimately creating a strong and successful nation brand starts from within, so these problems could counteract all positive external achievements and therefore will need to be solved for lasting impact and a truly holistic brand experience.

In summary, the performance of a national football team has an impact on the external perception of a nation brand, with other factors of influence playing an important role, especially supporters and media. Existing stereotypes make it more difficult to change existing perceptions. To create awareness and change perception, they need to be followed up by actions in the same vein – the national identity and the national image need to overlap. For smaller, less well known nations taking part in a football world cup (and even more so hosting a football world cup) can put the nation on the map and lead to significant positive changes. For established nations, taking part in a tournament will not lead to significant positive changes - however, when a nation performs consistently well over years, “the positive perception is more durable, and may survive through several years of relatively poor performance” (Anholt, 2005a, p.117-118) - and is much more likely to re-affirm stereotypes, unless the established nation is hosting the tournament. Nevertheless a risk of negative impact on the nation brand also exists as everything (police behaviour, architecture of stadiums, general hospitality

levels to mention just a few) is under scrutiny from the world press but more importantly from supporters visiting the country or watching via live feeds.

Methodology

Purpose of the research

The critical literature review has raised some key questions about national identity and nation branding per se and in its relation to football. This dissertation will focus solely on the impact of the performance of a national football team on the external perception of a nation brand.

The purpose of this research is to understand if and if so to what extent the performance of a national football team can influence the external perception of a nation brand. If this would be the case it would give football a completely new dimension and importance, especially as it has a bigger audience than most other cultural and even political activities. Sport, and in this case football, would transform from a substitute of war or entertainment and opium for the masses to an important communication tool on the international stage. If implemented into an overall nation brand strategy this could indirectly tip the balance in favour of a nation and its citizen and stimulate positive growth in all areas. First of all, the nature of the underlying problem needs to be explored and different specialist perspectives need to be taken into account. Before outlining the rational and the actual research method used, the foundational methodology of researcher and topic will be discussed.

Two suns in the sunset – a perception of reality

Research methodology is basically divided into two camps: On one side the positivistic one, on the other side the nominalistic one.

In the positivistic approach a single apprehensible reality exists. Subject and object are seen as separate entities that are independent of each other and therefore exert no influence on each other– “the data and its analysis are value-free and data do not change because they are being observed (Healy and Perry, 2000, p.120).” This worldview can be predominantly found in science, “however, a positivist approach is inappropriate when approaching a social science phenomenon like marketing networks which involve humans and their real-life experiences, for treating respondents as independent, non-reflective objects ‘ignores their ability to reflect on problem situations, and act on these’ in interdependent way” (Healy and Perry, 2000, p.120). Science is limiting when only using the traditional, reductionistic approach, but needs to “emphasis the complementary aspect: the assembling and the unifying” (Lutterer, 2005, p.498). A brand and a nation – as discussed in the literature review – are successful when in repeated voluntary interaction with all stake-holders and are ultimately influenced and defined by this exchange, which is supported by Balmer’s AC²ID model outlining that several perceived identities exist at the same time.

Subsequently this research asks for an interpretivistic world view based in the camp of nominalism. Ken Wilber developed integral theory – “an overarching model of human and social development that attempts to

incorporate as many approaches to development as possible into its explanatory framework” (Cacioppe and Edwards, 2005, p.89). Integral theory is based on four quadrants that are “four perspectives of reality and are the foundational domains of development” (Cacioppe and Edwards, 2005, p.90). The quadrants are based along the axis of the interior-exterior dimension (inner-outer) and the interaction of the individual-communal dimension (I-we) and the interaction of these domains results into consciousness (I-inner), behaviour (I-outer), culture (We-inner) and social (We-outer). Any change or development in one of the dimensions leads to change and/or development in the others (Wilber, 2001). On top of the four quadrants lie levels and lines of development – “for the individual these include moral, interpersonal, cognitive, spiritual and affective lines” (Cacioppe and Edwards, 2005, p.92) - which represent a dynamic process of development to higher order consciousness due to changing life conditions.

Talja et al argue that within the nominalist camp three metatheories exist: cognitive constructivism, social constructivism (also called collectivism) and constructionism. All three share that “the mind constructs reality in its relationship to the world” (Talja et al, 2005, p.81). The difference between the first two being that social constructivism argues that “this mental process is significantly informed by influences received from societal convention, history and interaction with significant others” (Talja, et al, 2005, p.81), while cognitive constructivism does not accept any other outside influence, which in itself sums up all the critique levered

against this metatheory. Talja et al cite Frohmann (1992, p.84) saying that cognitive constructivism is characterised by the “erasure of the social”, which ultimately would also render ethics meaningless (Andrew, 2004). For an individual “to operate effectively and to survive” (Andrew, 2004, p. 1393), the individual has to interact effectively with the external world. Pure cognitive constructivism also focuses only on two quadrants of Wilber’s integral map, the individual ones but neglects the communal dimension.

Constructionism argues that knowledge creation is mainly based on language, social constructivism, however, has a more convincing outlook in that “knowledge is constructed through – and embedded within - action, it provides an internal determinant for subsequent actions, which in turn modify the internal knowledge of the individual. In this way, the individual-as-actor constructs internal knowledge of facts, values and procedures through ongoing interaction between his or her internalised knowledge and his or her participation in the external world. Knowledge is both explicit in that it can be communicated through language and implicit or tacit in that it can be embedded within particular activities (Talja et al, 2005, p.87).” This seems to represent all four quadrants of Wilber’s integral theory and allows experience through action to form a nation brand which is line with the argument of crowd psychology and the element of style in a national football team’s performance as discussed in the critical literature review.

Another characteristic of social constructivism is the “view of professional groups and domains as thought-collectives” (Talja, et al, 2005, p.89) – while the communication between members of the same thought-collective flow, communication between members of different thought collectives proves difficult.

The author’s knowledge creation and interpretation of reality is based and founded on social constructivism. Several consequences subsequently arise from the discussion about knowledge creation:

1. Individuals are actors and objectivity does not exist nor does the subject-object division.
2. The observer is part of the observing system and therefore influences all observations. This needs to be taken into account, as discussed by second order cybernetics (Beyes, 2005, Julià, 2000)
3. There is an underlying order of the world (one reality) and many perceptions of reality (Similar to the third world in Popper’s realism as described by Healy and Perry, 2000).
4. The individual interprets actions based on culture, up-bringing and previous decisions.
5. The human being is not static but constantly evolving, hence perceptions of reality and interpretations change depending on the change in their life conditions.

6. There is a need for self-reflection and self-referencing (Julià, 2000), as constructivism is only relevant when in relationship to the external world.
7. The ethical imperative of acting is such as the number of choices increases (Von Foerster, 1993), as it also reflects the movement to higher order consciousness, however, it needs to be taken into account that lower value systems will not understand and therefore disagree with this consequence.
8. Therefore, decisions are being made precisely because of the increasing number of choices and the arising uncertainties.

The underlying foundation of this dissertation is based on the work of Professor Clare Graves and the subsequently developed Spiral Dynamics approach by Beck and Cowan (1996), which integrates the eight consequences above and is used by Wilber to “elucidate various aspects of his integral approach” (Cacioppe and Edwards, 2005, p.92). Spiral Dynamics helps to draw attention to the different stage of personal subjective as well as social/cultural developments as “cultures, as well as countries” are formed by the emergence of value systems (social stages) in response to life conditions” (Beck, 2006). The critical literature review has shown that culture is an important factor in the definition and the distinction of a nation brand.

In this bio-psycho-socio model the individual is moving up and down through various stages of development, influenced by the external

environment – culture and life conditions. Even though individuals at the same stage share certain aspects and criteria and are categorised in value systems, the manifestation itself and the interpretation there of are – based on the dynamism and the multi-dimensions – individual. There are many different perspectives of reality and every action always needs to be contextualised against the cultural backdrop. The individual ultimately creates his/her own reality and different value systems often do not understand the perceptions of reality by other value systems. Cowan and Todorovic (2000, p.6) argue that Spiral Dynamics is “the study of emergence and patterns of deep values that ...structure leader/follower relationships, establish decision structures and define reality”, those deep values influencing the more visible layers of hidden values – “a small set of timeless guiding principles that require no external justification” (Collins and Poras as cited in Cowan and Todorovic, 2000, p.6) – and surface values – “openly stated, moral positions and behavioural rules” (Cowan and Todorovic, 2000, p.6). The similarities and relationship between social constructivism and spiral dynamics becomes apparent.

To summarise:

The topic of this dissertation lends itself generally to an interpretivist method, as a positivist method would struggle with the following five problems:

“1. The problems are inherently complex

2. Problems cross discipline boundaries
3. Technical matters are rarely at the root of the problem
4. Problems don't have an independent life of their own
5. Problems are culturally relative" (Jankowicz, 2005, p.114-115)

Knowledge creation is based on the metatheory of social constructivism and uses Spiral Dynamics as a framework to illustrate the different stages of development, its influences on perceptions of reality and its consequences on the research topic.

Research method and research technique

Based on the position above, the nature of the research is exploratory and follows an inductive approach instead of the positivistic approach (Hines, 2000).

As the research topic crosses discipline boundaries, key informant interviews were chosen, with interviewees being chosen "on the basis of their idiosyncratic, specialised knowledge rather than being randomly chosen" (Jankowicz, 2005, p.276). Social constructivism refers to thought-collectives, so the sample of the expert interviewees will be based on representatives of four thought-collectives with a perceived influence on the dissertation topic:

1. Expertise: football across different cultures
2. Expertise: nation branding
3. Expertise: government's position on destination branding
4. Expertise: participant in a World Cup and international football player

It was decided to use interviews instead of focus groups for three reasons. The first one is a practical one, it would be very difficult due to location and time constraints to assemble all four experts in one room.

The other two reasons are from a methodological nature as interviews:

- cater best for the heterogeneous nature of the interviewees and their beliefs and values (Kvale, 1996; Hines, 2000)
- controversial views can be expressed while focus group lead to general consensus (Stokes and Bergin, 2006)

Based on the underlying hypothesis, some broad questions and a rough idea of the content were kept in mind and used as a loose structure. This enables the researcher to detect patterns and keep the interview on track (Jones, 1985), while at the same benefiting from the interviewees' expertise and knowledge and allowing the expression of opinions and beliefs. Using open questions thought to minimise the intrusion of the researcher's own views into the outcome (Hines, 2000).

Personal interviews also allow for the flexibility, clarity, quality of the data that are needed to discuss such a wide ranging topic, and – if necessary

– can be followed up for further questioning as the respondents are identifiable. The disadvantages listed by Toon (1999) are outweighed due to the possibility of using electronic communication as well as the researcher being the author and therefore having no interest in cheating and no need in supervising other researchers. Nevertheless, special consideration has to be given to the interviewer bias.

In interviews the risk of bias is considered higher than in any other approach (Zikmund, 2000), the researcher therefore intended to follow – as far as possible – the guidelines and skills for conducting qualitative research by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Nevertheless a certain interviewer bias is possible as a result from the discussion of the research topic in the critical literature review as well as through new insights gained during or at the end of the individual interviews (Jones, 1985) as the researcher becomes part of what is being observed (Hines, 2000). At the same time his dominant value system will influence the interpretation as he will be “affected by the coloured lenses of their own deep values glasses – we all are” (Cowan and Todorovic, 2000, p.10). The author himself has also filled out a questionnaire (which can be accessed at http://www.jobsite.co.uk/cgi-bin/myjobsite_questionnaire.cgi) to establish his own dominant value system (“yellow”), which therefore allows for self-reflection which is necessary to observe the observer.

Another limitation of an interview is the danger of people adjusting to “what they tell another person according to what they think that person

wants or expects to hear” (Smith and Fletcher, 2001, p.119), this is perceived as of little concern as all participants are seasoned professionals with own opinions, who are unlikely to change and adapt to the interviewers’ expectations. Once the dominant value system of the interviewees is established, this likelihood can be taken into account.

The Participants

As discussed above experts from four fields of influence on the dissertation topic have been recruited. Below are listed details about each participant.

Expertise	Football across different cultures	Nation Branding	Government’s position on destination branding	Participant in football world cup
Profession	Member of coaching staff of a European club	Consultant	Brand Manager for a nation	International football player
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male
Nationality	Swedish	British	British	British
Interviewed	By phone	By phone	By phone	By Phone

The Process

Before the interview, the participants received a pre-notification communication, explaining the purpose of the study and the interview. It also includes an assurance of confidentiality, which was repeated again at the beginning of the actual interviews.

As time constraints and locations needed to be considered the participants were given a choice between a face-to-face, phone or email interview. A face-to-face interview obviously is preferable as also non-verbal clues can be detected (Burgess, 1982), nevertheless it was more important to gain access to the participants, especially given the time constraint. As the interviews were not seen as a comparative analysis, the different modi operandi were seen as acceptable, especially as the interviews were those of key informants with specialised knowledge. All experts chose a telephone interview, which meant that no recordings were possible but notes were taken during the interview. Time constraints and difficult access outweighs any concerns about accuracy. The experts all gave their consent for further contact via email if further clarification should be needed.

The trust of interviewees towards the interviewer is seen as an important factor for the effectiveness of the interview (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991). This factor was overcome to a certain extent by the fact that both parties

were introduced via trusted third parties or already had an established relationship.

The researcher used the probing technique with its seven varieties (Easterby-Smith et al., 1997) to elicit a more focused response and to clarify others. At the same time the interviewer made sure that the interviewer bias was kept to a minimum.

Once the primary data has been collected it has be used to establish common themes across all four expert fields by way of triangulation, in this way a synthesis of the different perceived realities and perspectives can be achieved while at the same time highlighting the differences.

Findings: presentation and analysis

The primary research uncovered several themes shared by the different experts in relation to the research question of how does the performance of a national football team effect the external perception of a nation brand.

Team performance has greater impact on lesser known nations

All experts agreed that the performance of a national football team has a higher impact on the external perception of less well known nations that have a lower status on the world stage. This is mainly due to the fact that the audience has had little if any previous interaction with such a nation and has not accumulated sufficient awareness, perception and knowledge about the nation to create a stereotype. The element of surprise is seen as the biggest impact factor, albeit a diminishing one as the world gets smaller with the growth in electronic media: individuals know more and more about countries and nations and also about most of the outstanding players in the world. This is mainly due to the extensive coverage club football receives via the various media channels and as the star players are most likely to be playing with the best known clubs they are seen and experienced outside their national football team. And so the building of stereotypes begins.

Team performance has a lower impact on well known nations

All experts agreed that the impact of the performance of a national football team on the external perception of a nation brand is low for already well known nations – if Germany or Brazil should lose the first round of the next World Cup it would not alter their external perception – they would still be seen as football superpowers and the prescribed characteristics and attributes would not change. Internally it would obviously be a huge disappointment. If Germany or Brazil should be victorious in the tournament the external perception also would not change, but it would reinforce and increase the recall and interest in the country, which can lead to a short-term increase in tourism. If the USA wins the World Cup in Germany, it would also not alter the perception, as the USA is already very well known by most of the world's populace. A reputation – a brand – already exists in the mind of the viewers and will be reinforced or influenced by the well known players and football clubs of these nations. This influence on their brand is far more consistent as they will play more frequent games and receive more media coverage. However, this doesn't mean that nothing can change the perception of a well known nation brand: a brand has to permanently provide positive reinforcement and prove its brand values again and again. When a crisis occurs, the response needs to be in line with the brand on all dimensions to limit the damage and reinforce the brand.

The World Cup – the most important stage

The World Cup is seen as the best stage as it is one of the few times when billions of people watch the same event, entire nations gathering in social groups watching the events unravelling live on television, unleashing emotions in real time instead of having a personalised media experience. So even just participating in the World Cup will have an enormous effect on smaller nations, buying this kind of intense media coverage would be impossible. This media coverage in turn establishes perceptions about nations which will be thrust upon the team and can be noticed through an increase in fan mail referring to the attributes and attitudes that are perceived as typical to that nation and its football team.

The individual – the personalisation of the nation brand

Another theme that can be seen in the research is that a team (and therefore a nation) can be represented by one outstanding performer. It is possible that such a performer can become the anchor of perception and the personalisation of a nation. The individual becomes the shorthand of the brand, which at the same decreases the level of control it is possible to have over a nation brand as an individual star cannot be controlled. David Beckham stands for Brand Beckham and Brand England with his brand values being transferred onto the nation brand. This will increase if England should win the World Cup. It has to be said,

however, that he is one of only a handful of athletes in the world with such a strong influence.

It is interesting to note that given the fact that individuals are the personalisation of the nation brand, according to those interviewed, no official guidance on behaviour and representation of the nation is given to the players. Nevertheless, teams interact with the local community; the Irish team in Japan 2002, for example, held a coaching session with children from their host city.

External and internal perception are intrinsically linked

The performance of a national football team on the external perception of a nation brand is intrinsically linked to the impact of the performance of a national football team on the internal perception of a nation brand.

For less well known nations a good performance combines the positive external awareness with increased confidence by the citizens: after Greece won EURO 2004, the whole country changed. Winning increased the people's morale enormously and gave the citizens a desire to show the world that they are good at other things as well as football. At the same time the world became more aware and interested in Greece and all things Greek. This was heightened by Greece subsequently hosting the Olympic Games. The victory also had a positive impact on the

players: before winning the competition they were perceived as average players, since this success more of them now play in top European leagues. The victory gave them the confidence that they can beat the best teams and made them believe that they can compete with the best in club football. At the same time, the victory also changed the perception of the external observers and more Greek players were now being perceived as better than average and able to compete at the highest level.

For well known nations this link between internal and external perception also exists. A World Cup provides the opportunity to create a positive patriotism, while pushing the ugly face of extremism to the sidelines. Sporting events provide the opportunity to re-appropriate national icons and emblems. In the case of England, the nation brand was tainted by right wing extremists who were also responsible for the trouble at sporting events. Having a majority of citizens supporting and identifying with the performance of the national football team enabled the reclaiming of the St George's flag and its return from the right wing back to the centre of society, which in turn effects the external perception of England and underlines the modern, diverse and inclusive character of the nation brand.

Football as the mirror of a society's structure

To take the theme of linking internal and external perception even further, the football pitch can even be seen as a mirror of society: the structure of the society is reflected in the football style. The weaker the structure, stability and organisation of a society, the less likely they are to have a successful national football team. In parts of Africa, for example, the anarchy that exists in the set up and in the society has such an impact on the national football team's performance on the pitch and that it infringes on any chance of success. This also has a negative impact on the external perception, doubly regrettable as a good performance by an African national football team could lead to very positive benefits for the country.

This finding can also inform the debate about nurture versus nature: While a certain skill level needs to be in existence, it is only with coaching, good organisation and a stable structure that a nation can become a successful footballing nation.

The accuracy of perception depends on observer

The external perception, in the opinion of the experts, is influenced by the knowledge, perception and stereotypes of the observer as well as by the structures and understanding of reality by the observed system. For

example, in Germany football is viewed far more as a science and the team's coaching is built on scientific, measurable methods. In turn German football is viewed by external observers as well organised, reliable and in the mould of quality engineering. Where Germans are all about statistics, Brazilians are considered to be all about dance, rhythm, movement and tempo adjustment, nevertheless their system is still highly organised and complex as is the Brazilian football team. In Brazil, however, football is seen as an art form and this internal reality is to a certain extent matched by the external perception of foreign observers. The extent of the overlap and accuracy between the two depends on the observer's technical knowledge of football, their general knowledge of the nation in question as well as their own cultural upbringing.

Victory or Style – differing degrees of importance

The experts could not agree whether winning or style had the biggest impact on a nation brand. Even though a high level and attractive performance may attract more fans and admiration, it is the winner that remains in the memory. Those who take third or fourth placed will be forgotten. However, whether winning is seen as sufficient depends on the cultural background and football understanding of the observer. In some cultures winning is not enough and teams that played great football but haven't won a trophy have a stronger recall - for example the Brazilian team of 1982 when compared with the Brazilian team of 1994;

the 1982 team consisted of several outstanding creative football players. 1994 had a winning team, however, they lacked the same flair. In nations such as Italy, where football is being seen as serious business, the overwhelming factor is winning. The Brazil team of 1982 has a high recognition across the entire globe, due to its outstanding, creative and magical football and due to the fact that the majority of players were unbelievably creative performers and stars in their own right even though the 1982 team did not win.

Football as a substitute for war

Some of the interviewed experts described international football matches as a substitute for war, which explains the depth of emotions linked to football and the transfer and deep rooted-ness of perceptions and stereotypes that even overwrite rational knowledge of nations.

In summary, the performance of a national football team impacts the external perception of a nation brand, especially when participating in the World Cup. The impact – indirectly (internal) as well as directly (external) – is higher for less well known nations as awareness, perceptions and knowledge are non-existent or are yet not entrenched. The impact of the external perception on a nation brand of a well known nation is lower. As the structures of society are mirrored on the pitch, the internal and external perceptions of a nation brand are linked. The more accurate the

observer's technical knowledge of football and their general knowledge about the nation in question, the higher the accuracy of internal and external perceptions. The interviewees could not agree whether victory or style was a more important impact factor and whether national football is a substitute for war.

Discussion

In this section the findings of the primary and secondary research will be compared, contrasted and synthesised.

Lasting change through successful participation

For smaller nations the performance of a national football team only impacts significantly on the external perception of their own brand when taking part in a major tournament. Repeated successful participation will result in a stable reputation. The Football World Cup is by far the most important tournament in terms of nation branding. The primary research revealed that taking part in such a tournament leads to lasting change in the external perception even if it is not followed up by further nation branding activity. The host nation of the tournament will develop the strongest perceptions of the participating nations as the citizens of both countries experience much closer interaction. The local media of the host country will also focus on the behaviour of different supporter groups. Subsequent nation branding activities by the less well known nations will yield highest return when targeted at the host nation. If a nation wishes to really take advantage of this effect integration into other nation branding activities is crucial.

Media fragmentation augments the importance of the World Cup

The higher impact for lesser known nations is mainly due to the surprise factor, as perceptions or stereotypes have not yet been firmly established. In the future, however, the possibility of surprise will diminish, as new media consumption will lead to better access to information about all nations. Having better access, however, does not necessarily translate into improved knowledge and it could be argued that the fragmentation of the media and the increase in entertainment and video games could lead to lower knowledge and so greater inaccuracy or unawareness of the perceptions and expectations of nations.

Interestingly, it could be expected that more personalised and fragmented media consumption (and we have so far only seen the beginning with applications such as TiVo) would increase the importance of participating in the World Cup, as it is one of the few times when the majority of the world population watches the same programme at the same time, creating the outburst of collective emotions and the establishing of collective stereotypes and perceptions. The World Cup could even further increase in importance for any kind of nation branding activity if the future media consumption really does lead to less frequent access of information about other nations.

Ways of building a successful football culture

As can be seen building a successful football culture can be very beneficial for a nation brand. Brazil is a good example of this as a great deal of its reputation is founded on the national football team and its player. The team instils pride into the Brazilian citizens and supports social cohesion, while creating a very positive external perception. The challenge is that any development of this scale takes time, a consistent effort, knowledge and a degree of general education – as any successful nation branding activity.

There are other ways of impacting the external perception of a nation brand via football. One way would be the development of individual players onto a level that is good enough to play in European club football as both the literature review and the primary research have found that the nation brand can be heavily influenced by individuals. One risk of this strategy would be that after all of this investment the outstanding individual should decide to change his official nationality to be able to play in the World Cup should his nation's team not be strong enough to qualify. Another way would be for nations that want to improve the reputation of their brand to build a club that can compete and be successful at the highest level and therefore gain reputation which can be transferred to the nation brand itself. The rationale is the same as that of country of brand origin, only potentially quicker to realise as it is smaller and possesses less heterogeneity than a nation brand itself.

Gradual change can be achieved, but careful what you wish for

For well known nations the performance of the national football team has only a minimal impact on the external perception, as perceptions and stereotypes are already in existence. However, gradual change can be achieved as these nations can be well known through other nation brand activities besides football.

The primary research has highlighted that a clear link between external perception and internal behaviour and perception exists, which would support the fact that perception of an established nation can change. For example, if a national football team of a formerly successful nation suddenly does not perform as successfully anymore, it will impact on the self-image and confidence of a nation which will be felt in the interaction with other nations and will therefore alter the external perception.

Obviously, this change will only happen very gradually and the effect would need to overwrite any other positive, perception reaffirming events. Generally, it can be said, that principles discovered for the change in external perception also apply for the internal perception – the more well known a nation, the slower the change in perceptions.

Nation brands need to consider carefully how they want to change their perception and what the consequences will be. For example, the German government wishes to change the image of Germans as being

boring and without sense of humour. Using an advertising campaign and repeatedly stating that Germans are not boring can potentially backfire and highlight the very perception it wants to change. At the same time, the boring image also reinforces the reliable and trustworthy image that is the essence of the German brand positioning of quality engineering. Changing this external perception might also erode these core brand values.

Traditional nation states as the cradle of success

Success and style of football reflects the structure and organisation of society – the citizens are the brand, they define the brand and only if voluntary participation is given will the brand be authentic and reach its full potential. Another critical building block is the political leadership that builds stable structures and outlines the vision thus enabling nations to compete regularly and successfully – be it on or off the pitch. The consistent performance is what establishes the perception and therefore the reputation of a nation and once established change is not easily forthcoming. The impact on the external perceptions of a nation brand will be influenced by many different activities, yet the Football World Cup has the highest impact of re-affirming old perceptions or beginning the process of gradual towards a new external perception.

The mirroring of a nation's socio-political and psychological structure on the football pitch consequently leads one to the opinion that established traditional modern nation states (Spiral Dynamics: blue/orange colours) will be the most successful, as recently established nation states (red/blue) don't yet have the solid structures needed for success. Furthermore, one would expect postmodern states (orange/green) to lose their structure as heterogeneity grows. At the same time the egalitarian (green) section of the postmodern society will eradicate their competition based selection and thinking. A postmodern state could only continue to be successful if it has the possibility and manages to integrate foreign talent. This should not be infeasible if the postmodern nation state possesses a stronger reputation than the country of origin of the foreign players it wishes to acquire.

Increased heterogeneity calls for new branding techniques

Another finding of the critical literature review has been reaffirmed by the primary research: the nation brand and the way it is communicated is heterogenic in nature which subsequently means that any branding techniques that are based on a sender-receiver relationship instead of conversation, participation and interaction need to be changed in order to be useful on a nation brand basis.

The individual is the strongest ambassador for a nation brand

The interviews carried out for this paper have highlighted and enhanced the importance of the outstanding individual. As it has been established that the citizens themselves are the brand, the strongest representative of a nation brand and biggest influencer of the external perception will be famous individual citizens. Individual star players are the embodiment of the national football team and therefore of the nation brand. While teams may be respected, only individuals receive the strongest form of admiration and will be remembered even long after the actual event. Individuals are often more important than the team and in extreme cases the public may transfer the individual's values onto the nation brand. Interestingly, the individual player will always be assessed against the existing perceptions and stereotypes and all of his behaviour will be interpreted through the existing perceptions. Nevertheless the individual player will still have substantial power to influence the external perception of the nation brand.

With football players becoming celebrities in their own right, their impact on the nation brand will increase in importance, which highlights the lack of control a nation has over its brand, especially as nation brands do not have the power to control who will become a famous representative. The adoption of one specific individual as the brand representative leads to other dilemmas: are they representative of the entire population? What happens if their reputation gets tarnished (especially as they are seldom

replaceable as brand personalities are in the corporate world)? The synthesis of the research culminates in to the following point: the most influential method of nation branding is public diplomacy by individual citizens, be they well known players or individual fans, interacting with other citizens of other nations. The effectiveness of this public diplomacy depends on the level of pride, ownership and voluntary participation of the individual citizen towards his or her own nation brand.

Conclusion and critical reflection

The performance of a national football team influences the external perception of a nation brand in relation to the degree of awareness, perceptions and knowledge that already exists in the mind of the audience. The stronger these perceptions are, and the better well known a nation is, the less the performance of a national football team influences the external perception directly, nevertheless slow gradual change can be achieved. The knowledge about a nation does not depend on it being known specifically as a footballing nation but can stem from other experiences such as culture or politics. The lower the level of awareness, perception and knowledge that exists in the mind of the audience and therefore, the less well known a nation is, the higher the impact of the performance of a national football team on the external perception. The same formula is also valid in regards to internal perceptions, which leads to the insight that internal and external perceptions are linked and are influencing each other.

This research has also found that the participation in a football world cup, especially if repeated, can lead to lasting change for less well known nation states. This remains the case even if it is not followed up by further nation branding activities. Nevertheless, the impact on the external perception will be multiplied if world cup success is followed up by further nation brand activity.

The World Cup will become even more important as a stage for nation branding, as media usage is expected to become more personalised and fragmented. Subsequently the building of a successful football culture becomes beneficial for any nation brand. The research has shown that this can be achieved on different levels: national football teams, famous football clubs and/or internationally renowned star players. The more top players of a given nation play in the top international football clubs, the higher the impact on the external brand perception. The combination of creative star players and a successful campaign of a national football team in a major tournament will lead to the highest impact on a nation brand.

As the structure of the society is mirrored on the pitch, the research suggests that established traditional nation states will be the most successful footballing nations. Postmodern states will continue to build on their success if they manage to integrate foreign talent which will be helped through their still significant reputation as a football power.

Another very important finding of this research is that increased heterogeneity and changed media consumption will put even more importance on the individual as a personalisation of the nation brand and on public diplomacy through interaction between citizens of different nations. Star players are the anchor of a nation brand and can influence its perception by transferring their own values onto the values of the nation brand. If the star player stands for the top down approach, the

public diplomacy of the citizens is the bottom up one: the impact of a visiting nation on the host nation of the world cup is always stronger than the impact of a visiting nation on another visiting nation as more personal interaction occurs. The citizen becomes an increasingly important actor in nation branding, which signifies that successful nation branding needs to be built on pride, ownership and voluntary participation.

The following points could have led to a bias in the primary research:

- Football is still largely a male environment, it is therefore not surprising that all experts interviewed in this research were male. This could lead to a bias in the findings and would need to be addressed for subsequent research in this area.
- All experts are Europeans and can be deemed well informed, second tier thinkers from post-modern states, the inclusion of a wider variety of value systems on the individual as well as on the nation state level might have produced differing opinions.
- Based on Graves' and Spiral Dynamics' hierarchy of development the author's dominant value system is yellow. It would be interesting to show the same findings to researchers with other dominant value systems to understand overlap and differences in the interpretation.

The dissertation has also discovered several areas for further research:

1. It would be interesting to understand the impact of mobile embassies and guides that were rolled out to supporters and if any change in behaviour and perception has been achieved?
2. At the same time, the German National Tourist Board has run a campaign with Geoff Hurst to influence the perception of Germany in England: do campaigns like this impact the perception of the external environment? How are these campaigns perceived back home? Is there consistency between these campaigns and other nation branding activities?
3. As individuals have more than one identity, does a hierarchy of identities exist and what triggers the superiority of one identity over another? What would be the affect on nation brands?
4. How will multiple national identities affect the national identity and the nation brand? And in regards to football: how does the external perception change with naturalised players in the team, especially if they only chose the new nationality for professional and materialistic reasons?
5. What is the impact of country of brand ownership in cross border merger and acquisitions?
6. What is the definition of home-grown or domestic brands and how are they impacted in a culture of multiple (national) identities, especially with the impact of dual nationality, as well as supra- and infra-national identities?

7. Is democracy culturally dependent and what are the economical and educational levels need to establish a stable democracy?
8. Can nation branding only exist in democracies?
9. Are the current institutions, processes and traditions of a democratic system equipped to deal with the question of identity in a post-modern state?
10. How can traditional branding tools and processes that are based around consumers instead of actors and are built around the traditional sender-receiver relationship (instead of two or many way conversation) be adapted to be useful in the nation branding process?
11. How does the internet impact on the different development stage of nation states?
12. How can community be defined in a virtual age and on what characteristics will local politics be based?
13. How does the liking or disliking of a football club and/or individual football player impact the external perception of a nation brand?
14. At what stage – in terms of number of tournaments played or number of games won – does the impact of the national football team's influence on the external perception of a nation brand begin to lessen?
15. What is the relative importance of the different nation branding activities (sport, culture, politics, etc) on the perception of a nation brand?

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Appendices

Appendix A: The different levels of development – based on Spiral Dynamics

Description	Colour	Basic Concerns
Holistic-global	Turquoise	Life & harmony
Integrative-ecological	Yellow	Flexibility & natural flows
Sensitive-humanistic	Green	Equality & community
Strategic-materialistic	Orange	Autonomy & manipulation
Purposeful-saintly	Blue	Meaning & Order
Powerful-impulsive	Red	Dominance & power
Magical-mystical	Purple	Safety
Basic-instinctive	Beige	Survival

Beck and Cowan, 1996, p. 65