Nation branding and integrated marketing communications: an ASEAN perspective

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to examine the extent to which the nation branding activities of export promotion organisations (EPOs), investment agencies (IAs), national tourism organisations (NTOs) and embassies follow the principle of coordination that characterises an integrated marketing communications approach.

Design/methodology/approach – A qualitative exploratory approach was taken, comprising face-to-face in-depth interviews with key informants from five Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) involved in the implementation of nation branding communications in terms of export promotion, tourism, investment attraction and public diplomacy.

Findings – Seven key dimensions of interorganisational coordination in a nation branding context emerge from our results. These dimensions include sector, organisation domicile, mode, strategy formulation, nature, frequency and target audience.

Research limitations/implications – The relatively small dataset as well as the restricted geographic scope of the study limits the generalisability of the findings; further research is required to ascertain whether the findings of this study also apply in other settings.

Practical implications – Enhanced coordination needs to occur not only between the different governmental organisations engaged in nation branding strategy, but also between those organisations and their respective private sector stakeholders.

Originality/value – This paper extends previous work on the need for countries to adopt a coordinated approach to their nation branding activities. The paper is original in its examination of actors' perceptions of the optimal degree of coordination that should occur between a country's EPO, IA, NTO and embassies. The paper is also original in its reporting of findings from a region (ASEAN) that is under-researched relative to other areas, such as Europe and North America.

Keywords Brands, Marketing communication, Exports, Tourism, Investments, South East Asia

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

While the need for different state-level organisations to integrate their nation branding activities in a coordinated manner is widely accepted, very little research examines

actors' perceptions of the optimal degree of coordination that should occur. This paper helps reduce that gap by examining the extent to which the key organisations engaged in nation branding activities – export promotion organisations (EPOs), investment agencies (IAs), national tourism organisations (NTOs) and embassies coordinate their efforts according to the principle of coordination that characterises an integrated marketing communications (IMC) approach. In this paper, we focus on the process rather than the outcome of a coordinated approach. The process of coordination amongst EPOs, IAs, NTOs and embassies has not yet, to our knowledge, been examined empirically from an interorganisational perspective. Our paper seeks to begin filling that gap in the literature. We do this by investigating the nature and frequency of coordination and collaboration between the different organisations that participate in the formulation and implementation of nation branding strategy. This study also elicits the views of decision-makers from these organisations regarding what they perceive to be an optimal level of coordination in their nation branding activities. Future research should also examine the outcomes and campaign-specific content of such an approach, although this is beyond the scope of the present study.

The locus of the research is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region. ASEAN comprises ten member countries – Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. For a number of reasons, ASEAN represents an interesting and important locus from a nation branding perspective. In many parts of ASEAN, economic development is urgently needed and most countries in the region have initiated nation branding strategies to help achieve this aim; the member states of ASEAN find themselves at varying stages of economic development, and their differing needs and priorities may be reflected in their nation branding activities; and, ASEAN is a significantly under-researched region within the nation branding literature compared to other more widely studied regions such as Europe and North America. Nation branding in ASEAN thus merits attention, particularly in view of the region's widely acknowledged economic importance as a significant regional trading bloc (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2001; Cayla and Eckhardt, 2007). As Suh and Khan (2003) point out, with a combined population of more than 450 million people, ASEAN represents a massive market which has not yet been fully utilized. This constitutes a further incentive to examine the nation branding activities of ASEAN member states' EPOs, IAs and NTOs as these organisations attempt to address the challenges facing them, both within and without the ASEAN region.

This paper is structured as follows. First, we review the key elements of IMC and indicate the challenge inherent in applying an IMC approach in a nation branding context. Then, we review conceptualisations of the nation branding construct, with a particular focus on the degree of coordination that is desirable between different organisations engaged in nation branding strategy. Next, we outline the interpretive approach that we used in order to gain depth and breadth of understanding (Hirschmann, 1989), in line with the view that qualitative marketing research is especially pertinent in contexts that have not been well studied and where exploratory research is needed (Thompson, 1997), as is the case specifically for nation branding in the ASEAN region, and more generally for the application of the IMC principle of coordination in the context of nation branding. We present our findings under three main categories – the range of organisations with which collaboration takes place; the frequency of meetings with colleagues from EPOs, IAs,

NTOs and embassies; and finally, the degree of desired coordination between these different organisations. Finally, we discuss our conclusions and also highlight a number of avenues for future research.

2. IMC: the principle of coordination

The concept of IMC has become established in the marketing literature as an integral part of brand strategy (Cornelissen and Lock, 2000; Eagle and Kitchen, 2000; Gould, 2004; Madhavaram *et al.*, 2005). IMC may be considered to represent more than just a communication process, but rather a process associated with management and brands in which marketing communications are managed in a holistic manner to achieve strategic objectives (Kitchen *et al.*, 2004). It has been suggested that the integration of a firm's marketing communications is related positively to a firm's brand-related performance (Low, 2000; Reid, 2003). Wickham and Hall (2006, p. 95) provide a working definition of the IMC concept by stating that:

> [...] the basic premise of the IMC approach is that, through the coordination of marketing communications efforts, the firm can reach diverse audiences with a consistent message, thus resulting in optimal market coverage and greater impact on the target market for the least amount of investment.

This definition echoes the earlier work of Stewart (1996) who advocates better coordination of the communication media and promotional tools available to marketers, and Schultz (1996, p. 146) for whom:

> [...] the task of the marketing and marketing communications managers of the future will not only be to develop and execute planned messages, it will also be to attempt to manage all the information sources and resources that might influence a consumer's purchase decision choice.

Eagle *et al.* (2007) conceptualise IMC as comprising coordination of communications disciplines; a way to organise the business or firm; a way to develop and direct brand strategy; a way to deliver unified messages; coordination of advertising and PR programmes; and a strategic brand business process. In order to successfully implement IMC, companies need to assemble teams comprising members with specific skills sets from the various communications disciplines that an IMC approach draws upon (Phelps *et al.*, 1996).

Although the construction and application of IMC at firm-level is far from straightforward, the challenge is even more daunting at nation-level. When countries develop their nation branding strategies, the coordination of brand strategy development and the delivery of a unified message are complicated by the diverse range of stakeholders whose participation is required, and the differing audiences to whom the communications must be directed. This conundrum is discussed in Section 3.

3. Nation branding

A key premise of nation branding is that "the reputations of countries are rather like the brand images of companies and products, and equally important" (Anholt, 2007, p. xi). Whereas the application of branding techniques in the business sphere is well established, it is only in recent years that an upsurge of interest has occurred with regard to the potential benefits of applying such techniques to nations rather than just to products, services and companies. The increasing prevalence of nation branding

activity by governments worldwide has been identified and examined by Dinnie (2008) and Moilanen and Rainisto (2008). Van Ham (2001) has noted that the unbranded state has a difficult time attracting economic and political attention, and that image and reputation are becoming essential parts of the state's strategic equity. Despite the rising interest in nation branding, Szondi (2008) has observed that there are surprisingly few definitions of the nation branding construct. To help fill this gap, Szondi (2008, p. 5) provides a conceptualisation of nation branding as "the strategic self-presentation of a country with the aim of creating reputational capital through economic, political and social interest promotion at home and abroad." Fan (2006, p. 6) states that "nation branding concerns applying branding and marketing communications techniques to promote a nation's image" whilst Gudjonsson (2005, p. 285) takes a similar perspective by declaring that "nation branding uses the tools of branding to alter or change the behaviour, attitudes, identity or image of a nation in a positive way". Such definitions provide a useful orientation for researchers in the nation branding field, although further conceptualisation of the nation branding construct can be anticipated as the domain matures.

The need for nations to actively manage their image has been widely acknowledged in the literature (Olins, 1999; O'Shaughnessy and Jackson, 2000; Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Morgan *et al.*, 2002; Mihailovich, 2006; Avraham and Ketter, 2008; Hankinson, 2009). Country image has been predominantly studied from a consumer perspective (Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009), yet the domain of nation branding extends beyond a consumer focus on tourism promotion (Laws *et al.*, 2002; Dore and Crouch, 2003; Pike, 2005) to encompass additional functions such as investment attraction (Capik, 2007; Cho *et al.*, 2009; Arregle *et al.*, 2009; Lee and Rugman, 2009), export promotion (Tesfom *et al.*, 2004) and public diplomacy (Cowan and Cull, 2008; Fullerton *et al.*, 2009). In some cases, governments of member states may collaborate with each other in order to build supranational region brands (Dinnie *et al.*, 2009), where the challenges of stakeholder coordination assume even greater dimensions. The multiplicity of nation branding objectives, and the concomitant diversity of stakeholders whose input is required for the formulation of nation branding strategy, highlights the importance of a coordinated approach that draws on the principles of IMC described in Section 2.

The importance of a coordinated IMC approach in nation branding and the related challenges have been documented by Skinner (2005), who also raises the important question of whether a totally integrated strategy is something to which place marketers should aspire. The difficulty of achieving stakeholder coordination has also been noted by Pike (2004) and Florek (2005). Our study builds on Skinner's analysis by eliciting the opinions of key decision-makers from a range of nation branding functions including export promotion, inward investment, tourism and public diplomacy regarding what they perceive to be a desirable degree of coordination for their countries' nation branding strategy.

4. Method
To gain insights into the nation branding activities of ASEAN nations and the extent to which these activities follow the principle of coordination embodied by an IMC approach, a series of semi-structured personal interviews was undertaken. An interview guide (the Appendix) detailed the substantive areas to be covered, although respondents were allowed to freely move from topic to topic without necessarily adhering to the

order in which the topics appeared in the interview guide. The aim was to establish a "conversation-like dialogue rather than asking questions that impose categorical frameworks on informants" understanding and experiences (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994, p. 492). The use of open-ended questions enhanced the building of such a dialogue, as:

> [. . .] open-ended questions have the virtue of allowing the subjects to tell the interviewer what's relevant and what's important rather than being restricted by the researchers' preconceived notions about what is important (Berry, 2002, p. 681).

The use of open-ended questions thus increases the validity of the responses and is appropriate for studies of an exploratory nature (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002).

A qualitative approach was adopted as the most appropriate method to explore the diversity of perspectives and settings found in different types of organisations and in different countries (Craig and Douglas, 2001; Gurau and Ranchhod, 2005; Halinen and Tornroos, 2005; Freeman and Cavusgil, 2007). Whereas a quantitative approach would have been appropriate for measuring the frequency of phenomena, our aim was to gain deeper insights into the nature of the phenomena under investigation rather than to measure their frequency and therefore a qualitative approach was adopted (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Semi-structured face-to-face interviews took place with ten key informants, drawn from a range of organisations engaged in nation branding activities. Although the small size of the dataset limits the generalisability of the findings, key informant-based studies such as this are typically characterised by small samples that reflect the limited population of sufficiently knowledgeable respondents. The organisations whose members participated in the study include embassies, EPOs, IAs and NTOs. The respondents represented a total of five different member states of ASEAN. Table I shows the profiles of the respondents.

Three of the respondents were country directors of their national EPO. Two respondents were country directors of their national IA. Two respondents were country directors of their NTO. Three respondents were embassy officials. The objective was to sample a broad and rich diversity of views and settings, from which a comprehensive overview could be obtained. A purposeful sampling procedure was used in order to select key informants whose senior status within their respective organisations allowed them to speak with in-depth knowledge and authority on

Country	Organisation	Location
A	Embassy	Kuala Lumpur
A	EPO	Tokyo
A	IA	Tokyo
A	NTO	Tokyo
B	Embassy	Kuala Lumpur
C	Embassy	Kuala Lumpur
D	EPO	Tokyo
E	EPO	Tokyo
E	IA	Tokyo
E	NTO	Tokyo

Note: To ensure respondent anonymity, countries are represented by letters

Table I.
Respondents' profiles

the topics contained in the interview guide. Interviews were conducted in English at the respondent's offices. When permission was given to record the interview, the interview was recorded and later transcribed. When permission was not given to record the interview, the interviewer made notes during the interview and later wrote these up. Interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes. Thematic analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994) was applied to the interview data in order to explore the extent to which each respondent's organisation follows the principle of coordination that characterises an IMC approach in its nation branding activities.

5. Results

We present and discuss our results under three sub-headings. First, we examine the range of organisations with which the EPOs, IAs, NTOs and embassies in our sample collaborate. We then focus on the frequency with which colleagues from the different functional areas of export promotion, inward investment, tourism and public diplomacy hold meetings together. Finally, we analyse respondents' perceptions of the degree of desired coordination that they believe should occur between EPOs, IAs, NTOs and embassies. In order to preserve respondent anonymity, we have taken two steps. First, any reference made by respondents to the name of their country is replaced by a generic term such as "our country". Second, we perform a similar anonymisation of specific organisations. For example, rather than use the precise name of a country's organisation, we use a generic term such as EPO, IA, NTO or embassy. These steps were taken in order to respect respondents' insistence on anonymity as their precondition for participating in the study.

5.1 Range of organisations with which collaboration takes place
The EPOs, IAs, NTOs and embassies that we interviewed collaborate with a diverse range of organisations. One NTO country director relates that:

> We have three organisations here in Japan – ourselves, our EPO and our IA. They all report to the same government ministry. Where appropriate we do collaborate but a lot of the time there is no overlap. For example, the head of our IA will be calling on the Chairman of a big company to persuade them to set up a factory in our country to do R&D – I'm not involved in that equation.

This respondent acknowledges the potential for collaboration while also indicating the limits to the degree of overlap within which it would be appropriate for different organisations to collaborate. Although aware of the limits to possible overlap, he goes on to stress the positive synergies that can occur when overlapping goals exist:

> However, there could be opportunities, for example our EPO brings out food producers from our country to Japan and so we do consumer events that give Japanese consumers an understanding of our national food and our country as a destination. So there are collaborations. The agencies are autonomous, they have their own budgets, we all understand what each other's roles are, but where there is room for collaboration, we collaborate.

The interplay between autonomy and collaboration thus represents an important element in the interorganisational coordination of the key public sector agencies associated with nation branding activities, namely, EPOs, IAs and NTOs. However, the range of organisations with which collaboration occurs extends beyond public sector organisations from the same country to include collaborative undertakings with

private sector organisations in the host country where the EPOs, IAs and NTOs are based. The same NTO respondent states that:

> Our work includes engaging travel agents, it includes working with consumer brands, talking B2B as well as B2C. B2B would be, as I mentioned, travel agents.

The need for collaboration with private sector as well as public sector organisations was also stated by an IA respondent:

> We collaborate with other organisations, including government organisations and also private organisations. We coordinate from the beginning stage for policy formulation and for investment promotion activities. In order to formulate investment promotion policy, we consult with related government organisations, for example, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Commerce, so it's the key government organisations. Then in the private sector, there is for example our country's Confederation of Industries, Chamber of Commerce [...]. Actually we invite all stakeholders to brainstorm and to advise us how to promote the investment sector.

The multitude of organisations with which collaboration takes place is emphasised by another respondent (EPO), who stresses the need to work together with organisations from both one own's country and also with organisations from the host country:

> Of course, we always work together with the other government agencies, not only other government agencies but also with other countries. So, for example, we have the embassy, we have our IA, and we have an NTO. Besides, our collaboration with our own government authorities, we also have collaboration with the Japanese authorities, for example with JETRO (Japan External Trade Organisation) we had a recent joint collaboration where we participated in an international auto show. We also work together with ASEAN-Japan Centre in promoting our country's products. They help us a lot in promoting our products and our nation brand.

The above respondent reports a clear benefit to building their country's nation brand from collaborating with host country organisations, in this case Japan External Trade Organisation and the ASEAN-Japan Centre. This underscores the importance for government agencies to establish collaborative relationships with both own country and host country organisations. A different facet of interorganisational coordination is discussed by the same EPO respondent, who refers to the stimulus for coordination that is represented by official visits by governmental delegations:

> We collaborate with tourism and investment, if there is a visit by a government minister we will collaborate to welcome the delegation.

This form of coordination, motivated by delegation visits, may be viewed as symbolic rather than substantive. Coordination of this type is ephemeral, lasting only as long as the delegation's visit, although there is potential for more enduring collaborative relationships to emerge from such instances. Another respondent (IA) also referred to the capacity of official visits to stimulate interorganisational coordination:

> At some events we promote trade, tourism and investment so on those occasions we collaborate with them (NTO and EPO). Sometimes trade and investment events are organized together. In many activities we promote each other. We had an event earlier this year when our Prime Minister visited Japan. At that event we all collaborated for the first part of the seminar, and then after that we each did our own seminars.

Embassy officials also reported a wide range of organisations with which collaboration occurs. Given the broad remit under which embassies operate, the range of collaborating organisations mentioned included not only business organisations but also cultural and educational organisations. One respondent (embassy) noted this diversity of organisations:

> In our embassy here, we have a trade section, trade investment promotion is a component of an embassy. So, of course, another section for example like culture and tourism, education and diplomatic section also coordinate with each other to promote our product and service.

Another embassy official, from a different country to the above respondent, described that nature of the coordination existing between the embassy and the other national agencies:

> Our key role here is public diplomacy. For export promotion and attracting inward investment we do have our EPO and our IA. Generally we are all on the same page, we decide on a few characteristics that people associate with our country and we start to lay out our strategy on them.

Having examined the range of organisations with which collaboration takes place, we now turn to the frequency with which EPOs, IAs, NTOs and embassies hold joint meetings as another indicator of the extent to which the IMC principle of coordination is implemented in nation branding strategy.

5.2 Frequency of meetings with colleagues from export promotion, inward investment, tourism and the diplomatic service
There was wide variation from country to country in our respondents' reported frequency of meetings with colleagues from export promotion, inward investment, tourism and the diplomatic service. One respondent (NTO) gave the following details with regard to meeting frequency:

> We – our NTO, EPO and IA – do meet regularly here at the embassy. The most senior official here would be the Ambassador. We do have regular meetings here at the embassy and we update each other on our activities. We meet at the embassy a couple of times a year. Week-to-week we do touch base, our community here is not very big. I had lunch with the head of our IA recently, for example.

The above respondent not only provides detail on the frequency of meetings, but also draws attention to the two different forms of meeting – formal and informal. Whereas formal meetings of all key organisations take place only twice a year at the embassy, informal meetings between directors of the NTO, IA or EPO can occur on an irregular, spontaneous basis such as meeting for lunch. Although this respondent stated that embassy meetings with all organisations represented occur only twice a year, for other nations the meetings are much more frequent. One respondent (EPO) stated:

> We have a monthly meeting together with them (IA and NTO) at the embassy to brief the Ambassador on our projects. If we think we need their collaboration, that's where we start working on that.

For one country's organisations, no regular frequency appeared to prevail for interorganisational meetings. One respondent (IA) described the frequency of his country's interorganisational meetings as follows:

It takes place from time to time (meetings between EPO, IA and NTO). Whenever we formulate a new policy, we need the expertise and information from them. It's on an issue base, not a time base.

The above respondent highlights a key characteristic of the frequency of meetings dimension of interorganisational coordination, by framing frequency as being issue-based rather than time-based. An implication of the issue-based approach is that meetings are held on an as-and-when required basis, rather than being fixed in advance by calendar dates that may have little relevance to the issues that each organisation is grappling with. Another respondent (embassy) made a similar point regarding an issue-based approach for determining the frequency of interorganisational meetings:

We meet on an issues basis. If an issue arises we get together to discuss the problem and we see what is the best way to resolve it. I do not think these are regularised. I know the head of the international relation departments of different ministries in our country meet once a month and discuss the issues that require cross-agency coordination but I do not know how institutionalised it is beyond that.

This embassy official thus echoes the comments of the IA respondent regarding an issue-based rather than time-based approach to the scheduling of meetings.

We now turn to respondents' perceptions of the degree of desired coordination that should occur between EPOs, IAs, NTOs and embassies.

5.3 Degree of desired coordination

Support was expressed by respondents for a coordinated approach between their countries' EPO, NTO, IA and embassies. However, such support was qualified in various ways. For one respondent (embassy), the "institutionalisation" of such coordination is not necessarily welcome:

Definitely more coordination is good. But you don't want these things to get too institutionalised. They must be purpose-oriented.

The "purpose-oriented" aspect of interorganisational coordination was echoed by another respondent (NTO), who emphasised the need for potential synergies as a precondition for engaging in a coordinated approach:

It's better on the ground level. There is no point imposing, and I think the management recognise that you can't force fit the people on the ground if the projects don't have good synergies. As long as everyone understands what their responsibilities are, then it's very clear.

The above respondent also reveals a further important dimension of nation branding interorganisational coordination, namely, the dichotomy between a centralised versus a decentralised approach. The respondent's term "the management" refers to senior decision-makers based in the home country. The respondent clearly believes that a decentralised approach is the more desirable option, whereby "the people on the ground" are empowered to determine the optimal degree of coordination that should occur between the nation's EPO, IA, NTO and embassies. Support for such a view was also forthcoming from another respondent (IA), who stated:

There is no standard for how we should coordinate. It depends on our people.

The issue-based, rather than time-based, view regarding the most desirable degree of coordination was expressed by one respondent (EPO) as follows:

I think the current level of meetings is manageable. Of course, we have to meet once in a while to speak to each other to make sure that our objectives are being achieved.

One possible way to ensure an optimal degree of interorganisational coordination was articulated by one respondent (embassy), who explained how he and his colleagues are motivated to work together and coordinate their activities:

I think we have structured the government in such a manner that we avoid the turf-watching that is associated with certain bureaucracy [...]. My salary is dependent on how well our economy does at the end of every year and because of that I don't see myself as a foreign ministry official but as a government official. Because if we manage to succeed, everybody benefits. It is the reason why we work together so well.

The above respondent thus outlines one potential means to achieve successful interorganisational coordination whilst avoiding excessive bureaucracy as well as avoiding a turf-watching silo mentality that could hamper attempts to develop a coordinated strategy engaging the country's EPO, IA, NTO and embassies.

The findings discussed in the preceding sections are summarised in Table II in terms of the dimensions and dichotomies that characterise interorganisational coordination in a nation branding context.

In Section 6, we draw conclusions based on our preceding discussion of the findings and focus specifically on the following dimensions of interorganisational coordination in a nation branding context – sector, organisation domicile, mode, strategy formulation, nature, frequency and target audience.

6. Conclusions and future research

From our findings, the principle of interorganisational coordination in a nation branding context appears as a complex construct, characterised by seven key dimensions and their associated dichotomies (Table II). The first key dimension is "sector". An initial practical implication of our study is that interorganisational coordination needs to occur not only between the nation's key public sector organisations, such as the EPO, IA, NTO and embassies, but also between those organisations and the private sector organisations which play a facilitating role in the achievement of the country's nation branding goals in terms of export promotion, inward investment, tourism promotion and public diplomacy. Martin *et al.* (2005) have discussed the clear link between export promotion and foreign investment attraction; however, there is a dearth of studies into the organisational structures and processes that may enable different stakeholders to

Dimension	Dichotomy	
Sector	Public	Private
Organisation domicile	Own country	Host country
Mode	Formal	Informal
Strategy formulation	Centralised	Decentralised
Nature	Symbolic	Substantive
Frequency	Time-based	Issue-based
Target audience	B2B	B2C

Table II.
Dimensions and dichotomies of nation branding interorganisational coordination

coordinate their efforts in terms of fully exploiting the link between investment attraction and export promotion. Further research is thus required into this area. The second key dimension is "organisation domicile". A country's EPO, IA, NTO and embassies must look outwards and engage not only with organisations from their own country but also with organisations from the host country. Such engagement should contribute to the building of networks and relationships that embed a country's nation branding activities in the host country. The third key dimension is "mode" which refers to the distinction between formal and informal coordination practices. A further practical implication of our research is that an important strategic decision for nation branding policymakers is to establish clear guidelines for EPOs, IAs, NTOs and embassies on the ground in host countries regarding the expected degree of formal and informal coordination that is adopted in order to achieve specified nation branding goals.

"Strategy formulation" represents the fourth key dimension that emerges from our findings. The dichotomy within this dimension lies between a centralised approach on the one hand and a decentralised approach on the other. Policymakers need to determine the optimal balance between a clear and consistent, global approach to their nation branding activities and the flexibility for EPOs, IAs, NTOs and embassies on the ground in host countries to develop their own, host country-specific policies. This issue has been conceptualised within the sphere of corporate marketing as "flexible integration" (Christensen *et al.*, 2008), but has yet to be applied to the domain of nation branding. The fifth key dimension of interorganisational coordination to emerge from our findings is "nature" wherein the dichotomy lies between symbolic coordination and substantive coordination. Symbolic coordination refers to cases of interorganisational coordination which were stimulated by official visits by high-ranking delegations from the home country. On such occasions, the nation's EPO, IA, NTO and embassy would coordinate an event to welcome the visiting dignitaries, but no long-term coordination endured after the delegation's visit was completed. Substantive coordination, on the other hand, refers to ongoing coordinated activities with regular meetings, usually held at the country's embassy. The sixth dimension is "frequency". From our respondent's statements, there appears to be a desire for joint meetings to be scheduled on an issue basis rather than on a time basis. Respondents were conscious of the potentially time-consuming consequence of a rigid, bureaucratic approach to the frequency of meeting scheduling and appeared to prefer to allow the frequency of meetings to be determined by "issue" or "purpose" rather than to be fixed according to an arbitrary calendar interval. The seventh dimension is "target audience". The dichotomy here lies between business audiences on the one hand (B2B) and consumer audiences on the other (B2C). A key practical implication of our findings is that policymakers need to reflect on the need to provide training for certain of their organisations to help them communicate effectively with business and consumer audiences. For example, NTOs will normally be well experienced in dealing with both types of audience; however, embassy officials may be less well prepared through their professional training to be equipped to engage in communications with the domestic population of the country to which they have been posted. In this respect, Melissen (2007, p. xvii) states that "the practice of foreign ministries and embassies in engaging with civil society groups and individuals abroad demonstrates that the evolution of diplomatic representation has reached a new stage". This represents a further challenge for nation branding policymakers to address.

There are several areas related to interorganisational coordination in a nation branding context that require further research. Future studies should examine the degree of coordination that is prevalent within each of the functional areas associated with a country's nation branding strategy, primarily export promotion, inward investment, tourism and public diplomacy. Cross-disciplinary research is required to analyse the processes at play with regard to interorganisational coordination in the context of nation branding. For example, useful findings could be generated through a cross-disciplinary approach that combines the marketing perspective with an organisational behaviour perspective. Pioneering work utilising a marketing/organisational behaviour cross-disciplinary perspective has been conducted by Hatch and Schultz (2008) in the context of corporate branding; however, such an approach has yet to be applied to the domain of nation branding. A knowledge management perspective could also constitute a useful theoretical lens through which to view the effectiveness of a coordinated interorganisational approach to nation branding. In the context of multinational enterprises, Noorderhaven and Harzing (2009) have demonstrated the importance of social interaction between managers from different units in order to enhance knowledge-sharing; further research is required to ascertain whether such social interaction-based knowledge-building can also occur in the context of nation branding organisations. In-depth, single country case studies are also required in order to evaluate context-specific performance outcomes attributable to a coordinated approach amongst a country's EPO, IA, NTO and embassies. Finally, future research should include critical studies that question the received wisdom that a coordinated approach is *per se* a desirable phenomenon. The potential drawbacks of time-consuming administration and bureaucratic inertia point to the possibility that the desirability and exact nature of a coordinated interorganisational approach demands careful consideration.

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Appendix 1. Interview guide

Definition of "nation branding":

> The various ways in which a country promotes its reputation in order to increase trade, tourism, and inward investment. Other objectives may be to attract workers and students, and to gain international influence:

(1) Does your country have a nation branding strategy? If so, what does it consist of?

(2) Do you collaborate with other organisations in order to attract inward investment to your country? If so, which organisations do you collaborate with?

(3) To what extent is your country's inward investment strategy coordinated with other key functions such as export promotion, tourism promotion, and diplomacy? For example:

- Do you participate in joint programmes with representatives from export promotion, tourism and the diplomatic service?

- Are representatives from export promotion, tourism and the diplomatic service involved in your strategy planning, implementation, and evaluation?

- How often (if ever) do you meet with colleagues from tourism, export promotion, and the diplomatic service?

(4) Do you believe that more coordination would be desirable? Why/why not?

Note: The interview guide was used for key informants within IAs. The interview guide was modified for key informants within NTOs, export promotion agencies and embassies. For example, the first topic for inward IAs reads: "Do you collaborate with other organisations in order to attract inward investment to your country? If so, which organisations do you collaborate with?" The guide was modified as follows for key informants within NTOs: "Do you collaborate with other organisations in order to attract tourism to your country? If so, which organisations do you collaborate with?".

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