Nation Branding Communication

A Case Study of the Swedish Nation Brand

Ena Čalić

Master thesis, 15 hp
Media and Communication Studies  Supervisor: Diana Jacobsson
International/intercultural communication
Spring 2016  Examiner: Fredrik Stiernstedt
ABSTRACT

Writer: Ena Čalić

Title: Nation Branding Communication

Subtitle: A Case Study of the Swedish Nation Brand Language: English

Pages: 51
While many studies examine destination and nation brand development, little has been done in examining the process of planning and the selection of representative values that nations choose to communicate through their individual brands. Curiously, studies within the field of media and communication research are scarce particularly regarding how nations communicate with its public, especially with the rapid development and mass adoption of the internet. The aim of this study is to identify the key concepts used towards building a nation’s identity along with its brand communication while focusing the case study of the Swedish nation brand. This study primarily uses the process of critical discourse analysis (CDA) for content analysis within text and visual based brand messages posted on social media in order to breakdown and identify the core values that Brand Sweden communicates. The secondary process of a qualitative approach is also employed for interpreting messages through individual interviews with personnel who are in charge of communicating the Swedish nation brand. As brand Sweden is renowned and recognised as a unique nation brand, it serves as a good case study for examining the crucial factors within a nation branding discourse to help breakdown and understand its successes. This examination will also include the brand’s approach to balancing the recent trends and evolutions within the Swedish society.

Communication practitioners along with marketing organisations would find this study helpful in identifying and developing the primary focuses towards their strategy planning to build effective branding materials and messages that will allow them to stand out from the competition. Most importantly, this study will thoroughly dissect and present the successful, unique key factors and approach that made brand Sweden the success that it is today.

Keywords: nation branding, nation branding communication, Swedish nation brand, Brand Sweden, critical discourse analysis, ideology, discourse
# Table of contents

Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 5  
Brand Sweden .................................................................................................................. 6  
Swedish society ................................................................................................................ 7  
Sweden abroad ................................................................................................................ 8  
Aim and research questions .............................................................................................. 11  
Previous research ............................................................................................................ 12  
Nation branding .............................................................................................................. 12  
Nation branding communication .................................................................................... 13  
Values in nation branding ............................................................................................... 15  
Critical discourse analysis (CDA) in nation branding ...................................................... 16  
Positioning the study ....................................................................................................... 17  
Theoretical frame and concepts ....................................................................................... 18  
Ideology and discourse .................................................................................................... 19  
Society trends in Sweden ................................................................................................. 20  
Democracy and human rights ......................................................................................... 22  
Method and material ....................................................................................................... 25  
Analysis and result .......................................................................................................... 29  
Example 1 - Sharing Sweden: Olof Palme ................................................................. 30  
Example 2 - Sharing Sweden: Anna Lindh ................................................................. 33  
Example 3 - Embassy of Sweden in Zagreb´s Facebook post ......................................... 36  
Example 4 - sweden.se´s Facebook post ....................................................................... 38  
Example 5 - sweden.se´s Facebook post ....................................................................... 40  
Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 42  
References ....................................................................................................................... 46  
Appendix .......................................................................................................................... 50
Introduction

In recent years, tourism and advertising industries along with diplomatic factors, faced significant changes in both their trends and implementation. With globalisation as a primary factor, people became overwhelmed by the surplus amount of opportunities for studying, living and traveling abroad. Due to numerous movement possibilities, “The tourism market is fiercely competitive” (Pike, 2008: 13). Therefore, the need for countries to differ from one another and to attract people influenced a development of the phenomena nowadays known as `nation branding´.

That same phenomenon can be described as a notion where “governments engage in self-conscious activities aimed at producing a certain image of the nation state” (Bolin and Ståhlberg, 2010 as cited in Jordan, 2014: 283). Due to the extent of globalisation we have today, nations which spawned from political ideas, have transformed into commercial products (Ståhlberg and Bolin, 2016: 274). From a marketing standpoint, destination branding has a powerful ripple effect and role since it has the ability to trigger an emotional reaction towards a nation’s image which is undeniably crucial for tourism and businesses within the economy (Leisen, 2001 as cited in Marzano and Scott, 2009: 248). Therefore nation branding can be explained as “the practice of governments, PR consultants, media organisations and corporate business to promote a specific image of a particular nation-state” (Ståhlberg and Bolin, 2016: 274). Building a solid nation brand plays a crucial role for a country to gain a competitive advantage (Masjutina, 2016). Hence, a destination and its [nation] brand must be unique in order to beat the competition (Qu et al., 2011: 465).

To achieve these goals, countries need professional and consistent communication about their brand. Communication is crucial for the positive effect on businesses, investments, number of visitors and tourist generated income. Moreover, it establishes preconditions for public diplomacy (Molilanen and Rainisto, 2009: 1). As Özkan (2015: 177) claims, knowing how to use the power of a strategic communication is essential within the globalisation processes. “With the development of mass media instruments in the globalization process, there have been great changes in the context and style of messages conveyed to the masses” ( Özkan, 2015: 177). The same author claims that the development of a strategic communication management provides the way for approaching various masses by planning what to say ( Özkan, 2015: 177). Thus, due to the undeniable power of strategic communication, it is clear that countries carefully select the information that they want to broadcast about their nation brand.
There are two main concepts that focus on branding and providing information about the country. These concepts are destination branding and nation branding respectively. Although both concepts are communicating about the same place, they do so through different prisms which is why it is essential to separate these terms in order to avoid possible ambiguities. On one hand destination branding according to Moilanen and Rainisto (2009) is a concept that focuses on the promotion of tourism, industries and the public diplomacy of a particular country. On the other hand, nation branding is the concept associated with nation-building and the reconstitution of nations when it comes to both praxis and ideology (Kaneva, 2011 as cited in The Place Brand Observer, n.d.) However despite the differences between these two concepts, they both merge in their goals and approach. As Moilanen and Rainisto (2009) state, “[these concepts have an] identical purpose to promote a certain geographical location to a target audience, to make a place’s tourism and export industries appear attractive, and to support public diplomacy efforts (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009 as cited in The Brand Place Observer, n.d.). Therefore, since the primary aim of this study is to focus on the communication and review of the messages, nation branding theories will be linked to the practices of a destination branding strategies.

Although most countries already have common strategies for online mediums, nation branding is still developing in the domain of communication. In accordance with Huertas and Marine-Roig’s study (2016) written from a marketing’s perspective, “[the] marketing organisation’s usage of social media for informing tourists about destination brand is still experimental”. When describing how place brand is communicated by DMO’s, Jabreel et al. (2016: 2) pointed out that “most of them tend to focus on their attractions, not on building emotional connections”. Emotional values are still rarely used for brand messages development because many organisations specialised for this type of branding are still discovering new ways for communication of their brand (Huertas and Marine-Roig, 2016). Therefore, usage of emotional values for brand promotion is still rare. With the importance of effective communication still highly experimental, there is a lot of areas for examination. Especially in the field of communication where it is necessary to research the information countries select to publish and the method of which they choose to use in communicating their nation brands.

**Brand Sweden**

This study focuses particularly on Sweden’s approach towards nation branding after they got organised and launched the popular, “Brand Sweden” in 2007. According to Lisa Larsson (2016), former communication strategist at Swedish Institute, Sweden wanted to raise awareness about its identity abroad. By building a strong nation brand, Swedes planned to
change prejudices about their country that was previously seen as very cold, boring and non-innovative. Nation brand strategy had an aim to influence positive opinions about Swedish culture. By sharing Swedish lifestyle, Sweden had a plan to become more open in order to attract tourists, students and investors (Larsson, 2016). According to the interview with the Ambassador of Sweden in Croatia, Lars Schmidt, various analyses and researches concluded that progressivity is what distinguished Sweden from other countries (Schmidt, 2017). Progressivity in a way that Sweden strives for development based on the needs of its citizens and environmental conditions (Schmidt, 2017). And considering the answers gained on the interview, that is the message that Sweden strives to promote globally about its nation brand (Schmidt, 2017). Thus, Brand Sweden, if we also take into consideration previous statements from the research conducted by Jabreel et al. (2016), is using different approach when communicating its nation brand. Unlike other countries that promote attractions, Brand Sweden practices and associations with its brand are exceptional in the field of nation branding. This is further supported by The Reputation Institute which ranked Sweden as the number one country during the 2016 RepTrack (Masjutina, 2016). The Reputation Institute value-creation models includes data from the people who visited, lived or worked in the country, as well as an analysis of the communications that are broadcasted from the country in order to attract foreigners, media coverage and stereotypes about itself. In addition, the emotional component in combination with the rational data, contributes to the ranking in regards to their “advanced economy, appealing environment and effective government” (Masjutina, 2016).

Sweden was also ranked number nine in the World Happiness Report for 2017 (Hetter, 2017). This ranking provided by the United Nations, was made based on seven key factors which were “care, freedom, generosity, good governance, honesty, health and income” (Hetter, 2017). Considering the recognition from several reputable establishments, it can be fairly concluded that Sweden had built a strong nation brand. Within the last five years, Sweden was among the top countries with the strongest and most favourable reputations (Masjutina, 2016). This is another reason why, the Swedish nation brand was chosen to be the case study for this research.

**Swedish society**

When it comes to the Swedish society, like many others, it faced significant changes in trends over the years. Some scholars, such as Pamment (2011: 129) describes Sweden as a nation that had transformed from an agricultural, to industrial and then to a focus on information technology. Others analysed shifts regarding society trends within Sweden. For example, a study provided by Telhaug et al. (2004: 141), attributes the foundations for the famous Swedish system to the governance of Social democrats back to the period between the 1930s
and the 1970s (Telhaug et al., 2004). The Swedish social democratic system was established on the foundations of freedom and social security (Telhaug et al., 2004). Within that same period, the known welfare system within Sweden was based on hard values such as unity, solidarity, fellowship and cooperation (Telhaug et al., 2004: 143). These attributes formed a system popularly called “collectivism” that was based on civic spirit and the individual’s dependence on the community (Telhaug et al., 2004). After the 1970s, the Swedish society evolved to adopt professionalism and individualism which focuses on emancipation (Telhaug et al., 2004). Therefore, this meant that the Swedish people were less dependant on the government which resulted with citizens becoming more responsible for certain aspects of their lives which used to be completely provided by the country in the social democratic system. The changes followed with rapid globalisation that was conducive for the development of neoliberalism (Telhaug et al., 2004). Neoliberalism can be explained as a system whose ideas are based on countries where governments do not do much for its citizens that increased individualism (Bhuyan et al., 2015: 50). These changes provided new ways for the understanding of the Swedish society. Such shifts not only brought significant changes within the Swedish society, but they change the stand of an individual who coexist in it. In the same way Heinö (2009: 298) reveals that Sweden can be identified as “one of the most individualist societies”. This points the Swedish society towards a more individualistic rather than a collectivistic society in recent times. However, Heinö also points out how, despite individualism and neoliberalism, the Swedish political elites are still embracing multiculturalist and anti-nationalist ideas (Heino, 2009: 298). Equally, Joshi and Navlakha (2010: 74) described Sweden as a country whose system is still, despite society trends, based on social democratic values that empowers the common people and provides various freedoms for its citizens (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010). Hence, considering the systems that were discussed along with their developments and time periods, Sweden can now be described as a nation in transition between a socially democratic system in combination with the opposite systems such as an individualism and neoliberalism system. In order to fulfil the purpose of this study, further acknowledgements regarding society in Sweden will be further expanded within the theory section.

Sweden abroad

To gain real world knowledge about the effectiveness of Sweden’s nation branding efforts through its communication practices, the author decided to include a focused self-initiated pre-study of the perception of Sweden in Croatia. In recent years, there has been a lot done in Croatia in the field of Swedish nation brand promotion, so it seemed important to examine the Embassy’s opened approach to the public. This pre-study examined the current perceptions of Sweden and communication practices of the Swedish Embassy in Zagreb in the eyes of the public by interviewing several Croatian citizens. Some of the respondents are still
studying, while others have university degrees along with the access to various forms of media both online and offline. Respondents were asked questions where they had to express their opinions about Sweden. Also, they were asked to link Sweden to certain values and to answer whether they feel that perception of Sweden has changed in Croatia. The results showed that the perception of Sweden has a strong and positive connotations among Croatians, but not all respondents feel that Sweden as a country is a brand yet. Respondents tend to link Sweden to values such as human rights, good education system, social awareness and interestingly - all of them consider Sweden to be the country that offers a lot of opportunities. Most of them stated that Sweden is definitely recognised for its ‘modern way of living’.

Although respondents did not know much about communication provided by the Embassy of Sweden in Zagreb or the governmental organisation Swedish Institute, they did have certain knowledge about Sweden. In particular, they knew a lot about Swedish culture, society, welfare system, human rights, equality, etc. From this research, it is visible that this knowledge about Sweden and its society is not exactly connected to the nation brand communication. But moreover, these values can be seen as something that was deeply rooted in Swedish society for decades before the nation brand communication was launched. The word about progressive state was spreading globally and it provided a solid ground for the nation branding communication strategy planning.

This pre-study can be supported by other answers from the interview with the Swedish Ambassador in Croatia Lars Schmidt. In the research conducted by the Embassy, perception of Sweden among Croatians is positive, although associations are still coldness, blond people, IKEA, etc (Schmidt, 2017). And majority of opinions that individuals gain were through the media or from their families and friends who visited or lived in Sweden. Again, Sweden already had preconditions for developing and nurturing the Brand Sweden. Therefore, it is clear that the public abroad has a strong opinion about Sweden in general with knowledge of the nation’s values, deeply rooted in the Swedish society.

However what remains interesting is how the Swedish nation brand has been developed regarding values it promotes. Sweden not only brands itself as a destination to visit, study or live in but moreover, it is branding certain local values while others nations focus exclusively on their attractions or manifestations (Ashton, 2014: 287). To further understand Sweden’s angle on communication practices, it is equally important to dwell into various aspects within the Swedish people. Certain Swedish values are deeply rooted in the society and are connected to collectivism and social democratic system based on solidarity and welfare that was present from 1930s until 1970s (Telhaug et al., 2004) but on the other hand, Sweden in its recent years faced an occurrence of neoliberalism (Jonvallen et al., 2011) and individualism (Heinö, 2009) that caused a shift in its societies system. Although according to Joshi and
Navlakha (2011), social democracy and specifics of that system are still present in Sweden. Hence, we can clarify Sweden as a nation in transition with a rapid development towards increased neoliberalism, marketisation, deregulation, etc.

Despite these radical shifts within its society, some representations and impressions according to the pre-study, have found to be partly rooted in older social democratic values and beliefs. Our objective with this presentation is to dissect the nation branding communications distributed by the nation and to see how they have handled the ever shifting trends within its society. This study will examine what values Swedish Institute chooses to communicate through its online platforms. Also, a closer look will be taken at the Brand Sweden´s visual and textual messages in order to reveal Swedish Institute´s communication strategies on the internet, which is currently the most important and impactful medium for communication for this type of media (Yan, 2011: 696).
Aim and research questions

The purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding of the Swedish nation brand and its strategic communication practices. Researchers such as Telhaug et al. (2004) and Pamment (2011: 129) claim that a lot has been changed in the history of the country as Sweden faced various transformations within its society. According to the pre-study from the introduction, some individuals still connect Sweden to its advanced policies and welfare system from the 1960s. Therefore, in the time of globalisation and the current trends of nation branding, it is important to examine the selection of information that the Swedish government and the Swedish Institute chose to communicate about Brand Sweden. In summary, this study will research into what makes Sweden such a unique destination, especially analysing the messages that the nation brand communicates and their method of delivery.

The thesis will consist of several researched questions, all relevant to the field of communication:

1. What core values, ideas and norms are communicated in the Swedish nation brand?

2. How are brand values communicated in terms of visual and text based messages?

3. What are the present ideologies and values implemented within the Swedish nation brand communication?

4. How is the Swedish society represented within the nation branding discourse?
Previous research

[Nation] branding is complex because of its interdisciplinary nature, competitive tourism markets and the need for communicating national priorities along with the stakeholders wishes and demands (Kotsi et al., 2016). Although nation branding is not a new industry, it is faced with new trends and rapid developments due to the growth of social media. Therefore, further research into this field is important for communication strategists, marketing organisations specialised in nation branding or government organisations to make adjustments in planning branding strategies and their implementation.

Furthermore, unlimited opportunities for experimenting in nation branding communication on the internet allows public relations specialists, marketing organisations and governments to get creative. Therefore, branding practices can differ from country to country which in turn provides countless possibilities for research in that field. The examinations of several past research studies about destination and/or nation branding and communication practices reveals that some studies focused on previous theoretical knowledge while writing their researches but others examined various factors that influence people’s choices by providing new theories and methods for destination branding research. Also it is important to note that many authors researched destination and nation branding in the form of a case-study since they focus on a specific country or city in order to examine their branding strategies and results. In this research however, some studies on destination branding will be linked to nation branding since it was explained in the introduction on how both presents similarities between the concepts when it talks about the communication and its aim. It will be noted that some conclusions will be mentioned in relation with destination branding as well as with nation branding.

In the following sections, several chosen studies are going to be examined in order to give an overview of the communication practices and its gained acknowledgements in nation branding. Firstly, studies about practices in nation branding are going to be presented and their conclusions compared. Secondly, a consideration of the presence of destinations in social media and the aim of these studies about destination marketing organisation’s practices in online communication will follow. This presentation will further study the emotional impact and the importance of local values within destination branding in reference with one of the previously mentioned research questions. Lastly, a few studies will be shortlisted and then examined for its nation branding communication by applying critical discourse analysis (CDA) and their results will be presented.

**Nation branding**
According to Campelo et al. (2014), “A destination is both a geographical place and a metaphysical space determined by a network of meanings and values that are attached to it”. A way for promoting destinations, a term nowadays known as destination branding, Mocanu (2014: 89) described as a newer development that combines both marketing products and specific characteristics of the people’s culture and environment. In his study, Mocanu goes further with theoretical explanations, stating that a destination brand can be explained as a sum of all the perceptions that international stakeholders can have about one country (Fan, 2006, as cited in Mocanu, 2014: 90). Furthermore, another important feature of destination branding is destination image. Studies find it as an important part of the branding process and define it as “perceptual phenomenon that is formed through consumer interpretation, whether reasoned or emotional” (Dobni and Zinkhak, 1990, as cited in Ashton, 2014: 282). Anholt (2009: 8) explains that the reputation of one country can be connected to brand images in business companies.

Thus, destination branding can be perceived as a destination image. In her study, Ashton (2014: 279) used a qualitative approach by interviewing stakeholders in order to find how a destination image should be developed. Ashton (2014) found three main components of which a destination brand image should consist of. Firstly, specific attributes of a place should be taken into consideration (local products, character of the locals, local attractions, etc.). Secondly, brand image should consist of experiences, emotional impact and ideas, such as sustainable tourism, environmental care, health tourism, etc. Lastly, image brand must consist of a unique features that cannot be found in any other country.

Considering the study above, most countries choose to promote specifics such as natural and urban attractions, local products and festivals (Ashton, 2014: 287). Swedish Institute (2012) revealed in a report that Sweden was perceived as a country of openness, equality, consensus, innovation, etc. An obvious difference in destination image promotion is visible in comparison with other countries and their practices. Sweden rapidly became a well-know brand because of its freedom of speech, gender-equality, children’s rights, rights of sexual minorities, etc. (Swedish Institute, 2012: 7). Therefore, it can be concluded that Sweden does not base its communications solely on the promotion of its attractions but also to build a positive preconceived notion about the Swedish people and their values.

**Nation branding communication**

[Nation] marketing organisations (DMO’s) are responsible for creating [nation] brands (Blain et al., 2005, as cited in Lim et al., 2012). In some cases, the governments and organisations close to them shape nation branding vision (Schmidt, 2017). With the rapid developments within the technology sector, “The Internet has fundamentally reshaped the way
tourism-related information is distributed” (Buhalis & Law, 2008 in Xiang and Gretzel, 2011).

In his study, Özkan (2015) stressed the importance of strategic communication in nation branding. His conclusion was that nations can create a desired perception with strategic communication management (Özkan, 2015: 181). He also implied that in nation branding “is dramatically important that countries [...] have international values such as democracy, state of law, human rights and freedom” (Özkan, 2015: 181). Thus, nation brand cannot be successfully communicated without a well planned and researched strategy. Another research study conducted by García revealed the importance of the strategic communication in nation branding. In his study, García (2013: 558) examined the strategic communication practices used for building the nation brand of the Catalan region. The government used the media to enhance Catalan identity with special focus on language, sports, culture and Catalan symbols (García, 2013: 558). By using public relations and mass media campaigns in combination with public diplomacy, branding of Catalan region was considered successful (García, 2013: 558).

Another equally important factor in strategic communication is the platform that provides it. Rapid developments and mass adoption of the internet let to the increasing trend of social media usage. Social media turned out to be an excellent medium to distribute information for communication of the nation brand. For instance, the importance of the social media in nation branding was examined in the research conducted by Pamment (2011). This author points out the importance of social media in his study by expressing that social media provide ways for increasing the number of participants (Pamment, 2011: 131). Thus, social media helped in raising awareness about the Swedish nation brand. That statement is supported in Pamment’s study (2011: 132) where he explained how Swedish embassies used technology and social media to attain better public outreach. Also, he concluded that ´Brand Sweden´ became recognised in the US because it was communicated both virtually and physically, by using designed aesthetics and textures (Pamment, 2011: 133).

In the study of Besova and Cooley (2009: 219), it was concluded that the “media portray foreign countries stereotypically, by limiting the coverage around a few stories centred on a few issues”. To examine the relationship between the media and a perception of the country, authors used “public opinion survey data, content analysis data, as well as cultural, geographic, and economic proximity measures” (Besova and Cooley, 2009: 225). They also included the agenda setting theory and referred to McCombs and Shaw, who stated that “media may not only tell us what to think about, but also how to think about it, and consequently, what to think” (McCombs & Shaw, 1993 as cited in Besova and Cooley, 2009: 224). The results of this
study is crucial for examining how values once created can be seen, recognised and connected with a certain country.

In the case of the Swedish nation brand, a common platform for communication exists. “The brand platform is a result of close collaboration between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Business Sweden, the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, and the Swedish Institute” (Swedish Institute, 2017). They developed platforms on social media, such as Visit Sweden, Study in Sweden and sweden.se in order to communicate about the brand.

**Values in nation branding**

Several studies about values usage and building emotional bonds with a particular nation brand were published. According to the research of Huertas and Marine-Roig (2016: 294), most destination brands consists of tangible attributes and emotional values. Similarly, Kim and Stepchenkova (2016: 1) stated that “several marketing scholars have emphasised the importance of [an] emotional connection between consumers and the brand”. Their research concluded that individuals tend to develop emotional ties with strong and positive brands (Biel, 1993; Siguaw, Mattila, & Austin, 1999 as cited in Kim and Stepchenkova, 2016: 1).

The presented conclusions can be connected with tourism and destination branding within the current market. In the study of Jabreel et al. (2016: 1), it has been argued that tourists tend to make their consumption choices based on creating emotional bonds with destination instead of making a rational decision based on attractions offered by one place. Earlier studies also mentioned by Saji et al. (2015: 96) revealed that tourists, when choosing their next destination to visit would also take into heavy consideration the lifestyle statement that it broadcasts since they buy both an emotional relationship together with the brand image.

In relation to that, Saji et al. (2015: 96) cited de Chernatony (1993), whose findings revealed that consumers tend to connect themselves with a brand that helps express their personality, emotions, aims, etc. In their research, Saji et al. (2015: 105) created a questionnaire based on human-values model constructed by Schwartz and Boehnke from 2004. By using that model, authors chose four human values to measure respondent’s human value perception in the study. The questionnaire consisted of four components: self-transcendence, openness, conservation and self-enhancement. By using that theoretical approach, the authors believed that respondents choose their destination regarding their character (Saji et al., 2015: 102-103). Their study showed an existing connection between human values and destination branding, because individuals base their decisions on values and emotions.
In the study provided by Morgan et al. (2002: 351), the importance of destination branding has been confirmed as it provides ways for establishing emotional bonds if the brand fits to the consumers' lifestyle. In their case study about New Zealand, they examined the process of creating a “New Zealand 100% Pure” brand by examining the strategies which the United Kingdom (UK) employed with regards to the positioning of the brand. According to the study, the first step in their strategy planning was to research about the specific values that helped building a strong brand. When it comes to the core values, the UK conducted research based on interviews and focus groups. It was concluded that individuals tend to travel to places where they can restore their spirit, learn something new, reach certain status, feel energetic, etc. (Morgan et al., 2002: 344).

It has also been proved that recipients tend to develop loyalty and preferences towards positive branding strategies (Kim and Stepchenkova, 2016: 1). Clearly, Sweden is using its values for communication about its brand with the aim to awake and provoke emotional reactions since recipients tend to like brands with whose values they can relate to.

**Critical discourse analysis (CDA) in nation branding**

To streamline this section, it is clear that a lot has been done in the field of nation branding development, the importance of strategic communication and specifics that contribute to the building of a particular nation brand. However, very few scholars researched how exactly one nation brand communicates in the sense of its content and discourses in their messages. Nonetheless even with the lack of discourse analysis in the field of nation branding communication, few researches did examine communication practices of some countries. For instance, critical discourse analysis conducted by Edwards and Ramamurthy (2017), had interesting conclusions about communication practices of the Indian nation brand. In their research, authors examined the campaign constructions in Incredible India (Edwards and Ramamurthy, 2017: 322). Their CDA revealed how “nation branding [is] a complex, inherently political, and contradictory narrative process” (Edwards and Ramamurthy, 2017: 339). In other words, nation branding works for the interests of the global market rather than for its community (Edwards and Ramamurthy, 2017: 339). Another research similar to the case study of ‘Incredible India’ was published by Kaneva and Popescu (2013). These authors undertook a critical discourse analysis of nation branding campaign “Romanians in Europe” (Kaneva and Popescu, 2013: 506). The aim of their study was to “examine the oppressive side of branded national identities” (Kaneva and Popescu, 2013: 509). As a result, authors reveal how nation branding communication is based on the marketisation and commercialisation of the Romanian nation (Kaneva and Popescu, 2013: 509). Hence, an evident selection of information is present in communication strategies in nation branding.
Positioning the study

Despite the fact that nation branding is developing rapidly and how there is a vast more scholars who show interest in the field, there are still some gaps missing regarding discourse analyses. Very few scholars research on how nation branding communication is constructed in sense of discourse. Also considering how nation branding communication is strategically planned, most of the scholars base their studies on the effects of such communication and not on how published content is constructed. Or what is the possible underlying ideology behind such messages. Hence, how are messages constructed discursively remains unexamined in most scholars on nation branding. However, there are some studies focusing on nation branding discourse, with results that show how discourses for nation branding, provided by the governments, tend to illustrate countries in order to position them on the global market. Sweden is ultimately one of the more interesting and unique nation brands that has planned communications on social media and the success of their approach could be the key to what is missing in the field of nation banding.
Theoretical frame and concepts

This section will provide a theoretical framework that will serve as lenses for understanding the practices of Swedish nation brand communication in the analysis. This section begins with concepts of nation identity and ideology along with discourse. Further theory explains current trends of individualisation and collectivisation in society in order to provide a better understanding of the discourse in nation branding. Finally, the theoretical framework about democratic system along with neoliberalism will follow.

Constructing national identity

By definition, a nation is “an imagined political community” (Anderson, 2006: 6). Some scholars claim “how people think of themselves as in terms of national identity” (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2010: 921). Thus, national identity can be defined as “identification and categorisation, self-understanding and social location, as well as commonality, connectedness and groupness” (Brubaker and Cooper, 2002 as cited in Bechhofer and McCrone, 2019: 3). Other authors support this by stating how “Shared rituals, symbols and collective memories form a key part in the formation of a nation’s sense of self. They are chosen as a reminder of unity, ideology and heritage” (McCrone and McPherson, 2009: 13). In relation to the construction of the national identity, KhosraviNik and Zia (2014: 760) argue that:

Nation is shaped and conveyed both through top-down discourses (e.g. mass media, education, politics) and bottom-up social language-in-use through the (re)telling of national narratives by members.

Some authors however attribute the construction of national identities to states and their institutions (Bechhofer and McCrone, 2009: 3). Other authors narrow it down even more by stating how they are constructed in discourse (Wodak et. al, 2009 as cited in Barberá, 2016: 20) or how the importance of national identities lies in the feeling of being a part of a certain community (Alameda, 2008 as cited in Barberá, 2016: 20).

However, there are some critics towards nation identity branding practices. Accordingly, some researches “are worried about the consequences when national identity is appropriated ‘for the purpose of neo-liberal globalisation’”(Kaneva & Popescu, 2011 as cited in Ståhlberg and Bolin, 2016 :275). This statement was confirmed in the study of Kaneva and Popescu who revealed how nationalism, that can be linked to nation identities, is being subjected to the changes that globalisation demands (Kaneva and Popescu, 2014: 519). Hence, due to the competitiveness in the global market, scholars argue that nation identity has a new role.
Which means that the purpose of the nation identity is no longer nurturing the feeling of belonging to the community, but to serve to the purposes of global markets. Governments and similar organisations ‘shape’ their nation’s identity in order to establish the country globally, rather than developing and nurturing the ‘true-self’ identity of one nation. Therefore, these statements will serve as guide ropes in the analysis to see how the Swedish nation brand was constructed according to the globalisation and current market needs.

**Ideology and discourse**

Considering the critique presented above, a national identity is unquestionably constructed or influenced by state governments and similar organisations however, it is inevitable for the need to understand what is behind such constructions. Thus, relations between nation identity, nation branding and ideology are crucial for this study.

As Kaneva (2011: 118) claims, “nation branding seeks to reconstitute nations both at the levels of ideology, and of praxis, whereby the meaning and experiential reality of nationhood itself is transformed in ways that are yet to be fully understood”. Therefore, there is a certain ideology that lays behind the constructions of a nation’s brand. The term ideology, refers to “[a] belief systems held by individuals and collectives” (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 25). A broader definition explains ideology as a set of ideas such as beliefs, traditions, myths and principles an individual develops about institutions, human nature or social processes (Abramovitz, 2013: 1). All in all, Hall’s (Van Dijk, 1998 as cited in Barberá, 2016: 21) understanding of ideology narrows its down as:

*Mental frameworks - the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought and the systems of representation- which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, figure out and render intelligible the way society works.*

Further explanations provided by Abramovitz (2013: 2) claims how ideology creates and provides a framework for understanding the world. Equally important is the fact that ideology can be found in all areas of social life such as in institutions, in knowledge, values or ideas, etc. (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 25). Ideology can also be understood as the tool for understanding and sharing ideas about the world and its events which can be linked to the discourse since they share the same aim (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 25). Since ideology, represents and influences how individuals see the world and specific issues, it is essential to examine its presence in discourse. In relation to this study, this theoretical framework will serve as lenses for revealing the role of ideology within the discourse of the Swedish nation brand es-
especially when ideology can serve as a tool used for creating both real images and those with specific purpose.

In relation with this thesis, the ideology provided by the governments reflects economic and political interests of those in power (Abramovitz, 2013: 2). Hence, in accordance with the statement of Machin and Mayr (2012: 25), the power of ideology extends to the possibility of sustaining power. This means that the ideology discourse when accepted, can darken inequality within societies and prevent alternative ideas (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 25). In order to reveal specifics of the Swedish nation brand, it is important to dissect certain messages in order to reveal possible ideologies. This is why this theoretical framework connected to ideology and discourse will reveal information thusly for examination.

There is a connection with national identity, nation branding and ideology especially when ideology has the power to dominate the way everything works in society (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 25). Consequently, it has the power of developing a notion of a certain nation identity through discourse, which can be found in many nation brand communication practices. Thus, conducting a critical discourse analysis is crucial for examination of possible underlying ideologies. It is equally important in this study to examine what ideology lies behind chosen materials for Brand Sweden and its communications. More specifically, this theoretical framework will serve the purpose of analysing Brand Sweden’s ideology and its discourse in order to examine what materials and information was chosen for communication and what information has been left out in relation to the current society trends in Sweden.

**Society trends in Sweden**

In accordance with Telhaug et. al (2004: 141), the foundations for the famous Swedish system were established back in period from 1930s to early 1970s with the governance of Social democrats. Central ideology of social democratic government was based on social security and freedom. Hence, democratic values and civic spirit were essential (Telhaug et al., 2004: 141-142). Telhaug et al. in their research observe social changes through the prism of educational practices in Scandinavia since school was and is still an extension of society in Scandinavian countries (Telhaug et al. 2004: 143). The education system and therefore the society were promoting welfare thus political goals were “solidarity, community, fellowship, cooperation and national unity” (Telhaug et al., 2004: 143). Therefore, this can be understood as the system based on the idea of an individual coexisting with and relying on the surrounding community. This reveals that an obvious collectivism was present back at the time in Swedish society.
After the 1970s, authors claim that there has been a paradigm shift that led to professionalism and individualism (Telhaug et al., 2004). Focus was put on “freedom, emancipation and individualisation” (Telhaug et al., 2004:148). Individualism can, according to Simmel, be understood as “separation, autarchy and self-reliance” (Simmel, 2007: 68). Thus this can be explained from the point of view of an independent individual who has the ability to realise what is in his best interest. When it comes to politics and states, nation building switched from social security and a monocultural community to individually oriented values (Telhaug et al., 2004: 148). Another important factor is the phenomenon of globalisation which resulted with an appearance of the neoliberal phase of governance (Telhaug et al., 2004: 150). This meant that democracy puts an individual in the main place (Korsgaard, 1997 as cited in Telhaug et al., 2004: 150). Since globalisation brought the need for change in the system, countries needed to switch their systems and adopt a more individualistic approach rather than to remain a collectivistic society. Same happened in Sweden since many scholars, along with Heinö (2009: 298), identify Sweden as having “one of the most individualist societies”.

Globalisation has forced Sweden to become a nation in transition with the rapid development towards neoliberalism and individualisation. Sweden became one of the countries that faced radical shifts in their societies, where “neoliberalism had become the dominant political and ideological form of capitalist globalisation” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 350). “Neoliberalism is commonly characterised as a bundle of social and economic policies that emerged as a response to globalisation” (Brown, 2003 as cited in Bhuyan et al., 2015: 50). In other words, neoliberalism is a system based on ideas of smaller countries where governments do not do much for its citizens, thus social welfare is decreasing while individualism is increasing (Bhuyan et al., 2015: 50). Similarly, Ong sees neoliberalism as a “technology of government” for optimal governing (Ong, 2007 as cited in Bhuyan et al., 2015: 50). Especially when this system also stands for “open, competitive and unregulated markets” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 350). In other words, such system is based on the idea of free markets where countries and their regulations do not interfere. Therefore, development of such a system in Sweden has been spotted and argued by few researches. Since Sweden was known for its traditions of social democratic solidarity and welfare state provision, some argue that neoliberalism was developed in the shadows in Sweden (Esping-Andersen 1990 as cited in Jonvallen et al., 2011: 197). These facts heavily point to the fact that neoliberalism is present in Sweden.

Therefore, it is of utmost importance to examine how Sweden as a nation in transition with rapid development of systems based on market societies is balancing its nation brand communication. Moreover, since such communications are based on the selection of information, it is crucial to acknowledge the values and trends in systems Sweden choose to include when constructing branding messages. Linking this theoretical framework about trends in the Swedish society will help to reveal the ideology behind nation branding discourse, thus what values and what system Brand Sweden’s communication practice strives to promote. On the
whole this separates and identifies how the governmental organisation Swedish Institute chose to represent the country in the time of rapid changes in society trends in Sweden.

**Democracy and human rights**

According to Joshi and Navlakha (2010), a social democratic system is, despite the development of individualism and neoliberalism, still present in Sweden. That system can be defined as an “evolved version of democracy that extends the principles of equality and inclusion beyond the political realms” (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010: 74). The same authors state how this movement empowers the common people and takes away the elitists undivided ruling power (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010). They also claim how that same system provides personal, cultural, material and social freedoms for its citizens (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010: 73). As previously mentioned, the roots for a social democratic system can be found in the period from 1930s until 1970s and was a symbol of a collectivistic society (Telhaug et al, 2004), that same society was built on welfare, freedom and solidarity. The system developed and respected fundamental human rights and can be broken down further into basic human freedoms that exclude gender discrimination as well as discrimination of the poor individuals, individuals from rural areas or ethnic minorities (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010: 74).

Sweden’s individual freedom and social anti discrimination mentality extends even into religion. Joshi and Navlakha (2010) reveal how “Swedes can follow any religion of their choosing without fear of discrimination or violence” (Randburg, 2010 as cited in Joshi and Navlakha, 2010: 76). Further freedoms are connected to cultural freedoms such as freedom of choice and freedom of speech. Both are respected and nurtured in Sweden (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010: 76). Sweden had already been recognised for its social freedoms, providing equal opportunities for personal development for its citizens regardless their gender, ethnicity, social class, etc. (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010: 77). These fundamental attributes sums up the idea of the Swedish welfare system that provides same opportunities for everyone.

Regardless of the facts above, we still live in an unequal world full of prejudice and intolerance. Human rights are at stake everyday. Even in democratic societies whose constitutions and governments are obligated to respect them, some minorities face discrimination and violence. Unfortunately, the most recent examples are still connected to LGBTQ minorities in a lot of countries. For example, according to Gould and Moe (2015: 282), heteronormative public behaviour, daily threats and violence towards LGBTQ minorities in Serbia are constant. Authors claim how the problem in Serbia lies in the “politicised use of homophobia in post-communist Europe” (Gould and Moe, 2015: 273). Curiously, such situations affect the whole region since the same behaviour occurred recently in the neighbouring Croatia. The
Guardian (2013) reported how Croatians voted on referendum to forbid same-sex marriage. Similarly to the situation in Serbia, the Catholic Church and conservative parties influence the constitution (The Guardian, 2013).Unlike countries that still face challenges in respecting and promoting LGBTQ rights, the Swedes respect their LGBTQ minority and rights for homosexuals are being discussed and pursued for by the Swedish government (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010: 78). In the research of Jakobsson et al. (2013: 1358), it was published that Swedes are in favour of same-sex marriage but what is equally important is that the people of Sweden have a positive attitude towards LGBTQ minority that was same among all age groups within Sweden (Jakobsson et al., 2013: 1358). Sweden is a gay friendly country as indicated by a research done by Rainbow Europe which ranked Sweden as fourth out of 49 European countries (sweden.se, 2017). In addition, the research conducted by Jakobsson et al. (2013: 1358) also found that Scandinavians have a very positive attitude towards same-sex marriage, and that positive attitude is even more apparent among Swedes than among Norwegians.

Although recognised as the state of prosperity, welfare and human rights, Sweden is facing certain issues that can be identified even in the field of equality and democracy. For example, the indigenous Sami people and the minority of Roma often face exclusion from the important facets of society in Sweden (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010: 76). The same applies to immigrant communities within the Swedish society. Problems mostly occur in the labour market where some individuals face discrimination (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010: 76).

Regardless, the positive facts about Sweden as a nation indicate that they should be proud of its forward thinking and all inclusive society. These unique traits to Sweden and its society acts as a treasure trove of subjects which the Swedish Institute could communicate for its nation branding campaigns which could translate into positive perceptions and impressions of the country. These seemingly small steps could ultimately channel a boost into the tourism industries and local businesses. There is however an assumption that only these positive values and facts about Swedish society will be present in Brand Sweden´s messages however there is also an assumption on how, according to the practices in ideology discourse where problems in society tend to be left out in the communication process, selection of information was specific in this case as well. That is why the following information and theoretical framework will serve as a tool for revealing what was chosen along with the reasons why for the discourse in the Swedish nation brand.

As this study have discovered from the pre-study and interview, analysis revealed that the Swedish society still has many deeply rooted values that remain mostly unchanged even with rapid developments within segments of its society. This is why the theoretical framework about Sweden in general both throughout history and nowadays is important. This knowl-
edge about society trends will be linked to the analysis material in order to reveal what lies behind the chosen ideology. When directly applying this theoretical framework within the analysis, we can reveal what is important to both the government and Swedish citizens when broadcasting information about their nation, thus defining who they are as a society.
Method and material

This analysis mainly focuses on how Brand Sweden is communicated with the primary aim to research the process of which those messages are constructed discursively. As we have seen in the previous sections, Brand Sweden provides a uniquely successful approach to nation branding which makes it an ideal case study for its communication analysis. Englund’s research claims that on web 2.0 platforms “Sweden is being presented in a highlighted way with modern, sometimes bold web design and beautiful photography” (Englund, 2012: 83). To assist with this analysis, author will refer to content which includes photography in combination with text that was posted online and is the ideal material for this type of examination. In the following sections the toolkit suitable for observing how visuals and texts are composed will be presented along with the selected materials for the analysis.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA)

A critical discourse analysis (CDA) was chosen for the base of this research since that type of analysis, according to Janks (1996), enables the researcher to focus on signifiers in the text and to spot what lies behind carefully selected words. This is crucial since, for example, Fairclough (2012: 456) claims that “discourses are diverse representations of social life”. By analysing chosen content with CDA, the analysis reveals the hidden connections between language, ideology and power (Machin and Mayr, 2012) which is important to understanding the methods of Brand Sweden.

A traditional CDA involves a 3 dimensional framework. The analysis of spoken or written texts, analysis of discourse practice which includes the text production, distribution and consumption and also the analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice. This framework allows us to examine text in different ways such as

1. The direct message of the text
2. The tone of which said message was intended to convey which in turn triggers an emotional response
3. The institution who produced the content
4. Method of delivery and consumption

The intertextual and inter discursive elements taking into account the broad, societal currents that are relevant to the time period and location.
Since text and image are usually composed in unison to communicate certain messages in a certain way, the author believes that the upgraded MCDA is the better tool for most of the examples that we will analyse in the following sections. A Multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) is the analysis of a combination of the text and images together (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 9). According to the authors, “MCDA reveals the kinds of ideas, absences and taken-for granted assumptions in the images as well and the text” (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 9-10). Through the process of a MCDA, our objective with each example is to identify and breakdown the following:

1. Employing a traditional CDA on text
2. Analysing the image’s overall message and colour
3. Deducing the image’s overall tone (E.g warm, cold, happy etc.) & the resulting emotional trigger
4. Method, time and source of communication
5. Possible underlying ideology
6. Reason for the communication and relevance to the time period
7. The effects on Brand Sweden and why The Swedish Institute/government chose to send the message
8. Conclusion on the message and values the communication intended to convey

When it comes to the application of the CDA analysis and its revealing of the specifics behind the image and text, a book “How To Do Critical Discourse Analysis” written by Machin and Mayr (2012) will serve for guidance. Whereas for the objectives written in the points above, the theoretical frameworks described and presented in the theory section will be used for dissecting the intentions of the message a bit further. By submitting every relevant example through this process, the author argues that the results would paint a very clear picture about the intention and purpose of the communication carried out by the source and to also conclude how it adds to the nation brand. Besides, “MCDA views other modes of communication as a means of social constructions” (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 10). To summarise, arguably the MCDA method will sufficiently allow a thorough examination of the visual, emotional and political drives behind the communications broadcasted by the Swedish nation brand.

**Material**

When it comes to the material selection, we will examine several examples of images accompanied with textual content published on Brand Sweden’s online platforms for this communication analysis. These examples have been selected from sweden.se’s official Facebook account and the Sharing Sweden website platform. Additionally, we will also be examining a post from the official Facebook page of the Embassy of Sweden in Zagreb.
The criteria for the chosen messages are mainly focused on the values of which they are trying to impart. For example, quotes from Swedish politicians, Facebook posts that contain information about Swedish lifestyle and values cherished in the Swedish society. In addition, messages containing textual or visual content about Swedish traditions and habits were included in the selection for the analysis. Although many studies aim to select data based on the number of likes, comments and shares, the usage of that method for this selection could mislead the purpose of this study as followers tend to like pictures of nature and attractions more than the ones that contain the values of which are trying to be communicated across as the main message.

First of all, we would only be looking into materials from the past two years for the purposes of this study as the author feels it would be more relevant when in conjunction with the supporting pre-studies and Brand Sweden’s current nation brand strategy. Over 50 different messages were analysed and screened from the official Swedish Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts and of which, five were chosen for further analysis.

The author decided to include and highlight the five chosen messages primarily because they reflected the uniqueness of Sweden’s approach to nation branding by trying to convey a deep sense of Swedish values as opposed to other nation brands that chooses to focus mostly on local attractions and destinations.

Special attention was paid to the selection of information that accurately represents the Swedish identity as a whole especially when it comes to the question on specific traits that defines the Swedish people. Since the author was able to identify the main core values that are always present in Brand Sweden’s messages, this analysis will be structured according to categories regarding the values or the theory that should respectively be linked to these examples.

In addition the messages were chosen as they are fitting examples in identifying the trends within the Swedish society at the time of publication. With that we will also be able to determine the intention of Brand Sweden in regards to the intended perception of their society as it is an essential tool in building a successful nation brand. These five messages will run through a step by step process of the CDA and MCDA models which would allow us to reveal how these materials are represented considering the current social trends in Sweden. As one of the research questions in this thesis aims to answer how the opportunities in society are being communicated through nation branding discourse, images that mainly feature people have been chosen. As we have learnt from above in regards to the close involvement of governmental institutions in shaping and strategising a nation brand, images of politicians were
chosen to help breakdown and identify their role within the process. Further examinations will be done through images that are often used for presenting Swedish society for the values that it nurtures through discourse as opposed to solely their frequency of publishing.

The five messages also displayed what the author considers is the most important core values to represent Sweden which accurately summarises the whole communication concept of the Swedish nation brand. All messages analysed in this thesis are still easily accessible on Sweden’s social media accounts at the time of this publication.
Analysis and result

The Swedish nation brand famously known as; Brand Sweden was launched in 2007 (Schmidt, 2017). The Swedish Institute and other organisations such as the government, government export agencies, tourist agencies, local talents, businesses and investments all contribute to the vision, supporting materials and explanations for the nation brand (Schmidt, 2017).

In his research, Englund (2012:83) claims that Sweden is targeting consumers and stakeholders primarily through the medium of the web 2.0. Sweden has been actively communicating its nation brand over the last ten years through various platforms such as Visit Sweden, Study in Sweden, sweden.se or Business Sweden.

It is important to note that Brand Sweden captured the author’s interest since its inception and that the author has a very close following to the communications and messages broadcasted by Brand Sweden’s various social media accounts. Such is why the author feels that the messages that would be selected for this analysis would be based on how it summarises the whole Swedish nation branding concept and approach. This will break down further into the examination of Brand Sweden’s communication medium, content creation and what lies beyond Swedish Institute’s ideas.

As presented in the method section, the messages were chosen in regards to their frequency of publishing and specifics that differ from other nation branding communications. In the following sections, images of individuals or groups in Sweden will be examined through the CDA or MCDA analysis process and the results will be presented accompanied with the theoretical framework from the theory section in order to understand better the aim of the chosen messages broadcasted by the Swedish nation brand.
Example 1 - Sharing Sweden: Olof Palme

The first example set for this analysis is taken from the webpage of the Swedish Institute and its database ‘Sharing Sweden’. The same example frequently appears on various platforms by Swedish Embassies and on occasion featured on the sweden.se website. We will first analyse the image which fills up a significant amount of space with the former Prime Minister of Sweden, Olof Palme. This use of space focuses the consumers to Palme who was well known in international politics and was one of the most popular politicians in Sweden of all times. Even after his tragic assassination, his impactful legacy still remains within the Swedish people and outside audiences to fight for their right to values such as openness, tolerance, social welfare, etc.

If we look into the visual details, the choice for the picture to be in black and white triggers a sense of nostalgia and let us know that both the person and his words are from the past. This effect is very powerful in contrast to all other Brand Sweden materials which are usually in full colour. In addition, Palme’s portrait was setup to allow the consumer to connect with the person on the picture as close ups usually produce a more intimate effect. The photographer obviously had an aim to create the effect where the public can identify the politician clearly (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 97). Hence, the aim of the visuals was to get attention on the person, express the importance of the past - and awoke interest for the message in the textual content.
Further semantical analysis focuses on Palme’s quotation written on the image. The use of the Sweden Sans font can instantly be recognised in the message in keeping with the intentions of the publisher to maintain the signature font that belongs to Brand Sweden. Looking at Palme’s quote: “The rights of democracy are not reserved for a select group within society, they are rights of all the people”, the consumer can get a sense to how this sentence sounds imperative. Also, it contains words such as “society” and “people”, which invites the consumer to think about a connected community rather than one that excludes individuals. Overlexicalisation can be spotted in this sentence since the word “rights” was used several times and it is the repetition of the word that engages the consumer’s thoughts. This term refers to “surfeit of repetitious, quasi-synonymous terms” (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 37). The aim for usage of overlexicalisation can be linked to the ideological contention (Machin and Mayr, 2012:37). The more specific words are highlighted or repeated, the bigger the effect that they have among readers who understands and connects with the content presented.

If we move on to the word ´democracy´, in combination with the word “rights” provokes a conclusion about a democratic society. Such combination presents the notion of freedoms that are provided by social democratic states (Telhaug et al., 2004: 142). Further examination of words takes democracy, which represents a system where everyone are equal, to another level of human rights, again provided by the state (Joshi and Navlakha , 2010: 73). Overlexicalisation that leads to highlighting of the words ´group´ and ´society´ allows us to have presumptions how this was carefully selected in order to put attention to collectivism. Despite the evidence that Sweden today is a more individualistic society (Heinö, 2009: 298) in which neoliberalism prevails (Jonvallen et al, 2011), an obvious selection of information for Swedish nation branding is present.

Therefore, we can draw out the ideology behind the choice of Olof Palme and the particular quote. Since collectivism represents the society where people have the sense of belonging to a certain community, the values such as equality and freedom are promoted. With promotion of the past system, Brand Sweden through discourse acknowledges how some values remains present in its modern society. Despite the Swedish shift to a market society, this choice shows how Swedes tend to promote their nation as a united state, where individuals can feel safe and have the freedom to express themselves honestly. In addition to the choice of Palme being from a collectivistic society from the 1960s and 1970s, Sweden still remains a leader fighting for prosperity, human rights and social freedoms which are exactly the values that helped Swedish economic and social grow in result increasing their popularity on the global scale.

However as stated before, society in Sweden despite the shared ideology of democracy and rights to freedom are dealing with certain issues when it comes to the system and equality
(Joshi and Navlakha, 2010). Unemployment and prejudices are just part of the recent issues Sweden has to deal with (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010).

So ideology and discourse were used in this post to stress the importance of democracy and collectivistic society, maybe even highlight the past and influence readers/consumers to think about Sweden in a certain way. Despite issues and shifts within its society, the Swedish nation branding communication strives to present Sweden as (still) the country of democracy, equality and human rights.
Further examination of the Brand Sweden communication will include another Swedish politician - Anna Lindh. The picture was chosen for the analysis from the Swedish Institute´s online database ´Sharing Sweden´. Also, every year on the anniversary of Anna Lindh´s death, this picture is posted on the Sweden.se´s official Facebook page. Lindh, the Swedish former foreign minister, was also, just like Palme, assassinated. An interesting this is that she was Palme´s close colleague in Social Democrats who even spoke at his funeral (Eyerman, 2013: 457). Another important fact is that she was, as his predecessor, well known for her policies for unity, human rights, support towards EU and open borders. In short, she was the Swedish symbol of the ´fight´ for the freedom of movement. The values promoted in Lindh´s famous quote “The most important issue we have to deal with is freedom of movement” (BrainyQuote.com, 2017), still face challenge years after. Undoubtedly, selection of this politician has a purpose in the communication strategy of the Swedish nation brand.
This discourse again reveals certain ideology behind such selection of both the quote and the image.

When it comes to visual details, again they belong to the visuals of Brand Sweden since Swedish Sans letters were combined with the Swedish flag logotype. Image is again a portrait of an individual looking away. Anna’s portrait was a shot also taken from the close distance. The choice of such portrait had an aim to allow consumers to feel connected to the person on the picture (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 97). Another visual detail is the grey tone which makes it clear that this picture represents someone from the past. But, since this image is chosen for communication, it still represents something meaningful and valuable for the society nowadays.

Following semantic choices imply details that are already established in Brand Sweden’s communication. As seen in the previous example, Swedish Sans were used again for textual content at the picture which shows connection with the Swedish brand. We can observe how textual content was again quoted in an imperative way. Certain values in relation to the nation brand ideology can be revealed in the sentence “Resignation is our greatest enemy”. Despite the presence of the words ‘resignation’ and ‘enemy’, it seems that the word that is holding the thought together is ‘our’. As mentioned in the research of Telhaug et al. (2004), Swedish society was, back in the time of Palme, based on collectivity. Lindh lived and worked by the same values. And same can be spotted here, in the quote of the woman who inherited Palme’s ideas. A word resignation does mean lack of change, movement and action. And as mentioned before, Lindh was a fighter for the rights for freedom of movement. Not to mention that Lindh, along with Palme, was a member of Social Democrats whose policies consider multiculturalism as the virtue of one nation. And which are still a part of the Swedish society. Thus, textual content, in combination with the person who had such strong attitude and goals, does promote openness and appeals that resignation is not Swedish ‘style’. But moreover, nurturing social freedoms and human rights are the values that Sweden promotes.

As a result of the pre-study, Swedes are recognised worldwide for their respect of fundamental human rights. And according to Joshi and Navlakha (2010: 73), social democracy that provides social freedoms is still established in Sweden despite individualism (Telhaug et al., 2004) and neoliberalism (Heinö, 2009). However, there is another side that was placed in the background. Values that nation branding ideology promotes through this image and text seem different in Swedish reality nowadays. That very openness that has been promoted through this post has its problematic side. Joshi and Navlakha (2010: 79) reveal how this unprecedented level of freedom led to all sorts of problems, such as discrimination, immigrant unemployment, etc. Thus, the fight for the open borders seems a bit secondary in times where there is a problem within the society. However, an interesting detail is how the brand ideology supports openness through discourse, especially in times of trends such as emanci-
pation (Telhaug et al., 2004) and separation (Simmel, 2007: 68). Still, nation branding specialist decided to choose and include Lindh and her thoughts to represent Sweden as a stable country that cares about openness, equality and human rights. And despite possible issues in its society, Sweden still fights for nurturing and implementation of these values.
Example 3 - Embassy of Sweden in Zagreb’s Facebook post

The image above was chosen because of its frequent publishing. It is used very often by sweden.se’s social media accounts and Swedish embassies around the world. The Swedish Institute uses this image to promote human rights and equality. This post containing written content was taken from the Facebook page of the Embassy of Sweden in Zagreb, Croatia. It was published on the 11th of June 2016, shortly before the Zagreb Pride event was about to begin.

There are various signature visual details such as the image using the Swedish Sans letters and the inevitable Swedish logotype in the upper corner. In comparison with previously analysed images, this one is in colour pointing towards the present time. The negative space in the calming blue colour compliments the highlighted word ‘freedom’ to represent an association. Image itself has an effect of an open space and therefore can be connected to openness. Freedom as a symbol can be also spotted from the balloons that look like they are about to be set free up in the air. Furthermore, the image represents a woman holding them, which proves the claims on how Sweden avoids female discrimination (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010: 74) since a woman is representing values within the country. The various colours of the balloons are also suggesting towards the symbol of the LGBTQ movement as they resemble the ‘rainbow flag’ often featured at gay pride parades. Thus, this image indirectly contains multiple symbols from different issues for the reader even without the text. With these visuals, Sweden’s nation branding ideology has a clear purpose to visually represent Sweden as the country of freedom and tolerance.
When it comes to the textual analysis, same values are highlighted even semantically. Also, we can observe how both messages are imperative. Again, textual content was made with overlexicalisation since the word ‘diversity’ is followed by words that could even serve as synonyms, such as ‘cultures’ and ‘lifestyles’. The clear purpose of the first sentence was to emphasise values of diversity in Swedish society. And with the visual background, diversity was even more highlighted as something that is nourished, desirable and welcome in Sweden. Another interesting detail is how the part of the sentence ‘for freedom and diversity’ was painted in the dark blue colour. Swedish nation brand logotypes contain the same colour. Also, major part of the field in national flag of Sweden is in dark blue. On the other hand, words ‘against’ and ‘discrimination’ were painted in yellow which is the colour of an asymmetrical horizontal cross on the national flag. Noticeable, yellow colour is less represented in the flag. So, these visual ‘games’ with the colours of the letters have the purpose of stressing the importance of the human rights values in Sweden. Again, overlexicalisation was used for listing of the terms such as sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. The aim was to highlight how these are never questioned in Sweden. And when we link this content to the ideology of nation branding, by seeing this post, consumers get an impression of Sweden as a very tolerant society that protects civic freedoms. Thus, it can be concluded that nonetheless possible issues, diversity and human rights will always be respected by the majority in Sweden and protected by the government.

Final important step in this analysis is linking the Facebook post with the institution that published it and to explain the possible ideology that lies behind it. It is noticeable that the Embassy of Sweden in Zagreb published this post as a support to the Zagreb Pride event. Hence, according to the articles and studies about troubled times for LGBTQ communities in the Balkans, both by Gould and Moe (2015) and Horvat (2013), Sweden does seem unique and progressive in terms of LGBTQ rights and tolerance. Clearly, according to the research by Jakobsson et al. (2013: 1358), Sweden is ranking high with tolerance towards LGBTQ minority. With this discourse, we can observe that Sweden clearly takes pride in being recognised as the country that respects and promotes human rights and that it allows individuals to truly and freely express themselves. It is also important to state how religion and politics have had a major influence on governments abroad (Horvat, 2013). Thus, it can be challenging to promote Swedish values among those who have different ideologies from them. Still, it is visible that the Swedish nation brand tries to balance its communications abroad to try and appeal to a different audience. Moreover, as Özkan (2015) states, the promotion of human rights and freedom is crucial for the country’s nation brand communications. Hence, when it comes to the values that Brand Sweden promotes, the Swedish Institute recognised its opportunity to be uniquely perceived abroad and chooses strategically what traits it highlights through the Swedish nation brand communications.
Example 4 - *sweden.se* ´s Facebook post

Another example set for an analysis is a post published on *sweden.se* official Facebook page on 9th of May 2016. Textual content that goes along with the picture does not seem to have a special meaning. It is clear that a knowledge about Swedish traditions was shared, such as the tradition of having a fika, a well known and branded coffee break in Sweden. Since this is an image without any written content, it is to be expected that it communicates a particular set of values that are a matter of a ´free associations´ (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 50-51). Also, same authors stressed that, “where image makers need to get a specific idea across, they will rely on established connotations, carriers of connotations, which they feel confident their target audiences will understand” (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 519. And nation brand´s target group is anyone who likes coffee or is interested in Swedish lifestyle. So in this concept of connotation, the main goal is that the image “fits with consumer activities” (Machin and Mayr, 2012:51).
What is more interesting is the logo that is missing on the picture. Instead, it was replaced by the textual content in the Facebook description. Such practice reveals how the message of this post is simplicity in order to remind consumers of Sweden and its society.

However, some underlying ideology can be spotted through values this image is representing. Firstly, the image represents a group of young people. It seems that, despite their citizenship, they origin might not be from Sweden. But picture tries to show the group of people as plain. Thus, diversity is a value highlighted here since not all individuals have Swedish origin but they still do fit fine on the image, hence in the Swedish society. Moreover, this choice for brand communication can be linked to the research written by Heinö (2009). He claimed that Sweden embraced multiculturalism and has put national ideas aside (Heinö, 2009: 298). Such attitude can be spotted on the image. Even though it was posted to express Swedish nation brand, it was chosen to leave nationalism aside. Thus, a clear aim was to present these individuals as accepted in society.

Secondly, this selection of visuals has a purpose for communicating about the society. Another fact can be found at the research from the same author who stated how “strong collective identity seems to be a necessary prerequisite not only for democracy but also for a functioning welfare state and for general trust in society” (Heinö, 2009: 298). So this image highlights the Swedish society that does not accept discrimination towards immigrants or ethnic minorities (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010: 74). Furthermore, since there is a group of people, collectivism can be spotted. As previously stated, collectivism was based on freedom and solidarity (Telhaug et al., 2004) and is a system that empowers the common people (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010). Hence, although in recent years individualism infiltrated into Swedish society (Telhaug et al., 2004: 150), collectivism is still present on the image that again reveals how even modern Sweden still have collectivistic habits. So, despite an aim to show the modern society, collectivistic ideas are still present and cherished among youth.

However, as previously argued, there are some problems in the Swedish society. Not all immigrants get the same opportunities nevertheless the system (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010: 76). In fact, there are minorities in Sweden that face challenges like labour market discrimination, etc. (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010: 76). Still, Brand Sweden decided to send a different message about Sweden. With tolerance, diversity and equality on this picture, Swedish Institute wanted to create a different perception of Sweden among its consumers. Also, Sweden was presented as a modern society that is, overall, a combination of the neoliberal and collectivistic society. Through visuals like this, Brand Sweden communicates certain ideology about Sweden being tolerant and progressive.
Example 5 - sweden.se´s Facebook post

Last analysed material was taken from the official Facebook page of sweden.se. As the previous example, this post is a combination of an image and the text written in the description section above.

Visual content is lacking textual content and logotypes. This way, a consumer is allowed to have ´free associations´ (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 50-51). Without written explanation, consumer can see this image as a representation of a working environment. Scholars argue about current trends of individualism and neoliberalism in Swedish society (Heinö, 2009), which support self-reliance (Simmel, 2007). However, selection of visuals provided material representing two groups of people who cooperate. As acknowledged before, Sweden is recognised for providing equal opportunities for personal development. These opportunities are reserved for everyone, regardless their gender, ethnicity, social class, etc. (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010). And visual message of this picture is how both men and women are equal in the Swedish society. And, according to the image, that applies to the educational institutions, despite current trends of individualism in education as well (Telhaug et al., 2004). Moreover, image is again inspiring the idea of collectivism. Perhaps because the educational institutions in that system promoted welfare through cooperation (Telhaug et al., 2004: 143). And this image also implies democracy, since that is the system that gives a notion of empowering the common people where certain elitists have no influence, hence everyone are equal (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010). Furthermore, acknowledgements from before led to the ideology of
Swedish nation brand that can be explained as an idea where everyone have equal rights and opportunities. According to the answers gained in the pre-study, representations of Sweden are linked to opportunities that its citizens have. And those are, in Swedish reality, reserved for everyone, regardless their gender, ethnicity, social class, etc. (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010). Equally important is that visual communication shapes society (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 10). Thus, this visual choice was made to awake notion among consumers about gender equality in the Swedish society. Visuals also had an aim to get an attention of women, students and those who cherish democratic country where equality is main value. Machin and Mayr (2012: 519) explained how in order to get a specific idea, consumers should be targeted with actors, carriers of connotations they can identify with.

At the same time, textual content does have several purposes. It informs its consumers about the current trends in Sweden. Firstly, information seems simple considering the numbers and percentage. And it has an aim to highlight the level of education in Sweden. Secondly, since the percentage about university degrees among women, especially in comparison with the past, put this information on another level. Such selection of information does have ideology behind it. This was consciously chosen to stress the increasing education practices among women in Sweden. Especially since the fact about that change in education was constructed as a success for women, thus it is highlighting how the state cares for women. Hence, an obvious promoted value is gender equality. However, there are some issues regarding gender equality in Sweden. Despite the fact that women have equal opportunities for personal development and they have the right for free education, there are some impediments. Joshi and Navlakha (2010: 77) assert how women can face “harder time advancing in their careers”. Women´s salary, although close, is still not equal to the salary of men (Joshi and Navlakha, 2010:77).

Nonetheless these impediments that can occur in the Swedish society, Swedish Institute decided to use gender equality rankings and facts for the Brand Sweden´s communication. Again, according to Joshi and Navlakha (2010: 77), Sweden does rank high in a domain of salaries in comparison with other countries, for example US. Which means that Swedish society, despite everything, seems exceptional in the field of human rights and gender equality. Nation branding discourse and the image communicates a particular set of values. Swedish Institute´s choice has an aim develop representations of Sweden as the country of gender equality and prosperity, especially for women.
Conclusion

In the process of nation branding, a nation becomes “a boundary object—a category of discourse and practice deployed for a range of ends, whose scale and scope mutates to accommodate the claims being made in the name of those ends” (Aronczyk, 2013 as cited in Edwards and Ramamurthy, 2017). Despite nation branding being a profession that strives to promote a specific image of a particular nation-state (Ståhlberg and Bolin, 2016: 274), it represents so much more in the bigger picture as the communications serve as a tool to change the outside perception of a nation which could potentially alter the politics and economies within it. With these chain of events, nation branding can be of paramount importance and must be taken seriously with its discourse and representations.

According to Ståhlberg and Bolin (2016), governments and similar organisations are responsible for planning the strategic communications for nation branding. On the top of that, Machin and Mayr (2012) argue how power is represented in the discourse. Consequently, governments and other centres of power have a significant influence over nation brand messages and are the ones that choose what information about the country will be broadcasted as they are the main voices with the broadest outreach and influence. Ultimately the aim of this study was to dissect and examine with knowledge about discourse choices and the ideology in the Swedish nation brand’s online communication.

In the aforementioned research, scholars provided examples and practices of nation branding in general, stating how the most important part of the nation branding is strategic communication (Özkan, 2015). A well planned approach to the masses can build strong perceptions about a certain nation brands (Özkan, 2015). This analysis clearly reveals that the Swedish nation brand has developed a strong communication practice primarily on its official social media accounts. There are several points that can be reduced from the findings of this study about the Swedish nation brand communication strategy and its practices. Brand Sweden´s communication is definitely heavily reliant on the selection and communication of the information. With the strategic implementation of their researched based planned communication strategy, we can deduce that the shared information about Sweden has the primary aim to provide influential knowledge about the country abroad. With the positive consensus from the pre-study and results from other researches, Sweden can position itself highly on the global scale of nation brands. If Sweden leverages its positive image correctly, it will have a higher potential to attract businesses, students and tourists that will eventually contribute to the Swedish society and economy. This clearly shows that the Swedish Institute (SI) took a conscious and calculated strategy with foregrounding important information in accordance with the ideology of Sweden and its society and that its messages had significant impacts in regards to building the nation brand.
As we have seen, Brand Sweden’s online communication is heavily based on exceptional visual choices. An image, textual content or combination of both posted on Sweden’s official social media usually contain values such as equality, tolerance, openness, solidarity, gender equality which highlights Sweden as the country that respects diversity and openness that were strong in the time of politicians such as Olof Palme and Anna Lindh in addition to the frequent problems within the society. The massive reinforcement of these already associated traits of Sweden clearly shows the ingenious strategy employed by the Swedish Institute and that it was a success. Even from the interview with the Swedish Ambassador in Croatia, it is clear that consumers relate Sweden to its ´glorious times´ of diversity, social welfare, solidarity and prosperity.

Further results focuses on the semantic choices. The critical discourse analysis revealed how the Swedish Institute’s textual communication and semantic choices are based on overlexicalisation for gaining the desired influence. They also went as far as associating semantic choices that were always highlighted along with brand communication visuals with Swedish Sans letters. These visual and subconscious associations like their gestures, everyday life, habits or quotes represent the Swedish society and this critical discourse analysis revealed a specific “ideology” that was put behind both visual and textual content in Brand Sweden’s online messages. We can undoubtedly deduce that the Swedish Institute’s choices for communication are all very thought out and unique in term of approach towards nation branding.

To summarise, acknowledgements of this communication analysis can be observed through several categories. First of all, the selection of information was definitely based on some traditional specifics chosen from the famous Swedish era which dated back to the 1930s to the 1970s. As stated before, Telhaug et al. (2004) argue that there have been recent trends in society such as in individualisation, marketisation and neoliberalism in Sweden. With globalisation, Sweden faced a shift from the country of social rights to the one that is faced with fierce global market practices (Heinö, 2009). However, analysed material shows a clear selection of the values developed in different system and times in Sweden. It is interesting to find how the Swedish Institute is consciously working and integrating the new and old values of Sweden developed between 1930s and 1970s.

Brand Sweden was entirely designed and build on ideas from the social democracy of that time. A strong sense of a previously collectivistic society can be spotted in the brand’s discourse. For example, images that contain portraits of individuals express collectivism by using words as ‘society’, ´democracy’, ´us´, ´our´, etc. These words strongly connote collectivistic mindset. Despite current trends in the society related to individualism and the shift to a capitalistic movement, Brand Sweden still recognises social democracy and collectivism. Moreover, they cherish the politicians who contributed to this building of the society that the
Swedes have today. Another interesting find is how the Swedish Institute, when it comes to politics, choose to highlight politicians from the Swedish Democratic party who were assassinated because of their fights for human rights and equality. By focusing on examples like Anna Lindh and Olof Palme, the Swedish Institute clearly wanted to highlight the importance to its people to nurture its values such as solidarity, tolerance, equality, etc.

Since many consumers around the world still relate Sweden with the time of the rapid development of human rights and equality in Scandinavia, the Swedish Institute took advantage of the current perception and unlike other countries that still base branding communications primarily on tourism, they took a unique approach to their nation brand. Moreover, the promotion and nurturing of social values such as human rights, democracy, equality and solidarity is visible on almost every image or textual message that has been published so far. According to Özkan (2015), it is of exceptional importance that countries in their nation branding “have international values such as democracy, state of law, human rights and freedom” (Özkan, 2015: 181). Moreover, the results and the core values found in the analysis have proven how Brand Sweden ‘followed’ the rules for successful, recognised and influential strategic communication. This claims can be proven by several nation branding rankings where in recent years, Brand Sweden remains at the top of the list (Masjutina, 2016).

In relation to the obvious nation brand uniqueness and popularity, some scholars, such as Ashton (2014) and Jabreel et al. (2016) clarify that communication in the field of nation branding is mostly based on promoting nature and attractions, while usage of emotional values is still lacking (Huertas and Marine Roig, 2016). The unique aspect of the Swedish nation brand from other nation brands is that its communication strategists chose consciously to highlight the values in its society. These defining values have been found time and time again to have been successfully associate with Sweden and its culture; general equality, gender equality, LGBTQ rights, openness, freedom, progressivity, tolerance, etc. In short - Sweden’s approach in choosing to promote values and an ethical lifestyle even in other countries where Sweden has its embassies (examples are Croatia, Serbia, USA, etc) has proven to be a unique and successful plan.

Sweden is obviously a nation in transit with a development towards individualism and neoliberalism. The Swedish system should be, according to some scholars, based on the idea of a free market where states and their regulations do not interfere (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 350). Still, the system is partly rooted in older social democratic values and beliefs, which affects the ideology behind the Swedish nation brand. Brand Sweden is not only unique with its core values and specific communication with its consumers, but also in the domain of ideology. The Swedish Institute carefully chose to promote old values and specifics from the well known, but previous system. One of the reasons for this choice could be that
Sweden as a country takes pride in its progressive past when the society has started to build its nationalism based on solidarity, tolerance, openness, equality, human rights, etc.

To ultimately conclude, the communication strategy of the Brand Sweden could perhaps be explained with the quote by Trädgårdh (2008), who said “Swedish citizens as well as civil society generally view the state as an ally rather than as an enemy” (Trädgård, 2008 as cited in Joshi and Navlakha, 2010: 76). The Swedish Institute definitely recognised this as an uniqueness that Sweden has in comparison with other countries and chose that as a focus for its nation brand communications. With the government and its people supporting each other in matters such as equality, social welfare, human rights and freedoms, Sweden as a nation takes great pride in showing off that it can infuse both new and forward thinking ideologies all while staying true to themselves which makes their nation brand one the most unique and special examples in the world.
References


Jakobsson et al. (2013). Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage: The Case of Scandinavia. Journal of Homosexuality, 60(9), 1349-1360


Larrson, L. (April 15, 2016). *Building a Nation Brand*. Conference lecture


Morgan et al. (2002). *New Zealand 100% Pure. The Creation of a powerful niche destination brand*. Journal of Brand Management, 9 (4), 335-354


Qu et al. (2011). *A model of destination branding: Integrating the concepts of the branding and destination image*. Tourism Management 32, 465-476

Saji et al. (2015). *Selection of Tourism Destination as a Representation of Human Values*. Business Perspectives and Research, 3 (2), 95-108

Schmidt, L. (personal communication, May 2, 2017)


Xiang, Z., Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social media in online travel information search. Tourism Management 31, 179-188

Yan, J. (2011). Social media in branding: Fulfilling a need. 18(9). 688-696

Appendix

The following content represents the interview about the Swedish nation brand with the Swedish Ambassador in Croatia, Lars Schmidt.

1. **Do you think that representations of Sweden have changed in recent years?**
   I would say yes, in last 10 years since we developed Brand Sweden. In 2007 the Brand Sweden was created based on the numerous analysis and researches. Conclusions were that degree of progressivity is what distinguishes Sweden from other countries and Sweden can thus best be described as a country focused on development based on people’s needs and environmental conditions – a progressive country that strives for balanced development. That is our main message and I think it is recognised globally.

2. **Did Sweden become more popular in Croatia?**
   Please see answer 3.

3. **Do you feel that your approach has changed the image of Sweden in Croatia?**
   It is too early to say, since we have conducted a research at the end of the last year (2016) and that is the only relevant evaluation method of perception. But, I can say that we have broadened the network of people with whom we interact and that this network is more diversified than 4 years ago. We also focused on creating and fostering relationships with non-traditional individuals like young connectors with multiple links within society and influence on social media. Our intention is also to integrate more social media into public diplomacy to be able to reach new segments of the population and develop a channel that is not limited through time or space.

The result of communication activities in 2016 - Increased factual information about contemporary Sweden - in 2016 Embassy participated or organised 19 activities focusing on innovation, sustainability and equality that engaged around 80,000 people. In comparison to 2015, that is rise of 220% in activities. Also, 201 media articles in 2016 was direct result of Embassy activities, which in comparison to 2015 was 110% increase.

4. **To what extent the Embassy and Swedish Nation Brand strategies contribute to positive representations about Sweden?**
   Sweden has developed nation brand with all explanations and supporting materials. Swedish Institute and other organisations (the government, and the government agencies working with exports, attraction of tourists, talents, business and investments) have done great job in equipping us with vision and content. Embassies around the world can follow the same vision, but according to the different circumstances in different countries they can adopt different strategies and tactics but based on the same input. I think embassies, including Government in Stockholm, Business Sweden,
SIDA, Swedish Institute etc are contributing a lot to the positive representation about Swedish globally. Without clear position of Sweden internationally (what distinguish us from other countries) we cannot enhance the image of Sweden, so it contributes a lot.

5. Is there some “underlying ideology” behind your Embassy posts and your actions as an Ambassador? Does it exist?
All our communication is based on Brand Sweden (Sweden’s image is based on a combination of shared values that stand out in an international perspective); new industrialisation strategy (business priorities) and Government’s political priorities (such as UN, EU, gender equality etc.). From those documents, the Embassy identified three key pillars for the communications and public diplomacy – innovation, sustainability and equality.

6. Do you find it hard to communicate about certain Swedish values in Croatia? (LGBTQ, pro-choice, religion, etc.)
No. We are here to bring values that we stand for closer to the Croatian public, to explain our position and our attitudes. And I have to say that Croatian people, as well as Croatian politics, are very open and welcoming to hear us.

7. How do Croatians see Sweden?
We have conducted (with Ipsos) a first public perception research on the representative sample about the image of Sweden in Croatia. The results shown that perception of Sweden in Croatia is very positive, but outdated since the first impressions are coldness, IKEA, rich country, well organised state, blond people. For almost half of respondents Swedish origin increases the intent of purchase. 60% of people have preference toward workplace at Swedish companies. IKEA, Volvo and Ericsson are the best known and best evaluated Swedish companies on Croatian market. People recognise 1/5 of Swedish companies in Croatia as Swedish. Majority of information about Sweden people receive from local media and family and friends who live in Sweden. Quality, innovation and practicality are recognised as key attributes of Swedish solutions and Swedish origin increases the purchase intent and desire to work there. If prompted, majority of people in Croatia think that Sweden is a society with highly developed welfare society with social and economic equality, that gender equality is important for Sweden and that the living standard is great.

Interview
Only 7% of people in the research have visited Sweden, and 1/3 of them were visiting family/friends, 1/3 went for s business trip and 1/3 travel for tourism. However, 68% respondents would like to visit Sweden.

Lars Schmidt, Ambassador of Sweden in Croatia May, 2nd, 2017