# Discursive legitimation of nation branding program of Finland

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**Abstract:**

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The thesis analyzes how nation-branding program of Finland, started in autumn 2008, is legitimated for general public in publications of ministry of foreign affairs of Finland. The concept of legitimation is used in Weberian sense as sufficient external support for program to continue to exist. Data was collected along year 2009 from the website of ministry of foreign affairs and Kauppapolitiikka magazine, consisting total of 12 text articles. Method of inquiry is discourse analysis, which utilizes a theoretical framework of discursive legitimation strategies developed originally by Leeuwen (2008).

Results of the analysis showed that nation-branding program was legitimated in relation to two dominant discourses: global capitalist and nationalist discourse. The global capitalist discourse legitimated nation-branding program in terms of increasing global competition and need to separate from competitors. Nationalist discourse legitimated the program in terms of benefit for the homeland and raising national self-esteem. The main authorization strategies distinguished were authorization by expertise, which was seen as exclusive usage of marketing experts to tell about the program, and authorization by conformity, which was seen as hype about the popularity of nation-branding practice.

The thesis argues that legitimation of nation branding is part of legitimating wider transformation of nation-states role in world, where 'competitive edge' is turning out to be become top concern of governance. This is promoted by new type of nationalism, which attempt to unite people under common goal of global competitiveness.

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# 1. Introduction

Along with awake of new millennium and raise of global economic markets, there has been lot of talk about weakening of nation state and disappearance of ethnic and cultural identities. This has been somewhat true at least in respect of economy since nations seem to be having less and less control over markets even within nation's borders. Such major global organizations as EU and WTO have taken the place of nation state as regulator of markets and have left nation state in the role of conforming to regulations (or rather removal of them).

Also along with raising popularity of market-friendly policies the role of nation state has shifted from its long lasted duty of limiting and restraining of markets to be rather the co-operative partner of markets. Such terms usually associated with the nation state as national identities and ethnic cultures have been turned into efficient marketing tools, which can be utilized for raising profits of economy and gaining geo-political power for the state. One recently popularized term referring to this phenomenon, nation branding, emerged in last decade. Usually given definition of nation branding describes it as a new way in which nations can redefine and reposition themselves in globalized market environment and add surplus value to all that is produced within nation. (Jansen, 2008, p.121) In practice, this means distilling those aspects of nations identity, which enhances nation's marketability, or in the terms of trade,

promoting the 'core idea' of nation (Rainisto & Moilanen, 2008, p.148).

Finland started its own nation branding program in August 2008 when foreign minister of Finland Aleksander Stubb assigned 'high level delegation' to develop a brand for Finland. The first stage of program was to create visibility and broad communications for the program with purpose to decrease the criticism of the operations and actors. (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008, p.152) In sociological terms this can be conceptualized as gaining organizational legitimacy through public relations. How this legitimacy was gained, creates the main interest for this thesis.

## 1.1. Theoretical background of research

Focus of thesis is discursive legitimation strategies, by which nation branding program of Finland is negotiated as legitimate practice in publications of foreign ministry of Finland. The concept of legitimacy here is used in Weberian sense, meaning voluntary compliance from the environment  (Weber, 1968, p. 213 in Wæraas, 2007). The discursive approach to legitimation was selected as main focus of thesis as it gives insight into the larger changes that are happening in the institution of nation state today. This refers most of all to the changes happening in nation state's relation with the market forces that were talked in previous chapter.

From discursive perspective legitimation stands for creating a sense of positive, beneficial, ethical, understandable, necessary, or otherwise acceptable, action in a specific setting. It is central process that deals with the specific issue or action in question, but it has more fundamental social and societal implications (van Dijk, 1998; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999).

The discursive side of legitimation has not been very well researched subject, but recent years there have been more studies concentrating on it (van Dijk, 1997, Vaara & Tienari, 2008). Especially critical discourse analysis (CDA) has paid close attention to the social constitution of power relations and structures of domination in contemporary society, relating it to concept of legitimation (Fairclough, 1989, 2003; van Dijk, 1998 in Vaara & Tienari, 2008). Phillips et al. (2004) have claimed that discourses play a central role in the legitimation of institutional change and have outlined a model in which the dialectics of organizational actions and discourses lead to institutionalization.

Vaara & Tienari (2008) have noted that for the study of legitimation discursive perspective offers an important venue through which more subtle elements of legitimation strategies can be found from the texts as it helps to focus on the micro level of legitimation and reveal such textual dynamics that has passed unnoticed in previous research of legitimation. Concepts of discourse and legitimation are discussed more in detail in chapter 2.

## 1.2. Research focus and main question

More specifically thesis focuses how nation-branding program is legitimated for the general public. General public was selected as target, because it has an essential place in the nation branding process. This means that despite of the makeup of stakeholders or the qualities of the 'core idea', the primary responsibility for the success of the nation brand lies with individuals: the nation's citizens, who's key function is to "live the brand" – that is, to perform attitudes and behaviors that are compatible with the brand strategy. (Aronczyk, 2008; Anholt, 2008)

The main source of inquiry is articles published by ministry of foreign affairs in year 2009 about the nation-branding program. This source was chosen as target of inquiry, as it is seen as most direct venue through which communication between ministry of foreign affairs and general public happens. Other possible sources could have been, for example, public news. However, chosen source was seen most logical choice, from reason mentioned above. The data will be discussed more in detail in chapter 5.3.

Given these preambles the main question of the thesis can be formulated in following way:

"How is the nation-branding program of Finland legitimated for general public in the publications of ministry of foreign affairs of Finland?"

*And sub-question:*

"How does the legitimation of nation branding program reflect more general changes in the relations between nation state and markets?"

## 1.3. Previous research on nation branding

As nation branding is new and arguably under-theorized field, the academic research done on it is rather limited. Jansen has suggested that one of the main reasons why topic of nation branding has been neglected among academic researchers is its apparent simplicity and superficiality. It might seem that there isn't enough significant substance to excavate (Jensen, 2008 p.131). However, as nation branding have started to gain momentum as more common practice among nations, the public discussion has started to kindle and some academic authors have starting to take more serious stance towards nation branding.

In following some notable researches are introduced that are seen to belong to same critical discussion of nation branding which current thesis takes part of.

Closest to current research comes Aronczyk (2008) who has focused on the discursive assumptions and practical implications of the nation branding, drawing from series of in-depth interviews with consultants and researchers from advertising and branding firms. She concluded that ideologies and practices by which nation branding operates alter the cultural context in which national identity is articulated and understood. Jensen (2007) has examined the ways in which nation branding contributes to discussions of the role of the nation state in the current cultural and political context, though industry literature. She raised concerns about reductive logic which nation branding relies and has warranted more democratic ways to rethink national identity.

Bell (2005) has examined the ideological aspects of nation branding in context of '100% pure' nation branding program of New Zealand. She has warned that nation branding can divert discussions about environmental damages for supporting promotional campaigns and commercial interest. Widler (2007) has examined the common assumptions and practices in nation branding while concentrating on the question on how people's voice is heard in branding process. Her main criticism is that while the brand should speak with the voice of the people, and the people with the voice of the brand, nation branding does not allow citizens to play a significant role in the branding process.

## 2. Conceptualizations

In this chapter main theoretical concepts of thesis, discourse and legitimacy, are introduced more in detail, and some of the influential authors that have been developing the concepts are introduced. First part begins with an explanation of the concept of discourse and goes through the theory of Michel Foucault who is one of the most influential authors that have been developing the concept. After this concept of legitimacy is discussed. The main author who is taken account here is classic of sociology Max Weber, who has written widely about legitimation. Different principles of legitimacy, which Weber distinguished, are reviewed. Chapter closes with introduction to specific form of legitimacy, organizational legitimacy.

### 2.1. Discourse

One of the most influential authors that have developed the concept of discourse was Michel Foucault. For Foucault, discourse was embodied in sets of statements that formed the objects, concepts, subjects and strategies of which they spoke. Foucault explained that discourses are governed by "analyzable rules and transformations" and can be recognized according to the rules of formation for all of the objects, concepts, subjects and strategies within the discourses. These rules

constitute 'systems of thought' that determines what could be said, who could speak, the positions from which they could speak, the viewpoints that could be presented, and the interests, stakes and institutional domains that are represented. (Foucault, 1972, p.211, in Matheson, 2005) Not only does the knowledge expressed in these groups of statements structure the way the thing is thought about but also the way people act on the basis of that thinking. Discourse in that sense is productive. It creates the world while it explains it (Widler, 2007, p.145).

Alasuutari has noted that discourse should be seen as a game field, not a positive or negative opinion about specific topic. This means that although some positions are harder to express in discourse because the limits of the field, the field is still never totally defined by ruling positions. (Alasuutari, p.63, 1996)

Discourse in the Foucaultian sense is also a methodology: the statements, procedures and artifacts of a discourse can be studied with the aim of identifying its ideologies - the shared ways of thinking that inspire them. Ideology here is understood the way the cultural theorist Stuart Hall defines it:

"(...) *mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of though and the system of representation – which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, figure out and render intelligible the way society works* (Hall, 1996:26 in van Dijk, 1998:9).

Stuart Hall's standpoint is the one of social constructionism, which argues that our experience of, a sense of and confidence in commonsense reality are the results of social interactions. It does not deny the very existence of a reality nor claim that everything is a social construct. However, according to social constructionism, it is not the material world that conveys meaning but symbolic processes and activities. (Hacking, 1999; Hall, 1996 in Widler 2008 p.145)


## 2.2. Legitimacy


Legitimacy is a concept used by Max Weber, a German sociologist (1864–1920), referring to the voluntary support of people needed by ruler to use power. Weber made a distinction between ruling because power on the one hand, and domination on the other. While power referred to the ability to decide how others must act even against they're wills, domination meant that the will of ruler is obeyed because there is an interest in obedience, or least a sense of duty to obey. Any successful domination implies some sort of voluntary compliance.

According to Weber coercive power can be only basis of power in special circumstances like war, because such power is unstable and therefore unpredictable. A stable system of power must be based on acceptance of

people, in other words be legitimate (legitimus (lat.) = according to law). (Weber, [1922] 1968, p. 53 in Sulkunen, 1998, p.228) Thus, for Weber, having legitimacy means enjoying sufficient voluntary external support to continue to exist and exercise domination (Wæraas, 2007). In Marxist terms, legitimation is the very core strategy through which hegemonic power - as in the ability of various groups to convince the rest of society that ways of thinking that are in their interests – are reproduced. (Matheson, 2008, p.6)

## 2.2.1. Principles of legitimation

Weber distinguished among three principles of legitimation: the legal-rational, traditional, and the charismatic. The first is based on laws and rules that assure that rationality is implemented at every level of the system. The bureaucratic form of organization particularly adheres to this principle—it is a "pure" type of legal-rational domination. Any organization, which conducts its operations because of bureaucratic arrangements, will derive legal-rational legitimacy from its environments.

Traditional legitimation rests on the continuous cultivation of a belief in the sanctity of old tradition and habit. Lacking formally enacted rules, the system operates because of a set of traditional norms, which gives the ruler authority and his or her government the right to exercise domination over others. Charismatic legitimation is based on creating devotion to the

exceptional character of a leader. The system is legitimate because its leader is "considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities" Charisma is irrational in the sense that there are no rules; the followers comply with the leader's mission out of complete. (Weber, 1968, p. 241 in Wæraas, 2007)

Concerning current thesis, especially Weber's concept of charismatic legitimation is significant. Although the main work of the nation branding program of Finland is done by Finland promotion board, not that well-known organization in public, the public image of program is most of all centered around "steering group" and the leader of it, former CEO of NOKIA Jorma Ollila. This justifies the assumption that the nation-branding program receives part from its legitimacy through charismatic legitimation. This will be discussed in depth in analysis in context of authorization strategies in chapter 6.1.1.

## 2.2.2. Organizational legitimacy

The Weber's concept of legitimacy can be extended for all sorts of use of domination as mean of power. Parent-child relationship, religious leaders and they're followers, kings and the subject, and the relationship between formal organizations and their environments. Organizations are seldom giving and obeying orders, but are yet characterized by some elements of

domination. Organizations often seek to – in Weber's words – "influence the conduct of one or more others" (Weber, 1968, p. 946 in Wæraas, 2007), but are usually in no position to impose such demands. To be successful, organizations therefore depend on voluntary compliance from their environments. Without the support and endorsement of the organization's environments, further existence is unlikely.

To keep the privileged position, organizations must justify their existence to external audiences by developing a *myth,* which "cultivates the belief in its legitimacy". For Weber, a myth is a story that successfully justifies the system's privilege of existing and conducting operations. By saying this Weber's statement not only implied that legitimacy is socially constructed, but also that the potential for acquiring legitimacy lies in the citizens' perceptions of the system. The myths, which are created and cultivated, are not necessarily facts, and cannot have a legitimizing impact unless people believe in them. Similarly, a system is legitimate only as long as people believe in its justified right to exist. Acquiring legitimacy is therefore, according to Weber, a matter of influencing beliefs by gaining acceptance for the myth that the organization's existence is justified.

Extending on Weber's ideas, legitimation can be understood as a strategic process whereby the organization justifies its existence to external audiences and attempts to "cultivate" the belief in its legitimacy. (Weber, 1968, p. 213 in Wæraas, 2007) One of the most commonly used and direct way of cultivating belief of legitimacy in organizations is public relations. It can be argued that public relations as practice is involved not

only in acquiring legitimacy and ensuring that the organization has the voluntary support of its stakeholders, but also in protecting the organization's legitimacy when it is questioned. (Wæraas, 2007)

# 3. History and theory of nation branding

This chapter introduces short history and the theoretical roots of nation branding practice. This is done to give idea in what kind of mindset does the nation-branding program of Finland works in. First it should be noted that as nation branding is still emerging field of study with evolving body of knowledge, the boundaries of the discipline are still fluid (Szondi, 2008, p.1). This leads to that when using concept of nation branding there is no universal agreement on what does it actually mean, and therefore there is lot of confusion over the concepts used. Politicians, scholars, ad-men can attach meanings to the concepts, which best suit, their interest or actual situation. Aronczyk (2008) has noted that although nation branding has received lot of attention in recent years and there is lot of companies offering nation-branding services, there isn't currently that many thought leaders in the businesses that are seen as sources of valid information. This fluidity of concept leads to that when using the term nation branding, it is, yet, safer to talk about it in relation to some specific author or/and country.

Within last decade, there has been emerging few prominent authors in the field who has had big influence on the perception of the discipline overall and who are widely quoted in the literature. Most important author who is taken account here is Simon Anholt, the British government advisor specializing in the field of nation brands, who is considered as leading name of the industry (*http://www.nation-branding.com - The top*

*10 most influential nation branding experts, 2008*). Anholt is usually the one who is credited for coining the term nation branding up. Anholt is also founder of "*journal of destination branding and public diplomacy",* which is currently the only scientific journal specialized on nation branding and the *"Nation brands index" (NBI)*, (*www.nationbrandindex.com*) which is analytical ranking for the nation brands released four times in year, in which currently (2009) 50 countries are taking apart of.

The chapter begins with discussion on what is meant by concept of brand and goes briefly through the main theoretical foundations of idea of branding and sociological aspects of it, such as growing importance of symbolic value in consumer markets. After this chapter moves on to discuss about the predecessor of nation branding, destination branding, and explains how it have been applied in practice. Third part of chapter contains introduction to the basic idea of nation branding through ideas of Simon Anholt.

## 3.1. Branding

Originally the word brand comes from the cattle herding where brand meant burning mark, which was used to separate the individual animals from the herd. As addition to making mere difference from group there was positive connotation in brand, which signaled the customer from good quality. (Karvonen, 1999, p.45) From early 80's the word brand came into

use in marketing literature. Branding product (or rather company) meant to produce intentionally favorable image out of product, which was spread through smart advertising using latest mass media and advertising technology. Brand was supposed to reflect strengths and values of the business.

What separated branding from advertising in past was the shift of relevance of product itself to image and symbolic value produced from it. (Jensen, 2008 p.125-126) In modern industrial era the product had value in itself and the image merely represented it, but with emergence of late capitalism there has happened a major shift from the economic realm to symbolic realm (Fuat Firat & Shultz II, 1997 p. 16). This meant that companies were not anymore only selling products, but rather attitudes, moods, and life-styles associated to them: in one word, attracting identities (freedom and youth etc.) for consumers to identify themselves to. The aim of creating a successful brand was eventually to build loyalty, purchasing commitment and highlight the product (or company) as separate from its competitors. For customer, the brand was supposed to act as "promise" of advantage, both economically and symbolically. (Kapferer, 1992; in Saraniemi, 2009) Brand advantage was secured through image-building campaigns, which highlighted the specific benefits of a product, culminating in an overall impression of a superior brand (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998 p.140). Currently huge sums of money are expended annually on such image promotion of global megabrands like McDonalds, Nike, and Coca-Cola, which have brand symbols that are

recognizable in any language or culture.

### 3.1.1. Branding and symbolic value

One of postmodernist insights concerning branding has been that the reverse between products value and image of is caused by saturation of consumption. By this it is meant that because needs of people are easily satisfied, the surplus production satisfies only desires of people. The less consumption is aligned according to actual needs, the more important becomes the symbolic value (Maffesoli, 1997 in Sulkunen, 1999 p.300).

This idea can be reflected to the logic of branding where products symbolic value is the main target of attention. Companies branding products attempt to associate products with attractive identities such as youth, prestige, and nature friendliness with promise that consumers who buy these products are imbued with the same values. Companies do not of course create these values but rather they originate from culture. However, as Wernick notes in relation to imagistic advertising generally, they do not reflect the culture as such, but their aim to sell implies definite limits on what orientations and values advertising will actually mirror, and at what angle. In both the values appealed to and in the symbols deployed, there is a deep bias towards the conventional and the most widely diffused. It typifies what is a diverse, filter out what is antagonistic or depressing, and naturalizes role and standpoint of

consumption as such. The picture of  world that it presents accordingly, is flat, one-dimensional, incorporative and normalized. (Wernick, 1991, p.42)

Symbolic value of consumption has been recognized as one major parts of creation of individual identity today. According to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu there is a power struggle over symbolic power in society where consumption plays an essential role. According to him, economically and intellectually prominent groups are continuously developing new consumption habits and tastes to point out their position. The less prominent groups try to emulate this behavior, which causes the behavior to become casual, and continue the same circle (Bourdieu, 1984, in Sulkunen, 1999 p.301).

## 3.1.2. Spread of branding terminology

Branding has proven to be more than just a novel marketing tactic for the companies to add surplus value for the products. Terminology of branding has spread outside the product marketing to various sectors of society. Indeed, it seems that currently almost anything can be infused with brand value; churches branding their services, universities branding their curriculums (recent example, the new car of rector of University of Eastern Finland is part of university's brand [Uljas, 12.12.2009]) environmental organizations guarding their brands and so on

(Rastenberger, 2008 in Ojajärvi & Steinby, p.296, 2008). This can be seen as not only spread of terminology of branding, but also spread of the ideology, which is inherent to it. One defining characteristic of this ideology is essentialism, an idea that there has to be a favor of certain qualities, a reduction of the diversity to some single criterion held to constitute its defining 'essence' and most crucial character" (Calhoun, 1997, p. 18; in Aronczyk, 2008) to communicate whatever message does the brand attempt to evoke.

The spread of branding terminology can be seen also as part of what Andrew Wernick has called emergence of promotional culture. By this term Wernick refers to a trend to push market into every facet of social life, resulting not only a spread of certain ideology but also fundamental transformation of all forms of communication. Wernick's thesis is that the range of cultural phenomena which, at least as one of their functions, serve to communicate a promotional message has become, today, virtually co-extensive with our produced symbolic world (Wernick, 1991, p.182).

For some critics, the single-voiced brand discourse is not only considered to be too dominant, but also far too loud. As brands, rather than commodities, are flooding the marketplace, the social landscape is, in many aspects, turned into a commercial "brandscape" which invades into private and public space. (Klein, 1999)

## 3.2. Place branding

In 1990's terminology of branding started to be applied to services and places. Destination branding emerged as a sub-sector of place branding especially practiced in tourist industry (Saraniemi, 2009; Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008; Morgan et al. 2004). Destination branding has been applied to cities, villages, tourism spots, hotels, shops; almost any places which have stakeholders, and therefore economical value. Morgan et al. (2004) have noted, as style symbols places can offer similar consumer benefits to highly branded lifestyle items. These are used to communicate statements and group memberships, just as vacation trips are expressive devices communicating messages about identity, lifestyle and status (Morgan et al., 2004).

One of the most cited definition for destination brand is introduced by Richie and Richie (1998, in Saraniemi 2009, p.42): "*A name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the place; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the place; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the pleasurable memories of the place experience".* More recently, destination brands are seen to convey core values that are linked to the destination's 'sense of place' (Williams, Gill et al., 2004).

What differentiated the destination branding clearly from product

branding was overall the lack of control over the branded target. In product branding company could force its employees to adapt into the company brand policy but with the places such control is not possible. As Saraniemi (2009) has put it, place branding is far more complex practice that corporate branding, involving multifaceted offers, cross-sector stakeholder co-operation with potentially different local perspectives and, finally, whole populations. This is why place branding is often seen as complex and tedious task, but still highly profitable if successful (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008 p.1, Morgan et al. 2002).

Addition of new opportunities for economical gain, one common argument why its proponent has advocated place branding is global markets and new challenges, which it imposes on places (Rainisto 2004, Anholt, 1998, Morgan et al., 2004). As Rainisto has put it: G*lobal competition between places means that "faceless" capital is seeking opportunities over national borders and comes only in areas which offer high enough profit for the investment* (Rainisto, 2004, p.30). According to Rainisto the places which can develop they're co-operation and market they're abilities are the ones to succeed in this new situation: "marketing isn't a practice for only some specific group but marketing minded thinking should reach out to all level." (Rainisto, 2004, p.15)

Although place branding has stirred lot of interest, well-documented empirical evidence of successful place branding campaigns is rare. Access to data has often been challenging and the reputation of branding in this

new context has been questioned. (Saraniemi, 2009 p.41)

## 3.3. Simon Anholt – Nations as brands

Simon Anholt, the industry titled 'guru' of the nation branding movement and member of the Public Diplomacy Board of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the UK is the person who is usually credited of coining the term "nation brand" in nation branding literature (Aronczyk, p.46, 2008) Anholt has a background in corporate branding and he has done marketing campaigns for global brands such as Coca Cola and Nestle. First time Anholt used the term in article published in journal of brand management (Anholt, 1998) in which he sketched the basic outline on usage of nation brand as marketing tool. In article Anholt discussed how certain countries have become brands as themselves and give certain type of connotation on all public perceptions from that country. For instance Anholt introduces Swiss brand, which conjures mythic image of Switzerland as highly dependable, wealthy and somewhat secretive country, which crystallizes itself in public image of impenetrable Swiss bank. Through this image commercial product brands such as Rolex, Breitling, and Piaget coming from Switzerland receive considerable amount of their brand equity (the value which bare brand generates for product) from simply being "Swiss made. As another example of strongly branded nation Anholt introduces the Brazil, which according to him

doesn't produce any international commercial brands, but still, brand print Brazil is seen as effective set of values especially aimed toward youth markets: samba, carnival, music, dancing, gaiety, ecology, sex, beaches, sport and adventure, and could be a brand print of any successful youth product of the market today. (Anholt, 1998 p. 402)

Anholt's basic idea about importance of provenance for marketing purposes has been well documented before in marketing literature. Many decades before the concept of nation brand first appeared it was already well known that label "made in x" country could have a considerable influence on the consumer's quality perceptions of the product. The term used to refer to this phenomenon has been country-of-origin effect (COO effect). The main point of COO effect is that the manufacturer of products in the certain countries would be affected by build-in positive or negative stereotype of product quality (Czinkota, 1993, 324-326).

Studies have shown (Josiassen and Harzing, 2008, European Management Review) that COO may have an impact on the willingness to buy a product which means that consumers may tend to have a relative preference to products from their own country or may tend to have a relative preference for or aversion to certain products that originate certain countries (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). The effect of country of origin is however debated (Usunier, 2006) as studies (e.g. Chao, 2001) have shown that the origin of design (for instance Apple computers or Nike shoes) can be more important than the country of origin.

### 3.3.1. Applying branding to nations

The basic mechanism of applying concept of branding in country context according to Anholt is that when country develops a strong conscious identity and communicates it outside, it attracts investors and tourists, which on the other hand increases the political influence and helps the economy of country to grow. Anholt suggest that applying nation branding is especially good strategy to boost economy for emerging economies such as Russia, China, India and many African countries, because even though they are not strong in economic sense, they have potential to build strong brand associations as they are richly embedded into global culture and history. Anholt sees nation branding as a 'leveler' that allows these countries, which are not strong in economic sense to "punch above their weight". According to Anholt the link between certain brands and their country of origin can become so powerful, through consistent and high-profile marketing that it is difficult to decide whether the perception of particular quality derives more from the brand or from its provenance.

Jensen (2007) have noted that even though Anholt sees nation branding as great leveler for emerging nations, his realpolitik does not however challenge either market fundamentalism, or despite the claims of the contrary, global cultural stereotyping. Rather Anholt seeks to extract and

purify positive elements from national stereotypes and capitalize on them by targeting Western consumers who are searching from 'exoticism' (Jensen, 2007, p.152).

### 3.3.2. Further elaboration of the term

In his later writings Anholt has elaborated the concept of nation branding (Anholt (2007), "Competitive identity") and has noted that appliance of concept of nation brand, as he means it, is not about marketing campaigns or manipulating perceptions which it is often mixed. He has made distinction between marketing-based, "logos and slogans" nation branding and policy-based nation branding. According to him, purely communication based marketing campaigns for changing perception of places are naïve and lazy efforts to achieve this. According to him governments are often easy pray for communication consultancies, which offer such easy solutions to improve the nation brand. Success of these campaigns is rarely measured in anyhow. These solutions according to Anholt rarely make any difference and in worse case can backfire, which have already somewhat happened with some early nation branding campaigns such as "Cool Britannia", which attained significant mainstream media attention, controversy and criticism, with some coverage framing whole concept as superficial, silly and easy fodder for satire. (Olins, 1999, p. 23-24, in Jansen, p.121 – 142)

Policy-based model which Anholt advocates here is according to him about 'proving the vision rather simply communicating it', which requires a substantial change of culture within and around government, vastly improved communication between the private and public sectors, and creating a substantial commitment to change among the population of the country. Anholt has emphasized that this task is impossible without support of population; and to understand the essential nature of the population is a prerequisite to eliciting its support. According to him there is a direct line between identity, behavior, and reputation. (Anholt, 2009)

# 4. Nation branding program of Finland

In August 2008, Finnish foreign minister Alexander Stubb announced about appointment of "high-level nation branding delegation" consisting of many names in high economic and political positions, such as chairman of NOKIA, Jorma Ollila and former Prime Minister and current leader of SITRA (Finnish innovation fund) Esko Aho, with purpose of creating a strong nation brand for Finland (see full list of members in appendix 1). (Formin, 16.9.2008) According to the mission statement of nation branding delegation, purpose of the nation brand program was...

*…To strengthen the operating potential of Finnish businesses, increase foreign political influence, promote interest in Finland as an investment target and to increase tourist flows to Finland … the country brand is a cornerstone underpinning success and wellbeing. In the worst case, a poor image means economic risk and political setback. (Formin, 338/2008)*

The appointment of delegation was related to the present government programme in which improving national image is stated to be one of the major goals (Valtioneuvoston kanslia, 2007. P.48). Delegation was given rather tight schedule as they're work is suppose to be ready by the end of 2010. Following the announcement the promotion board published internet website for public, "mitä suomi on" (what is Finland?) in beginning of 2009, with purpose to offer a public venue to discuss about

Finland's image and to 'participate' into the work of delegation.


## 4.1. Operational plan


The scientific research of the nation branding program of Finland was commissioned to the place brand management specialists Teemu Moilanen and Seppo Rainisto who released their operational plan for the creation of brand Finland in 2008 (Suomen maabrändin rakentaminen), which according to them is supposed to work as platform of discussion for different stakeholders. This plan was divided into five-step program, from which the plan covered the first four main parts. Parts are following:

1. Start-up and organization
2. Research stage
3. Forming brand identity
4. Making, Executing, and Enforcing the plan
5. Implementation and follow-up

The first four parts of the operational plan are set last 1.5 years. Following this, the implementation phase is set to five years. Estimated funding is average €5 million for the planning stage and at least €15 million for the implementation stage annually. (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008, p. 164)

First step of program, "start-up and organization" phase is divided into

three parts:

1. Securing commitment of the highest management (Political and business).
2. Getting organized.
3. *Creating visibility for the process.*

The purpose of the first part is to make top-level private and public sector decision-makers committed to the project. Purpose of second part is to create a functional and credible organization, which can lead the country-brand building's planning process. The purpose of third phase, - which is also the main interest of this thesis, as it is the one that is most concerned with communication with public - is to increase the projects transparency and communication on participation opportunities and to ensure early commitment form the parties. With transparency and early communications, the aim is to decrease amount of criticism of the operations and actors. (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008, p. 149-152).

Moilanen & Rainisto note in their operational plan, the main challenge of nation branding program is the transformation of concepts coming from profit-aimed sector to non-profit-aimed sector (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008 p.31). The concepts such as profit maximation can be "translated" into cost-benefit maximation. According to Moilanen & Rainisto after these translations there are no problems in applying marketing models into non-profit oriented sector.

## 4.2. Public reception

The announcement about the program and the appointment of delegation created quite a stir in media in 2008. First big topic of controversy was that the majority of the delegations members were men. This was quickly fixed afterwards by adding more women members (Finland's foreign ministry, press note 351/2008).

Some commenter's expressed immediately their opposing view about the work of delegation, such as Finnish composer Esa-Pekka Salonen who publicly refused the membership of the delegation. He stated in his interview (A-tuubi, 31.10.2008) that improving national image is not something that can be done in delegations, but rather the invested money should be spent on non-populist large-scale cultural exporting projects. Former minister of culture Jörn Donner, on the other hand commented in his interview that the idea of nation branding is anachronistic and is not useful in globalized world (Suomen Kuvalehti, 4/2008). The proponents of the nation-branding program have seen public discussion as positive, since it shows that people have interest in the subject.

## 4.3. Finland's image management from historical perspective

The concern about the external image is not actually a new thing in

Finland and the current nation-branding program isn't the first governmental initiative by to improve the Finland's external image. Finland's governments have been appointing delegations to research and improve Finland's image already starting from 60's (Korhonen, p.191-192, 1999 in Bode, 2002.). In 1972 government assigned first stable organ "ulkomaantiedotuksen koordinaatiotyöryhmä" (foreign communications coordination workgroup), to coordinate the Finland's foreign communications. This workgroup worked most of all as a forum for discussion, but didn't lead into any actual action.

In 1988 Finnish government assigned "kantine", kansainvälisten tiedottamisen neuvottelukunta (commission of international communications) to investigate the goals and coordination of international communications. The final report of kantine released in 1990, emphasized the factors that might affect negatively Finland's image and gave suggestions to fix these and also some general suggestion to improve Finland's image. This led to four year programme to communicate Finland's image abroad more efficiently, which at least according to previous foreign trade minister Kimmo Sasi brought notable results as an improved notability of Finland (Sasi, 20.12.2000).


The next notable movement happened in December 2006 when government council raised the country image as important matter and appointed a stable working group working under foreign ministry called

"Finland promotion board", consisting wide range of different foreign trade institutions, (see full list of the institutions and leading members in appendix 1) to coordinate foreign communications and improve overall Finland's image. (Moilanen, Matkailusilmä 03/2007)

## 4.4. Legitimacy and nation branding program

Although the actions done by nation branding program targets primarily external audience, or more precisely global markets - tourists and investors, it essentially is still dependent on consent and favor of internal audience. In other words, nation branders have to prove the legitimacy of the nation-branding program to be able to influence on attitudes and actions of internal audience. This influence is needed because the logic behind nation branding inherently means a unified communication strategy with consistent messages coming from the nation (see chapter 3.3.2). This raises the question about control and how is the internal audience in nation actually inspired to accept the "brand identity" (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008, p.155) which nation branding tries to evoke, because it is impossible to actually control all messages coming from the country. This lack of control is according to Moilanen & Rainisto one of the main differences between consumer good marketing and place marketing. In company all the activities are organized and there is one person in the hierarchy who has the power and right to make decision but place

marketer has very little if any influence in the elements of the marketing mix other than marketing communication (Morgan et al.2002 in Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008, p.20). This leads to that without sufficient legitimacy, nation branding program would risk of being held as untruthful, if not sheer propaganda not only by internal audiences but also external. The need for sufficient legitimacy of nation branding program can be differentiated in three main spheres of society. 1) Economic (stakeholders) 2) political, and 3) public sphere (citizens).

### 4.4.1. Spheres of legitimacy in nation branding program

*Economic*

First, nation-branding program has *to* inspire allegiance in stakeholders who have direct connection to the activities of nation branding program, especially the tourism industry (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008, p.149). The specific term of "allegiance" is used here, because it doesn't refer only to the passive consent but rather readiness for action. In case of nation branding programs it means taking part in communications strategy set up by nation branding program. Unless there is such allegiance, such program could be very easily falling apart due competing messages sent by different stakeholders. Such was the case of Norway's nation branding program started in 1998, which eventually got cancelled in 2003, because of overwhelming critique (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008, p.42). Moilanen &

Rainisto estimate that one of the main reasons of the failure of this program was that planning was made by only small part of the stakeholders that caused the messages sent by nation branding project to be not in unison, and sometimes even totally opposed, to other messages that came from Norway's other destination marketers.

*Political*

Similarly, as allegiance of stakeholders, nation-branding program needs to inspire political allegiance. This is because nation-branding program is inherently dependant on the public resources and cannot withstand on private funding alone. Political allegiance is even more acute because nation branding is a long-term process, which requires funding even when the current government's term of office is over (Moilanen & Rainisto, p.150). Without long-term commitment on behalf of political elite, program would end up financially bankrupt.

*Public*

Legitimacy from the public sphere is primary interest of this thesis. It is not so evident why is the legitimacy from public sphere so essential in first place, as the legitimacy in economical and political sectors, as it doesn't involve either funding or stakeholders. However, this comes clearer when the role of citizens is looked from a point of view of nation

branding literature. As was already talked in chapter 3.3.2, Simon Anholt is very explicit about the role of citizens. His idea is that citizens must be inspired to share the "brand identity" and act as "brand ambassadors" which disseminate the nation brand around the world. This inherently means that citizens have to first accept the brand identity that is projected by nation branding program. Inspiring people to share the vision of nation branders is not so simple task as people are living the place that nation branding program is attempting to brand which makes the target their home and surroundings (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008, p.19). This leads to that such program, attempting to project singular message, is bound to be target of critique from many different groups with their own perceptions and ambitions. Without proper legitimacy on behalf of public success would be unlikely.

# 5. Methodology and Data

## 5.1. Critical discourse analysis

Methodology chosen for analysis of the data can be most closely associated with the critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA scholars have made previously significant advances in the linguistic analysis of micro level discursive strategies used to legitimate controversial actions (Rojo & van Dijk, 1997; Van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999, in Vaara & Tienari, 2008).

CDA in this thesis is used most of all, to give a framework for the analysis of the materials but also as a specific approach to the problem of thesis, with its own premises (Matheson, 2005; Fairclough, 2003). A central concern of critical discourse analysis (CDA) is to explore who has the power to speak or to set the terms of her/his own representation in language events, and who lacks that power, forced to perform a self or selves mapped out by others. One of the main purposes of CDA is therefore to analyze the connection between the power structures in the society and the language. (Matheson, 2005)

Critical linguistics school has argued that the journalists and other media workers can never evade the power structures which shape the vocabulary and other aspects of the way the language makes sense. CDA is not therefore analysis of the basic building blocks of language, but of the 'ruts in the road' that have been formed over time in language use

because of the dominance of certain social interests. This idea comes from presumption that language is inherently ideological, to the extent that it causes us to think in ways that support the interests of powerful groups. Originally this idea centers on statement in The German Ideology (1997– 8; first published 1846) that, 'The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force.' So language can be analyzed in order to identify the limited set of representations of the world which surround members of a society, and thereby show the limits placed on consciousness by the unequal society they live in. (Matheson, p.5, 2005)

Often used critique against discourse analysis concerns its way to understand world through textual connections. Some commenter's have noted that the concept of discourse in CDA takes too big role in defining the social problems and sometimes undermining the real problems underneath. In other words, the social issues are seen as only matter of discourse and the real problems beneath are covered.

Other possible approaches for the analysis could have been for example rhetorical analysis, which concentrates on the methods of persuasion or content analysis, which concentrates on the symbolic meanings of the text (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002). However, CDA allows one to examine not only the "obvious" rhetorical legitimation acts but also more subtle ways in which specific discursive functions and practices are used to establish

or resist legitimacy in a particular text (Vaara & Tienari, 2008 p.988).

## 5.2. Discursive legitimation strategies

From a discursive perspective, the starting point for any analysis of legitimation is the notion that senses of legitimacy are created in relation to specific discourses: discourses provide the "frames" with which people make sense of particular issues and give sense to them (e.g., Fairclough, 1989,1992; Fiss & Hirsch, 2005 in Vaara & Tienari, 2008) An essential part of CDA is examining the specific ways in which legitimation is carried out. In CDA this has been conceptualized in terms of "legitimation strategies"—in other words, specific ways of mobilizing specific discursive resources to create a sense of legitimacy or illegitimacy (Fairclough, 2003, p. 98–100; van Dijk, 1998, p. 255–262 in Vaara & Tienari 2008).

Van Leeuwen (2007) has introduced a framework for analyzing the way discourses construct legitimation for social practices and public communication. This framework is based on four general types of semantic-functional strategy – that is, ways in which language functions and is used for the construction of legitimacy: authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation and mythopoesis. (Leeuwen, 2007, p.94-107) In basic sense, all these strategies answer to spoken or unspoken question why – 'Why should we do this?' or 'Why should we do this in this

way?'

This framework was applied in analysis by first reading the data throughout and then separating out the clauses from the articles, which was characterized by legitimative function found in one of these categories. These findings were inserted into excel table to make analysis easier. Chosen illustrations were translated to English to be presented in results.

In following the basic categories of Leeuwen are introduced. Specific sub-categories are discussed more in detail as they appear in the results.

## 5.2.1. Authorization

*Authorization* is, legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom and law, and of persons in whom institutional authority of some kind is vested. Authorization can be divided into personal authority, expert authority, role model authority, impersonal authority, the authority of tradition and the authority of conformity. Also, Vaara & Tienari (2008) have separated normalization as a separate category of authorization.

### 5.2.2. Moral evaluation

*Moral evaluation* is, legitimation by (often very oblique) reference to value systems. In most cases moral evaluations linked to specific discourses of moral value. However, these discourses are not made explicit or debatable. They are only hinted at, by means of adjectives such as 'healthy', 'normal', 'natural, 'useful', and so on. These adjectives are then the tip of a submerged iceberg of moral values. Moral evaluation can be divided into evaluations (evaluative adjectives), abstractions and analogues.

### 5.2.3. Rationalization

Rationalization is, legitimation by reference to the goals and uses of institutionalized social action, and to the knowledge society has constructed to endow them with cognitive validity. Two separate types of rationalizations can be recognized, instrumental and theoretical rationalizations.

*Instrumental rationalization*

Instrumental rationalization legitimates practices by reference to their goals, uses and effects. Noticeable here is that instrumental

rationalizations are often mixed with moral evaluations, as all purpose constructions must contain element of moralization to serve as legitimations.

*Theoretical rationalization*

In case of theoretical rationalization, legitimation is grounded, not in whether the action is morally justified or not, nor in whether it is purposeful of effective, but in whether it is founded on some kind of truth, on 'the way things are'.

## 5.2.4. Mythopoesis

Mythopoesis is legitimation conveyed through narratives whose outcomes reward legitimate actions and punish non-legitimate actions. Mythopoesis can be divided into moral tales and cautionary tales.

## 5.3. Data

The data consist of 12 text articles mainly collected from year 2009, with exception of 2 articles from 2007 (see full list of articles in 'sources' in the end of paper). The main source of articles was ministry of foreign affairs

of Finland (7) and "Kauppapolitiikka" magazine (5), which is the magazine published by the same ministry concentrating on market policy and export promotion. Kauppapolitiikka magazine states that its purpose is to "*deliver informed and central knowledge for the decision-making, and to work as information channel between the readers and the ministry of foreign affairs of Finland"* ([www.kauppapolitiikka.com](www.kauppapolitiikka.com)). This data collected is seen as part of public relations of the program, as it is concerned with informing the public of programs mission, policies and practices.

The data was collected along year 2009 from the websites of the Kauppapolitiikka magazine and the homepage of ministry of foreign affairs. All publication released by foreign ministry relating to nation branding program of Finland were reviewed, but only the relevant were selected for analysis. However, this meant leaving out only couple articles, which did not add relevantly to the analysis. In other words, they didn't contain legitimative purposes. All the persons interviewed or speaking in the articles has direct connection to the project, meaning they are either members of the promotion board or branding delegation, and are therefore primary sources of information.

The specific genre (loose set of criteria for a category of composition) that is seen to characterize the materials analyzed is what Fairclough has called "hortatory report". Hortatory report is contemporary genre, not only in policy formation in governments, but also in the 'management guru' literature which gives persuasive reports on transformation in economies, societies, and businesses with hortatory intent – provide

managers with blueprints for transforming their own practice (Fairclough, 2006, p. 96).

# 6. Results

## 6.1. Authorizations

### 6.1.1 Expertise and power

Most prominent authorization strategy found in the articles analyzed was the expert authority. Expert authority provides legitimacy by expertise rather than status. This expertise may be stated explicitly, for instance by mentioning credentials, but if expert is well known in given context it may be taken for granted. The experts' utterances themselves will carry some kind of recommendation, some kind of assertion that a particular course of action is 'best' or 'a good idea' (Leeuwen, 2007, p. 94).

Usage of expert authority in articles was seen as active usage of branding experts, prominent politicians and academic researchers to tell about the nation-branding program and its goals. Two main groups of experts were distinguished. First group recognized was researchers and experts of the branding field. The usage of these can be seen as attempt to raise the scientific legitimation of the program. Noticeable here is that the researchers and other experts speaking in the articles mainly came from field of marketing, so the scientific background, which is brought in discussion, is rather one-sided. However, considering the highly regarded

status of economic/marketing knowledge in current society, it can be said to hold strong authority by expertise. In illustrations 1-3 the expertise, professionalism and scientific status is highlighted:

> *Illustration 1: "Program is based on concrete research which is executed by Finland's leading experts in field" (Kauppapolitiikka, 10.4.2007)*

> *Illustration 2: "Marco Mäkinen is the best person to answer question, what is a nation brand. He is professional of branding and member of nation-branding-delegation." (Kauppapolitiikka, 29.5.2009)*

> *Illustration 3: "Investing to the nation brand is definitely a good investment the researchers note" (Formin, 04.03.2009)*

In second group, there were political and economic leaders, which can be seen as addition to expert authority, also as use of personal authority legitimation. In case of undiluted personal authority, legitimate authority is vested in person because their status or role in a particular institution. Such authorities don't need to invoke any justification for what they require others to do other than that a mere 'because I say so'. (Leeuwen, 2007, p.94) Especially names such as of Jorma Ollila and Martti Ahtisaari brought strong personal legitimation as they are both known either from their strong political or economic backgrounds in Finland. The public image of the nation-branding program of Finland leans very much to the authority of Jorma Ollila who is portrayed in media as the main

orchestrator of the nation brand. This was also clearly visible in the articles analyzed:

> *Illustration 4: "Finland's nation brands development is under work in branding delegation chaired by Nokia's chairman Jorma Ollila" (Formin, 16.10.2009)*

Other notable name that can be considered to add to the personal authority legitimation is mentioning of president Ahtisaari, who isn't anyway connected to nation-branding delegation or program otherwise. Considering the long history president Ahtisaari holds in Finnish political life, this can be seen as drawing the legitimation from his authority:

> *Illustration 5: "President Ahtisaari estimates that nation brand must be continuously and systematically under work. He told that he favored organizing the branding delegation" (Formin, 15.7.2009)*

Usage of names such as these makes sense in light of plan of Moilanen & Rainisto in which, the essential part of the start-up phase of the program is to make parties with international visibility committed to the project.


## 6.1.2) 'All aboard for the brandwagon'

Second biggest category of authorization strategies found was the authority of conformity. In case of conformity, the answer to 'why' question is because 'that's what everybody does' or 'that's what most

people do'. The implicit message is 'Everyone else is doing it, and so should you', or 'Most people are doing it, so should you'. No further argument. (Leeuwen, 2007, p.97)

Conformity in this case was doing comparisons to other developed nations that are supposedly doing their own nation branding programs. Nation branding indeed seems to be gaining popularity as a legitimate practice among many nations, at least according to its international spokesmen, such as Anholt. Anholt has even claimed that 'a country a week' was seeking his services (quoted in Economist, 2006, p.1 in Jensen, 2007). However, it is hard to say how large has the "brandwagon" actually gotten, because as spoken in the chapter 3, there isn't yet common understanding about the nature of practice. Even so, this hasn't lessened the proponent's hype about nation branding. In illustration 6 the point of reference is highly industrializes countries:

> *Illustration 6: "More and more highly industrialized countries are seeking competitive edge with their "trademark" as in nation brand" (Formin, 16.10.2009)*
>
> *Illustration 7: "Building brands, in country context is again fashionable" (Kauppapolitiikka, 11.08.2009)*
>
> *Illustration 8: "Everyone around us is doing this job. If we don't join, we will be helplessly behind." (Kauppapolitiikka, 29.05.2009)*

In illustration 8 these authorizations are further enforced by warning that unless we shall join the others or "fail to respond to the pressures coming

from global markets", we will be left behind from progress and risk economic setback. This claim is very effective legitimation strategy especially in case of small countries like Finland, which is often influenced by trends of bigger nations. This was also recognized in articles:

> *Illustration 9: "[about nation branding] In country like Finland which is dependant on the foreign countries, it's beneficial for all" (Formin, 16.10.2009)*

## 6.1.3. Governmental decision

Finally, two other authorization strategies were recognized: impersonal authorization and authorization by tradition. Impersonal authority refers to laws, rules and regulations, and authority of tradition to 'tradition', 'practice', 'custom', 'habit' and so on. Both of them were intertwined in a sense that impersonal authorization here is reference to governmental power, and authorization by tradition reference to the tradition of using it. These two didn't represent significant part of the authorization strategies, which was rather surprising considering the source of articles, which is governmental communication. Following impersonal authorization was the only one found from articles analyzed:

*Illustration 10: "Organizing the [nation branding] delegation was based on government program in which fortifying Finland's country image is one central goal" (Formin, 28.8.2009)*

What this tells is that although indeed the nation-branding program has government's official support, this isn't commonly used to legitimate program. As in light of further findings discussed in chapter 4.5.4, this is most likely conscious choice. Aim is not to profile program as 'governmental program', but rather a program 'for people'.

Finally, one illustration described nation branding as something that isn't new thing, but rather the latest stage of long interest in image of country, as to bring hint of authority of tradition:

*Illustration 11: "Pondering image of country is not new thing in world and either in Finland" (Formin, 04.03.2009)*

The mentioning of Finland obviously refers to the history of effort done to improve the image of Finland, which was discussed in chapter 4.3. Lack of this authorization strategy is not as big surprise as the last one, because the results that previously done efforts have bought have not been very visible, and would not bring much to the legitimation of current program.

## 6.2. Moral evaluations & Rationalizations

This chapter deals with both, rationalizations and moral evaluations in the articles. Reason for mixing these two categories is because both of them withhold elements of each other, whether implicitly or explicitly. As Leeuwen has noted, in contemporary discourse, moralization and rationalization keep each other's at arms length. Rationalizations assume certain agreed ends, and legitimizes actions or procedures or structures in term of their utility in achieving these ends. In other terms, these rationalizations are connected to specific discourses of moral values from where these assumed ends stem from. Main purpose of this chapter is to analyze these moral discourses, and the rationalizations, which are legitimated by terms of utility for them. In articles analyzed two main discourses of moral values were recognized: global capitalist and nationalist discourse.

## 6.2.1. 'Ammunition for global competition'

First discourse of moral values that was recognized was global capitalist discourse. Typical for this discourse is the emphasis of competitiveness, markets trends and seeing markets as the main source of power in globalized world. According to global capitalist discourse maximum efficacy is needed not only from the companies, but also from the nations

and people to secure the competitive edge. The rationalizations that shared the value assumptions of this discourse were found from articles in two types, ones mentioning the: 1) Existence of global competition and growing saturation of markets 2) Current economic crisis. Also third type of rationalizations existed relating to this discourse, but rather than underlining the importance of global markets, these rationalizations reconciled hard economic goals with softer cultural values.

Starting with existence of global competition, it was seen as factor, which forces to look after nations positive qualities and fame. Following theoretical rationalization under category of *definition* demonstrates this:

> *Illustration 12: "It has been understood that we are in competitive situation. If positive qualities and fame aren't looked after and developed, there will be rather disadvantages than advantages for competition." (Kauppapolitiikka, 29.5.2009)*

> *Illustration 13: "Behind the research of nation brand is increasing global competition where the decisions about tourism, investments, cultural exports or international mobility can be effected by nation brand. (Kauppapolitiikka, 10.4.2007)*

Definition is theoretical rationalization where activity, is defined in terms of other, moralized activity (Leeuwen, 2007, p.104). Here this means defining the nation branding in terms of success in global competition. Global competition has become in contemporary discourse what Habermas has called "generalized" motive (Habermas 1976:36 in

Leeuwen, 2007, p.98), which is now commonly used to push through reforms, which promote global competitiveness.

Furthermore in warning of illustration 14 there is *prediction* that if this was not done, there would be rather disadvantages for competition:

> *Illustration 14: "If positive qualities and fame aren't looked after and they are not developed, there will be rather disadvantages for competition. (Kauppapolitiikka, 29.05.2009)*

Although predictions have a ring of authority on them, they are meant to be based on expertise, not on authority, and can therefore be denied by contrary experience, at least in principle. (Leeuwen, 2007, p. 104) This warning is somewhat same what was already seen in the case of authorization by conformity. Here the warning is to be left behind in 'competition' rather than from other developed countries. However, the idea is same. Other definitions pointed to growing similarity of technical solutions:

> *Illustration 15: As the competition tightens and technical solutions grow more similar, the image is that differentiates." (Kauppapolitiikka, 20.4.2007)*

Here nation branding is defined by terms of increasing competitiveness and growing similarity of technical solutions. The importance of image that is mentioned here was already talked in chapter 3.1.1. Also here, it is the saturation of markets, or 'similarity of technical solutions' as it is

expressed here, that is the pushing factor to differentiate.

In instrumental rationalizations, that legitimated nation branding as utility for these preambles, nation branding was seen as something that develops 'new drive' to the marketing of Finland, which helps to fare better in global competition. Following means-oriented instrumental rationalization demonstrates this:

> *Illustration 16: "Goal [of nation branding program] is to develop new kind of drive into marketing of Finland" (Kauppapolitiikka, 10.08.2009)*

The rationalization here is means-oriented. It means that the purpose is constructed as 'in action', and the action as a means to an end. Here this means the 'new drive' isn't actually the end product of the program or some distant goal, but rather on going activity. Notable here also is the *evaluative adjective* 'new', which highlights the novelty of the nation-branding program. Evaluative adjectives such as this have two purposes: they communicate actual qualities of the actions or objects but also commend them in terms of moral values. Moral values here are connected to global capitalist discourse that has been talked in this chapter, where ideology of nation branding is seen as justified act in terms of success in global competition.

Finally some rationalizations recognized the potential conflict between the economic goals of nation branding program with 'soft' cultural values:

*Illustration 29: [Tuomi-Nikula telling about cultural production as part of brand Finland] "Hard economic goals are not in conflict with soft cultural values, quite opposite. They are supporting each other. Why art production executed abroad couldn't be business?" (Kauppapolitiikka, 29.05.2009)*

This 'reconcilement' of economic and cultural values is not new phenomenon. Critical cultural policy literature has documented this shift as one from an arts-based model to a "creative industry" or "enterprise culture" model of policymaking (Corner & Harvey, 1991; McGuigan, 1996, 2004; Brighton, 1999; Volkerling, 2001; Florida, 2002; in Aronczyk, 2008),

## 6.2.2. New approach during economic crisis

Global competition was not the only state of things, which legitimated nation branding. Also current economic crisis was brought to discussion. In following instrumental rationalization economic crisis is seen to 'focus' program more and 'correct' the wrong beliefs about program:

*Illustration 17: "Tightening economic situation focuses the [nation branding] program even better. In this way no one doesn't even think it's only a campaigning, but rather fundamental review of*

*contents: What is promise the of Finland and how can it be reclaimed?" (Kauppapolitiikka, 29.05.2009)*

In illustration 18 the assumed acceptance of nation branding program by people is rationalized with *explanation* that because of the economic crisis, people would be more willing to put more in risk and try new approach:

*Illustration 19: "In uncertain economical situation in world and as competition tightens, new approaches are needed. In recessions people seem to be willing to risk more and try something new" (Formin, 04.03.2009)*

In case of explanations it is not the practice that is defined or characterized, but one or more of the actors involved in the practice. Here the answer to the 'why' question is, 'because doing things this way is appropriate to the nature of these actors' Explanation describes general attributes or habitual activities of the categories of actors in question (Leeuwen 2007, p. 104). The word 'seem' here confirms that this illustration here is based on experiential than scientific rationalization. Experiential rationalizations are various explanatory schemes relating sets of objective meanings. Like moral evaluations, they function as commonsense knowledge despite whether they originate in theoretical rationalizations or not, but they are more explicitly formulated, and therefore more open to debate, albeit in experiential and anecdotal, rather than in scientific term. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 112 in

Leeuwen, 2007, p. 104).

The economy was also brought into discussion not as current state but as a prediction of what kind of benefits nation-branding program would bring once the economy recovers:

> Illustration 20: "*After the economy will recover, we will get benefit from the job done now in form of more concentrated publicity and competitive advantages.*" *(Kauppapolitiikka, 29.05.2009)*

Notable here is not only the prediction about the benefits of nation branding program, but also the naturalization about raise of economy; the economy is seen as "natural" phenomenon, which rises and falls like day and night. 'Naturalization' is a specific form of moral evaluation, a form that in fact denies morality and replaces moral and cultural orders with the 'natural order'. (Leeuwen, 2007, p. 99) Here the global capitalist discourse comes very pronounced as the economy is actually seen as disguising itself as natural order. This type of naturalization is common in contemporary discourse.

### 6.2.3. 'Good for the homeland'

Second main discourse recognized in articles was nationalistic discourse. Typical for nationalistic discourse is seeing nations rather as individual entities rather than group or community of people. In Fichte's words

(Fichte, 1968 in Calhoun, 1993), "nations are individualities with particular talents and the possibilities of exploiting those talents". Along with the globalization and increased competitiveness in markets, the nationalistic discourse has become again important part in governmental policies. Nationalistic discourse was visible in articles in two ways: 1) framing the nation branding as 'good of homeland' and 2) framing nation branding program as 'good for national self-esteem'.

Starting with first one, in illustration 21 this is expressed though moral evaluation strategy of *analogue* by comparing the companies as the ones that have already realized 'what is good for the homeland':

> *Illustration 21: "Many companies are in [nation branding program] as volunteers, and do not charge from their work which they see as beneficial for homeland but also for themselves." (Kauppapolitiikka, 29.05.2009)*

In case of *analogue* the implicit answer to the question 'Why must I do this?' or 'Why must I do this in this way?' is because it is like another activity, which is associated with positive values (Leeuwen, 2008, p. 99). Here the 'patriotic' behavior of companies is portrayed as the signpost for the people to follow. This illustration intertwines the previously spoken global capitalist discourse with nationalistic discourse. Confusingly, these two are in contradiction with each other; while nationalism generally promotes coherent and strong national state, global capitalism is against this, as it sees that the markets are the main source of power in

globalized world. However, nationalism and global capitalism are not as opposed as first is seen. Kettunen (2008) has noted that nationalism is actually empowered by global competition, as it requires cherishing national competitiveness; it unites the people under same goal of nations economic success in global markets. Sklair (2001) has called this combination of nationalistic and global capitalist discourses as "global nationalism" - the conviction by governments that national interests are best served if the country can find a "lucrative role" within a globally integrated economic system (see also Castells & Hall, 1994).

Some explanation rationalizations explicitly pointed out nation branding as 'common cause' for people by framing nation branding as something that is done not just by the representatives of the program, but by everyone:

> Illustration 28: "…In a way, we are all branders of Finland always when we are abroad or in homeland with foreign people. In these connections other people from world create mental image from us Finnish and whole Finland." (Formin, 24.03.2009)

This explanation repeats what was already said above about uniting the people under common cause of success in global markets. Noticeable in this rationalization is that it mixes psychological discourse and marketing terminology together, which can be seen as act of 'normalization'.

Normalization is a separate category of authorization, distinguished by Vaara & Tienari (2008), which emphasizes the strategies used to render

specific actions or phenomena "normal" or "natural." Here the branding is seen to be normal outcome from all relations with foreigners. Normalizing the terminology can be seen as essential part of the legitimation process of the nation branding program; as the terminology becomes more common-sense knowledge, also the actions are more easily approved. In a sense this means gaining dominance in discursive field. As Matheson has noted, people align themselves often with dominant structures of meaning, often with those, which have become so firmly established that they have the status of common sense. (Matheson, p.6, 2005)

## 6.2.4. National self-esteem project

Second way in which nationalistic discourse was applied was tapping concepts of national identity or national self-esteem. In illustration 22 this is done with the moral evaluation of *abstraction* by titling nation-branding program as 'self-esteem project':

> *Illustration 22: "He [Jorma Ollila] estimates that the nation branding is very much national self-esteem project" (Formin, 15.07.2009)*

Abstraction is a moral evaluation that refers to practices in abstract ways that 'moralize' them by distilling from them a quality that links them to discourse of moral values. Here the 'self-esteem project' abstracts the

national self-esteem as moral value that is linked to nation branding program. This mixes nationalistic and global capitalist discourses, but here the nationalistic discourse is more explicit, as opposite to illustrations 21 and 22.

As for why would the self-esteem be relevant legitimation, in illustration 23 Finnish people are described as being too modest with their achievements and thus in need for something to bring needed self-esteem. This explanation is backed up with 'many researches', which supposedly prove the national personality of Finnish to be too modest:

> Illustration 23: *"Many researches show that we are too modest and underestimate our achievements … how to get Finnish to believe in Finland? That is central challenge for nation branding delegation … "* (Kauppapolitiikka, 29.05.2009)

> Illustration 24 *"As a country that is positively different, Finland can be seen as flawed diamond, the researchers write"* (Formin, 04.03.2009)

Also these rationalizations can be seen as connecting the nationalistic and neoliberal goals. On one hand they are offering a solution to supposed "inferiority complex" of Finland, polishing the flawed diamond, from illustration 23, so to speak. On the other they are redefining the markets as the main determinant of this national self-esteem, connecting it to more market oriented way of thinking. As Jensen has noted nation branding not only explains nations to the world but also reinterprets

national identity in market terms and provides new narratives for domestic consumption; what essentially distinguishes the idea of national brand from national identity is that the primary motivation, the raison d'être, of nation branding is commercial ambition (Jansen, 2008, p.122).

Continuing with rationalizations, which utilizes concepts national-esteem and identity, in illustration 25, the moral evaluation of *analogue* of winter war is used to refer to the current 'war' in economical field, urging people to gather behind the nation brand for the good of the nation:

> *Illustration 25: "Now it's time to gather the troops and rise up the spirit of winter war" (authors note: referring to starting the nation branding program) (Kauppapolitiikka, 29.05.2009)*

> *Illustration 26: "Tanks of globalization are on the way, but we can still make couple good Molotov cocktails for what is to come" (Kauppapolitiikka, 29.05.2009)*

Here the global nationalistic discourse is applied by redefining the nationalistic war rhetoric by the terms of global markets. What is noticeable here is also the sense of urgency, which is evoked. This same urgency was also seen in illustration 26 prompting us to make 'couple good Molotov cocktails' before it's too late.

# 7. Conclusion

## 7.1. Review of findings

The analysis of discursive legitimation strategies of nation branding program of Finland showed that various discursive strategies were used to bring legitimacy for the nation-branding program. In table 1 the results are shown by occurrences:

| Authorization by | |
|---|---|
| Expertise | 8 |
| Conformity | 4 |
| Impersonal Authority | 1 |
| Tradition | 1 |
| Total | 14 |
| **Moral Evaluation by** | |
| Evaluation | 4 |
| Analogue | 7 |
| Abstraction | 6 |
| Total | 17 |
| **Instrumental Rationalization by** | |
| Means-oriented (potential/use) | 7 |
| Goal-oriented | 1 |
| Total | 8 |
| **Theoretical Rationalization by** | |
| Definition | 11 |
| Explanation | 4 |
| Prediction | 1 |
| Total | 16 |

Table.1.

From the authorization strategies most used ones were authority of expertise, which was seen as active usage of experts coming from the field of marketing to tell about program and its goals. What was noticeable was that the expertise brought into discussion was concentrated only on marketing expertise, confirming that there wasn't attempt to take account other possible perspectives of expert knowledge.

Also prominent figures of political and economic fields were brought to discussion to tell their own views of the program. Most likely choice of persons given authority on the matter had been conscious choice primarily for legitimative purposes. Such names as Jorma Ollila and Martti Ahtisaari bring in personal authority, which in case of Olllila comes from long history of leadership in Finnish economic field, and in case of Ahtisaari long history as a prominent political figure, not only in Finnish, but also international political field. The Ollila has clearly been chosen as spokesman of the program, as he is a common public face of nation branding program in public media. This can be seen also as ideological choice of market economic public face for the program.

Second biggest category of authorization strategies was authority of conformity. This authorization was used to frame nation branding as practice, which is done actively around us, and that by not joining the others Finland would risk to be left behind from others. To confirm whether statement about popularity of the practice is true is difficult, as the concept of what is considered as nation branding differs widely as was spoken in chapter 3. However, the hype of the nation branding programs,

whatever they may be, generates seems to be more general trait of the practice (Jensen, 2006, p. 130). Authority of conformity can be seen as effective legitimation strategy especially for relatively small country like Finland, which is often influenced by more politically and economically stronger countries.

Nation branding was also legitimated by the terms of impersonal authority and authority of tradition. These legitimations refer to mentioning the governmental decision about starting the program and the previous similar attempt to effect to Finland's external image. These legitimations were spotted only in few occasions, which signal that these were not necessarily seen as effective, or at least best legitimation strategies. The reasoning for this is most likely that nation branding is wanted to be portrayed as not governmental program, but rather a program "for the people and by the people" as was discussed in chapter 6.2.5.

Rationalization strategies were discussed under discourses of moral values that were dominative in the articles analyzed. Two main discourses were recognized: global capitalist and nationalist discourse. Global capitalist discourse rationalized the nation branding program by existence of global competition which forces not only products, but now also nations to compete for recognition and differentiate themselves to more marketable showcases of themselves. Another main legitimation under this discourse was existence of current economic crisis in which nation branding was seen as new approach, which is needed in tough times like this. The economic crisis was seen as good time to prepare for the coming

upswing. It was also rationalized that nation branding is not only for markets, but also useful for other sectors of society.

The nationalist discourse rationalized nation branding as "good for the homeland" This was done for example by making moral evaluations about the companies as the as the ones that have already realized nation branding to be good for the homeland and are therefore supporting it. This combines interests of nation and markets together. As was discussed in chapter 6.2.4, discourses of global competition and nationalism are not at all opposite to each other's, but rather support each other. Another way nationalist discourse was applied was tapping concept of national identity and self-esteem. Nation branding was seen as way to heal apparent 'self-esteem problems' of Finland. Nationalist discourse was also applied by portraying nation branding as something that should be done by all, not only by the nation branding delegation.

## 7.2. Reflections and future research

What came clear in the analysis of legitimation strategies was that there was more legitimated here than only the nation-branding program. As was discussed in the introduction, nation-branding practice relates to wider transformation of nation states role in world, where global competition is set to be the pacemaker and a nation states role to conform to it. Nationalistic rhetoric, what is seen as 'good for homeland'

now conforms to the goals of global capitalism. As was seen in chapter 5.3.3, concepts such as national self-esteem are now redefined by terms of survival in global competition, and strong national identity is seen as requisite for success. This success in global markets is seen as the 'common cause', which supposedly unites people. What the nation branding practice actually is pointing out is this merging of nationalistic and global capitalist interests.

In thesis this progress was discussed from perspective of legitimation; how this change is negotiated to audience. As was discussed in context of authorization strategies in chapter 5.2, the essential legitimating authority mainly comes from marketing expertise. Marketing has become in recent years a discipline that is spread outside from its origin of consumer markets also to non-profit sector. This is part of larger cultural phenomena, what Wernick has called emergence of promotional culture: trend to push market into every facet of social life. The nation branding can be seen as prime example of this.

Important question to be asked is what are the implications of this cultural change, and what happens when logic of profit maximation and philosophy of branding will become dominant practices in governance of entities like nation state. The ideology of nation branding inherently requires the unification of communication and control over projected identity. In product branding this is a simpler thing to do as company has control over employees through salary, but in case of nation branding,

brand control becomes more questionable concept.

The work of nation branding delegation is supposed to be finished end of 2010. After this the implementation phase of the decided nation brand will start. This thesis gave some answers to question in which way is the program legitimated, but it didn't give answer whether legitimacy is actually achieved. Future research should pay attention on the public reception of what comes out from the work of delegation and how people will accept the 'core idea' of Finland. Also attention should be paid how this new market-case identity is promoted in practice, and how does it effect to the cultural policies and the allocation of the funds. What concerns author is the possibility that nation brand will suppress other possible ways to express national identity that does not conform into the image that nation branders want to project. As Kettunen (2008) have noted, answers to global competition are not always answers to democracy. Whether it will be people that are speaking with the voice of brand, or just voice of brand that is speaking to people, remains to be seen.

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*Brändätyn maan taktiikka* – Harri Kilpi (29.5.2009) (Tactic of branded country)

*Uutta höyryä vanhaan koneeseen* – Juha Markkanen (10.8.2009) (New steam for the old machine)

*Made in Eu* – Paula Lehtomäki (Minister of foreign trade- and development) (11.8.2009)

**Appendix.1**


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