

Abstract

Changing a country's image is a complex process requiring long-term strategic effort. Nation brands are influenced by a wide range of external influences possibly causing negative images or stereotyping. Thus, regarding states, rebranding is often used to redefine the generally perceived image. Nonetheless, the image of a state is deeply rooted and cannot be changed by marketing tools and communication alone. Noticeable changes and policy actions are needed to create a strong communication basis for the development of a nation branding strategy. Countries generally having reputation problems are often non-democratic and the growth of their brand tends to be limited. The Middle East frequently faces negative image and stereotyping. At the same time, nation branding receives vast attention, effort and budgets there. Saudi Arabia launched its nation rebranding strategy by presenting the Vision 2030 document. This paper aims to determine the extent of nation branding multidisciplinary in the Saudi context. A combination of a quantitative analysis of national branding indexes and semi-structured expert interviews is chosen. Nation branding in Saudi Arabia has experienced moderate growth, considerable professionalization, and the first strategic achievements of the Vision 2030 plan. On the contrary, factors negatively impacting the image and the nation brand are detected. Although some of them are not addressed within communication, transformation is very much intertwined with communication, and implemented changes and reforms create major communication opportunities and challenges.