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Positioning the image of Mexico in the media of english-speaking nations of the Pacific rim: with focus on the USA, Canada and New Zealand¹

Posicionamiento de la imagen de México en los espacios
mediáticos de países de habla inglesa en la Cuenca
del Pacífico: el caso de USA, Canadá y Nueva Zelanda

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Abstract

This paper examines the overall image of Mexico promoted through its foreign policy (Nation Branding strategies) and reflected in the Us, Canadian, and New Zealand press, with a focus on two major newspapers in each country. To do this, this article employs both quantitative and qualitative analysis. It offers a 6-month long diagnosis of news (1st November, 2014 ~ 30th April, 2015), which will disclose the agenda of objects and attributes regarding Mexico.

¹ The authors of this article are grateful to Conor O'Reilly for having reviewed the English text.

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Keywords: image of Mexico, country image, Nation Branding, image of Mexico in English-speaking countries, mass media, Pacific Rim.

Resumen

En este artículo se revisa una imagen completa de México mediante su política exterior y sus estrategias de marca país, reflejado en la prensa de Estados Unidos, Canadá y Nueva Zelanda, a través del análisis de las noticias sobre México (en seis periódicos), dos en cada uno de los países anglo-parlantes antes mencionados. Para poder reflexionar en torno a los imaginarios mexicanos, durante noviembre de 2014 y abril de 2015 se utilizó un análisis de corte cuantitativo y cualitativo. Esta investigación brinda una oportunidad de indagar si la agenda de los objetos y atributos de los periódicos analizados, coinciden con los objetivos planeados para el sexenio actual de México hacia Estados Unidos, Canadá y Nueva Zelanda.

Palabras clave: imagen de México, imagen país, marca país, imagen de México en las naciones de habla inglesa, medios de comunicación, Cuenca del Pacífico.

Introduction

The relationships with the countries of the Pacific Rim play an important role in Mexico's current foreign affairs policy. Mexico is integrated with the supranational organisms and signed international treaties, including those with other countries of the Asia Pacific region.

The level of cooperation of Mexico with the United States is reflected in the country's main documents, for example, the Plan of National Development (PND) which establishes economic relations with the United States and Canada as fundamental to the aim to broaden this agenda in future decades (Gobierno de la República, 2013, p. 94). Mexico seeks to strengthen the relationship with the two nations based on a comprehensive and long-term vision that promotes competitiveness and convergence in the region, on the basis of existing complementarities (Gobierno de la República, 2013, p. 147), broadens consular assistance, and the protection of its citizens in the United States (Gobierno de la República, 2013, p. 152). Mexico joined the

trade negotiations on TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership), which also embraces the United States, Canada, New Zealand and other countries, in October of 2012 (Gobierno de la República, 2013, p. 95). The Mexican government aims to strengthen the Strategic Alliance with Canada and United States by improving transport logistics, border facilitation, among other activities. (Gobierno de la República, 2013, p.154).

The named strategies are implemented through more detailed events, reflected, for example, in the Second Government Report. Mexico and the United States engage in numerous high-level meetings, investment activities, collaborate in administration of the United States-Mexico border, deepen commercial and educational relations, strengthen security (including in cyber space), cooperate on health care related programs, work on human rights, justice, and environment protection, and other important programs and activities⁶ (Presidencia de la República, 2014). In order to improve its image abroad Mexico has launched various public and cultural diplomacy programs in Canada, participated in bilateral military events, security and defense projects, cooperated on Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP), encouraged cooperation in civil society, the private sector and local government, fostered academic exchanges, and implemented the Joint Action Plan Mexico-Canada 2014-2016, to name a few of the activities carried out.⁷ In New Zealand, Mexico seeks to reinforce its cultural presence, and cooperate on energy and climate. In order to advance the development of standards to strengthen the quality of domestic products and promote consumer confidence, Mexico started the exploration of the corresponding mechanisms and practices from New Zealand.⁸ According to the Second Government Report, Mexico signed agreements with New Zealand in the educational sphere, thus strengthening academic cooperation.⁹

Despite the importance of multilateral relations with each of the three countries in focus, there has not been much of a systematic investigation of how Mexico is presented by the press of the United States, Canada or New Zealand.

⁶ For more details see: 2^{do} Informe de Gobierno, 2014, pp. 50, 57, 60, 93, 94, 178, 438, 483, 485, 513, 514, 515, 518, 522, etcétera.

⁷ For more details see: 2^{do} Informe de Gobierno, 2014, pp. 56, 222, 481, 484, 504, 511, etcétera.

⁸ For more details see: 2^{do} Informe de Gobierno, 2014, pp.346, 394, 509, etcétera.

⁹ For more details see: 2^{do} Informe de Gobierno, 2014, pp. 303, 304, etcétera.

This study attempts to examine how the image of Mexico is presented in the US, Canadian, and New Zealand press and provide insight into English-speaking nations' perception from the North American and Oceania parts of the Pacific Rim. To do this, this paper will employ both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The article offers a 6-month long diagnosis of the news that will allow us see the agenda of objects and attributes regarding Mexico. Thus, this article presents an empirical analysis of the ways in which the press of three English-speaking nations of the Pacific Rim portrays Mexico with a focus on two major newspapers in each country.

Therefore the main objective of this paper is to find out, through the analysis of newspapers of the United States, Canada and New Zealand, what is the overall image of Mexico promoted through its foreign policy (Nation Branding strategies) and how it is reflected in the media of the mentioned countries.

Additionally, one of the objectives of this work is to analyze whether the Nation Branding strategy, a part of Mexican foreign policy, has an adequate impact abroad and, if this would be the case, to understand how this strategy is reflected in the articles of the main newspapers of the three English-speaking countries.

Nation Branding and Image

Relation between the Nation Branding strategy and image

Information exchange is growing faster with the development of technology. All nations need to compete with each other for a share of the world's attention and wealth, and development is as much a matter of positioning as anything else (Anholt, 2003).

Nation branding has become an emerging discipline that combines the principles of both marketing and international relations. Many authors agree that the domain of nation branding extends beyond a consumer focus on tourism promotion to encompass additional functions such as investment attraction, export promotion, and public diplomacy (Dinnie, Melewar, Seidenfuss & Musa, 2010).

The definition of a national image varies across academic disciplines and according to the focus of scholarly research. Its early definition came from the discipline of marketing (He, Xianhong, & Xing, 2012, p. 677). Fan (2006, p. 6) states that "nation branding concerns applying branding and marketing communica-

tions techniques to promote a nation's image", whilst Gudjonsson (2005, p. 285) takes a similar perspective by declaring that "nation branding uses the tools of branding to alter or change the behaviour, attitudes, identity or image of a nation in a positive way".

The acts of communication in which nations commonly engage may include, among many other factors, the way they feature in the world's media (Anholt, 2003). The role of the media is unprecedented because it shapes an image of different elements of country's communication to the rest of the world.

Nation branding involves promoting a nation's image to an international audience (Fan, 2006, p. 9). A positive image of a country can be rendered as one of the goals of nation branding. This happens because the image of a country, according to Simon Anholt, determines the way in which the world sees it and treats it (Anholt, 2005, p. 105).

As a communications strategy and a practical initiative, nation branding allows national governments to better manage and control the image they project to the world, and to attract the "right" kinds of investment, tourism, trade, and talent, successfully competing with a growing pool of national contenders for a shrinking set of available resources (Aronczyk, 2008). Now it is important to understand the mechanisms and elements of mass media that are involved in the process of dissemination of a country's image abroad.

Country's Image and Mass Media

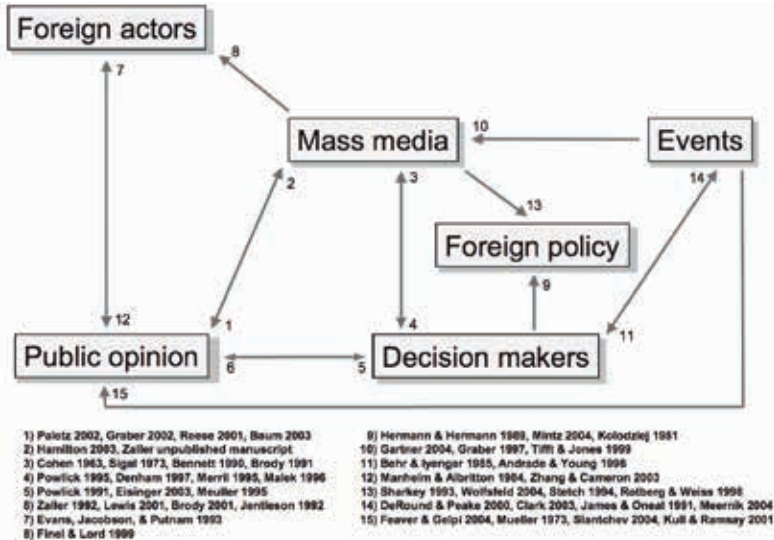
A country's image can be assumed as a complex strategy of national image management reflected in foreign media and perceived by individuals abroad. Studies in the area of communication and mass media indicate that the respondents' impressions and opinions are shaped largely by common news media (Zhu, 2013, p. 277).

On the other hand, other empirical studies testify that media image and public perception do not necessarily coincide. For instance, in terms of being of vital interest to the United States, some nations appeared to rank near the bottom of the public agenda, despite their high salience in the four major network newscasts. Mexico, for example, received a relatively high number of negative stories, yet was a relatively "warm" nation on the respondents' thermometer (Wanta, Golan & Lee, 2004, p. 372).

The image in mass media can persuade and influence people’s attitudes in other countries. Walter Lippmann in 1922 wrote a classic work titled “The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads”. He discovered that the priorities of the media strongly influence the priorities of the public. Elements prominent on the media agenda become prominent in the public mind. It is proved that the salience of objects in the mass media is linked to the formation of opinions by the audience (McCombs, 2002). But it is also true that not all countries are covered equally, as the networks cover the world in an unbalanced manner (Wanta, Golan & Lee, 2004).

The country’s image is also important because it is considered by the politicians and business leaders of many nations. Several decades ago, researchers found out that the news media is a major information source for decision-makers, even in the twenty first century members of the governmental policy-making system cannot have direct experience of the whole range of international affairs (Zhang, 2010, p. 236). The complexity of the casual link between the public, decision makers (foreign and domestic), and the media, is available in the scheme 1.

Scheme 1. The interrelations between mass media, foreign actors, events, foreign policy, decision makers and public opinion as attested in academic literature.



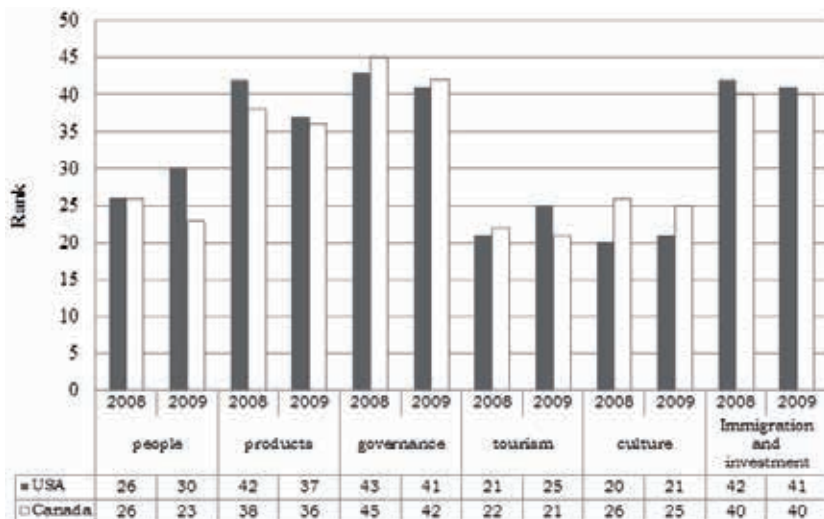
Source: Baum & Potter, 2008, p. 41.

Thus, mass media is related to public opinion and decision makers among others, but each element may have different perspectives of the same object and can generate its own image inside society.

Approach to a public/collective image of Mexico in the USA and Canada

The dynamics of the global perception of Mexico per agency or ranking is detailed in the works of various authors.¹⁰ However, the data presented at the global or regional scale shows only general trends. The only exception is an instrument developed by Simon Anholt (2009), which gives a more or less detailed picture of the collective perception of a specific nation in other societies and measures the image of 50 nations by examining six dimensions of national competence—exports, governance, culture, people, tourism and immigration, and investment. The collective perception studies as defined by the Nation Brands Index ranked Mexico in 2008 and 2009 in the USA and Canada with the indicators as appears in the graph 1. Unfortunately, the tool does not include New Zealand.

Graph 1. The perception of Mexico by the citizens of the USA and Canada in 2008 and 2009.



Elaborated from: Simon Anholt (2009)

¹⁰ See, for example: Diaz & Pérez, 2010; Anholt, 2012.

Without doubt, public image is a subjective matter, being at the same time “subject to collective opinions, rather than an individual one” and reflects “the perceived conduct of a nation and its citizens” (Zhu 2013, p. 271). So when discussing the above-mentioned country rankings as pictures of nation branding strategies one must bear in mind that this is a “public image”, not individualized views about Mexico.

As one can see, among the six main areas considered to measure Mexico’s brand, Us and Canadian citizens ranked culture, tourism, and people highest. Some authors state that Mexico generally counts for a considerably positive reality associated with the discourses of its powerful cultural tradition and gastronomy, ethnic diversity, natural and historical resources, among others (Villanueva Rivas, 2012, p. 16).

The international media have great impact on the global perception of any country. Castells admits that four of the six conglomerates where global media industry is concentrated are from the United States (Brambila Ramirez 2014, p. 20). As mentioned Bogan, Forbes of November 2008 referred to Mexico as a “failed state”, justified by drug-terror and economic crisis (Brambila Ramirez 2014, p. 20). In an instance like that the Us media, due to its high global influence, negatively impacts Mexico’s image worldwide. This concern about the dependence of Mexico’s international image on the Us mass media has been expressed before (see: Díaz & Pérez, 2012, p. 171; Anholt, 2012, p. 124).

One of the reasons why newspapers produce news of this kind can be explained in terms of marketing. Of course, from a commercial point of view there is nothing more attractive than to create a sensation and increase sales, as the case of Mexico’s combat against drug cartels and its violent consequences can prove. The recipe cannot fail to draw attention because, according to Simon Anholt (2012, p. 122), it has the most powerful ingredients-those of the most exciting and violent Hollywood gangster movie and of the most attractive “reality” show.

The other reason the Us media projects a negative image of Mexico internationally is based on the political and economic interests of the USA. The latter wants to position Mexico as a subordinate nation, assigning stereotypes to manage or influence Mexican politicians who have the burden of bad reputation of their country (Villanueva Rivas, 2012, p. 19-20).

Mexican Nation Branding strategy and its main obstacles

In the second half of the 90s and early twenty-first century, Mexico, along with Chile, Argentina, Brazil and other countries of the region were among the world's most active states in managing its external image (Ramos & Noya, 2006, p. 1). On September 5, 2005 during the presentation ceremony of the Mexican Nation Brand strategy, the minister of Tourism Rodolfo Elizondo stated: "We are more than just fun, sun and sand; we also have great talents in such areas as literature, painting, architecture, and music, to name the few" (Ramos & Noya, 2006, p. 32).

Until the middle of the first decade of the new millennium the strategy of the Nation Branding for Mexico was mostly concentrated on tourism and language, and aimed at the United States to promote the messages of "exceptionality", "diversity" and "hospitality" (Ramos & Noya, 2006, p. 34). Unfortunately, not only for economic reasons, but also its informal dependence on the USA makes many people from other countries look at Mexico through the lenses of US media companies-a dimension affected by political influence. Seen through the reducing prism of US popular culture, everything that Europeans and Asians can know about Mexico is a pale caricature of a violent, corrupt, slightly picturesque but in essence underdeveloped tropical territory, without any economic, human, cultural or political importance, in particular (Anholt, 2012, p. 124).

Mexico has historically tended to concentrate most of its business, labor, cultural, economic and academic relations on the United States (Anholt, 2012, p. 123). As a result, Mexican society is globalized inadequately -the country has not benefited from many of the opportunities offered by the "emerging markets", the result of the globalization of the last half-century (Anholt, 2012, p. 124). Hence, there is the need to reduce dependence on the US market and to actively develop relations with Europe and Asia (Diaz & Pérez, 2012, p. 171). Therefore, the Mexican government reflected upon its interests and came with a new strategy of positioning the country. The state authorities defined three main phases: the first was launched in September 2010 and is aimed at the markets of United States and Canada; the second started in 2011 and addresses the European market, and the third has been implemented since 2012 and includes strategic markets in Asia (Diaz & Pérez, 2012, p. 174).

It is important to recognize that the Mexican government has taken actions to position the country's nation brand worldwide. There is evidence that due to its efforts, the tone of traditional Us news media improved significantly by the end of 2012 (Díaz & Pérez, 2012, p. 183). As suggested by Anholt (2012, p. 124), it is time for Mexico to take control of its own international position and avoid a situation in which it appears represented to the world by another country whose interests do not invariably coincide with Mexican objectives.

Methodology

A combination of two research methods was employed in this study. The first was a quantitative analysis of news on Mexico from two nationwide newspapers in the United States, Canada and New Zealand. The second was an interpretative analysis aimed at an examination of the evaluative undertones of the stories based on content analysis. This study employs analysis of the content that appears both in printed and digital formats, though accessed electronically the stories were downloaded from the webpages of the newspapers.

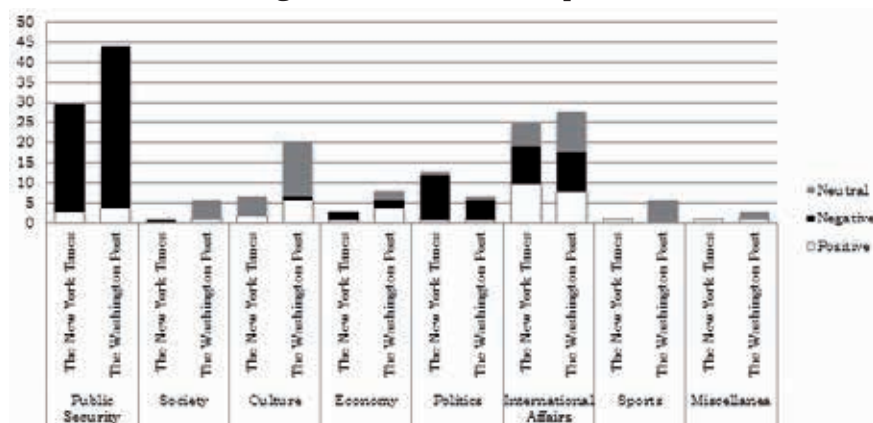
This paper employs a 6-month time lag starting from November 1 of 2014 until April 30 of 2015. Using the linguistic methods, the articles were classified according to the following categories: 1) public security; 2) society; 3) culture; 4) economy; 5) politics (domestic); 6) international affairs; 7) sports; 8) miscellanea (technology, science etc.). This helps to obtain a detailed picture of all the Mexico related issues that appear in the press of the United States, Canada and New Zealand.

Every unit of analysis, individual news stories, was also coded for valence depending on whether it was covered in a positive, neutral, or negative manner. If a newscast reported "decrease", "stagnancy", "murder", "violence" etc., the story was coded as negative. News without any negative or positive coloring or stories that demonstrated a balance of both positive and negative information was coded as neutral. Correspondingly, the news employing "improvement", "progress", "growth" and other epithets with a positive tint were classified as positive.

The image of Mexico in Us newspapers

For the news analysis in the United States, the largest national printed media coverage in the country – *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* – were selected. The results are displayed in the graph 2.

Graph 2 The image of Mexico in the main Us newspapers during November 2014 - April 2015



The number of the articles relevant for this analysis consisted of 81 stories from *The New York Times* and 122 from *The Washington Post*. It is worth noting the philosophy and reputation of these two Us newspapers indicate that each tends to cover particular topics of their specialization. *The New York Times*, for example, is generally focused on international, financial and economic affairs due to its location in one of the biggest commercial capitals in the world, while *The Washington Post* predominantly concentrates on political and foreign affairs since its headquarters is based in the capital of the United States.

A total of 37% of *The New York Times* articles concern issues of public security, and 31% of its coverage on Mexico is dedicated to foreign affairs. Similarly, 37% of *The Washington Post* articles on Mexico fall into the category of public security and 23% focuses on foreign affairs. Therefore, we can assume that the agenda of two Us newspapers on Mexico addresses significant attention to the two specified topics.

Public Security. The highest concentration of the news in this category is detected in November, 2014 compared with the

remaining five months. This mostly coincides with the surge of protests and manifestations in some Mexican cities, started in September 2013 and provoked by the disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa.¹¹ Other topics discussed in both newspapers were the capture of a leader of organized crime in Michoacan, the fight against drug cartels, the disappearance of a priest, the explosion of a gas tank in one of the hospitals of Mexico City, constitutional reforms concerning anti-criminal legislation, and the criticism of the Mexican President over the missing students in Ayotzinapa. This category evaluates the image of Mexico in the USA mainly influenced by Ayotzinapa tragedy, and is described negatively by 90% of its articles in *The New York Times* and by 91% in *The Washington Post*.

Society. The number of articles registered in this category is very insignificant compared to that of public security. “Society” discusses two important topics – discrimination against Mexican immigrants in the Us labor market, and analysis of Mexican legislation on the legitimization of transgender couple marriages and the change of their legal status. It is noteworthy that *The Washington Post* speaks mostly in a neutral tone about Mexican society.

Culture. The attention to this topic is not the same for the two newspapers as *The Washington Post* is apparently more specific. The issues reported in this category range from gastronomy to various exhibitions of Mexican paintings and architecture in Us museums. The news talks about festivities for the Day of the Dead and Day of the Candelaria, Chespirito’s death, the new disc of Lila Downs, the archaeological discovery in one of the pyramids of Teotihuacan, and finally, mention of the touristic promotion of the historic center of Mexico City through the filming of the new James Bond movie. Undoubtedly, Mexico’s strongest cultural image could be found in cinematography, as this featured in the speech of Alejandro Gonzalez Iñarritu, who received a number of Academy Awards including Best Picture and Best Director in 2014. The agenda of both newspapers in this category is perceived as mostly neutral. This shows that for the periods in focus Mexican culture is viewed favorably in the main US newspapers.

¹¹ In general terms, it refers to disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa. For more information see, for example, the following article in Wikipedia and its list of reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Iguala_mass_kidnapping.

Economy. Surprisingly enough, the articles related to economic matters are fewer in number than those of the previous category. They deal with issues such as energy reforms and their relation to oil production, the growth of remittance from the United States to Mexico, the introduction of foreign capital through the establishment of new factories, the lack of producers of computer parts in Mexico for investment companies, and the increase in exports of Mexican avocado and sugar to the Us market. One of the most important articles in this category mentions the high-speed train from Mexico to Queretaro, a project where the Mexican government is reportedly involved in corruption. The evaluative tone regarding this category was very diverse, possibly due to the heterogeneity of the texts. The estimation of Mexican decisions in economic matters by *The New York Times* was mostly negative, while the tone of *The Washington Post* was considerably positive.

Politics. For *The New York Times* this category ranks third for the total number of articles, while for *The Washington Post* it is the fifth most important topic. Like the previous category, the coverage of Mexican national politics is very heterogeneous. The issues with negative evaluation concern several corruption scandals on both federal and state levels. Among others, there are stories about real estate (called the “White House”) owned by the First Lady. The same evaluative tint underlies the coverage of the content related to government of Mexico City trying to change the script of the new James Bond movie, so that the city would be seen as less violent and corrupt. However, there were two positively viewed topics which discussed government measures to consummate the anti-corruption laws and free access to information. Similarly to the public security category, the image of Mexico in politics was evaluated mostly negatively.

International affairs. This is the second biggest category by number of articles for both newspapers. Despite this the addressed issues are different, but there are similar tendencies in terms of reporting on immigration, deportation, and the violation of human rights on the border between Mexico and the USA. Noteworthy, in late 2014 and early 2015 the presidents of the two countries worked on strengthening legal immigration reform that would benefit the Mexican migrants working in the United States. There articles also featured issues like the case of three Mexicans sentenced to death in Malaysia, the suspen-

sion of Jeremy Clarkson from the British television show *Top Gear* for mocking Mexicans, as well as statements made by Pope Francis about the disappearance of the 43 students in Ayotzina-pa. *The New York Times* refers to Mexico with articles which are 40% positive, 36% negative, and 24% of neutral, while for *The Washington Post* figures are 28% positive, 36% negative and 36 % neutral in their evaluation.

Sports. The topic of sports is not relevant for either the agenda of *The New York Times*, or *The Washington Post*. Mexico's image in this category is limited to scarce information about the Mexican national soccer team and its members. The expectations from the football match between the Mexican and Us teams in April of 2015 are reflected in a special report in *The Washington Post*. There was also a story about the death of Mexican wrestler in Tijuana. In sum, *The New York Times* published a single positively perceived article, while *The Washington Post* referred to its six stories neutrally.

Miscellanea. Like sports, the coverage of Mexico in this category is very poor. The articles deal with technology developed in Mexico and its various applications. They touch upon, for example, Gordie Howe and his recovery from heart attack after receiving stem cell transplants, as well as the use of drones in Mexico City airport and along the border between Mexico and the Us to help monitor airspace.

The qualitative analysis shows that the cumulative image of Mexico for all the categories in *The New York Times* is 62% negative, 23% positive and 15% neutral, while the overall perception of *The Washington Post* demonstrates 48% negative, 32% neutral, and 20% positive stories. *The New York Times* projects a slightly more positive image of Mexico than *The Washington Post*, however there is a disproportion in the coverage of some categories as there is little interest in apparently important topics, such as the economy or society.

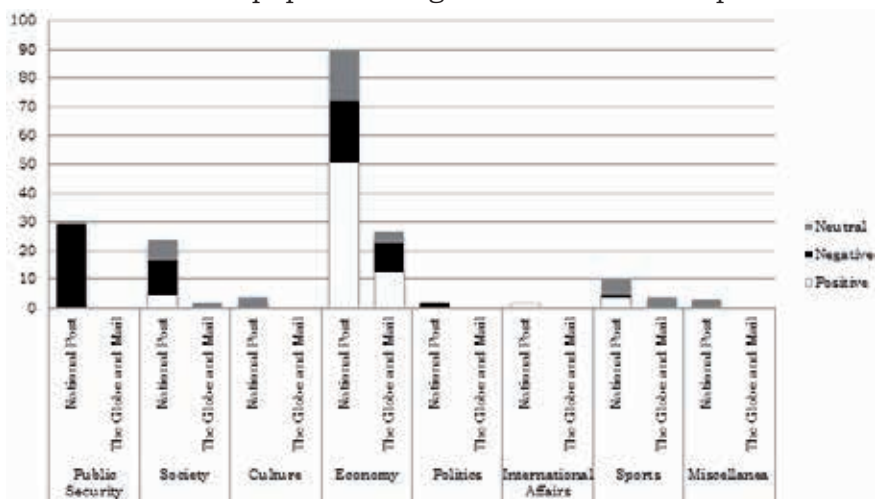
The New York Times reported 100% positively in two categories, sports and miscellanea, but these included only one article for each category, followed by the category of international affairs with 40% positive stories. The categories with the highest negative rating were society, public security and politics. Finally, the most neutrally referred categories were culture and international affairs.

The Washington Post more or less positively views Mexican economy, culture and international affairs. The categories with the highest number of negative news were public security and politics. Finally, the most neutral categories for this newspaper were sports, society and culture.

The image of Mexico in Canadian newspapers

For news analysis in Canada the article refers to the largest national printed media coverage in the country, the *National Post* and *The Globe and Mail*, the two nationally distributed newspapers published Monday through Saturday. The results are displayed in graph 3.

Graph 3. The image of Mexico in the main Canadian newspapers during November 2014 - April 2015



The number of the articles relevant for this analysis consisted of 165 stories from the *National Post* and 36 from *The Globe and Mail*. The overall majority of *National Post* articles, 54.5%, concern the economy, while in second place with 18% of coverage on Mexico is concerned with public security. 75% of *The Globe and Mail* articles on Mexico also occur in the economy category, and 11% focuses on sports. Therefore, we can assume that the agenda of these two Canadian newspapers on Mexico addresses significant attention to the economy.

During more than 70 years of diplomatic relations between Mexico and Canada,¹² both countries have promoted academic and cultural exchanges, as well as close economic cooperation. These have had central importance during the 20 years of the life of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Relations between Mexico and Canada have strong legal and institutional support, where both countries are each other's important trading partner, according to the records of imports. Concurrent to this, Canada ranks fourth in foreign direct investment in Mexico and was the second largest source of foreign tourists to Mexico in 2012.

According to information obtained, the news related to Mexico in the *National Post* appeared more often between the months of March and April, with 63% of all content concentrated in these two months. In *The Globe and Mail* the highest concentration of news related to Mexico appeared in January and April, a total 30.5% and 28% respectively.

As mentioned before, the majority of all the stories in both newspapers focuses on the economy. This news is related to the issue of Mexican energy reform, oil reserves, mining in Mexico, automotive industry production, banking, as well as airline services.

It appears that news related to public security is the second most important concern for the *National Post*, since the newspaper gave timely follow-up on issues relating to the 43 students missing in Ayotzinapa, as well as news related to violence and drug cartels.

As far as the topic of society is concerned, health issues, migration, and the image of modern Mexico, income inequality, and quality of life were highlighted. Surprisingly, the topics of culture, politics, international affairs, and sports have been given insignificant and sporadic coverage.

Although a balance between positive and negative news is observed, analysis detected the prevalence of a positive tone, with 39% and 36% respectively for *National Post* and *The Globe and Mail*. In both newspapers, the economy category is characterized by a greater concentration of news with a positive tone, especially those related to automotive production, such as Volk-

¹² For more information refer to: http://embamex.sre.gob.mx/canada_eng/index.php/press-releases/564-january-2014/5398-mexico-and-canada-comemorate-70-years-of-diplomatic-relations.

swagen and Ford, or those addressing labor costs in Mexico as favorable for the economic relations between the two countries.

Furthermore, the presence of Canadian mining companies in Mexico is viewed positively, as is oil production, and issues related to music industry. The demand for Mexican fresh products in Canada is significant, as observed from the news related to the consumption of Hass avocados. Among other positively referred issues is the possible sale of HSBC Mexico,¹³ which could enhance Mexican banking sector in the long-term perspective.

As far as negative news is concerned, economic activities have been reportedly influenced by the global crisis, as well as by drug-related violence, which affects the economic climate and casts a negative and pessimistic shadow over it. Also the reports talk about layoffs and businesses affected by robberies, as in the case of mining companies located in the state of Guerrero. Furthermore, Canadians have always seen Mexico as a good tourist option for its rich landscape and climate. However, activities related to tourism in Mexico have been affected by drug-trafficking related violence.

The qualitative analysis shows that the cumulative image of Mexico for all the categories in the *National Post* is 39% positive, 38% negative, and 23% neutral, while the overall perception of *The Globe and Mail* demonstrates 36% positive, 36% negative and 28% neutral stories. Yet the *National Post* projects a slightly more positive image of Mexico than *The Globe and Mail*. However, there is a disproportion in the coverage of some categories, likewise in the case of the main Us newspapers, where there is little interest in apparently important topics, such as culture, politics or international affairs.

For the *National Post* the most positively related categories were economy, with 57% of stories coming across as positive, while the category of international affairs was limited to only two positive articles. The categories with the highest negative rating for the same newspaper were for public security and society. Finally, the categories referred to in exceptionally neutral way are those of sports and miscellanea. The newspaper views the category of culture neutrally or positively.

¹³ Scotiabank, the bank of Canadian origin is one of the possible buyers of Hsbc Mexico; for more information see, for example: <http://www.brujulafinanciera.com/notas/empresas/202220/scotiabank-podria-comprar-a-hsbc>, <http://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/economia/scotiabank-en-platicas-con-hsbc-por-activos-en-latinoamerica.html>, etcétera.

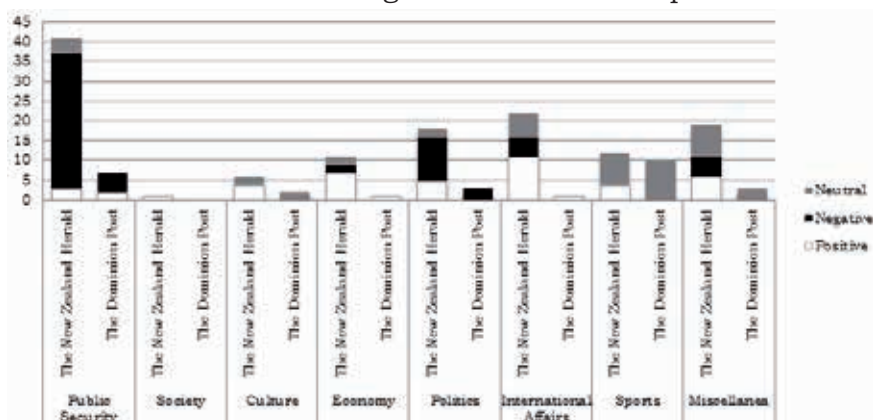
The Globe and Mail more or less only views the Mexican economy category positively. Culture and politics lack stories to analyze. The categories with negative news were public security and international affairs, with only one article in each one. Finally, the neutrally related categories for this newspaper were sports and miscellanea.

The image of Mexico in the newspapers of New Zealand

For this document, the two major newspapers with the largest national news coverage in New Zealand, *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Dominion Post*, were selected. The number of articles relevant for this analysis consisted of 130 stories from *The New Zealand Herald* and 27 from *The Dominion Post*. In total 31.5% of *The New Zealand Herald* articles cover the issues of public security and 17% of its coverage on Mexico is dedicated to foreign affairs. *The Dominion Post* included 37% of articles on Mexico focused on the category of sports and 26% on public security.

According to information obtained, the news related to Mexico in *The New Zealand Herald* appeared more often between the months of March and April, with 80% of all content concentrated in these two months. For *The Dominion Post* the highest concentration of related news highlighting Mexico appeared in November and March, with 33% for each month respectively.

Graph 4. The image of Mexico in the main newspapers of New Zealand during November 2014 - April 2015



Public Security. Since November 2014, the articles on Mexico in *The New Zealand Herald* dealing with this category address the lack of efficiency resolving conflicts related to public security, and mainly focus on the conflict that resulted from the disappearance of the 43 students in Ayotzinapa. It was observed that 24% of all articles published are devoted to this topic, of which 86% of reported news relate to the issue in a negative sense. The newspaper also reported on marches and demonstrations by the disappeared students' parents and thousands of their supporters who protested against the federal government. Other stories address the states of Michoacán, Guerrero, and Oaxaca as the poorest administrative units of the country, thus producing more violence and organized crime. Besides this, *The New Zealand Herald* has stories on the facilities for drug smuggling to the United States.

In its turn, the newspaper *The Dominion Post* did not show much interest in the issue of the missing students, in the same way as *The New Zealand Herald* did. The 28.5% of articles in this category's focus are positive, addressing the public security issue, covering the measures and strategies taken by the government of Mexico to curb the means and ways that allow the transit of drugs to the United States, and fight the violence using the drones. Also it refers to the efforts of Mexican military forces to dismantle organized crime networks.

Society and Culture. The articles concerning society are very few in number. A similar situation concerns the subject of culture. It is mentioned that Mexico is famous for its culture, referring to its colorful characters and costumes. Articles report on the production of a film that promises to be a blockbuster with a script related to the celebration of Day of the Dead in Mexico City. The criticism is addressed at the efforts of Mexican authorities to improve the country's image abroad by negotiating the modification of the script of the film with the production company.

Economy. *The New Zealand Herald* devotes 8.5% of all articles to the subject of economy, of which 64% project a positive image of Mexico. Particularly they mention the investment proposal in the energy sector by First Reserve oil company as well as agreements on trade and investment. The articles also report on the willingness of Japanese automakers to invest in Mexico, highlight the commercial links between Mexican business and the leading telecommunications company in New Zealand. It is

also stressed that Mexico is the ideal place for companies that want to minimize labor costs and tariffs. However, some stories report the concern expressed by the organizations engaged in monitoring human rights about the impact of reforms on the country's stability. On the other hand, the newspaper *The Dominion Post* delivers some news about the livestock trade between Mexico and New Zealand.

Politics. Of all the news published by *The New Zealand Herald* in the six-month period, 14% refer to the category of politics and 28% of them have a positive coloring. An example is the news report about the profit Mexico generated as a result of implemented policies and measures to protect the security of tourists and foreign investors. Similarly, the effectiveness of Mexican Congress and the President is recognized with regard to the promotion and approval of the reforms that constitute the basis of good trade relations stipulated by the agreements signed between Mexico and the countries of Asia-Pacific region. Furthermore, the government's actions that allow free access to public information are welcomed.

The New Zealand Herald also supports a negative view regarding the lack of counter-measures in the case of the 43 missing students, and the demonstrations and protests demanding justice and transparency. The news also covers the issue related to the President's purchase of a million-dollar mansion. Using a negative tone, *The New Zealand Herald* depicts marches of over 80,000 agricultural workers demanding higher wages and better work conditions from Us companies on the border of Baja California. Also the discovery of distribution channels in the border built by drug traffickers was reported, among other news. *The Dominion Post* exposes impunity and political corruption in the Mexican government.

International Affairs. The newspaper *The New Zealand Herald* welcomes the agreement signed by New Zealand with the TPP member nations. Yet, 23% of the articles published in this category have negative connotations, highlighting problems provoked by migration from Central American countries and related issues. However, the newspaper positively refers to the work of the Mexican immigration authorities. In addition, *The New Zealand Herald* disseminates information on tourism to Mexico and other Caribbean and Central American countries. In turn, *The Dominion Post* devotes only one report on the issue of inter-

national affairs. Thus, it positively addresses the visit of Prince Charles and his wife Camilla to Mexico and Colombia with the purpose of promoting trade relations.

Sports. The sports news in *The New Zealand Herald* comprises about 9% of the newspaper's total coverage on Mexico, and 33% of it projects a positive image. Mexico is viewed with potential in sports, and reports talk about cycling championships, golf, auto racing, mixed martial arts, and, of course, football. Mexico has reportedly shown that its football teams rank high and possess global competitiveness. *The Dominion Post* covers 32% of the news related to sports in a neutral way. The latter focuses mostly on MMA championship fights, rally cars, freestyle motocross, and golf, at the same time highlighting the attractiveness of different tourist destinations in Mexico.

Miscellanea. This category includes news on science, environment, and health issues, among others. Thus, 15% of all reports published by *The New Zealand Herald* are related to the mentioned topics. Of that percentage, 32% project a positive image of Mexico, while 26% are negative. Elements that contribute to the creation of a good image in the minds of New Zealand readers generally speak of actions to preserve biodiversity. In contrast to that, there are reports on anthropogenic disasters that occurred in Mexico and are referred to as a result of the negligence the country has had in implementing regulations related to environmental protection. Examples of this are oil spills and well fire and their consequences in the Gulf of Mexico.

However, some news from miscellanea published by *The Dominion Post* is related to drastic measures and policies that Mexico has implemented for the protection of marine animals in danger of extinction.

The qualitative analysis shows that the cumulative image of Mexico for all the categories in *The New Zealand Herald* is 32% positive, 44% negative, and 24% neutral, while the overall perception of *The Dominion Post* demonstrates 26% positive, 26% negative and 48% neutral stories. There is a disproportion in the coverage of some categories, likewise in the case of the main US newspapers, with little interest in apparently important topics, such as society, culture and economy.

For *The New Zealand Herald* the most positively referred categories were international affairs, with 57% of positive stories inside the category, economy, with 64% of positive stories

inside the category, culture, with 67% of positive stories inside the category and society limited to its only positive report. The categories with the highest negative rating for the same newspaper were of the public security and politics. Finally, the categories referred to in mostly neutral way are those of sports and miscellanea.

The Dominion Post more or less positively views Mexican culture, economy and international affairs (each category limited to one positive article). Surprisingly, the category of society lacks stories to analyze. The categories with overwhelmingly negative news were the public security and politics. Finally, neutrally referred category for this newspaper was sports and miscellanea.

Conclusions

Rafael Tovar y de Teresa (2012, p. 189) points out that “in the Mexican state’s foreign policy has always prevailed the intention to put the significant weight to culture”. In this regard, none of the analyzed newspapers is “helpful” to achieve desired by Mexico projection of the image from cultural perspective.

Something that is somehow linked to culture, or at least associated with it, is sport. Mexico almost always is positively associated with football and the role its team plays in the Latin American football. Undoubtedly, previous generations of Mexican players have done a great job to achieve this by disseminating this global perception, which is generally supported by the press of the three countries in focus.

Though the analyzed period is relatively short, it allows seeing clearly that the Achilles’ heel of Mexico’s image in the US major newspapers is public security and politics. This perception is largely reinforced by the violence of drug cartels and corruption among the state figures that provokes violence, poverty and marginalization of Mexican society. Still it requires further efforts to improve public security to help the growth of tourism, as well as consolidate its foreign policy to attract more investments.

Media coverage of *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Dominion Post* considerably reinforces a negative image of Mexico as a country plagued by insecurity, poverty, violence, drug trafficking and corruption. The newspapers of New Zealand report little on economical, cultural and social potential of Mexico.

Many scholars admit that Mexico has been presented abroad as a violent country (Tovar y de Teresa, 2012, p. 203). Its

international image has been deteriorated significantly during recent years mostly because of a massive information campaign associated with criminal violence in national and international media (Villanueva Rivas, 2012, p. 14). The image of violence that arrives to the USA, Canada and New Zealand through the analyzed newspapers is projected from the categories of “public security” and “society”. No doubt, it is not a desirable phenomenon, since “from the cognitive perspective, the negative images affect a state very perniciously and the change from a negative to a neutral or positive perception is very difficult to achieve, requiring for that many institutional efforts” (Villanueva Rivas, 2012, p. 15). For the moment, the image that comes to the USA, Canada and New Zealand does not match the vision of the National Development Plan of Mexico in its search for improving public security conditions.

Although the Mexican project of Nation Branding, as mention Ramos and Noya (2006, p. 31), started with a tourism-oriented perspective, the strategy must include other elements such as export products – agricultural products of the highest quality. In this sense, the image of Mexico particularly in the USA and Canada counts with the export of avocado, among other items.

As mentioned before, PND refers to the USA and Canada as principal commercial partners (Gobierno de la República, p. 94). In this sense, neither of the US newspapers reinforces this vision, in spite the PND states that international commerce of Mexico is concentrated in USA with 77.5% of all Mexican export in 2012 (Gobierno de la República, p. 95).

As has been admitted by the US press, there is discrimination against Mexican immigrants in the US labor market. In this regard PND mentions the necessity of implementation of a policy to protect Mexicans in the USA and aims to activate a promotion strategy and empowerment of Mexican migrants through the consulates of Mexico in the United States (Gobierno de la República, p. 152). The assistance to Mexican communities in the United States, promoting their welfare and full respect for their rights, as established by PND (Gobierno de la República, p. 147) is highlighted in the US newspapers. The activities related to the promotion of the comprehensive modernization of the border area as featured in PND (Gobierno de la República, p. 147) are also reflected in the US press. The press of New Zealand as well reinforces these efforts.

The New Zealand press also mirrors the efforts of Mexican government to broaden economic cooperation with Asia-Pacific region and Oceania, as stipulated by PND (Gobierno de la República, p. 94-95). Mexico renders TPP as one of the most important global treaties (Gobierno de la República, p. 95), favorable for its economy. The press of New Zealand also positively views this country's integration into TPP. As argued by Simon Anholt (2012, p. 119), this era of globalization, where "geography is history", Mexico needs to take much more advantage of its potential to engage with countries and peoples of other parts of the world and not be focused only on the United States, has proved to be both an advantage and a disadvantage.

The significant minority of Americans and Canadians who know and love Mexico, and in no way share negative opinions certainly will need some guarantee to remain good friends of Mexico and continue visiting the country, enjoying his culture and investing in their businesses and properties. It is therefore vital that the relevant government agencies in Mexico to try to identify them and do everything possible to keep them close (Anholt, 2012, 119-120). Therefore, "one of the main objectives which should be assumed by Mexico's foreign policy ... is an emphasis on the improvement of the country's image ... (Tovar y de Teresa, 2012, p. 201). In order to have a counterbalance to the negative aspects of its image in the USA or New Zealand Mexico should strengthen issues that were ranked better – culture, economy and international affairs.

In sum, most of the elements that position Mexico in the USA, Canada and New Zealand strengthen its Nation Branding strategy, but only part of them are reflected in the agenda of the objects and attributes of the six analyzed newspapers.

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