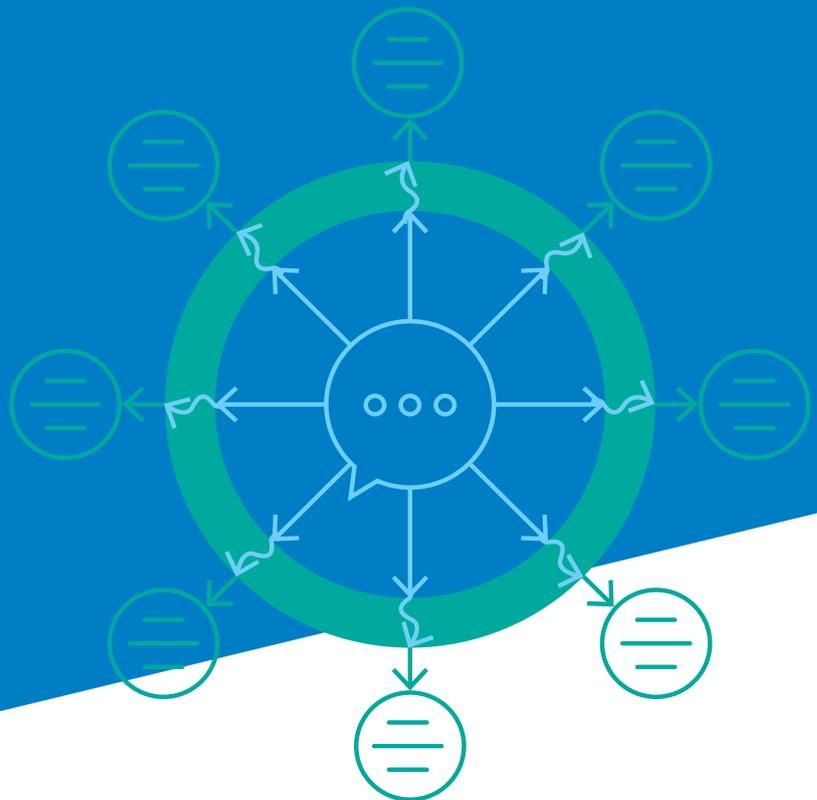


Measuring a destination country's brand in the minds of people considering irregular migration

December 2020



Summary

This paper demonstrates the power of a country's brand name in attracting and repelling people considering irregular migration - a dynamic we label your "brand impact". Four out of five European countries show a clear positive or negative effect in a test designed to isolate the influence of the country's name. For countries engaged in official and unofficial efforts to shape flows of irregular migrants, the test highlights the need to take your country's brand into account during activity research, design and evaluation.

If you are in political communications or you design migration-related communications campaigns, the implications include:



Know your country's brand impact: Seefar's research shows how smart interventions will benefit from targeted research that identifies and monitors brand impact.



Leverage your brand name: If you use and develop your brand wisely, you will achieve better results for less effort.



Demonstrate results to voters or those funding your campaigns: Your stakeholders will support you more if they understand how you are using the brand and how it is important to contextualize results.

Introduction

What shapes our destination preferences?

Imagine you want to migrate internationally. How attractive would the following country be to you as a destination?

- A country with an average temperature of 22-26 °C.
- A country whose economy has tripled in size in the last 20 years;
- A country that has recently hosted over 200,000 refugees in its borders.

Ok, now let's try again: if you were going to migrate, how attractive would Brazil be to you as a destination?

If you were asked these questions separately, do you expect your answers would match?

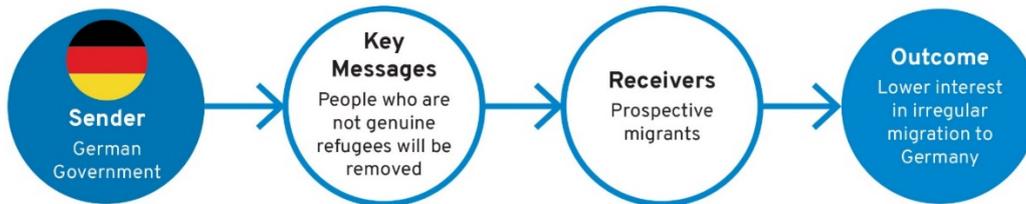
When you are asked to rate the attractiveness of Brazil, your answer probably consists of a mixture of consciously available "facts" connected to unconscious associations that are informed by experience and other people's opinions, including media representations. This mixture is related to but quite distinct from a list of facts or opinions about Brazil, because you are integrating this knowledge with emotional and motivational associations.

In other words, "Brazil" triggers a brand representation in your mind, which is independent from any specific set of facts or opinions about Brazil.

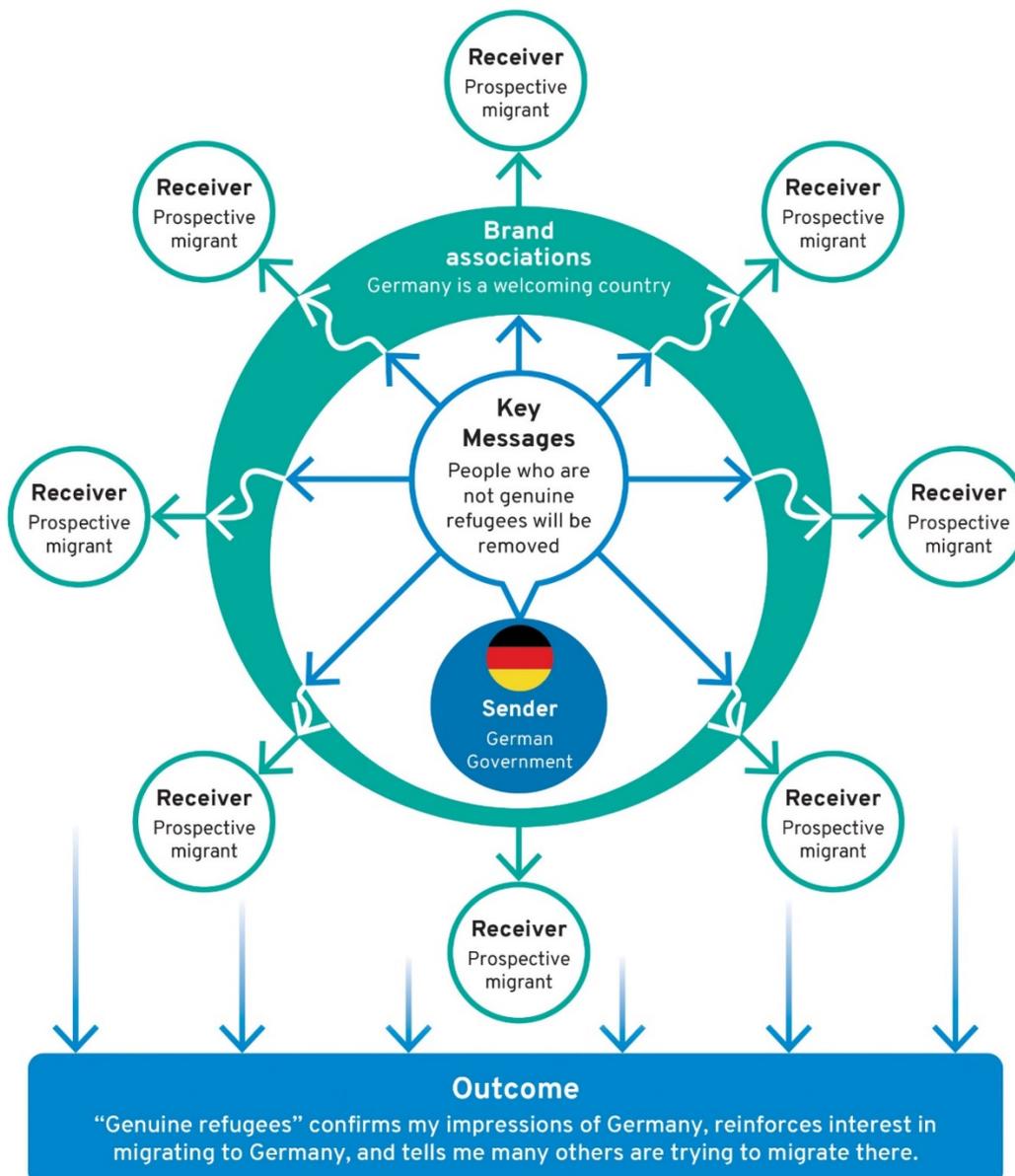
Understanding your brand

If you are going to communicate with potential migrants, understanding your brand is critical. Our team has evaluated 50+ campaigns over the last ten years and found that communications will be ineffective or even counterproductive if a country's name is used without understanding what it means to the audience.

What happens if you *think* you are communicating through a linear model...



...But you are actually communicating through a web model?



For example, you may wish to reduce the number of people interested in working illegally in your country, so you initiate an online campaign highlighting risks and arrests of illegal workers and their employers. However, you did not realize that your country previously had an unattractive profile as a destination for people seeking illegal employment overseas. Rather than deterring illegal migration, you've now highlighted potential opportunities for those arriving in your country to work illegally, and the time and money you invested has been wasted. By providing information aimed at deterring illegal migration without understanding your country's brand impact, you have actually made some people more motivated to do it.

This finding is not abstract theory - Seefar recently field tested the impact of a country's brand name on migration intentions. The findings are relevant if you are a politician communicating on migration issues or if you are designing migration communications campaigns.

The Test

We prepared two questionnaires, consisting of the following areas (Figure 1):

Figure 1



The only difference between the questionnaires was in Section 6: Country Descriptions. In Version A of the questionnaire, we provided text with facts about five destinations. Version B of the questionnaire provided exactly the same information, with one change in presentation. Figure 2 shows how the experiment introduced Sweden to respondents:

Figure 2

Version A	Version B
<p><i>Sweden is a European country where about 1 in 6 people are born in another country. In the summer, the average temperature in Sweden is 18 degrees and in winter -3 degrees (compared to 25 degrees in Asmara in June)...</i></p>	<p><i>Country X is a European country where about 1 in 6 people are born in another country. In the summer, the average temperature in Country X is 18 degrees and in winter -3 degrees (compared to 25 degrees in Asmara in June)...</i></p>

In other words, the text is the same but the country is not named. In both questionnaires, Seefar asked respondents for each of the five countries tested:

Please indicate how attractive or unattractive this country is for you as a place to migrate to. If you choose 0, you are saying this country is extremely unattractive for you. If you choose 10, you are saying that this country is extremely attractive for you.

Through online networking, we recruited a population of Eritreans living in Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda. We randomly assigned them to answer Version A or Version B of the questionnaire via an online form. We received 294 valid responses.¹ At this point, we were concerned that the sample sizes would not be large enough to identify any patterns - but the results told a very different story.

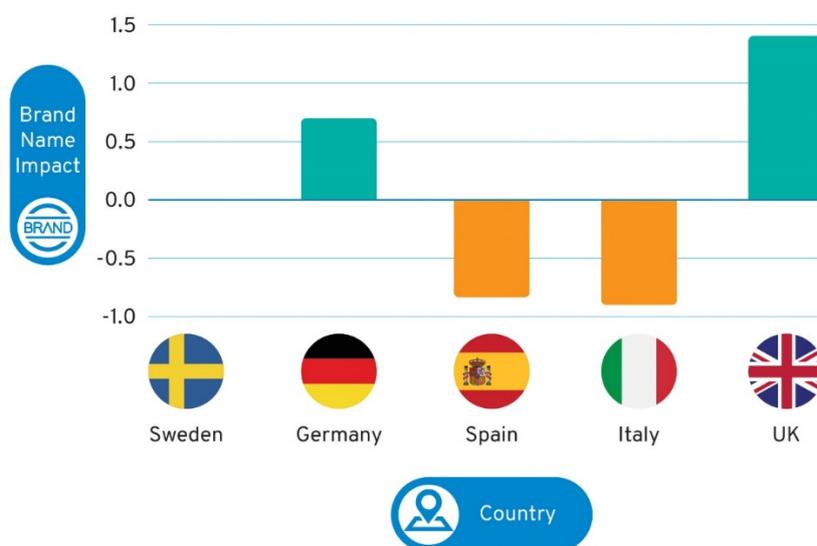
Results: A Brand Name Impact

We first checked whether there were detectable systematic differences between people who received the two different questionnaires.² We found there were more people answering the Version B questionnaire who did not currently plan to migrate. Given this potential skew between the two different segments, we removed all such people from the analysis (in both versions of the questionnaire). Beyond that, we could find no significant differences on any dimensions, providing strong confidence in the experiment's randomization.

We then tested the difference between Version A and Version B for each country in five models. The summary of the results is shown below. For example, a result of +0.5 for Germany would mean that the version of the questionnaire that mentions Germany by name (A) generates an average of 0.5 points more as an attractive destination, compared to the questionnaire that lists facts about Germany without naming it (B).

Figure 3

Brand Name Impact on Destination Attractiveness



¹ 159 for A and 135 for B.

² This involved rigorous statistical testing using the questionnaire version type as the independent variable.

The UK, Italy and Spain show consistently significant differences between the questionnaires (Figure 3). The UK has a strong *positive* brand effect. This means that individuals who hear the UK's name are more likely to view it favorably as a destination than individuals who do not hear the UK's name. Italy and Spain have a *negative* brand effect, which means that people who hear the names "Italy" and "Spain" view those countries as less attractive destinations. Germany demonstrates a positive brand effect in three models and an insignificant effect in two models (Full results listed in Figure 4).

Figure 4

Model #	Description	Sweden	Germany	Spain	Italy	UK
1	No controls	No relation	+0.62	-0.94**	-1.02**	+1.69**
2	Demographic controls	No relation	+0.75*	-0.85**	-0.88**	+1.79**
3	Demographic controls + migration reason	No relation	+0.77*	-0.92**	-0.83**	+1.77**
4	Destination preferences only	No relation	+0.54	-0.82*	-1.07**	+1.34**
5	Everything together	No relation	+0.71*	-0.85*	-0.91**	+1.42**

* = p < 0.05 ** = p < 0.01

Implications

Know your brand impact

Smart migrant communications programmes will use upfront and rolling research to understand the impact of their brand name on migration decision-making. Such research can be fast and cost-effective. These "brand impacts" will vary depending on the audience and over time, but are likely to tell you something new and important about campaign objectives, message content and delivery. If you would like to discover methods to achieve this, [get in touch with us](#).

Leverage your brand

Armed with this knowledge, effective migrant communications campaigns can integrate a country's brand meaning into design and messaging, AND consider how to develop the brand over time. Examples could include:

- Leveraging the specific features of your brand to amplify the attitude or behaviour change you are seeking.
- Understanding how to compare and contrast your country with alternatives to irregular migration.
- Knowing when to stay quiet and when to be loud with your country's name, policies, or alternatives.

Demonstrate results

Using brand impact measurements offer government officials a new way to demonstrate their value to leadership. Most campaigns may use simple outputs like online engagement or community events to approximate impact, but your ability to tell a story about changing brand impact can help contextualize campaign metrics, build support from key decision-makers and provide valuable insights to complementary programmes.

For example, many irregular migrants may perceive your country as “open” and “humanitarian”, which is linked to their belief that you will allow anyone who reaches your country to stay there permanently. Upfront research may identify this as influencing important behaviours, like people paying smugglers to reach your country. You could then decide that your aim is to shift perceptions of your country to “fair but firm”, linked to a belief that you allow a small number of people who need protection from threats to take shelter with you. Rather than telling your campaign stakeholders about website posts and community events, you can show directly how you are influencing an important web of associations in the communities that matter. The benefit is that you can more effectively answer your critics and maintain funding or political support.

Next step

We are currently offering briefings on this research and the implications for communications design.

If this could help your work, [get in touch with us](#).

The logo for SEEFAR is displayed in a white rectangular area with an orange border. The letters 'S', 'E', 'E', and 'F' are blue, while 'A' and 'R' are orange. The 'S' has a small orange triangle on its left side, and the 'A' has a small orange triangle on its right side.

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