Instead of the introduction: the idea of an umbrella image

The majority of researchers notice that one of the peculiarities in the field of country image communication is the majority of actors: national, regional and local authorities, as well as business organizations and even individuals, working in different directions and absolutely different ways, what causes the difficulties in conceptualization and control of this phenomenon (Jaffe&Nebezahl 2006: 140). Even if we exclude such factors as primary communication, private communication and confine ourselves only to the governmental institutions, there are still a lot of them: tourism board, economic development agencies, cultural institutes, MOFA, working in different sectors and towards different directions.

Looking at the history of the development of country branding theory (Papadopoulos 2004), it becomes obvious that different sectors of country image communication (public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, tourism promotion, exports promotion and FDI attraction) were developed by different institutions and with different aims. Researchers and institutions of different sectors usually did not recognize the similarities in their activi-
ties. Such model is called uncoordinated (or fragmented) branding by Jaffe and Nebezahl (2006: 141) and is usually criticised, as different actors send different and sometimes contradictory messages, resulting in the failure of the practices (Anholt 2007: 3).

Therefore, the concept of a country’s umbrella image emerged in late 1990’s, proposing the idea that coordinated country image communication could advantage in the economies of scale and raise a possibility of synergy (Jaffe&Nebezahl 2006: 141). The main requirements for the umbrella image are to find common requirements of stakeholders, then construct a common core of values and finally implement it (ibid: 142).

It must be noted that although this issue was mainly developed by country branding proponents, a similar problem was also noticed and discussed by public diplomacy researchers. For instance, Melissen (2007: 8) mentions the “importance of developing long term public diplomacy strategy with central coordination of policies.”

Influenced by this idea, many countries have been trying to implement the umbrella image in practice, and researchers have been trying to find the ways of effective implementation, though many questions have not been answered yet.

This paper tries to research the present cultural diplomacy of Japan from this aspect, raising a question: is Japan implementing the umbrella image idea to unify its governmental activities towards well coordinated country image communication? This empirical research is a part of a bigger research on the newest trends of Japanese cultural diplomacy, which is based on the analysis of documents and expert interviews with policy-makers, working as key people in the country image communication institutions. Out of 13 interviews conducted in Tokyo during the summer of 2009, 4 are used for this paper, as they deal with the presented aspect directly.

**Levels of the umbrella image**

The exact understanding of the notion of a country’s umbrella image is not still clearly defined and different countries and researchers still look at this notion from very different perspectives. Concluding different cases of the implementation of the umbrella image idea, it could be argued that
this idea could be divided in four different levels: symbolic, strategic, implementation and institutional.

**Symbolic level** tempts to create common symbols for the country. This idea is not new because different forms of symbolic representations of nations and nation-states were constructed by 19-20th century nationalisms, including national flags, anthems, cuisines and heroes. The 21st century branding campaigns artificially construct marketing tools, consisting mainly of country’s visual (logo) and textual (catchphrases) expressions. Above all, there is the core message about the country.

As the majority of country image communication institutions already have their logos for different purposes (eg. Tourism promotion, export promotion), creating an umbrella logo usually means the unification of existing logos (as it happened in the South African Republic), or creating an absolutely new one (as it happened in Lithuania or Spain). The creation of an umbrella logo usually causes public discussions, regarding its importance. The reaction of the public opinion varies from positive acceptance and belief (one of the examples being Spain, the logo of which uses a detail of J. Miro) to harsh criticism and denial (for example, Italy).

Different countries also create their catchphrases, which are supposed to distinguish the country in the context of its competitors and to position it by emphasising its strongest points. For example, New Zealand is branded as 100 proc pure, while since 2005 Latvia has textualised the phrase Keystone of the Baltic. After long lasting scandals, Lithuania established its core idea of Brave Lithuania and its umbrella logo in 2008.

The **strategic and implementation levels** are highly mutually interconnected, as the first one tempts to create a national strategy, while in the second level it is implemented by unifying the activities of different actors towards a system of common tasks and aims. S. Anholt argues: “far more can be achieved if the work of these stakeholders is coordinated, of consistent high quality, and harmonized to an overall national strategy that sets clear goals for the country’s economy, its society and its political and cultural relations with other countries” (Anholt 2007: 3).

Strategic-implementation level symbolises big differences between country image communication and corporate branding. Although umbrella strategies can be quite easily implemented in the companies, where decisions are usually made by CEO or small teams, but it becomes much more difficult in the case of countries.

S. Anholt raises the examples of Singapore or Dubai, the places “that
are run more like corporations,” which have successfully built global brands (ibid: 82), however, bigger countries face more complicated tasks. One of them is the creation of a “carefully managed coalition” of the government, business and civil society with the first taking the leading role (ibid: 74).

Here the importance of the Institutional level arises. In this level, which could be considered as the highest one, the umbrella image means administrative unification of all governmental institutions of different sectors, dealing with different aspects of the image of the country and usually towards different directions. Similarly as with the case of the symbolic image, this could be achieved by merging the existing institutions into one, or establishing a new institution above them with the aim of effective coordination.

It should be mentioned that although many countries are trying to implement their umbrella image idea in other levels, until now, there is no country having applied it in the institutional level.

**Main governmental institutions in Japan’s cultural diplomacy sector**

Since 2004, Japan has been developing a new phase of country image communication, which is accelerated by globalized international community, increasing presence of China, terrorist attacks (Ogawa 2009: 273) and the success of Japanese contents industry. These factors led to the quick increase of public discourse and emerging governmental institutions.

Presently, there is a big diversity of governmental actors, participating in the country image communication. Even such ministries as the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) or Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) are mentioned as contributing to Japan’s image in the fields of food culture or fashion (No. 7, No. 4). Excluding clearly non-public diplomacy sector institutions in Japan, mentioned by the majority of respondents, for instance, JETRO and Tourism Agency (established in 2008), I would like to distinguish the main institutions related to Japan’s cultural diplomacy, which I will classify to main clusters according to their institutional subordination.

As Katzenstein (2002) notes, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is the
main and the oldest actor in Japanese cultural diplomacy, mainly acting through *Japan Foundation* (JF), which was established in 1972 mainly inspired by the international Oil crisis and Nixon shock, and laid the basis for the post-war Japanese public diplomacy (Hirano 2005). Although it was established as a new institution, its tight relationship with the *Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai* (KBS), existing since 1934 cannot be denied: KBS ceased to exist on the same year, and its staff and the offices in Rome, Cologne, New York and London were transferred to Japan Foundation (Vyas 2008). From its establishment, the Foundation was treated as a semi-dependent (agency level) division of MOFA, but since 2003 it has become a legally independent institution (独立行政法人). However, as the interviews show, this re-structuralisation has not completely cut JF’s ties with MOFA: it still remains dependent on MOFA's budget and strategies (No. 3, No. 12). Therefore, JF remains inside the MOFA cluster.

T1: Governmental institutions in Japan, working with the country image communication (the researched institutions are marked in grey):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Sector of CIC</th>
<th>Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOFA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Diplomacy Department</td>
<td>Cultural diplomacy</td>
<td>PD, S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Press Office</td>
<td>Information policy</td>
<td>PD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary advisory groups and councils for promotion</td>
<td>Public diplomacy</td>
<td>PD, CB, S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan Foundation</td>
<td>Cultural diplomacy</td>
<td>PD, T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEXT (Agency for Cultural Affairs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Culture Exchange Office</td>
<td>Cultural diplomacy</td>
<td>PD, T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council on the Culture Promotion Strategy</td>
<td>Cultural diplomacy</td>
<td>PD, S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JETRO</td>
<td>Export promotion</td>
<td>CB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Small and Medium Enterprise Agency</td>
<td>Attempts for umbrella image</td>
<td>CB, S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLIT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan National Tourism Organization</td>
<td>Tourism promotion</td>
<td>CB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan Tourism Agency</td>
<td>Tourism promotion</td>
<td>CB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest Japan Office (IJIC)</td>
<td>FDI attraction</td>
<td>CB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelectual Property Policy Headquarters</td>
<td>Attempts for umbrella image</td>
<td>CB, S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other institutions in MOFA cluster are subsequent temporary advisory groups and councils for promotion, that were usually established with specific tasks to deal with concrete international challenges. One of them was the Council on the Promotion of Cultural Diplomacy initiated by the Prime Minister J. Koizumi and headed by Prof. Tamotsu Aoki, a prominent researcher on the image of Japan. The Council was supposed to improve the recognition of Japan abroad and to contribute in enhancing the safety of Japanese overseas.

T2: Temporary advisory institutions of MOFA on public diplomacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Head</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Advisory Group on International Cultural Exchange</td>
<td>Gaishi Hiraiwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005 07</td>
<td>Council on the Promotion of Cultural Diplomacy</td>
<td>Tamotsu Aoki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2008 03</td>
<td>The Council on the Movement of People Across Borders</td>
<td>Fujio Cho</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Diplomatic Bluebook 2005; Diplomatic Bluebook 2006

The newest institution in the cluster of MOFA is its Public Diplomacy Department (広報文化交流部) established in 2004 after the structural reform when two clearly separated fields of public relations and cultural exchange were merged together (No. 12).

The Ministry of Education (MEXT), more precisely Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA), is the second main actor in Japan’s cultural diplomacy. However, the Agency’s activities have always been targeted towards domestic, not worldwide, audiences and the preservation of heritage (No. 7). Therefore, if we exclude Japanese language promotion activities, it has been participating in cultural diplomacy since relatively recently, i.e. 2001, when the International Cultural Exchange Office (国際文化交流室) was established. As the respondent indicates, only in this year, the Agency began implementing planned cultural diplomacy strategically. It must be mentioned that in the premises of the Agency, a temporary Council on the Culture Promotion Strategy (文化発信戦略に関する懇談会) was established in 2007 for a period till 2009 as a strategy creating institution. One of the main issues for cultural diplomacy in the Agency, indicated by the respondent, is the shortage of budget, which is not growing, though the tasks and activities are increasing (No. 7).
The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) also emerged in the field of cultural diplomacy quite recently through the activities of the Small and Medium Enterprise Agency (中小企業庁), which initiated the campaigns of Neo-Japonesque (Kaneko 2009: 7) and Japan Brand (Small and Medium Enterprise Agency 2007).

The fourth governmental stakeholder in Japan’s country image communication is the Prime Minister’s Office (首相官邸), i.e. the Koizumi Cabinet, which became an actor in 2002. In 2002, J. Koizumi emphasized the importance of intellectual capital for Japan and created a new slogan of intellectual property-based nation (地在立国 chizai rikkoku). A part of this new policy was the growing interest in Japan’s international image (Dinie 2008: 211-219). In the context of this policy, a newly established Intellectual Property Policy Headquarters (知的財産戦略本部) raised many tasks. It is interesting that Japan’s country branding issues were covered by the Task Force on Contents (コンテンツ専門調査会). Two of its working groups prepared two strategic documents, namely Development of Japan Brand Strategy (Kontentsu… 2005) and Japan Brand Strategy (Kontentsu… 2009b).

**Institutional level**

Therefore, it is obvious that since 2000 there has been a big increase in different institutions, dealing with Japan’s cultural diplomacy from different aspects, and it shows a new developmental phase in the Japanese public diplomacy. Now I would like to present the main discourses, regarding the cross-institutional cooperation, observed in the official documents and during the interviews, dividing them to pro- and anti- umbrella image in this level.

Firstly, budget efficiency issue could be one of the main stimuli for unification because present expenditures for cultural diplomacy are shared between various actors, what makes it very difficult to calculate and to use them effectively and without overlaps. For example, JF’s budget is less than that of British Council or Alliance Française, but one of the reasons could be that some functions of cultural diplomacy in Japan are covered by other institutions. As the respondent points out, “the Agency for Cultural Affairs also deals with cultural exchange, but its budget is not counted as cultural diplomacy” (No. 4).

As some respondents note, from the point view of the Ministry of Finance and some Parliament members, there are some pushes to unify
the institutions with similar activities because there are many overlapping functions and especially invitation schemes. Combining them together to one institution would make the control of budget and functions easier and more effective (No. 7, No. 12): “So, maybe the coordination is necessary because when we invite some people from overseas, we could possibly combine some other programmes conducted by other ministries or agencies” (No. 12).

Secondly, as the success of cultural diplomacy often depends on the needs of the consumer and the feedback, the key factor for successful implementation of strategies is establishing contacts with local audiences and developing an interactive network of strategies and local needs (No. 4). In this respect, the most developed institution is MOFA, having a wide network of diplomatic missions abroad. Japan Foundation, which has only 20 overseas branches in 19 countries but belongs to MOFA cluster, uses these diplomatic missions and contacts with them directly (No. 4).

Much more difficult is the case of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, as MEXT does not have any overseas offices. This was mentioned as the main problem in the interview. The needs-feedback research at ACA is implemented through the individual reports of the visiting artists, that tend to be subjective and non-professional. Therefore, ACA has to collaborate with MOFA in this aspect: “As I have already said, Agency for Cultural Affairs does not have any overseas offices, and the thing is that we have to trust diplomatic missions… embassies of MOFA… It cannot be said that this is always successful… <…> What concerns MOFA, it gets information from various diplomatic missions and summarises it… well… we cannot check, if we get well done summaries… This issue is quite tough…” (No. 7).

The third stimulus for unification is a better understanding of the activities to the audiences: in spite of very similar activities, the administrative divisions between institutions make it more difficult to present themselves and to be understandable to both, the Japanese and the foreign audiences. “The most important thing to sell Japan overseas is that we act together, as all Japan. Because for the recipient of Japanese culture, it is not important at all who is doing the job. It all comes from Japan. So, combining our strength we will be greater.” (No 12).

The document of the Council on the Promotion of Cultural Diplomacy also emphasizes the importance of central coordination and proposes “establishing governmental Conference for Promotion of Cultural Diplomacy, consisting of scientists and cultural exchange experts from the related
ministries and agencies, governmental institutions, corporations and civil society, with aim to project the plans and effective implementation of strategic policy, by coordination of the majority of main actors“ (Bunka gaiko… 2007: 19).

The above mentioned factors show the needs for cooperation, better coordination and even unification of the institutions. However, although there are highly centralized cultural diplomacy models, such as France or Peoples Republic of China (No. 12), all respondents have a clear opinion that it would be difficult to reorganize the governmental structure in Japan.

The reasons are not only structural (i.e. restructuralisation costs, etc.), but it is also closely connected with the corporate identity of particular institutions and long lasting frictions among them (especially MOFA and MEXT clusters). As one respondent mentions, “if to merge such institutions, of course, it would be a bigger number of staff, the organization would become larger... Yes... well... but I think, it would be very hard personally...” (No. 7).

Therefore, respondents mention that the cooperation should mainly take part in the form of sharing information and participation in joint projects. As it is pointed out, “So, I don’t think there is any problem that there are so many different teams. Some politicians say: “overlapping is not good.” But in the area of culture, I think, it is good because, I think, we should have diverse programs to invite many different people” (No 12).

As T. Ogawa points out, “Japan’s post-war public diplomacy is similar to the British model, whose organizations are loosely coordinated” (Ogawa 2009: 265).

**Strategic–implementation level**

What concerns the strategic-implementation level, two types can be clearly distinguished in the researched set of cultural diplomacy institutions: there are institutions, concentrating on strategies (marked S in Table No.1), and those mainly implementing the strategies at the operational level (marked T in Table No.1).

The majority of strategy-based institutions have created strategic documents, listed in Table 3, proposing visions how Japan’s cultural diplomacy should be developed in the future. The deeper analysis of these documents is not the aim of this paper, however, it can be presumed that they look
towards different directions, use different tools and usually serve the specific needs of particular organizations. For example, as one respondent argues in his interview, the Japanese Branding Strategy of March 2009 is mainly serving the interests of METI (No. 1). This is not denied by the policy makers themselves: some of them are not tempting to create an overall strategy. As the respondent mentions, “Actually, now we are formulating the policy, the strategy to brand Japan but, I think, it all comes down to the individual policy of each agency or ministry to promote our own image” (No. 12).

T.3: Some strategic documents prepared by governmental cultural diplomacy institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February, 2005</td>
<td>Development of Japan Brand Strategy</td>
<td>Japan Brand Working group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July, 2005</td>
<td>Towards the Establishment of Japonesque Modern</td>
<td>Council on the Promotion of Neo-Japonesque brand (METI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February, 2008</td>
<td>Measure and Framework for Strengthening Japan’s Public Diplomacy</td>
<td>Council on the Movement of People Across Borders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March, 2009</td>
<td>Japan Brand Strategy</td>
<td>Contents and Japan Brand special research group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March, 2009</td>
<td>About the Program of Cultural Transmission with Aim of Raising Understanding and Interest towards Japanese Culture.</td>
<td>Council on the Culture Promotion Strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The balance of the strategy creating and implementing institutions is not good, as there are much more first ones, and only two institutions work on the implementation level. Moreover, these two make pairs. Japan Foundation makes a clear pair with PDD (Ogawa 2009: 272) and other advisory councils of MOFA, and is very dependent on the MOFA’s diplomacy strategies. As the respondent points out, annual plans are proposed by JF according to the local needs, and then discussed in MOFA, if they respond to the overall strategy (No. 4). Therefore, the newest shifts and growing strategic attention towards pop culture influences JF’s activities as well: for example, in 2009 a new Pop culture division was established.

Similarly, the Agency for Cultural Affairs has a strategy created by the Council on the Culture Promotion Strategy, however, it seems from the interview that it has more freedom in choosing its strategy-based partner. As the respondent argues, “well… like this… we are receiving new advices
and proposals from different places… (smiles) there are really attractive proposals, but… well… there are some… when you think… maybe it is not the function of our Agency… So, I think, we just select them and, beginning from the possible activities for us, gradually move towards implementation” (No 7).

A much stronger corporate identity can be felt when the respondents of two implementation-based institutions (JF and ACA) are trying to distinguish their institutions and compare their activities with the opposite party. The respondents agree that JF’s promotion of cultural exchanges are based on the diplomatic point of view with the aim for a better mutual understanding and a deeper knowledge, also with the aim to increase the number of pro-Japan oriented audiences (No. 4, No. 12), while it seems that the Agency does not have such a political implication.

The biggest differences between the two implementation-based institutions are observed in the aspects of the represented culture. Historically, ACA is oriented towards a more traditional, ancient culture, which is understood as “Japanese,” while JF also widely uses the “new” culture, like media art, anime, manga (No 7). Sport diplomacy is also mainly dealt by Japan Foundation and is not managed by ACA. However, as both respondents notice, since recently ACA has also dealt with the pop culture, and the notion of culture of both sides is getting closer and closer (No. 4, No. 7). There are several minor differences as well. For example, ACA dispatches the artists for quite a long period (at least one month), while JF usually uses shorter dispatches for particular events (No. 7).

In several cases, the pride of their institution, a kind of superficiality can be felt when explaining other institution’s activities: “Agency, to be clear, up to now, was professionally concentrated on very high level art and culture… how to say… it’s a kind of self-satisfaction, but we have nourished the top level Japanese culture… It’s our self-consciousness. And Japan Foundation… strange to say that… they… it seems it’s OK, if the culture is not so top level… <…> Of course, they are dispatching top level artists as well, but not always” (No. 7).

**Symbolic level**

In the symbolic level, all Japan’s cultural diplomacy operating institutions can be divided into two main types: seeking a symbolic umbrella image and feeling sceptic about this idea.
The first type of institutions, belonging especially to the clusters of MITI and the Cabinet, is usually based on the branding approach of the country, and is trying to find the main idea/core identity for Japan to be branded, and then usually proposes its visualization and textualization. There were no interviews conducted with the representatives of this type of institutions, however, I would like to present four cases observed from the documents and other authors’ research.

During the Abe Cabinet, the short lived catchphrase of Beautiful Japan (美しい国、日本) was proposed. According to T. Ogawa (2009: 264), Sh. Abe was the first Prime Minister who expressed his concern about public diplomacy in such a clear manner. Moreover, some other attempts to visualise and textualise the core idea of Japan, such as the proposal of Intellectual Property Policy Headquarters (2009) to use the catchphrase Power of Japan (日本力) (Kontentsu... 2009a) could also be mentioned. In addition to these proposals, two main other discourses or lines can be distinguished, regarding the encapsulation of the core idea for Japan. These are the Cool Japan and the Japonesque Modern.

The idea of Cool Japan was not inspired by any strategy or institution but emerged from the Japanese public diplomacy in 2002 after a famous article “Japan’s Gross National Cool” by D. McGray in Foreign Policy (McGray 2002). This article attracted the attention of Japan’s public diplomacy strategists, who, coincidently, were also fans of Japanese pop culture, as Minister T. Aso himself. This discourse became the mainstream idea in several strategic documents prepared in MOFA’s and Cabinet’s clusters. The proponents of this discourse promote Japan as a country of manga, anime and other kinds of pop culture, inspiring the so-called pop culture diplomacy.

Another discourse concentrates on the traditional culture recreated in modern contexts, and could be called Japonesque modern. It was inspired by the strategic document of METI (Ministry of Economy... 2005), which still remains the main proponent of this idea. This strategy defines Japan’s core identity as “Japanese view towards nature / Spirit of harmony” (日本人の自然観＝和の心), which can be described as „feeling of coexistence with nature and beauty of harmony” (自然との共存と調和の中に美を感じ) (Ministry of Economy... 2005). As Kaneko (2009: 7) concludes, these efforts were not successful and some trials as, for instance, selecting the best Japonesque modern symbolising items, ended in 2009.

The second type of institutions does not deny the ideas of Beautiful
Japan or Cool Japan themselves, but they are very sceptic about the idea of a symbolic umbrella image. Several reasons can be mentioned.

One reason is administrative, i.e. the continuation problem and the difficulty of building consensus among the majority of stakeholders, acting in cultural diplomacy, including citizens. The respondent points out the idea, that for democratic countries, like Japan, consensus building is extremely hard, because after cabinet changes, the policy line usually changes as well, and there is no continuation (No. 1). This could be obviously observed in Japanese cultural diplomacy during recent cabinet changes. Anholt (2007) confirms this idea saying that the symbolic umbrella image is implemented more easily in authoritarian countries and monarchies, but not democracies.

Moreover, as some respondents notice, it is safer to create a more abstract idea, but not the concrete one. If the message becomes too clear, it leads to stereotypes, and usually inspires the discontent from other stakeholders (No. 1). „It’s OK when discussions are a little bit abstract. When it is spoken politically, maybe, consensus building will fail. In this sense, I think… it’s small countries, where nation branding can succeed… Ireland… Finland… Maybe it is easier for these countries to reach consensus” (No. 4).

Another important reason is that, as all respondents agree, understanding the Japanese culture is too broad because of its historical and geographical diversity. Therefore, it is impossible to “describe” or “encapsulate” it briefly. To put in simply, “well…. It is very difficult to brand one country, <…> it is very difficult to describe the… just one word or two… image of the country…” (No. 12). “In such countries as China, America or Japan, even if there is some image, there is always some reality contradicting to it, and it is difficult to create a brand. Maybe brand image or country branding could succeed in small countries… also cities… City branding could really succeed. <…> When the scale is bigger, it is extremely difficult” (No. 4).

Therefore, the main stance of the second type institutions is that Japan must be presented “as it is” or “true, correct Japan” (正しい日本 tadashii Nihon). Therefore, there should not be any specific message or unified idea to communicate. The only truth is that Japan is diverse (多様 tayo), and the institutions are to promote this truth, to deepen this knowledge in order to avoid propaganda (No. 4).

This diversity of the message on Japan is sometimes explained as a balanced communication. In addition, this balance is usually positioned in the axis of traditional culture vs. pop culture. As the respondent explains, the recent increased emphasis on pop culture in cultural diplo-
macy is caused by this discourse: “But most of the efforts to introduce Japan and Japanese culture have been concentrated on the traditional art. And if we have to introduce Japan “as it is,” then pop culture should be included” (No 12).

Therefore, according to the respondents, the emphasis on traditional or pop culture mainly depends on the needs of the local consumer in the targeted country. Some countries need “standard” or “stereotypical” culture of Kabuki, Noh, and some of them have an increasing interest in manga, anime and other pop cultural aspects: “If some country does not have any knowledge about anime, we try to introduce traditional culture more. And vice versa. Our mission is to find this balance” (No. 4).

**Conclusion**

The ideas of a country’s umbrella image are becoming more and more popular in different countries in the world. Sometimes the unified core idea, national strategy or central institution are presented as a kind of panacea, helping countries to improve their images, public opinion and reputation, with all subsequent positive results.

The research shows that the policy makers of Japanese cultural diplomacy (which is only a tiny part of a bigger field of Japan’s country image communication) understand the problem of overlapping functions. Some factors, enforcing the unification in different levels, could be financial efficiency, difficulty in implementation in local audiences and a better positioning of their activities both in the domestic and overseas audiences.

However, the corporate identity frictions among several clusters (although dealing with very similar tasks) make the unification very difficult. Moreover, the variety of actors has been growing, starting from 2001, showing absolutely opposite trends. In spite of some efforts to implement the umbrella image in different levels in Japan, it has not been established yet.

**Used abbreviations**

ACA – Agency for Cultural Affairs (文化庁)
JF – Japan Foundation (国際交流基金)
MAFF The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (農林水産省)
METI Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (経済産業省)
MLIT Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (国土交通省)
References


Documents:


Interviews:


Interview No. 4. *Dr. Ogawa, Tadashi*, Director of Planning & Evaluation Division of Japan Foundation. June 03, 2009, Japan Foundation, Tokyo.
Interview No. 12. H.E. Monji, Kenjiro, Director of Public Diplomacy Department, MOFA. June 24, 2009, MOFA, Tokyo.

Abstract

The idea of a country's umbrella image is a very important notion in the communication of a present country image, recently widely discussed by country branding and public diplomacy specialists. It emphasises the ideological, symbolical and institutional unification of the country's image communication. This paper researches the case of Japan from the aspect of implementation of the umbrella image idea, and is based on the newest empirical research (expert interviews with the people, dealing with public diplomacy of Japan) conducted in 2009.

Presently, four institutions, i.e. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Japan Foundation, the Agency for Cultural Affairs and the Intellectual Property Policy Headquarters are the main actors in Japan's public diplomacy practices. The research shows their mutual interconnections, differences and functional places in the overall whole. Moreover, the recent efforts of the Government to implement the umbrella image are introduced, and the success of these efforts is discussed.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation for Japan Foundation, for the invaluable support during my fellowship in Japan, in 2009, while conducting this research. I would also like to thank the respondents for kindly agreeing to share their precious time. Moreover, I am immensely grateful for Prof. K. Fujita and Dr. M. Kaneko for their help to make the appointments in Tokyo.