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## ***The close journalistic link between marca España and politics***

### **El estrecho vínculo periodístico entre la marca España y la política**

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#### **Abstract**

The main objective of this paper is to describe the features of general daily press coverage of the term 'marca España' linked to the political sphere between 2012 and 2015. This period, which covers most of Mariano Rajoy's first term in office, is characterized by a context of economic, social, and institutional crisis. The three most widely circulated newspapers in Spain: *El País*, *El Mundo* and *La Vanguardia*, are taken as a sample, and all the journalistic pieces that include the term 'marca España' are analyzed through a quantitative content analysis. The results demonstrate the close journalistic link between the Spain brand and politics and show the difficulty of shaping a favorable public opinion when the country's leading institutions are going through a credibility and leadership crisis. By means of a specific case study, the paper helps us understand a diffuse and complex concept such as nation brand.

#### **Keywords**

Press; politics; marca España; public diplomacy; content analysis

#### **Resumen**

El principal objetivo de este trabajo es describir las características de la cobertura en la prensa diaria generalista del término 'marca España' vinculado al ámbito de la política entre los años 2012 y 2015. Este periodo, que abarca la mayor parte de la primera legislatura de Mariano Rajoy, se caracteriza por un contexto de crisis económica, social e institucional. Se toman como muestra los tres diarios españoles con mayor difusión, *El País*, *El Mundo* y *La Vanguardia*, y se analizan todas las piezas que incluyan la expresión 'marca España' mediante un análisis de contenido cuantitativo. Los resultados demuestran el estrecho vínculo periodístico entre la marca España y la política y ponen de manifiesto la dificultad de moldear una opinión pública favorable cuando las principales instituciones del país atraviesan una crisis de credibilidad y liderazgo. A través del estudio de un caso concreto, el trabajo contribuye a la comprensión de la marca país, un concepto difuso y complejo.

#### **Palabras clave**

Prensa; política; marca España; diplomacia pública; análisis de contenido

## 1. Introduction

The creation of the High Commissioner of the Government for the Spain Brand in June 2012 shows the concern of the government to improve the deteriorated image of the country in an adverse sociopolitical context, characterized by the economic <sup>(1)</sup>, social, and institutional crisis, political corruption, and the rise of the Catalan independence movement.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016), the main objective of this government initiative is to improve the image of Spain, both nationally and internationally. However, its relation with the aforementioned ministry is already a sign that its target was outside of Spain.

The behavior of an organization is a key communicative aspect that must be consistent with the 'symbolic' messages it delivers, establishing the basis for building an image (Capriotti, 2009). If we extrapolate this idea to a country, the behavior of its government and other political actors will have a similar communicative role when creating the self-image of its citizens. In our opinion, this complicates the task of improving the local image, as citizens can compare institutional messages to the reality they experience.

The media establishes the public agenda and has a symbolic power that enables it to shape social meanings (Casero, 2009). In fact, how the mainstream media use the term 'marca España' in daily press coverage influences the public opinion's understanding of this concept, as they link it to specific aspects of their lives. It is worth highlighting that in this paper we will use 'Marca España' in capital letters when we mean the institution and 'marca España' with lower case for other meanings.

In addition, news is a key strategical resource in building media reality, and its control is a priority for the political actors in their effort to shape the public sphere according to their goals (Casero, 2009).

The main interest of this paper is to show the treatment the term 'marca España' is given in mainstream daily press concerning politics and check whether it contributes to endowing the term with a positive meaning, or rather the opposite, working against the main goal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From a wider perspective, we would like to contribute to the understanding of a vague and multifaceted concept such as nation brand through the study of a specific case.

This paper is divided into four parts. First, the theoretical framework, the foundation of this research, is developed. In the second part, the goals and hypothesis are laid out and the analysis methodology is explained. In the third, we present the results of our research on the media coverage of the Spain brand in relation to politics, considering both the overall press coverage and each newspaper separately. Finally, conclusions are drawn which prove the close journalistic link between the Spain brand and politics.

## 2. Issue Status

### 2.1. Introducing the concept 'nation brand'

*Nation brand* is a concept that was coined in 1998 by Simon Anholt in his paper 'Nation-Brands of the Twenty-First Century'. According to Anholt, it refers to how countries manage their reputation, comparing it to the brand image of companies and products due to its strategic significance (Anholt, 2009a).

However, there seems to be a lack of agreement among authors regarding the meaning and scope of the term 'nation brand', as well as the best disciplines to address it. According to Noya and Prado (2012), the terms 'country branding' and 'nation branding' are related to international or country marketing, a discipline with two types of strategies depending on its objectives. On one hand, nation brand related strategies, which have an economic nature and are aimed at attracting tourists and investors, promote exports, etc.; on the other hand, public diplomacy related strategies, aimed at exercising political influence in other countries.

Fan (2010) identifies four disciplines that converge in the concept of nation branding: the country of origin (or COO), tied to exports; place or destination branding, aimed at tourism; public diplomacy, related to political branding; and national identity, linked to cultural branding.

However, Azpíroz (2012) considers nation brand a variant of public diplomacy above other disciplines, despite noting there is a debate on whether nation brand strategies can be considered public diplomacy or simply marketing actions.

Olins (2005) claims that nation branding brings nothing new besides linking the concept of brand to a country and applying marketing and branding techniques. He argues that countries have always wanted to build and shape their reputations in order to earn domestic loyalties and promote their power and influence in neighboring countries.

Anholt believes nation brand strategies are far more complex than commercial brand strategies, since companies, opposed to countries, have tremendous control over their products and communication channels (2009a). Fan agrees with Anholt that many aspects of a nation brand are beyond the control of those involved and, additionally, cannot be changed in a short period of time (2010).

A decade after making the concept of 'nation branding' popular, Anholt (2009a) decided to switch to the term 'competitive identity'. In doing so, the author dissociates the concept from marketing and takes a political approach, claiming that managing a country's reputation is more related to national identity and competition policies and economies than to branding.

Fan (2010) highlights Anholt's contradiction, considering it the author's response to the skepticism raised by the term 'branding' applied to countries. Nonetheless, Fan acknowledges the unwillingness to accept 'nation branding' and suggests 'nation image management' as an alternative.

In theory, nation branding strategies require consistent and coordinated communication between many stakeholders. In this regard, Fan (2010) indicates that studies published on nation branding refer to specific areas, such as exports or tourism, but none of them covers branding actions at a country level.

Fan (2006) claims that, in practice, it is impossible to develop a unique, inclusive message or concept that can be used by different sectors in different countries. As a result, he suggests using 'nation branding' as a multi-dimensional concept encompassing tourism, investment attraction, exports, etc.

Anholt considers the image of a country as something very stable and difficult to manipulate deliberately through branding, since it is based on clichés and stereotypes well rooted among the population. The author bases his claim on the results published in the annual *Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index*, which rates and analyses the global image of 40 countries. Between 2005 and 2009 Anholt observed that there was no interrelation between investments aimed at improving the image of some countries and an increase in brand equity (Anholt, 2009b).

However, Anholt considers marketing the appropriate tool to promote the virtues of a country, from products and culture to tourism. In what seems a contradiction, the author states that the quality and consistency of the messages delivered by different stakeholders are key factors in building the reputation of a country (Anholt, 2009b).

As a result, Anholt (2009b) rejects the term 'nation branding', since he considers it confusing and inappropriate based on the previous arguments. Instead, he suggests using the concept 'Competitive Identity'. According to Anholt, competitive identity consists in developing a plan arranged by most of the national sectors, both public and private, to improve and promote the image of the country.

In his 'Competitive Identity' model, Anholt (2009a; 2009b) contends that the interaction of countries with the rest of the world, and therefore the construction of their image, is achieved through six basic channels or areas of activity that we will describe to later represent them in Figure 1:

1. Exports: brands and products are major ambassadors of a country, as long as the country of origin is explicitly indicated.
2. Cultural exchanges: this section refers to cultural exports of the country and international sports presence. Several authors call these activities 'cultural diplomacy' (Lynch: 2005; La Porte: 2006; Manfredi: 2011; Azpíroz: 2012).
3. Tourism: this is usually one of the most visible areas of nation branding, since huge sums of money are allocated to touristic promotion. This section also includes the experiences of foreign visitors.
4. Government and politics: the author indicates that internal and external policies also have an impact on international media, and he mentions diplomacy as the main channel of international political communication.
5. Investments and talent: Anholt refers to the ability of a country to attract investors, entrepreneurs, workers, researchers, and students.
6. People: this section refers to politicians, celebrities, athletes, and the general population, regarding both their behavior abroad and as hosts in their own country.

**Figure 1: Basic channels of 'Competitive Identity'**



Source: Adapted from Anholt (2009a: 209).

Anholt's proposal consists in improving the coordination between the dimensions of the model by developing a coordinated strategy based on the collaboration of the various stakeholders in order to achieve a more effective national reputation management (2009a).

## **2.2. Public Diplomacy**

As mentioned before, Noya and Prado (2012) claim that there are two types of strategies when talking about nation branding: nation brand strategies and public diplomacy strategies. The latter has political objectives, aimed at increasing political influence in other countries, and is developed by big and medium powers.

Public diplomacy seeks to influence another country's public opinion to favor foreign policy (Mannheim, 1994), and, according to Batora (2005) it includes every activity that might help maintain the soft power of a country. The term 'soft power' was first used by Nye (1990) as opposed to 'hard power', the traditional term for coercive power, based on the military and economic force of a country. The aforementioned author links soft power to a country's influence capacity based on the appeal of its culture and policies (Nye, 2004).

Torres defines soft power as a perception of the population of the legitimacy of a power resource (2005: 5), meaning a favorable public opinion, an acceptance of the values and ideas the country represents. Likewise, Nye states that "a country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries want to follow it, admiring its values, emulating its example, and/or aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness" (2003: 30). Anholt maintains that the more a country is known internationally, the more opportunities it has to be admired for its strengths and achievements and forgiven for its mistakes (2009a).

The term 'public diplomacy' was first defined by Edmund Gullion in 1965:

Public diplomacy [...] deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications (Azpíroz, 2012: 13-14).

About this definition, Azpíroz highlights the significance of information as a tool of national power together with other powers, such as diplomatic, military, or economic powers. She reaches the conclusion that, based on the study of the definitions by other authors, public diplomacy is a tool at the service of the image and politics of the states (2012).

The difference between public diplomacy and traditional diplomacy, according to Wolf and Rosen (2005), is that the former seeks to reach the whole population, while the latter is only aimed at governments. In addition, the transparency of public diplomacy is opposed to the secrecy of traditional diplomacy. Along the same lines, Snow (2009) believes the main difference between traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy is the active nature of the latter, based on exchange and dialogue. He describes it as a symmetric activity aimed at changing the attitude of the general public and reaching mutual understanding. In this sense, we can observe a connection with the two-way symmetrical model of public relations described by Grunig and Hunt. The goal of the model is to foster mutual understanding between an organization and its audiences via a two-way flow, characterized by a dialogue between both parties. The symmetrical nature of the model lies in the fact that the feedback from the audiences helps to produce changes in the organization and not only to create more persuasive messages, as happens in the two-way asymmetrical model. Therefore, its effects are balanced, in such a way that changes take place in both the audiences' and the organization's attitudes (Grunig and Hunt, 2003).

Manfredi points out that public diplomacy is a strategy that complements traditional diplomacy and comes from the government:

Public diplomacy is the information and education strategy aimed at influencing foreign audiences. It is a foreign line of action compatible with conventional diplomacy and established in government bodies (2013: 111).

The same author mentions the public diplomacy paradox. Although created with the purpose of influencing people abroad, it exercises a powerful influence over internal procedures, since it forces to innovate and requires reaching agreements and consensus among participants. The arguments of Manfredi confirm the two-way symmetric nature of public diplomacy. As a result, the author believes public diplomacy is a government action that must not be confused with a public relations campaign (2013: 111). The government has to manage the project, but a high degree of private and public cooperation is necessary. To sum up, public diplomacy is the result of the planning and execution of certain public policies by means of reputation management (Manfredi, 2013: 111).

In their definitions, most of the authors consider foreign audiences as the recipient, excluding national public opinion. According to Oviacionayi, the influence of public diplomacy affects foreign public opinion as much as local public opinion, adding that after the Cold War, there is no clear-cut boundary between domestic and international affairs when it comes to defending and promoting foreign policy (2004: 235). Noya defines 'public affairs' as a country's relationship with public opinion, drawing a distinction with public diplomacy, which addresses foreign public opinion. However, Noya specifies that public diplomacy can influence the public opinion of your own country, since the borders between domestic and foreign are increasingly blurry in the current interconnected world (2006). Sheinfeld, on the other hand, believes that it is possible to practice public diplomacy in your own country in order to influence immigrant communities and also to inform the general public (2012).

Lynch divides the main activities of public diplomacy into three groups: information activities, which include daily news dissemination and management; target audience research and analysis activities; and cultural and educational activities which seek to bring societies closer and achieve a better mutual understanding. Essentially, he considers cultural diplomacy an activity within public diplomacy (2005).

According to Gregory (2005) there are two main schools of thought that address the relationship between public opinion and power. The style of public diplomacy is different based on the affinity for one or the other. The first school is called 'discourse communication' and follows Habermas' tradition and goal of generating an atmosphere of understanding and reaching an agreement by consensus of the participants, conceding, if necessary, the starting objectives (La Porte, 2007: 29).

The second school is called 'instrumental communication' and is influenced by Lippmann. It understands public diplomacy as "the management of perception" (Mannheim, 1994). The supporters of this approach focus on the interest in reaching the objectives established previously and insist on developing strategies that allow for it: persuasive language and practices, audience research, media relations, and public relations (La Porte, 2007: 29).

Habermas establishes a difference between the use of language to reach mutual understanding and the exploitation of language to reach a predefined goal, favoring the former:

The concept of communicative action assumes language is a means where certain understanding processes take place and where participants, while interacting with a world, encounter one another with claims to validity that can be recognized or questioned (1998: 143).

La Porte states that both approaches coexist at present and result in very different political strategies:

The discursive school recommends limiting political action to creating public spaces for dialogue and debate, while assuming the interaction between citizens will generate the foreign policy acceptance that the governments seeks with public diplomacy. The instrumentalist school recommends a strategically and carefully planned line of action, developed by the politician or diplomat, that will promote the understanding of the government's objectives. Although both positions involve long and short-term actions, the former are more common in the discursive approach and the latter in the instrumentalist approach (2007: 30).

In our opinion, these two positions agree with some of the public relations models described by Grunig and Hunt (2003). To be more specific, we observe similarities between the discursive school and the two-way symmetry model, as both seek mutual understanding, whereas the instrumentalist school bears similarities with the asymmetric model in that they are both aimed at scientific persuasion. Azpíroz (2012) reaches the same conclusions and, additionally, relates the instrumentalist school to traditional public diplomacy and the discursive school to 'new public diplomacy'.

As we have seen, several authors agree that the objective of public diplomacy is to influence foreign public opinion (Mannheim, 1994; Wolf and Rosen, 2005; Manfredi, 2013). However, some authors include local population among the target audience (Oviacionayi, 2004; Morillas, 2014). In the survey by De San Eugenio, Fernández-Cavia, Nogué, and Jiménez-Morales (2013), the experts interviewed believe it is very important for local communities to identify themselves with the brand of territory and create a sense of belonging. Along those lines, Olins claims it is essential for the citizens of a country to get involved in the project, understanding and supporting it, and for that to happen, the media has to collaborate (2005). Morillas is also taking into account the local population when he refers to the inevitable educational nature, inward and outward, of public diplomacy as a tool to disseminate the positive image, culture, and products of a country (2014: 15).

We wonder whether a brand of territory should create a sense of belonging or, on the contrary, come from the population's preexisting sense of belonging. According to Batora, the necessary condition for a successful public diplomacy is the appeal of the ideas and values the state represents within the state itself (2005: 5). Therefore, we can conclude that a country with identity conflicts might fail in its attempt to manage the repercussion of its external image.

Several authors establish a relation between public diplomacy and influencing public opinion (Mannheim, 1994; Oviacionayi 2004; Gregory, 2005; Noya, 2006; Azpíroz, 2012), a complex and changing concept throughout history (Price, 1992). According to Wilcox and Cameron "public opinion is the collective expression of opinion of many individuals" (2006: 273). Authors stress that people have to be interested in or affected by a subject to have the chance to participate in public opinion.

As Casero states, journalistic information plays a key role in shaping civic perception and creating public opinion (2009: 8). The agenda-setting theory states that the content published by news media influences the importance placed on the topics of the public agenda, meaning that the media chooses the topics the audience has to think about, but not necessarily what to think about those topics (Wilcox and Cameron, 2006). According to McCombs, "for nearly all of the concerns on the public agenda, citizens deal with a second-hand reality, a reality that is constructed by journalists' reports about these events and situations" (2006: 24). In addition, McCombs explains that the media "not only tell us what to think about, they also tell us how to think about some objects" (2006: 141).

In this respect, the framing theory focuses on how journalists select certain facts, subjects, treatments, and even words to 'frame', or shape, a story (Wilcox and Cameron, 2006: 279). Kinder and Nelson (2005) indicate that framing introduces a subject in a familiar context to citizens, making it easier for them to reflect upon it. They also argue that frames are biased since, they determine what the main issue is, what to think about it, and, sometimes, how to solve it. Along those lines, Noelle-Neumann (1993) claims that ideas about our surroundings are significantly influenced by the opinions of journalist and the content of the media, which are both creators of opinion.

### **2.3. Marca España**

After the general elections of November 2011, Mariano Rajoy succeeded José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero as President of the Spanish Government in an adverse context. The new scenario was marked by a shift from a climate of hope to one of mistrust caused by the financial crisis that started in the US in 2008 and later affected Europe, triggering a huge social and financial crisis. Manfredi and Cachinero describe this situation as a citizen credibility crisis towards institutions, companies, and financial entities, and also highlight

the crisis of leadership within all of them (2013: 3). Additionally, in the case of Spain, it is important to highlight the rise of the independence movement in Catalonia, intensified by the financial situation (Molina 2012).

Likewise, at a global level, Manfredi and Cachinero (2013) point out that international relations have become more complex due to the arrival of new and powerful economic competitors, such as emerging economies, the rise of technological companies, and the public protests of citizens.

For this reason, they recommend using public diplomacy and reputation management as tools to foster changes in order to guide political action and defend national interests, beyond the promotion of Spain as a tourist destination. By pairing public diplomacy with conventional politics, the national identity of a country can be strengthened (internal objective), financial diplomacy can be developed (external objective), you can connect with the citizenship, and the image of the country can be renewed.

A nation brand is not a government's responsibility towards political colors, but rather a matter of state responsibility (Peralba, 2010: 131). Along a similar line of thought, Mariano Rajoy's government launched the Marca España project, creating in 2012 the High Commissioner of the Government for the Spain Brand and its office (Royal Decree 998/2012, June 28).

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation:

Marca España is a self-conscious management strategy of Spain's image and reputation. It is a state policy that seeks long-term results. The goal of this strategy is to improve the image of our country, both inside and beyond our borders (2016).

This short definition provides some keys to understand the foundation of Marca España. We can confirm that, at least in theory, the proposal matches Anholt's approach, which mentions country reputation management as related more to competition policies and economies and less to marketing (Anholt, 2009a). Manfredi and Cachinero (2013) describe reputation management as a tool to generate value, credibility, and trust, avoiding the use of traditional marketing tools.

In addition, the definition refers to Marca España as a long-term state policy. Authors like Anholt (2009a); Peralba (2010); Noya and Prado (2012); and De San Eugenio et al. (2013) attribute the highest responsibility to the government regarding this kind of initiatives. Other authors also agree that nation brand projects and public diplomacy are long-term endeavors (Olins, 2005; La Porte, 2007; De San Eugenio et al., 2013; and Manfredi, 2013).

In a report on the Marca España Project written in 2003 by the Elcano Royal Institute et al., the common goal described is to build a new image of Spain that may not only improve the economic projection of the country, but also convey the new political, social, and cultural reality of Spain, with its modernity, artistic innovation, dynamism, and financial and cultural power (2003: 3). Based on the previous statement, we can conclude that the Marca España Project takes into considerations several dimensions of Anholt's theoretical model (2009a), namely those related to politics, culture, and economy, the latter being the most relevant of all three. The report insists on the importance of the aforementioned objective, as the image of Spain is mostly ambiguous, stereotyped and incomplete, lacking competitive strength (2003). 3).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016) is also focused on improving the national and international image of Spain. We consider this aspect relevant because, as we have seen before, many authors include the local population as part of the target audience in territory brand strategies and public diplomacy (Oviamionayi, 2004; Olins, 2005; Manfredi and Cachinero, 2013; De San Eugenio et al., 2013; Morillas, 2014).

We can conclude that, in principle, the foundations of the Marca España initiative match the main theoretical approaches.

In July 2012, Spain's President appointed Carlos Espinosa de los Monteros as High Commissioner of the Government for the Spain Brand. At an institutional level, this position depends on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and makes use of its human and material resources (Marca España, 2013a).

The responsibilities of the High Commissioner (Marca España, 2013a) are planning, support, and management of all the actions carried out by those in charge of promoting the foreign image of Spain in financial, cultural, social, scientific, and technological fields.

In November 2012 the Marca España Council was created, an institution that is chaired by the High Commissioner and is composed of the chairpersons or heads of the bodies that constitute the main actors of the project (Marca España 2013b). In the table below, we arrange the builders of 'country image' following Peralba's classification (2010) and based on the nature of each of them:

**Table 1: Basic channels of 'Competitive Identity'**

<b>State representatives</b>	<b>Institution representatives</b>
President's Secretary of State for Press (President's Office).	Spanish Olympic Committee.
National Sports Council (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport).	Cervantes Institute.
General Secretariat for Agriculture and Food (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment).	Elcano Royal Institute.
General Secretariat for Defense Policy (Ministry of Defense).	Corporación Radiotelevisión Española.
Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness).	Fundación Carolina.
Turespaña (Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism).	Agencia EFE.
General Directorate of International Economic Relations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation).	
Directorate-General for Communication and Diplomatic Information (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation).	
Directorate-General for Trade and Investment (Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness).	
Directorate-General for Economic Policy (Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness).	
Ambassador of Spain for Cultural Diplomacy (Santiago de Mora-Figueroa y Williams, Marchis of Tamarón).	
Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport.	

Source: Own elaboration.

Based on Peralba's classification we can observe there are no "economy-business" nor "social" representatives. However, the Marca España project collaborates with private companies considered both a main actor and a potential beneficiary of the project (Marca España, 2013a) through the Leading Brands of Spain Forum.

### 3. Objective, Hypothesis, and Methodology

The contributions of different authors gathered in the previous sections show the highly political component of nation brand and, specifically, of the Marca España project. As a result, we consider interesting to analyze the characteristics of daily press coverage of the term 'marca España' in relation to politics. This general objective comprises the following specific objectives:

- O1. Learn to what extent the term 'marca España' is linked to politics in Spanish daily press. For this purpose, we have taken into consideration its double meaning as reference to the Marca España institution and to the identity, image, or reputation of Spain.
- O2. Identify whether newsworthy facts are assessed positively or negatively regarding Spain's nation brand.
- O3. Identify which actors and political spheres are related to the concept 'marca España'.
- O4. Define the traits of the news coverage carried out by the analysed newspapers, identifying common aspects and differences.

Bearing these objectives in mind, the following hypotheses are posed, to be confirmed in our analysis:

H1. The discourse generated by Spanish daily press in relation to the term 'marca España' focuses specially on the political sphere. Many renowned authors establish a close relationship between a nation brand and politics (Anholt, 2009a; Morillas, 2001; Saner and Yiu, 2003; Noya and Prado, 2012; De San Eugenio et al., 2013).

H2. Newsworthy facts linked to the Spain brand are mostly negative, due to the adverse sociopolitical context highlighted by Manfredi and Cachinero (2013).

H3. The Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are often mentioned in the press coverage, since they are the main promoters of the initiative (Royal Decree 998/2012, June 28)

H4. The discourse differs according to the approach of each newspaper, prioritizing different aspects of reality in relation to the Spain brand.

Newspaper sources are the central element of our research, since our main objective is studying the treatment given to the term 'marca España' linked to politics by Spanish daily press between June 2012 and December 2015. Therefore, the backbone of our research is the content analysis of the selected newspapers.

The type of content analysis chosen to study the information is quantitative, a usual approach in Social Sciences that allows for "the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952: 18). Sierra Bravo justifies its use describing it as the most elaborate and scientifically prestigious technique in the field of document analysis (1997: 287).

As Wimmer and Dominick point out (1996) there are many definitions of content analysis. Krippendorff (1990: 28) describes it as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use", and Igartua (2006: 181) as "any systematic procedure developed to examine the content of archived information".

One of the most widely accepted definitions, according to the aforementioned authors is Kerlinger's (1986) who claims it is a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring concrete variables. Based on this definition, we extract the main concepts indicated by Benderson (1952) that we will explain below:

The systematicity of content analysis is manifest in the establishment of an explicit set of rules for sample selection and in the coding, analysis, and assessment procedures. Objectivity refers to the establishment of a set of unequivocal rules for categorizing contents, so the results obtained are regardless of who carries out the process. Its quantitative nature allows to represent accurately a set of units of analysis and to encapsulate the result with the help of statistical tools (Wimmer and Dominick, 1996).

Due to the vast amount of information we had to work with, besides quantitative research, other approaches seemed less appropriate. Therefore, quantitative research is the most appropriate methodology for the objectives of our study.

In the present research, our object of study is the treatment given to the term 'marca España' in relation to politics in Spanish daily press. The selected sample includes all the news pieces published in *El Mundo*, *El País*, and *La Vanguardia* between June 2012, when the High Commissioner of the Government for the Spain Brand was established, and December 2015 when the general elections took place and therefore, the term of the Government responsible for the initiative ended.

We define "coding unit" as any information in its own right that contained the term 'marca España'. This includes any journalistic genre except for comic strips and cartoons. Regarding the location of the news pieces, all the basic sections of the standard daily papers were considered, excluding those supplements and sections that did not comply with this rule. The result was 936 units of analysis: 386 from *El Mundo*, 359 from *El País*, and 191 from *La Vanguardia*.

To collect the coding units, we took the printed editions of the newspapers as a reference, which were available in their respective online archives. With the help of search engines, we found all the news pieces that explicitly included 'marca España' in any of its meanings. Then, we checked each unit to make sure it complied with the validity criteria aforementioned.

One of the newspaper selection criteria was daily circulation in 2013, the first complete year of our research. We chose *El País* and *El Mundo* because they are the two main general-interest newspapers published in Madrid, but distributed nationwide. According to OJD (2017) *El País* and *El Mundo* had an average circulation in 2013 of 292,226 and 173,507 copies respectively, the highest circulation among general-interest newspapers in Spain. According to the same source, *La Vanguardia* had an average daily circulation of 152,320 copies, occupying the third position in 2013.

The second criterion was diversity among the newspapers in terms of their tendency. We selected *El País* and *El Mundo* because they are two national newspapers with a tradition of confronted points of view regarding many topical issues. *La Vanguardia* was included because it is the most read newspaper in Catalonia, with a regional impact similar to the newspapers of the capital and the use of the term 'marca España' in this newspaper is especially interesting due to the importance that nationalist and independence claims have in Catalonia.

For our research we have developed a code for analysis that comprises a total of 12 categories or variables shown in table 2 and was applied to the 936 news pieces published in the three daily newspapers studied. Before applying the code for analysis, we performed a pre-test to check the reliability and usefulness of a series of randomly selected units of analysis. Once such code was corrected and its validity was confirmed, it was applied to the units of analysis. Coding was carried out by a single researcher, therefore the criteria for applying the code has remained constant during the whole process.

Once the coding process was over, we performed the statistical treatment of the selected data by means of the SPSS software. By doing so, we obtained a series of frequency tables and variable cross-tabulations. The results of the subsequent analysis are shown in the next section.

**Table 2: Code for Content Analysis**

Variable		Associated Values
1	Newspaper the unit of analysis belongs to.	1. <i>El País</i> 2. <i>El Mundo</i> 3. <i>La Vanguardia</i>
2	Is the Spain brand associated with Spanish companies and products?	1. Yes 2. No
3	Is the Spain brand associated with the cultural sphere?	1. Yes 2. No
4	Is the Spain brand associated with tourism?	1. Yes 2. No
5	Is the Spain brand associated with politics?	1. Yes 2. No
6	Is the Spain brand associated with certain people or groups of people? [2]	1. Yes 2. No
7	Is the Spain brand associated with attracting and/or retaining investors and/or talent?	1. Yes 2. No
8	If the answer to variable 5 is Yes, how does the unit of analysis assess the impact of the newsworthy fact on the Spain brand? [3]	1. Positively 2. Negatively
9	If the answer to variable 5 is Yes, what institution does it mention?	1. The Crown 2. The Government of Spain, in general 3. The President 4. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs 5. The Ministry of Defense 6. The Ministry of Economy 7. The Ministry of Labor and Social Security 8. The Ministry of Industry 9. The Ministry of the Interior 10. The Ministry of Health 11. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport 12. Other Ministries 13. The Spanish General Courts 14. Governments of Spanish Autonomous Regions 15. Parliaments of Spanish Autonomous Regions 16. Local institutions 17. Political parties 18. EU institutions 19. Other institutions 20. More than one of the previous options 21. No mention to any institution
10	If the answer to variable 5 is Yes, what political sphere does it mention?	1. Domestic 2. Foreign 3. Both 4. Neither
11	If the answer to variable 5 is Yes, is the Spain brand associated with political corruption?	1. Yes 2. No
12	If the answer to variable 5 is Yes, is 'marca España' associated with nationalist/independence claims?	1. Yes 2. No

Source: Own elaboration.

## 4. Results of the Analysis

### 4.1. General Overview of the Coverage

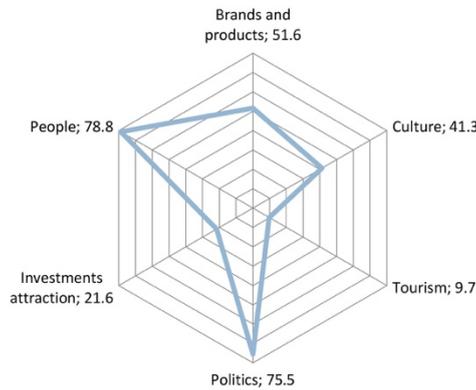
Chart 1 shows a general overview of the press coverage regarding the six dimensions of Anholt's theoretical model (2009a) applied to the Spain brand. It is necessary to clarify that a single unit of analysis may be linked to several dimensions, meaning they are not mutually exclusive.

As shown in the chart, the two most prominent dimensions are 'People' (78.8%) and 'Politics' (75.5%). The reason for the first one is that most of the news pieces published mention people or groups of people that are inevitably related to the facts. Regarding 'Politics', it is necessary to consider the fact that a lot of the news pieces published in the press are usually related to politics, as they affect every aspect of society.

The percentage of 'Companies and products' (51.6%) and 'Culture' (41.3%) is lower, but also significant, highlighting the importance of these fields in the implementation of the Spain brand.

Finally, 'Attracting investors and talent' (21.6%) and 'Tourism' (9.7%) have a much lower representation, especially the latter, which could be explained by the fact that those areas are much more specific than the previous ones.

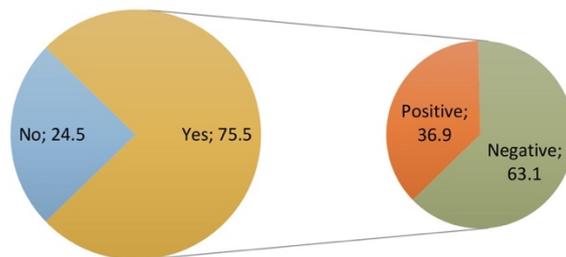
**Chart 1: Correlation of the term 'marca España' with the six dimensions of 'competitive identity' of Anholt's model (in percentage)**



Source: Own elaboration.

75.5% of the analysis units of the three newspapers taken into consideration associate the Spain brand to politics, which proves 'marca España' is a highly political issue. However, this dimension is usually assessed negatively (63,1%) regarding the impact of the noteworthy fact on the Spain brand, as shown in Chart 2. This result is not surprising, considering the period under scrutiny was characterized by a situation of financial crisis, together with political corruption scandals, the deterioration of some institutions, and the nationalist tension in Catalonia, which we will further explain in this section.

**Chart 2: Correlation between the term 'marca España' and politics, and assessment of the impact of the noteworthy fact on the Spain brand (in percentage)**



Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding the political institutions mentioned, out of all the units of analysis that link 'marca España' to politics, 28% associate the term with the Government of Spain and 7.4% with the President, as seen in Chart 3. If we add the coverage given to the different Ministries, over fifty percent (53.8%) of the results associate 'marca España' to the Government of Spain.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, with 7.8%, has the most prominent result compared to other ministries, which is understandable considering its direct involvement in the Marca España project.

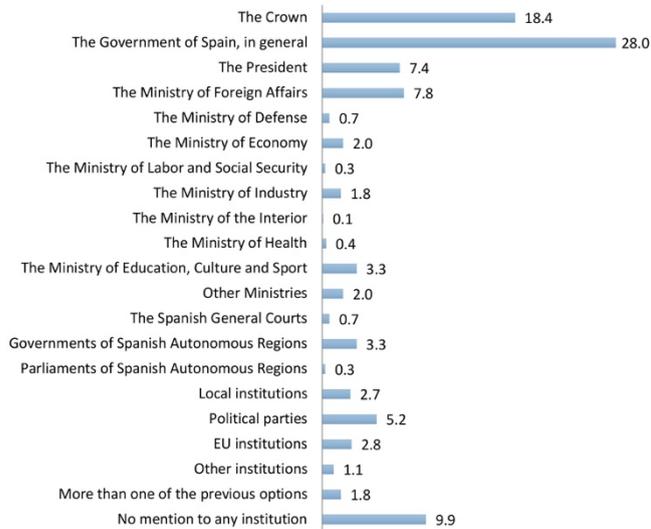
More discrete, but still significant, are the results of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (3.3%), the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (2%), and the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism (1.8%). These results are significant because the four ministries with the most coverage all have representation in the Council of Marca España.

With a lower result, we find the Ministry of Defense (0.7%), also represented in the Council of Marca España, followed by the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality (0.4%), whose press coverage is mostly related to the "Ebola crisis". The Ministry of Labor and Social Security (0.3%) and the Ministry of Interior (0.1%) complete the chart, with very low results. Finally, other ministries not specified in the code reach a 2% coverage.

The second institution with the highest coverage is the Crown, with 18.4%. Regarding the rest of the institutions, political parties receive 5.2% coverage, mostly related to PP and PSOE, besides a few mentions to the appearance of Podemos in the Spanish political scene, especially during the last months covered by our analysis. The Governments of Spanish Autonomous Regions register quite a low presence (3.3%), usually related to Catalonia and the Basque Country, followed by EU institutions (2.8%) and local institutions (2.7%).

The General Courts (0.7%) and the Parliaments of Spanish Autonomous Regions (0.3%) hardly receive any press coverage. Other institutions not explicitly included in the code receive a 1.1% coverage. An example of the last category is a gossip column published in *El Mundo*, where journalist Carmen Rigalt describes Anne Hidalgo, the Mayor of Paris, as 'marca España', because she was born in Andalusia (Rigalt, 13 July 2014).

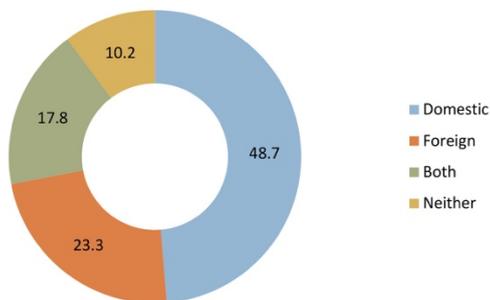
**Chart 3: Institution referred to (in percentage)**



Source: Own elaboration.

Despite the foreign tendency of Marca España and the close ties of the institution with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the domestic sphere received more coverage (48.7%) than the foreign sphere (23.3%). In addition, 17.8% of the news pieces cover both spheres, while the remaining 10.2% do not specify any, as shown in Chart 4.

**Chart 4: Political sphere referred to (in percentage)**

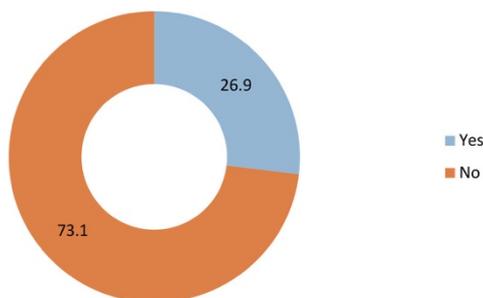


Source: Own elaboration.

One of the main characteristics of the period analyzed in our research is the proliferation of cases of political corruption in Spain. The financial crisis, together with a number of corruption scandals linked to the political elite, have increased the awareness of public opinion towards an issue that has caused an institutional reputation crisis.

For this reason, we have considered appropriate to identify the press coverage of political corruption in relation to the Spain brand. In Chart 5 we observe that 26.9% of the units of analysis that link the term 'marca España' to politics mention corruption, which means that one out of every four news pieces associate the Spain brand with political corruption. The result is very significant and explains why most coverage contains a negative assessment regarding the political sphere we previously mentioned, and also why domestic politics receive a wider press coverage.

**Chart 5: Correlation between the term 'marca España' and political corruption (in percentage)**



Source: Own elaboration.

The second political aspect that characterized this period is the rise of nationalist and independence claims, especially in Catalonia. Chart 6 shows that 22.3% of the news that link the Spain brand to politics mention nationalist or independence claims.

Nationalist movements have thrived during the financial crisis, due to the climate of social disappointment. In many of the news pieces analyzed there are opinions along these lines. For example, in an opinion article titled 'El año en que falló todo' (The year everything went wrong), the journalist Fernando Ónega states that the more the crisis lashes the Spain brand, the more the feeling of separation settles, and he adds that Catalans are the only citizens that cherish a shared hope in a country that has lost all hope (Ónega, 29 December 2012: 17).

We identified in several units mentions to other regional or local territory brands created at the same time as the Marca España project. In this sense, Saner and Yiu (2003) identify the presence of sub-national actors

in economic diplomacy due to the growing decentralization of the states' powers in favor of lower territorial entities.

For example, *La Vanguardia* published an article titled 'El Govern impulsa como reclamo turístico la marca Catalunya' (The Government of Catalonia launches the Catalonia brand to attract tourism), where the Catalan Minister Frances Homs says he is not happy with the Marca España project because it does not defend the plurality of Spain (Hinojosa, 5 June 2013).

In some news pieces, we observed how many nation brands are promoted as a reaction to the international discredit of the Spain brand. For example, the front page of the supplement *Vivir* delivered with *La Vanguardia*, a feature was published titled 'La ciencia reivindica la marca Barcelona' (Science defends the Barcelona brand), where Jordi Camí, General Manager of the PRBB (Barcelona Biomedical Research Park) explains that many resources are allocated to research worldwide. In his opinion, if Barcelona is on the map, it will have access to those resources and, therefore, will attract both talent and investments. In addition, he states that the Spain Brand is experiencing one of its worst moments and, in these circumstances, what can actually protect Barcelona scientists and help maintain the interest abroad is the Barcelona brand (Corbella and Angulo, 7 April 2013: 1).

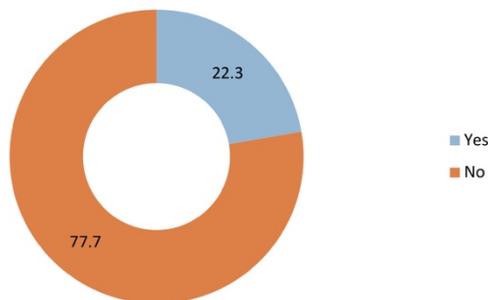
However, in an interview published by *El Mundo*, the High Commissioner for the Spain Brand, Carlos Espinosa de los Monteros, gave an unequivocal answer to the question on whether the Catalonia brand was known worldwide:

The Catalonia brand does not exist, it is completely unknown abroad, he said. He stated that out of 7,000 million people on the planet, over 4,000 million recognize the Spain brand, nearly 700 million know Barcelona as a city, but Catalonia is unheard of in the rankings (Esteban, 27 March 2014: 8).

In the Basque Country, there is also a case of a territory brand created as a response to Marca España. A news piece published in *El Mundo* explains that the Government of the PNV (Basque Nationalist Party) plans to promote internationalization of Basque companies under the umbrella of the Basque Country brand, because siding with the Spain brand internationally is a huge problem. The Basque minister of Economic Development and Competitiveness, Arantza Tapia, said that the Spain brand damages the Basque economy (Rioja, 14 May 2013: 12).

We can see these brands have a sectorial nature. as they are aimed at promoting tourism, science, or business, although their creation might also respond to ideological motivations of local and autonomous political institutions.

**Chart 6: Correlation between the term 'marca España' and nationalist or independence claims (in percentage)**



Source: Own elaboration.

#### 4.2. Correlation between the term 'marca España' and politics in each newspaper

Table 3 illustrates the correlation between the term 'marca España' and politics, and the results regarding the press coverage in all three are very similar. *La Vanguardia* is the newspaper with the highest percentage (78%), closely followed by *El Mundo* (75.6%) and *El País* (74.1%).

In the previous section, we highlighted the predominance of negative assessments (63.1%) regarding the impact of the noteworthy fact on the Spain brand. The newspaper with the highest percentage of negative assessments is *La Vanguardia* (71.1%), followed by *El País* (63.9%), while *El Mundo* is slightly less critical (58.2%).

**Table 3: Correlation between the term 'marca España' and politics in each newspaper (in percentage)**

Correlation with politics	<i>El País</i>	<i>El Mundo</i>	<i>La Vanguardia</i>
Yes	74.1	75.6	78
No	25.9	24.4	22
Total	100	100	100

Source: Own elaboration.

With regard to the mentioned institutions, we found certain special features that we will explain below. The Government of Spain is the institution that is most linked to the Spain brand in all three newspapers, mostly in *La Vanguardia* (31.5%), followed by *El Mundo* (27.7%) and *El País* (26.3%). However, regarding the President, *El País* has the highest percentage (10.5%), followed by *El Mundo* (5.8%), and *La Vanguardia* (4.7%).

The Crown is the second institution with the highest press coverage. In this case, the widest coverage is given by *El Mundo* (20.9%) and *El País* (19.9%), almost twice as much as *La Vanguardia* (10.7%).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, the main promoter of the Marca España initiative, is given more coverage by *El Mundo* (9.2%), followed by *El País* (7.1%) and *La Vanguardia* (6%). The presence of other ministries is very rare, except for a few cases. The main exception is the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, whose percentage in *El País* (4.9%) is significantly higher compared to *El Mundo* (2.4%) and *La Vanguardia* (2%).

The Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism has a higher coverage in *El Mundo* (2.4%), followed by *El País* (1.5%) and *La Vanguardia* (1.3%). This data is consistent with the previous results, since *El Mundo* tends to link the Spain brand to tourism and business.

The Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness is given the most press coverage by *El País* (2.3%) and *El Mundo* (2.1%) compared to *La Vanguardia* (1.3%), and the Ministry of Defense is covered in *El Mundo* (1%) and *El País* (0.8%), but not in *La Vanguardia*.

The rest of the ministries are hardly mentioned in all three newspapers. For example, the Ministry of the Interior is only mentioned once in *El País* (0.4%) and never mentioned in *El Mundo* and *La Vanguardia*. Other ministries not considered in the code are given a wider coverage by *El Mundo* (3.8%) compared to *El País* (1.1%) or *La Vanguardia* (0%).

Autonomous governments are similarly represented in *El Mundo* (3.8%) and *La Vanguardia* (3.4%), followed closely by *El País* (2.6%). Local institutions are less equally distributed. The coverage given by *La Vanguardia* (6%) is significantly wider than the coverage in *El Mundo* (2.4%) and *El País* (1.1%). This fact is not surprising, considering that *La Vanguardia* is a newspaper that mostly circulates within an autonomous region.

Political parties are given the most coverage by *La Vanguardia* (8.7%), followed by *El Mundo* (4.8%) and *El País* (3.8%). EU institutions receive the most press coverage in *La Vanguardia* (4.7%) and *El País* (3.8%), and very little in *El Mundo* (1%).

Concerning the political sphere, the domestic sphere is clearly predominant in all three newspapers: *La Vanguardia* (52.3%), *El Mundo* (49%), and *El País* (46.2%). The foreign sphere is almost equally represented in *El Mundo* (25%) and *El País* (24.4%), and received less coverage in *La Vanguardia* (18.1%). Additionally, coverage of both spheres simultaneously is more frequent in *El País* (20.7%), followed by *La Vanguardia* (18.1%) and *El Mundo* (15.1%).

Political corruption linked to the Spain brand receives a wider coverage in *El País* (30.8%), followed by *El Mundo* (25.7%) and *La Vanguardia* (22.1%). This information partly explains why there is a higher percentage of negative assessments in *El País* compared to *El Mundo*.

In the case of nationalist and independence claims, there is a significant difference between the three newspapers. We see that *La Vanguardia* (40.3%) considers the matter to be much more relevant than *El Mundo* (19.9%) and *El País* (15%), something to be expected considering it is a Catalan newspaper.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

The political sphere is widely covered by the press and is present in three of every four news pieces. This result shows the political nature of the Spain brand according to the press. Therefore, the results support the first hypothesis of this research: the discourse generated by the press surrounding the concept 'marca España' is closely linked to national politics.

However, the news pieces related to the political sphere are assessed negatively in the most part. The cases of corruption and nationalist and independence claims in Catalonia, together with the financial crisis, were the current topics of national interest that are the most representative of the Spanish situation during the period under scrutiny. Both are prominent in press coverage, a fact that explains the vast amount of negative assessments received concerning national politics. In the overall press coverage, one of every five news pieces links the Spain brand to political corruption. The number of news pieces that associate the Spain brand to nationalist and independence claims is slightly lower in the overall press coverage, but it is still significant.

The wide coverage received by domestic politics may be explained by the financial, institutional, and social crisis, which translates into an increased awareness of the media and public opinion towards the country's domestic affairs.

All the results support our second hypothesis: noteworthy facts linked to the Spain brand are mostly negative due to an adverse sociopolitical context.

The Spain brand is most frequently linked to the Government of Spain or to some of its ministries, mainly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. In addition, the Crown is also widely covered by the press in relation to politics. Therefore, the results also support our third hypothesis: The Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are often mentioned in the press coverage, since they are the main promoters of the initiative.

Considering the number of news pieces, the attention paid by *El País* and *El Mundo* to the concept 'marca España' is significantly greater than that of *La Vanguardia*. Both Madrid newspapers published approximately twice as many news pieces as the Catalan newspaper, proving that the topic raises more interest in the capital's press.

The correlation between 'marca España' and politics in the press coverage of all three newspapers is very similar, although criticism is more present in *La Vanguardia*. The high percentage of negative assessments in *La Vanguardia* is explained by the rise of nationalist tension in Catalonia.

*El País* is the newspaper with the most correlations between the Spain brand and political corruption, while *La Vanguardia* is the one with the least.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport is given the widest coverage by *El País*, showing the inclination of this newspaper to link the Spain brand to cultural matters.

Nationalist claims receive twice as much press coverage in *La Vanguardia* as they do in the other two newspapers. However, the Crown receives half as much press coverage in *La Vanguardia* as it does in the capital city's counterparts.

These conclusions partially support the fourth hypothesis: despite the different results between the newspapers, there is a significant homogeneity that refutes part of the hypothesis.

The current research proves that the political nature of the Spain brand and, by extension, of the nation brand, is reflected in press coverage. However, its connection to negative aspects of reality help configure a negative social understanding of the Spain brand which is opposite to the main objective sought by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This shows how difficult it is to shape a favorable public opinion towards a nation brand project when the main institutions suffer a credibility and leadership crisis.

From a broader perspective, this research tries to reach a better understanding of a complex object of study, such as "nation brand", by means of confining it to the press coverage of the Spain brand as related to politics. This approach enables us to suggest avenues for further research that may extend and complement our findings: analyzing the correlation in the media of the Spain brand with other spheres, broadening the sample in terms of time period and number of newspapers, studying the treatment the Spain brand receives in international newspapers, or studying other cases of nation brand.

In October 2018, the government of Pedro Sánchez replaced the High Commissioner for the Spain brand and its office with the State Secretary for Global Spain (Royal Decree 1266/2018, 8 October 2018). España Global shares with Marca España the goal of improving the image of the country abroad and among the

Spanish people (España Global, 2018). Besides the change of name and the organizational restructuring of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, it is still unknown whether the new State Secretariat will follow the main strategic guidelines established by Marca España. This makes us wonder whether a nation brand project can be born as a state responsibility and implemented effectively in the long term, regardless of the political color of the government. Future research might answer these questions.

## 6. Acknowledgement

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## Notes

1. On 22 July 2012, the risk premium of Spain reached its historic high at 638.42 basis points (*El País*, 2 January 2015).
2. Variable 6 is considered affirmative if the unit of analysis mentions a specific person or group of people and links them directly to the Spain brand. By group of people we understand any professional collective, group of interest, or specific segment of the population such as workers, scientists, business owners, etc.
3. In variable 8 positive assessments are those where the facts are considered under a positive or neutral point of view. On the other hand, negative assessments are those considered under a negative point of view.

