Conference Paper

BRICS Multicultural Internet Projects As a Tool for Integrating and Overcoming Unfavorable Images of Countries

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Abstract

This article is devoted to the problem of a digital cultural project as a resource of cultural diplomacy for the BRICS group. The purpose of the study is to analyze the cultural projects existing on the Internet, their possibilities and potential. Particular attention is paid to the Internet cultural projects of the BRICS, which can be used to overcome the unfavorable images of these countries. The main result of the study is that the BRICS countries practically do not have and do not use the Internet as a resource for promoting joined cultural projects, since they do not develop and do not work on the joint BRICS cultural policy. That is why the author's recommendation is to first develop common values of the BRICS group, and then this will become the basis for creating cultural projects and promoting BRICS in the world. The BRICS joint value system will contribute to a clear understanding of the group by everyone in the world.

Keywords: BRICS, cultural projects, Internet cultural projects, globalization

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1. Introduction

The study of the formation of BRICS mainly relates to its economic and political aspects.

In Russian science, this topic is being studied by various scientists. A. Sergunin, [1] G. Toloraya, V. Gorbacheva, O. Alekseenko, K. Muratshina [2] and others explore some theoretical aspects of international relations within the BRICS framework. They consider the activities of BRICS as a whole, its main areas of activities, the role of the group in the field of international relations, its progress and tasks that need to be addressed in the future, as well as the place and role of Russia that it occupies in this political body.

The issues of ``soft power'' and public diplomacy as a whole are considered by N. Tsvetkova, N. Gusejnova, S. Kosenko, D. Borodin, T. Zonova, A. Panov, S. Veselovsky, K. Tabarintseva-Romanova [3] and others. These specialists made a significant contribution to development of the basic concepts of the theory of public diplomacy in domestic science and analyzed some aspects of its manifestation in Europe, Japan, and the USA.

Among foreign experts, J. Nye should be mentioned as a world famous theoretician of the theory of soft power and the inspirer of research in this field.

There are many foreign experts who are interested in exploring the BRICS group. Cameron G. Thies and Mark David Nieman devoted their research to the rising powers and foreign policy revisionism with a focus on understanding BRICS identity and behavior. A. Athique explores the soft power of India, J. Srinivas studies cultural diplomacy and the role of the diaspora in this matter. Yang Chengyu, Liu Juan, Zho Zhi Wei consider China and Brazil as part of the BRICS. O. Stuenkel from Brazil explores the political and economic aspects of the BRICS group.

All these topics are about civilizational aspects, and, as we know, civilization is opposite to culture in the sense that civilization reflects the standard process of production, transportation, logistics, consumption of goods, ideas, money, etc. From this point of view, BRICS is a product of civilization that brings together countries wishing to participate in the global process of production and consumption on an equal footing. But on the other hand, almost all researchers claim that BRICS is significantly different from any other global structure, namely they promote the idea of mutual respect, understanding and acceptance of each other. Civilization processes are based on rational foundations.

Many economists and other researchers argue that this coalition will not exist for a long time due to differences between its members in the cultural, economic and political spheres. However, the BRICS group can be applied not only to rational formation, but also to emotional ones. They often emphasize that the values they stand on are associated not only with consumption and production, but also with the development of new standards of relations in global politics. But now we can notice some anxiety among the BRICS participants, which is caused by the growing difference between them. That is why finding the fundamental socio-cultural basics for these countries is much more important than building an economy. Spiritual values are much stronger bonds than money, and can give the coalition new strength.

A specific emphasis on the BRICS cultural and digital diplomacy, the search for the fundamental basics of common socio-cultural traditions can be found in the works of A. Kurumchina [4], [5]. There are several NGOs in the world that have dedicated their work to cultural initiatives as practitioners. S. Khanna and V. Chauhan explore the potential of cultural connection for the tourism problem in the framework of the BRICS. D.K. Thussu's research deals with the soft power of cinema, and so on. C. Zanardi devoted her research to the Confucius Institute as soft power. The book of R. Crane is about the bridges between the BRICS.

So, as noted, the BRICS topic is popular in the scientific world, and almost all aspects of this union are being studied.

The main objective of this study is to explore the possibilities of a new cultural form of multicultural communication - Internet cultural projects. We will study the very form of Internet projects in the field of culture, their peculiarities and capabilities, compare them with offline ones. The second task is to focus on the BRICS online cultural projects and reveal their role in overcoming the unfavorable images of these countries at the global level.

The author will present various projects initiated by the BRICS participants in this area and present the ways to overcome the negative images of the BRICS countries.

As a result, the study mentions some tasks for the BRICS countries that need to be solved in order to overcome the difficulties of globalization and creating a club brand.

2. General Analysis of Projects in the Sphere of Culture

At the very beginning, let's decide what a cultural project is. From the point of view of the managerial approach, this means that this activity corresponds to all the characteristics of the project as a whole, namely, it has an exact beginning and end, creates something new or improves something that already exists; must have a team, a budget, and in a sense it is unique. Project thinking is a reaction to global socio-cultural transformations that began with the beginning of industrialization.

Today's project is a category that reflects the types of activities that we use to monitor the rapid changes in reality and social time. Offline projects imply that they exist in the material world, and their products are some goods or offline services. Can we define projects as offline if their teams communicate via the Internet? I think so, in case the result of the project is offline. As for online projects, they are implemented online from beginning to end. Almost all of the business processes of them are online, especially their product itself. Given the specifics of the Internet and its intangible nature, I would say that this is an ideal environment for any cultural project.

Cultural projects might be in some different categories. For instance, the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs provides grants for ``Art in Education'', ``Discipline-based or artistic project'', ``Underserved Cultural Community Development projects'', ``Artist Performances'', and Individual Artist projects (Specific Cultural Projects. https://dos.myflorida.com/cultural/grants/grant-programs/specific-cultural-projects/ (Accessed 01.10.2019)).

The growing role of the Internet today leads to the new opportunities for cultural projects, namely online broadcasts or online performances, exhibitions, discussions

and interactions. There are some international cultural projects that use the possibilities of the Internet to spread the information all over the world, to promote the ideas and involve as many participants as they can. For instance, Culture Summit Abu Dhabi, 2019 (Culture Summit Abu Dhabi. https://abudhabiculture.ae/en/learn/cultural-programmes/culture-summit (Accessed 01.10.2019)). It was a highly technological event, with all registration and handouts available online using QR-code and phone app, as well as all panel discussions, workshops, and performances that could be seen on YouTube channel. It was a really global event and an absolutely new global level of availability of high-professional forum. The topic of the summit was *Cultural Responsibility and New Technology*. There were 400 participants from 90 countries, and 1.12 thousand followers on YouTube channel during broadcasting. Unfortunately, there was no interaction opportunity for overseas viewers who watched it online, as they could only leave the comments. But I hope this is a task for the future. It should be noted that it is not the only culture summit in the world, as the world knows the Edinburgh International Culture Summit, Culture Summit (USA), Saint Petersburg Cultural Forum are other events of this kind. The American Culture Summit is mainly about organizational culture, while the Edinburgh, Abu Dhabi and Saint Petersburg events are about culture in its classical meaning.

Culture has a significant role in the modern world. This is an important part of the world economy as a creative economy, which currently accounts for 4% of the global economy.

The development of technologies allowed Google to make a special art and culture online project *The Google Art Project*. It is ``online database which gives the Internet browsers the opportunity to view art pieces from all over the world in a gallery-style collection'' [6], [7]. If you have Google Account, you can personalize the collection according to your tastes. This resource was made by a Hindu guy Amid Sood in 2014 in collaboration with 14 world museums. Today, there are 45 000 masterpieces presented in this project. As for the BRICS countries, China presents there 86724 exhibits (Guangzhou presents 1164, Beijing 3146, Shanghai 5336), Brazil has 38658 showpieces, India gives access to 75442 exponents, South Africa to 8066, and Russia presents 101420 masterpieces and places. This project is included into *Google Cultural Institute* where the users can find information about virtual exhibitions of the most famous museums.

Cultural projects are not only an important part of the world creative economy.

From the ontological point of view project is a futurological vision of reality and it seems much more important than rational economical hypostasis of a project, as

it defines philosophical and socio-cultural basis for them. The eternal opposition of civilization and culture is about opposition of death and life. As soon as the mutual creative process produces something significant for humanity, civilization intends to transfer it into a product and sell it as expensive as possible. That is why the terms ``creative economy'' and ``project'' reflect the civilizational, rational nature, and their goal to assign the very soul of culture. Here we have a contradiction. On the one hand the BRICS countries are interested in developing mutual cultural ground, but on the other hand the very rational idea of using culture kills its live nature.

The difficulty of finding common socio-cultural grounds for the BRICS is determined by the very nature of the group: they belong to different cultures, geographical areas, languages, etc. What they have in common is socio-economic problems caused by globalization: production, distribution, migration and negative images of these countries caused by politics and economy. But as the western rational approaches led to all these problems in spite of the fact of relatively high living conditions, the socio-cultural western values are practically not working. That is why we must once again ask Eastern wisdom, the source of all the leading world religions, about how to overcome the cultural and spiritual destruction of the modern global era. And the role of BRICS in this area is much more important than just production, logistics of goods and supply of natural resources.

2.1. The BRICS countries' images

Image and brand are PR and marketing categories. In spite of this they are successfully used in international relations to create, manage and promote the image of any territory from city to region. The study of this aspect started in 1990s by the European public relations education & research association (EUPRERA). [8].

The notion of national branding was suggested by Simon Anholt, who is the most famous consultant in the sphere of country's branding. Also, he put into circulation a new term to define the process of promoting image of a territory-- competitive identity. According to him, it is more effective to join brand-management with public diplomacy. He developed a hexagon of competitive identity: people, culture and heritage, tourism, foreign and domestic policy, investment and immigration, export brands.

This competitive identity or image of the country should not contradict with the national identity and can be applied not only to city or country, but to any territory or group. [9]. Unfortunately, only Russia is presented in the list of the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index 2017, taking 23rd position from 50. Other BRICS countries are presented without their position index. This 23rd position doesn't look bad taking into

account that there are 266 countries (or 193 UN members) in the world. According to the 1.3 version of the Good Country Index, China is on 61st position, India -- 44th, South Africa -- 47th, Brazil -- 72nd. [9].

In the modern world, the BRICS member states - Russian Federation, Republic of India, People Republic of China, the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Republic of South Africa - are considered by western world as having negative images which discourage their equal participation in global economy and politics.

Using hexagon of Anholt we can analyze such components as tourism and culture.

Tourism seems to be an excellent opportunity which lets other people know about your country. As for BRICS, there are some obstacles.

The first group of problems includes poverty, high level of crimes, diseases and polluted environment. [10, 11]. The quality of life in the BRICS countries is not as high as in Europe, which is perceived as an obstacle to the development of tourism. Nevertheless, the BRICS countries do their best to promote themselves as a safe place for tourism. They use a world sport event to overcome this prejudice. For instance, FIFA World Cup-2014 and Olympic games2016 in Brazil, FIFA World Cup in Russia 2018 and Olympic games in Sochi 2014, Olympic games in Beijing (China) in 2008/2022.

In 2019, a growing number of Chinese tourists became a problem for Saint Petersburg due to queues in museums. And despite the fact that the flow of Chinese tourists is growing by 20% every year, Russia does not earn, because ``these are "low-budget" groups of tourists, who are mainly served by gray schemes of clandestine traders from China and do not bring Russia anything but problems'' [12]. That is why online, maybe even VR projects, VR tourism, can be a good alternative that helps mitigate the situation and neutralize all negative aspects.

The second group is distance between the BRICS countries and trip-charges. According to the data of World Tourism Organization, in spite of the mentioned problems Brazil is on the second place in the world as a tourism destination among Argentinian, American, Italian and other European and Latin Americans tourists, but there are no tourists from other BRICS countries. [13], [14]. This situation is known to the BRICS leaders and they are doing everything possible to solve this problem.

There is an interesting point that should be mentioned. Vadim Volos, global director of the Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index, was surprised by ``the fundamental stability of the nation's image and reputation: our analysis for the period the 2008-2018 showed that NBI gives remarkably stable assessments of the image of national brands, reflecting the underlying stability of national reputation.

Events have an impact. NBI is sensitive enough to mark a noticeable annual move-ment on key measures for some countries, apparently reflecting the reaction of the world community to major events (such as elections, economic or political turmoil) with high international fame. However, a national reputation tends to come back after the impact of dramatic events has disappeared.

This does not mean that countries are locked in their reputation ``cages.'' Communi-cations really help to raise awareness and spread a good word about the assets of the nation and its progress.'' [15].

As we see, global offline multicultural events in the sphere of sport or art are able to change the reputation of a country. Usage of PR and communication technologies can help to change the images and can be used for cultural diplomacy.

Thus, taking into account the Anholt's hexagon, we can create the BRICS image, and online cultural projects are an important part of this work.

2.1.1. Online cultural projects of the BRICS

Every country of the BRICS club has its own vision of what they should do in the field of culture. The most popular one is the Chinese project *Belt and Road Initiative* in the field of economics, which is accompanied by cultural communication, educational cooperation and tourist exchanges. Some of them are offline. Confucius Institute is China's most successful and well-known offline cultural project. Today in the world there are 500 Confucius Institutes in 132 countries. In Russia there are 17 Confucius Institutes and 4 Confucius schools.

2018 marked the fifth anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative. ``This year, at the Shanghai International Film Festival, an Alliance of Belt and Road Film Festival was held with a memorandum of cooperation issued by 31 film festival organizations from 29 countries participating in the BRI. The alliance's published manifesto states that the organization plans to improve the exchange of information and films, as well as the exchange of filmmakers and industry experts, and to launch more joint projects with the coalition. In addition, during the festival, the first Belt and Road Week was held, at which 154 films from 49 countries were presented.

In addition to cooperation in the film industry, the Library Alliance along the Silk Road, created in May, also serves as a significant foundation for cultural communication. Initiated by the National Library of China (NLC), the alliance has a first group of 24 members from countries and regions such as Bangladesh, Belarus, Malaysia, Mongolia,

Thailand, and Vietnam, for collaboration in document exchange, classics protection and digitalization.

Over the past five years, China has also seen an increase in the number of foreign students from countries covered by the BRI. In 2017, 317,200 students from the Belt and Road countries studied in China, which is 11.58 percent more than in 2016, which is 64.85 percent of the total number of foreign students in China. As part of this initiative, 81 educational institutions and projects were established in China, as well as 35 cultural centers in countries along the Belt and Road. In the first half of 2018, China spent more than 270 million yuan (about \$39.3 million) on the Silk Road scholarships.

Tourism development and cultural exchanges between the two sides are also show-ing steady growth. By 2020, the total number of tourists entering and leaving between China and the Belt and Road countries will exceed 85 million, and expenses - about \$110 billion. According to Li Jinzao, China's vice minister of culture and tourism, at the Summit of Mayors of Travel Cities ''Belt and Road'' in Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan Province in Central China, the combined scale of international tourism along the belt and road is about 70 percent of the world total. According to a report by the UN World Tourism Organization published at the summit, the number of tourists in areas along the Road increased from 775,000 in 2012 to nearly 3.1 million in 2016, with 2.1 million coming from China. The country has become a major driver for tourism in countries and regions along the 21st century Sea Silk Road.'' [16] As one can see from this report, all projects are offline. This means that despite the high technological achievements, China does not fully use online projects to promote its image and the BRICS club.

Despite the fact that the Declaration on cultural cooperation between the BRICS countries was signed and the need to digitalize this area was accepted, despite the Alliance of BRICS Museums, the Alliance of the BRICS Museum of Art and Gallery, there are no such projects yet.

3. Results

The result of research emphasizes that culture, tourism and people are important components of a national image and brand. They should be used to build the necessary content from them. The theory of image and brand can help in developing the brand of the BRICS group. But it claims first to find and develop common socio-cultural traditions of these countries. And we think that this is the main reason why there are not so many cultural projects in which BRICS would be presented as a single object, and not as a group of five with separate interests.

Another result is that these countries do not introduce digital technologies, online communications to promote themselves as integrity.

All these tasks are very important for the future of this group, because political and economic points cannot be as strong as spiritual and cultural values and foundations.

Since the BRICS countries are not so strong in the economy, they must find their advantages in their culture, history and people.

4. Conclusion

This study identified very important tasks for the BRICS alliance, which should be resolved in the near future. Common socio-cultural fundamental values will help develop new perspectives not only for the BRICS, but also for the entire globalized multicultural world, in order to find answers to global problems that humanity must solve in order to survive.

Smart and skillful cooperation of culture and civilization as a technology will overcome current and future difficulties of globalization. And the role of BRICS is difficult to overestimate here.

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