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**ESTONIA AND JAPAN:  
EFFECTIVENESS OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY**

Bachelor's Thesis

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## **ABSTRACT**

Cultural diplomacy can be utilised as an instrument to gain international credibility, and can play a major role in transforming actor behaviour. Acknowledging the ontological foundations derived from social constructivist theory, it can be claimed that the projection of cultural characteristics that appeal to others can achieve their trust and respect. Therefore, cultural diplomacy becomes a significant asset to any state that is anticipating to achieve political leverage in regard to foreign affairs, particularly in the case of smaller states that are inevitably limited by size and military capabilities. The Republic of Estonia is progressively pursuing to increase its global presence, especially in preparation of its position in the European Union Council Presidency in 2018. Through highlighting its achievements in IT technology, science and knowledge based resource transfer, Estonia has the potential of becoming an attractive innovation partner. Japan, a state that acclaims the position of a global leader in information technology, is a prospective long-term affiliate, as collaborative contributions in development can provide mutual benefits. The aim of this research is to highlight the importance for efficient cultural diplomacy, and justify government expenditure on this method. More specifically, the research endeavours to explore the efficiency of the currently deployed methods between Estonia and Japan. Through dynamic analyses of theoretical reasoning and utilising a survey based research methodology, strengths and weaknesses will be detected, allowing for suggestions in regard to alterations and improvements.

Key words: cultural diplomacy, Japan-Estonia relations, social constructivism, co-operation, soft power

## INTRODUCTION

The reputation of a state can become a crucial variable in the process of determining its ultimate success in the international political arena. The creation and preservation of positive external image is indispensable for a state, as this is what facilitates gaining the trust and respect of other states (whoever sceptical might be in terms of these qualities), affecting the inter-state relationships. Thus, in addition to becoming an attractive investment opportunity and providing a decent foundation for business relationships in the private sector, 'identity' is also a key factor in enabling the reinforcement of the political position of the state on an international level. Ultimately, it can be suggested that the identity of a state is a dominating factor in providing a state the power of influence. One of the ways to employ state identity as a variable for gaining influence is through an effective implementation of cultural diplomacy. The use of this strategy can enable a state to increase its international presence through intentionally displaying a planned and revised image or identity that gains recognition globally. In this context, as suggested by Hurn (2016, 81), "[i]t achieves this by emphasising the qualities that make it special and unique". For that reason, this research aims to prove that **an efficient use of cultural diplomacy** still has a place in a globalised society and when utilised to its full potential, investments into this method are justifiable.

The external perception of a country becomes increasingly important to smaller states that may not possess the equivalent means of hard power in comparison to others, nor is perceived as an equal due to its size or military capabilities. The Republic of Estonia, being a relatively small nation in the Baltic region, is attempting to expand its political influence as well as achieve recognition for technological development, progress in science and other areas in which Estonia is flourishing in. On a political level, all post-1991 governments of Estonia have been trying to demonstrate the country's successful recovery from the Soviet occupation, and create a new image for itself that reflects a modern European society with prospects of becoming a valuable contributor to global development. The scope of this ambition has reached the initiation of large-scale projects such as the 5D initiative, which incorporates public services transformed onto electronic platforms, and currently includes countries such as New Zealand, South Korea, Israel, and Great Britain (Anthes 2015, 18-20). In addition, the e-

government programme launched by the Estonian government has allowed for individuals living outside of Estonia to become e-citizens and, thus, substantially simplifying the process of foreign investments into the country and the creation of new foreign businesses.

As the partners of projects such as the 5D initiative and the potential investors reach geographically and culturally distant states, it is vital for Estonia to maintain a positive reputation abroad. Small nations that are surrounded by geographically and politically more powerful states are vulnerable in many ways, from territorial threats to maintaining economic security. As a result, most small states focus their attention towards devising strong foreign policy strategies in order to decrease their vulnerability through soft power, as their military capabilities are not compatible with the large nations, and would be an irrational approach for national security. Of course, this depends on the individual state, the unique situation, and regional relations. For example, Singapore, another geographically small nation like Estonia, followed a different direction by adapting Lew Kuan Yew's approach of becoming a "poisonous shrimp", meaning that Singapore, a small yet militarily strong nation would be capable of self-defence in the case of external threats (1966, 18). Time has passed since the adoption of this policy and Singapore has not only spent large sums on its military, but also increased its diplomatic relations with others, adapting to the developments of globalisation. To ensure that Singapore does not become isolated; the country's founder noted once: "I think we have to go in whatever direction world conditions dictate if we are to survive and to be part of this modern world. If we are not connected to this modern world, we are dead" (Lee 2007). However, due to a different set of circumstances, Estonia has not prioritised military security as much, and since its independence has directed its efforts solely on diplomatic relations for the purposes of having an impact in economics and politics.

A part of this strategy is having a global presence. This meaning, that other states need to become more familiar with the country and its culture in order to become interested and instigate long term partnerships. Potential knowledge gaps in cultural perceptions can lead to a distortion of the identity of the state, and damage the reputation of the state on a political and social level (Khatib 2015, 506). This implying, that Estonian cultural diplomacy is increasing in the significance of facilitating state relationships and hence, the effectiveness of the diplomatic instrument must be at its highest potential to ensure the best possible outcome.

As Estonia has an intensive focus on expanding its knowledge based resource transfer, it is seeking innovation partners in the fields of science and technology in order to tackle common goals through co-operation (Kose 2014).

One of the prospective long-term partners of Estonia is Japan, a country with the ambition of attaining the position of a global leader in information technology and therefore, interested in any further development opportunities. Estonia with the latest success in e-governance, robotics, as well as high-level progress in science, has become an attractive investment opportunity and innovation partner to many countries abroad, including Japan. Therefore, it is important and academically justifiable to investigate the factors that affect the relationship between the two countries in order to improve these factors where possible. Even though the focus of the relationship is based on scientific and technological knowledge transfer, the cultural perceptions on the other can influence decision making of businesses (Ladegaard 2007, 159-160) as well as have an impact of diplomatic relations and policy making (Khatib 2015, 505). Due to the importance of Japanese investments and the potential of Japan becoming a longstanding innovation partner with Estonia, the relationship between the two countries is significant in defining the future of the partnership. In order to assure successful co-operation, both countries are currently utilising the benefits of cultural diplomacy for increasing awareness and familiarity of their culture and values.

This research will attempt to identify the different practices of cultural diplomacy that are used by Estonia and Japan, and analyse their actual efficiency. Presumably, this will allow for a review on whether the current practices are sufficient enough, or whether they need to be improved or discarded. The conclusions from these findings will provide a foundation for suggestions toward developing and enhancing approaches of cultural diplomacy for a more successful outcome. As the subject of increased expenditures on culture and diplomacy is a highly debated one, as many claim that this is an outdated concept and has no place in a globalised world, this research will attempt to provide evidence for the support of continuing such practice. The paper's methodological approach will incorporate empirical data collection for the epistemological challenge of this research, providing quantitative evidence transferred into statistical information and thus, allowing a clear analysis for the research question. An online survey will be used for the collection of relevant data, as this will enable to reach a

larger sample group. The survey will consist of closed questions that will allow to determine the different kinds of cultural diplomacy used between Estonia and Japan, and the effectiveness of these respectively. The survey will also include open questions for qualitative information, giving more in-depth explanations and providing insights that will reflect the detailed outcomes of Estonian-Japanese cultural diplomacy.

The participants of the survey will consist of two groups, providing comparative data for a more dynamic analysis of the subject. The first group will be International Relations students that reside in Estonia, on the assumption that they will represent individuals that have an interest and insight in the concept of diplomacy and international affairs. In addition, they are more likely to be aware of current political and social circumstances of Estonia, adding value to their opinions as they are more informed, and thus increasing their credibility. The second group will consist of Japanese nationals that are residing in Estonia, providing important perceptions on how Estonian cultural diplomacy reaches the public in Japan, and whether it is affecting their views enough to create a positive identity of Estonia in Japan. The participants will be asked to compare the information that they have acquired about Estonia prior to and after arrival, giving a comparison of their perception of expectation and view of reality.

The structure of the research will start by a theoretical explanation of the concept of cultural diplomacy and how it is perceived through and linked to the theory of International Relations. The potential and effectiveness for cultural diplomacy will be discussed through examples of past and present uses, that have proven to be a significant factor in improving state reputation and international identity. The theoretical framework of the research will also include a review on Estonian and Japanese practice of cultural diplomacy, assessing the methods that have been employed and the investments that have been made so far. This will be followed by an examination and assessment of the outcomes from the surveys, analysing the results from a statistical perspective and inferring whether the used methods of cultural diplomacy have been successful in the means of reaching public attention achieving the desired goals. Detecting successes and flaws in the current uses of the strategy allows for suggestions in the means of improvements, alterations, and possible implementation of more efficient methods of cultural diplomacy.

# 1. THEORETICAL APPROACHES

## 1.1 Cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy

The idea of public diplomacy is to provide an alternative to aggression and violence through shifting the focus on communication, and presenting ideas that are more appealing than the notion of gaining desired goals through the utilisation of physical force. The technique was predominantly used by the main world powers after major wars, attempting to gain political support for new foreign policy agreements. More specifically, the origins of the concept is closely affiliated with the United States employment of the strategy during the Cold War for the purposes of promoting American ideologies and the pursuit of national interests (Gienow-Hecht, Donfried 2010). However, the concept has been taken further and has incorporated new techniques that accommodates requirements for the globalised world structure. The practice of cultural diplomacy is commonly referred to as one of the main branches of public diplomacy, which in itself is a form of “soft power” (Nye 1990). Soft power being defined as the intentional use of communication aimed to have an influence on external politics through the establishment of diplomatic leverage that would not include the use of military actors or material power. Joseph Nye lists three sources of soft power that can be used by a state for the purposes of influencing the perception and behaviour of others (2006):

- culture (in places where it is attractive to others)
- political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad)
- foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority).

The use of cultural diplomacy can enable the projection of cultural traditions and values through appealing to others, and as a consequence this can achieve trust and respect toward the nation abroad. If this step is deployed effectively, it can establish international credibility (Khatib 2015, 506), an invaluable asset to any nation that wishes to gain any type of political influence, as this is what helps building the grounds for affecting the political views of others to coincide with national interests. Furthermore, this can ultimately lead to changes in foreign policies that will provide national advantages. Hence, cultural diplomacy



can be implemented as the first step toward gaining political power and beneficial policy alterations, as a nation that has achieved these goals is enabled to have a voice in crucial decisions regarding policies on humanitarian, environmental and economic affairs. On the other hand, as Nye pointed out, the use of cultural diplomacy is only advantageous if the values that are communicated as distinctive to the nation are perceived as appealing to others and hence, where the role of cultural diplomacy becomes significant. This enables deliberate emphasis to be drawn toward a specific selection of characteristics that the state wishes to promote abroad — this technique being referred to as “nation branding” (Ollins 2002, 247-248).

In contrast to the traditional form of diplomacy that involves networks of state representatives facilitating political dialogue, public diplomacy is focused on encompassing a broader audience that integrates individuals and non-government actors (Leonard, Stead, Smewing 2002, 12) in the process of building inter-state co-operative bilateral relationships in various fields of work. This is usually done by introducing and highlighting traditional social values of the state abroad, increasing familiarity and therefore through time, gaining the trust and respect of others. Through achieving credibility from creating a positive image perception, it is possible to have an effect on important political decisions without the need for a strong military presence. This is based on the premise that states are not the sole actors that can impact their survival, interaction, and wellbeing.

Nye explains that the need for this form of diplomacy derives from the changes that are taking place within the international structure, as the network of interdependence has reached a point of higher complexity. In addition, he suggests that the increase of power held by multinational corporations is becoming largely more prominent in having an impact on state security, affecting the stability of economics and welfare, rather than the traditional perception of military threats being eminent concerns (1990, 157-158). Therefore, due to a shift of power actors that can influence the security and wellbeing of a state, the focus of action has been transferred towards a strategy of co-operation for the purposes of reaching both, common objectives as well as individual state goals. It can be said that “[i]n fact public diplomacy is about building relationships: understanding the needs of other countries, cultures and peoples; communicating our points of view; correcting misperceptions; looking for areas where we can find common cause” (Leonard, Stead, Smewing 2002, 9).

Cultural diplomacy can be perceived through a dynamic spectrum that incorporates top-down strategic behaviour, in which the state is responsible for implementing intentional aspects of information transfer and has full credibility (Wastnidge 2015). Another aspect of cultural diplomacy is the role of individuals and corporations, as globalisation and advancements in technology have opened up the flow of people and ideas, allowing for these non-government actors to have a much larger impact on cultural perceptions than ever before. In this research, **cultural diplomacy will be referred to as the methods** that the government institutions employ directly for the purposes of positive image creation and familiarising others with the national values and traditions. It will also be recognised that non-government actors are significant in having an impact on nation branding.

However, as it is difficult to review and analyse all other individual actors and thus, only the potential actions of government organisations will be examined. These include government investments, promotions of individuals and corporations that add value toward the mission of cultural projects abroad, as well as events and cultural promotions that have been planned and organised directly by government institutions. Furthermore, it is important to note that even though corporations and industries within the sphere of the international marketplace have a clear impact on building public perceptions of their home culture and values, governments can still have a role in assuring that the outcomes of this are successful. This can be done by appropriate resource allocation (Leonard, Stead, Smewing 2002, 5), to ensure that government initiated public and cultural diplomacy are in correlation with the companies that represent the nation internationally, and that these non-governmental organisations are supported in the process of nation branding. On that account, it is important to understand the extent of the impact that corporations can have on creating state identity, so that the focus and the resources that are used on government projects that help commercial networks are used to their best advantage and are targeted toward the right methodology.

A hierarchy of public diplomacy by Leonard, Stead and Smewing explain the different outcomes that the strategy can have (2002, 8-10):

- 1) increasing people's familiarity with one's country (making them think about it, updating their images, turning around unfavourable opinions);
- 2) increasing people's appreciation of one's country (creating positive perceptions, getting others to see issues of global importance from the same perspective);
- 3) engaging people with one's country (strengthening ties – from education reform to scientific co-operation; encouraging people to see us as an attractive destination for tourism, study, distance learning; getting them to buy our products; getting to understand and subscribe to our values);
- 4) influencing people (getting companies to invest, publics to back our positions or politicians to turn to us as a favoured partner).

If these are the prospective impacts that using public diplomacy can have, it would be in the best interest of the state to use this strategy to its advantage, especially in the case of a smaller state that is innately limited in its powers of political and social leverage. Therefore, it is crucial for the methods applied to be effective in order to reach the potential advantages that are offered by public diplomacy. In addition, it needs to be practiced efficiently to justify government spending on this sector, as it can become a subject of national public debate and gain an unfavourable reputation amongst the society, making it difficult to alter foreign policies that would integrate cultural diplomacy into its main framework of action. These impacts of such policies should be the goal of cultural diplomacy abroad, as well as publicising the benefits to the national public to justify funding of cultural projects as being beneficial not only towards influencing politics, but affecting local businesses. As the third point in the hierarchy suggests, a positive state identity will increase its attractiveness on a commercial level, enabling to showcase the quality of local products and thus, increasing investments and market worth.

Therefore, for a country like Estonia, it is essential that the funds that go towards supporting cultural diplomacy are used as efficiently as possible, and that the strategy is focused on the areas that the state has a practical interest in and realistic potential in pursuing advantageous bilateral relations with. Cultural diplomacy is has no limitations when it comes to its geographical reach, and is an important mechanism that can be used to impact far away states, that can prove important for economic and political advance. For example, Japan and Estonia are separated by continents but their cultures can be transferred and relationship strengthened. Thus, a significant step in assuring that this is done is to identify strengths in current policies in order to pursue these further. Yet, it would be logical to suggest that detecting errors and inefficiencies in specific methods is the outmost crucial step, as this can help to either revise them or replace them with new practices, so that the already limited resources of the small nation do not go to waste on procedures that do not produce any outcomes. In addition, inefficient techniques may not only cause a problem in the form of poor resource allocation, but can threaten the entire purpose of the mission. This can be due to misleading information or a confusion due to inconsistency from ineffective planning.

## **1.2 National brands and nation branding**

### **1.2.1 Nation branding**

Understanding and identifying the influence of cultural perceptions can bring forth important information that can consequently lead to crucial insights for the construction of new methods for improving inter-cultural and inter-state relations. The nature of the information that is providing a foundation for the perceived identity of a culture is the key factor in determining the attitude and position that others take toward that specific culture. Identifying gaps in information and errors of interpretation (Khatib 2015, 506), can thus explain certain behavioural patterns toward a specific culture, and help to improve communications with others by filling these gaps through the provision of additional sources. Therefore, this is a critical step that will enable modernising International Relations toward a new era of public diplomacy, recognising the power of such perceptions on social influence as well as political actors.

The role of cultural diplomacy is considered to be a significant part of foreign and economic policy. It is the utilisation of national values and cultural attributes through promoting the exchange of ideas and cultural activities for developing a “brand” of the nation, and building commercial and civil networks (Hurn 2016). For establishing substantial outcomes, encouragement of cultural activities would contribute to being an influence for people to form an image of the state, allowing the state to gain validity in its views and impact the opinions of others. The composition of a state identity is an assembly of various concept (*see Figure 1*), in which some characteristics may stand out more than others, leaving a proportion of them undervalued. For having long-term effects on positive nation branding, a state should consider all of the six attributes, and ensure that all actions and policies on these are coordinated in a coherent organised manner (Anholt 2003, 119). This in the long run can provide benefits for everyone involved as well as provide a favourable environment for any future organisations, as a strong consistent and revised message that builds a favourable identity for the nation will increase the chances that foreign interest will increase, and thus lead to the enlargement of already existing markets, as well as expansions into entirely new ones.



Figure 1. The hexagon of competitive identity.

Source: (Anholt 2003, 118)

As industries such as trade, tourism and potential foreign investment opportunities are largely affected by the perceptions that others have acquired based on the reputation of the nation, it is important to co-operate on a national level. This is specifically for the purpose of improving the quality of the national identity through a consistency in the messages that are depicted by all the various organisations involved. Governments do not possess the control or sufficient proficiency over all the various institutions that intentionally wish to instigate, or inadvertently have an influence on cultural diplomacy abroad, nor might these institutions be interlinked through common production affiliations or shared commercial networks. This means that there could be a selection of different messages being presented to the outside, with each organisation projecting their own independent image of the nation.

Unfortunately, this can be a cause for misunderstandings or confusions, and as a consequence, can act as a counter-effect toward building a positive impression. Inconsistencies in messages could stain the reputation by creating an idea that this nation could be unpredictable and thus, lead to the impression of being unreliable. Merely increasing the international awareness of a country does not instantly coerce or cause improved positive associations (Future Brand 2015, 30). Hence, poor communication and lack of co-operation can work directly against what cultural diplomacy aims to achieve, undermining any efforts of the government that intend to create an identity for the state. A reflection in research based on the prospective outcomes of efficient national identity building, it is noted “although a nation is a cacophony of images, in certain cases, it is possible to speak of a dominant image, an image powerful enough to crowd out all the other meanings and resonance” (O’Shaughnessy, O’Shaughnessy 2000, 59). This means, that even though there is a plethora of attributes for one single state, choosing one dominant characteristic or particular depiction can help to avoid misinterpretations. Leonard, Stead and Smewing suggest that institutions and corporations should work together in order to promote a specific, agreed upon reputation for the nation, which would strengthen the message through unified repetition (2002, 14).

On the other hand, the unified message should be chosen carefully, in order to avoid tendency toward the emergence of perceptual biases (Khatib 2015, 506), which are based on generalisations of behaviours that have been either intentionally or non-intentionally misinterpreted. Depending on the individual state, certain messages should be avoided to prevent

damaging the relationship further. An example of this described in a study by Khatib, illustrated the perceptual biases that have formed between the European Union (EU) and Egypt as a result of knowledge gaps, selective generalisation and lack of clear information, which is also interlinked with prejudice originating from emotional links to colonial history (2015, 513). This implies that for example messages regarding the EU that are reaching Egypt, may be intentionally altered due to a pre-existing stereotypes, and so the images that are projected need to be carefully analysed on the basis of their context and coherence. Therefore, this conveys the importance of the necessity for adequate planning in cultural diplomacy or nation branding, as the chosen messages should not provide support for already existing, or the establishment of new stereotypes and biases that would distort the image of the state in a negative way. This study provides a useful foundation for other nations deploying cultural diplomacy to make progress in bilateral relations. In the case of Estonia and Japan, before developing a model for diplomacy, the existing images should be considered and the desired outcomes distinguished.

### **1.2.2 National brands**

As previously mentioned, one of the key contributors to the identity and reputation of a state is the image perception and recognition of the national brands. These are able to communicate social values through the projection of characteristic which will be interpretations of brand messages and the evaluation of product quality. Thus, as corporations that represent the country play a big role in determining the outside perceptions (Future Brand 2015); it is even more crucial that the messages that are being communicated are portraying the state as valuing high quality and possessing desirable social attributes.

On the other hand, studies show that this can also be applied in reverse, as in the case of the process of product evaluation of brands that are not well known, the existing perceptions of the nation are used to construct judgements on the quality of national brands and their products. Alternatively, if the products of the country are not familiar to others, the reputation of the state becomes a deciding factor in perceptions on national brands (Min Han 1989). This means that the reputation of the country will be a deciding factor on whether or not national brands will be acknowledged and thus, will determine if the organisation/product will become

successful internationally. A less known country will have its international brands to build the states identity instead, acting as ambassadors for the state and having the key influence on how the outside will perceive it.

Furthermore, findings show that Japan ranks at the top of positive brand awareness globally, whereas Estonia is positioned at being number forty-seven within the European continent (Future Brand 2015). These findings can be useful in explaining the comparative need for promoting and expanding international recognition for both countries. Japan has already achieved the highest level of awareness for its national brands, and does not acquire further efforts to become externally known for its production capabilities, as there are working in favour of constructing a positive identity. In addition, this study further investigated the concept of country brand image by examining whether a higher index would prove a correlation in providing a competitive advantage in the fields of investment, tourism and product consumerism. The findings showed that a country that is ranked higher is able to benefit from also being a choice preference in all the mentioned fields, when comparing to other countries (Future Brand 2015, 35). For example, the results portrayed that around 90% of the respondents consider Japan as a beneficial potential business partner, 65% would consider Japan as a personal travel destination in the next five years, and 90% would also happily recommend it as a destination for family and acquaintances.



### 1.3 International Relations and cultural diplomacy

This research will be based on the International Relations theory of social constructivism, as it recognises and highlights that culture and individual ideas can have an impact on the international structure. This is the sole theory with emphasis toward identifying social structures and communication as significant enough to have an impact upon an actor, to the level of influencing behaviour that can subsequently alter political action. The recognition of culture as something that is developed through the existence of a social ideational environment (Lezaun 2002, 231) and allows to modify the direction of changes in the material world. In addition to purely having a schematic cause and effect relationship, it will also be implied that this knowledge can be converted into strategic non-material power, as identity can be influenced intentionally for the purposes of establishing desired predictable behaviours. Henceforth, this research will be driven by **conceptual support of the social constructivist approach**, which suggests that the actual social process of identity formation is a significant contributor to establishing actor interests and as a consequence, plays an important role in actor behaviour. That being the case, the focus is directed toward the importance of cultural perceptions and the justification for the employment of cultural diplomacy as an instrument for providing a foundation for shaping successful political and entrepreneurial relations between states.

To fully apprehend the reasoning for the premises of research that integrated politics, and international relations with the concepts of social interaction and cultural influence, the theory should be analysed accordingly. In addition, as Connolly (1974, 97) commented on the infliction of intentional power on another actor, the moral and ethical implications of accepting responsibility arises, requiring adequate justification that can rationalise the benefits gained from such actions. Social constructivism as a paradigm acknowledges the existence for the need for a flexible dynamic approach to theory that would enable a more coherent conceptual explanation of political actors. Consequently, social constructivism in itself has established the creation of a whole new social theory that incorporates philosophical thought (Wendt 1999, 3), interpretational observation and reality of action (Guzzini 2000, 148), and seeks to explain a correlative interrelation between the two in order to provide a middle

ground hypothesis (Adler 1997, 322). Furthermore, it is incorporating the notions of dominating International Relations approaches and thus, building a cohesive unification for the holistic explanation of the international political system. This would include the complexity of the actor-relationships on the international structure, and the systematic explanation of the epistemological limitations that arise from dominant theories that radically exclude the concept of social construction, ideas and identity from theorising the fundamental origins of state actions. Social constructivists attempt to change the way in which International Relations is conceptualised, as there is a lack of theories that would encompass the international political system through dynamic ontological understandings capable of interpreting limitations of the hegemonic theories (Wendt 1999, 4) that are dominated by materialism and individualism.

The modern interpretation of social constructivism attempts to reach deep into the origins of action proper (Guzzini 2000, 149), seeking to explain this through distinguishing a relationship between the natural world and the socially constructed environment that impacts both individual and collective ideas and values. Scholars that have chosen to contribute to the development of social constructivism, endeavour to explain the fundamental ontological and epistemological positions of the approach, just like any other theorists in the field. However, social constructivism is heavily criticised for being too eclectic (Guzzini 2000, 148) and must defend itself against hermeneutic arguments of relativist theorists (Adler 1997, 321). As a consequence of this, constructivist scholars are adapting comparative methodologies that would either distinguish the common theoretical hypothesis that all supportive theorists agree upon and thus expand on these areas in detail (Reus-Smit 1999), detect theoretical redundancies in order to reconstruct a cohesive approach for reinforcing an improved unified school of thought (Guzzini 2000), or justify heavily debated approaches of well-known constructivist theorists for the purposes of protecting the integrity of the theory (Lezaun 2002).

Christian Reus-Smit dedicated an entire book, *The Moral Purpose of the State : Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations*, on exploring the ontological dynamics of modern social constructivism, striving to contribute to the progress of a holistic perspective to the critical theory of International Relations (1999 165-168). In this book, Reus-Smit suggests that in order to recognise and explain changes within the system, it is crucial to incorporate a systematic approach (that is merely capable of interpreting the

origins and roles of state identity through social interaction) with a holistic perspective. This would allow the observational explanation of the relationship between “[i]nternal human, material, and ideological characteristics” that are derived from corporate and social identities (166), and the systematic changes that take place from social evolution and the rise of a global community.

The previously discussed conceptual premises of social constructivism become especially relevant to this particular research due to the ontological assumption of the foundations of this work. As the concept of state identity, more specifically the identities of Estonia and Japan, and the process in which their identities are constructed through a cognitive reality that derives from the changes in the social environments and interactional community, are in direct relation to the actions of the states. Hence, the specific concern for this research is embedded distinctly in the way that the social reality can be altered strategically and thus, influencing the interests and behaviour of the state accordingly. To be more precise, the question goes beyond whether non-state actors, institutions or rational thought are the variables to shaping the international structure. The intention is to deduce whether the construction of a social reality (Guzzini 2000) can be altered by tactical methodology that would ultimately lead to the alteration of observed action – in this case, whether by the utilisation of targeted cultural diplomacy (ergo the identity of one state), could potentially be used as an instrument to transform the ideas of another state and as a result, potentially adjust the identity of the other up to the point of coinciding and shaping the political actions of the other. Based on the epistemological claims of constructivism, cultural diplomacy between Estonia and Japan could be used to alter the cognitive interpretation of one another, and ultimately achieve behavioural changes that lead to foreign policies advocating co-operation.

This would mean that the state that is attempting to modify the cognitive social construction of the other, must be capable of extrapolating which outcomes are the direct results of the intentional infliction of influence. This can be complicated due to natural changes in the social world, which can lead to systematic changes that can appear as the intentional desired results. For this reason, it is important to realise that even though the concept of power and emergence of benefits can be interlinked, the key is to be able to differentiate between power that has been gained through deliberate action that was intended to reach the outcomes, and

the advantages that have been received merely on the basis of luck (Dowding et al. 1995, 267). Henceforth, the importance of being able to make a clear distinction between the two — as a state is then enabled to recognise whether its chosen methods were actually beneficial for achieving the desired results, or whether the outcomes were a mere consequence of situational luck. As a result, if a state was to initiate a strategy of cultural diplomacy targeted to alter the perception of another for the purposes of gaining advantageous political leverage through this, it is crucial for the chosen method to be effective. In this case for example, Estonian diplomacy in Japan needs to be analysed in detail to establish whether it is the methods used that is leading to the increase of Japanese tourism in Estonia, or if it is merely a coincidence. On that account, if needed, the proven methodology can be reproduced for increased benefits.

Despite whether the outcomes may appear beneficial, they cannot be replicated if caused by other situational circumstances. Although the benefits that were desired may have been established deliberately or by luck, for the purposes long-term success it is pivotal to research the real outcomes of the techniques that were used. In addition, important decisions regarding future budgeting and strategy development can be damaged if conclusions are not clearly distinguished. Therefore, through carrying out this research, the intention is to provide a contribution to understanding the true benefits, and the cause and effect relationship between methods of cultural diplomacy and the identity perceptions that others have constructed toward the state. This can be done through examining the procedures of promoting the nation that are intentionally instigated by a state, and finding out whether these specifically have been the cause for particular changes that have taken place. This can be made difficult, as there can be a combination of causes, or a collaboration of state efforts and situational consequential social changes. Nevertheless, efforts to strive for the most feasible objective analysis is crucial in order to justify resource allocation, to ensure that the methods of chosen cultural diplomacy are not a waste of investments, and to prove the sacrifice of opportunity cost as a reasonable and logical decision.

## 1.4 Effective methods of cultural diplomacy

For the development of an effective cultural diplomacy strategy, it is important to consider all the specifics. This would include aspects such as the detailed desired outcome of the plan, the country of which the method will be focused on, and the distinct characteristics of state identity that are going to be chosen to be communicated. First of all, it should be established whether focus state is in fact relevant to national interests (Leonard, Stead, Smewing 2002, 7), and whether cultural diplomacy is the correct instrument to reach intended interests. When the country of focus has been justifiable chosen, a set of particular intended messages should be agreed upon, budgets must be set, and strategy revised. Each country should be treated differently due to the nature of each state being different in demographics, development stages, and unique in geographic aspects. In addition, each state possess individual preferences toward certain attributes and therefore, the some projected values may be desirable to some, and unfavourable for others.

Moreover, the method of delivering the chosen messages can be a deciding factor in whether the desired national image will be received the way it was intended. The author of the *Nation Brand Hexagon*, Simon Anholt comments on ineffective cultural branding by reflecting that “[...] what is truly heartbreaking is when thousands of people, companies, products, politicians, personalities and cultural artefacts are drop-drop-dropping messages every single day about their country and it doesn’t amount to anything, because there’s no method behind it, no guidance, no strategy, no vision, no common purpose” (2003, 119). Thus, projections of the national culture can originate from a vast number of sources, but with a lack of coherence and clear planning there is a possibility that there may not be any beneficial results or worse, there may be damaging consequences.

The identity of a state is composed of a plethora of characteristics, and the image perception that is reflected to the outside is a complex combination of fragmented collections of associations that are linked to the process of creating awareness and familiarity. The various associational dimensions (*see Table 1*) may not be reached or interpreted the same way by different demographics, and some characteristics may be more prominent at times due to

changes conditions such as current political circumstances or ongoing entertainment events. The solution to avoid incoherence or irrelevance is to take advantages of specific dimensions at the appropriate times (O’Shaughnessy, O’Shaughnessy 2000, 58) as this can provide the full benefits of utilising situational factors to benefit the national image. For example, if the intention is to promote bilateral relations in technology development, it might be worthwhile to also raise awareness in the national values and not merely scientific skills, as these may prove a factor in the decision making of potential investors.

Table 1. Association dimensions

| <b>Status</b>           |                                |                           | <b>Experience</b>             |                                    |   |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Value system</b>     | <b>Quality of life</b>         | <b>Business potential</b> | <b>Heritage and culture</b>   | <b>Tourism</b>                     | <b>Made in</b>                                  |
| political freedom       | health and education           | good for business         | historical points of interest | value for money                    | make products that are authentic                |
| environmental standards | standard of living             | advanced technology       | heritage, art and culture     | range of attractions               | make products of high quality                   |
| tolerance               | safety and security            | good infrastructure       | natural beauty                | resort and lodging options         | they create unique products                     |
|                         | would like to live/study there |                           |                               | would like to visit for a vacation | would like to buy products made in that country |
|                         |                                |                           |                               | food                               |   |

Source: (Future Brand 2015, 9)

## **2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

### **2.1 Research methodology and data collection**

Within the scholarly field of International Relations, the study of culture and society as variables possessing gravity of influence, has manifested itself to be academically challenged when it comes to methodological approaches and provision of objective evidence. Many theorists in the field have claimed that social constructivism as a theory, is limited to arguments that are deducted merely from ontologically conceptualised claims (Finnemore, Sikkink 2001, 393). This is abandoning the traditionally established importance of empirical and material evidence and consequently, lacks a coherent argument that could be systematically proven in its validity. An acclaimed suggestion in *Strategies for Research in Constructivist International Relations* (Klotz, Lynch 2014, 17-20), advocates the endeavour of moving toward a more dynamic approach to “discourse analysis”, as this would enable the reduction of comparative interpretations that are based on patterns and norms. This meaning, the integrity of constructivism-based studies can be improved through conducting research that integrates different methodologies, whilst recognising the strengths and weaknesses of each technique, including individual philosophical assumptions.

Therefore, taking into consideration that this particular research is based on the ontological assumptions of constructivist social theory, various methodological instruments will be incorporated for a more systematic analysis. The discipline of cultural research commonly includes gathering of comparative patterns that allow the explanation of correlations between social norms and behaviour (Klotz, Lynch 2014, 17-18). This research is implementing the collection of statistical data from state archives and reliable statistics databases. These will be used to find information that contribute to providing an analytical report on government intentions regarding cultural diplomacy, expenditures/budgets on culture. If spending on this area has increased through the years, it would convey that the government has increased its interest toward this through expanding investments. If budgets for cultural expenditures have increased, outcomes should be evident to a certain extent, and show positive improvements to

national identity building, as otherwise it would be difficult to justify heightened spendings on an area that is not producing visible results.

It may be assumed that it is more important for Estonia to implement cultural diplomacy due to its lower international profile and global influence, thus the need to establish progress in these areas through diplomatic means. However, regardless of the specific sums that are invested into cultural diplomacy, what is most important is that the resources are allocated adequately and used efficiently. This implies for both countries, even if one is prioritising cultural diplomacy more than the other, resource management should still be maintained at the highest possible level of productivity. Therefore, it is crucial to review the implemented methods of cultural diplomacy and analyse the relevant success of these techniques.

This research will attempt to investigate this through the use of an online survey, as this offers easy contact with potential participants. To provide a more in depth contextual understanding of the current impacts of cultural diplomacy between Estonia and Japan, as well as agree/disagree statements, open ended questions will be included in the survey, granting contingency to information that can then be transcribed accordingly. The qualitative data will compliment the empirical findings through clarifying details that elucidate the accounts on the specific encounters with the relevant cultures, and can therefore help to explain which methods of cultural diplomacy have been successful. The sample groups will consist of forty Estonian residents and forty Japanese nationals currently residing in Estonia, providing a proportionate of representation for both groups. The research might have benefitted from having larger sample groups, however, this proved to be difficult due to the small number of Japanese nationals in Estonia, and the complications involving contact availability. The sample group of Estonian residents will involve International Relations students from ages nineteen to twenty-nine, as they will represent individuals that are academically involved international affairs, and are more likely to be informed on subjects related to Estonian politics.

To be able to reach as many individuals for the sample group as possible, the group of Japanese nationals will accept all occupations, and include ages eighteen to seventy. Furthermore, this group will be providing information regarding their personal encounters with Estonian culture previously to their arrival, which will indicate the sources from which they acquired information on, and what affected their image of Estonia. This will be useful in show-



ing whether these were in correlation to the cultural diplomacy carried out by the Estonian government, or whether they were coincidental occurrences. In addition to this, the questions from the survey will allow for a comparison of preconceptions on Estonia, and the perceived reality after arrival to the country. Through this, it will be possible to analyse whether the information that reaches Japan reflects positive intended messages, or whether it is a poor depiction of truth.

Although the survey was able to provide important data regarding the information that is reaching the sample groups in regard to the reflections of the relevant cultures, some issues occurred with the methodology. After completing the survey, a few individuals from both groups reflected that their answers may not be suitable for providing sufficient material for this research, as they believed that their knowledge on the matter was lacking appropriate expertise. The intention of the survey was to acquire individual opinion, rather than solid facts, as this would provide understanding into the comparison between the cultural diplomacy that is implemented, and what actually reaches the public. This should have been communicated to the sample groups more clearly in order to assure them in their contribution. However, this did not prove to be a major obstacle as the participants answered the questions of the survey based on their personal opinions, just as the research intended.

Apart from the disadvantage of having small sample sizes, the information collected should allow to establish a foundation for deducting successful cultural diplomacy methods from non-successful ones, enabling the formulation of suggestions for improvements and alterations. In addition, the qualitative data will provide insight regarding detailed accounts on specific encounters with the culture, and this will be important in distinguishing which form of media is effective for informing the public and communicating messages. For example, as the sample group of Japanese nationals represent individuals that are more likely to travel and emigrate, their views will be useful in revealing factors in the formation of country perceptions and sources for basing these views on.

## **2.2 Current cultural diplomacy**

### **2.2.1 Brief overview of Estonian cultural diplomacy**

Estonia is progressively becoming a world class economy as a result of significant developments and leading innovations in IT technology, science, and medicine. In addition to the outstanding breakthrough that has been established in the knowledge-based industry, Estonians wish to showcase their creative ideas to the international community. National product design is gaining popularity amongst locals and is also drawing the attention of foreigners, attracting external investors and also providing inspiration to others. These are especially the products that are made of recycled materials and designs that incorporate traditional nationalistic symbols, such as the national flower of the cornflower, folk patterns, and silhouettes of Estonian indigenous animals. The brand image of Estonian design can be summarised as taking pride in old traditions, and transforming of the trademarks of Estonian heritage into new innovative ideas that incorporate the modern comforts of simplicity and multi functionality, while remaining ecologically friendly through the use of biological and reused materials.

If a country is advanced in ecologically friendly product design, the value that is communicated can convey respect for the environment and entrepreneurial creativity. This can be an attractive attribute that can aid in reputation building for the country, as well as attract investors, foreign consumers, and tourists. Even so, it is crucial that the message is being communicated efficiently and that it reaches the appropriate audiences to assure the best possible national benefits. Estonia is approaching its one-hundredth anniversary and in addition, is in the progress of considering prospective opportunities for growth and recognition in regard to preparations for the EU Council Presidency in 2018. These are significant events that will shape the future of Estonian foreign affairs as well as the direction of the country's economy. Although the Presidency will certainly increase international awareness of Estonia as a country, the credibility and level of influence will depend on the existing reputation prior to the actual event. Leonard, Stead and Smewing suggest that for successful cultural diplomacy, it is crucial for a state to manage and prove their relevancy, and establish long-term relation-

ships (2002, 7). Therefore, it would be logical for Estonia to deploy cultural diplomacy instruments to already achieve bilateral ties with countries of interest.

Specifically taking these occasions into account, the government of Estonia intends to increase the nation's international presence through initiating and facilitating cultural activities abroad. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture are cooperating in a project that involves the investment of 650,000 euros of financial support for the representatives of Estonian culture, with the purpose to enable these individuals and organisations to reach the international arena (Saar 2016). The funding will be provided to those who prove a valuable contribution to the promotion of Estonia, and demonstrate a potential for beneficial networks with the intended target country. This implying that the government has endorsed the necessity for cultural politics as a means to Estonia's advance in global affairs through creating a strong identity, and believes in the integration of non-government actors in having a role in shaping foreign affairs.

Kadri Jauram (2015), Head of the Foreign Relations Department of the Estonian Ministry of Culture, acknowledges the importance of cultural diplomacy by expressing that

supporting Estonian culture abroad serves several purposes: it helps to boost the export of culture, it has an important role to play from the cultural diplomacy point of view, and it also shapes the image of the Estonian State... The internationalisation of culture enables to raise the competitiveness of Estonia, since culture often opens doors to other fields.

Henceforth, as these "other fields" may be the ultimate objectives of advancement, culture is being confirmed as a key instrument to achieving these ambitions. This explains the increased government expenditure on culture related areas, as between the years of 2007 and 2014, total government spending on recreation, culture and religion grew by 19,34% (OECD 2016). Although this is an overview of a broad functional expenditure, it still provides an understanding of government behaviour in regard to appreciating that investments into this field are necessary.

Currently, there is only Estonian Institute that is dedicated to the promotion of Estonian culture abroad, and six cultural attachés located in Europe (Ministry of Culture 2016). On the other hand, culture is being exported by extensive programs supported by government in-

stitutes, involving the funding, but also providing assistance in networking opportunities for contributing organisations. Furthermore, the establishment of the 2020 cultural policy was initiated with the specific purpose of improving national image as well as developing co-operational relations, and involves the promotion of market expansion into crossing European borders and reaching geographically distant areas.

One of the countries of interest is Japan, and in order to make progress in increasing ties and cooperating on new levels, it is important to develop mutual trust and respect. This is where the role of cultural diplomacy takes new priority and becomes an instrument for the development of bilateral relations. The Estonian Embassy in Tokyo was opened in 1996, and is mostly functioning as a business facilitator and consular organ. There is a lack of evident cultural promotion by the Embassy, missing an opportunity for cultural diplomacy benefits and introducing Estonia directly in the Japanese environment. Unfortunately, the website of the Embassy is outdated and does not provide any relevant news from after the year 2007. This might be a negative discouragement for individuals who may be seeking information on Estonia, and not leave an attractive impression. Although there is an absence of cultural promotion by the Embassy in Japan, the government of Estonia does devote its efforts toward building opportunities between the two countries.

In April 2016, an Estonian start-up company, Lingvist, opened its office in Tokyo (Lõugas 2016), and officially proved that there is an existing market for Estonian products and services that is still undiscovered and with great potential. In addition to this, Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas visited Japan on a delegation mission, along with twenty-four Estonian enterprises interested in new partnerships (Ärileht 2016). These developments are a clear indication of progress toward strengthening ties between the two countries, and shows promise for a future of beneficial co-operation. With the support of the government, Estonian entrepreneurs are given new opportunities to network with potential Japanese investors, and are provided with an advantage to meet individuals and organisations through events specifically designed for the purposes of strategic communication. Nevertheless, the communication could be improved if the people in the two countries were more aware of each others culture and community, building familiarity and therefore strengthening economic affiliations between the two countries.

### **2.2.2 Brief overview of Japanese cultural diplomacy**

Japanese foreign policy's section on the implementation of public diplomacy is primarily focused on security issues, promoting co-operation with other states and non-government organisations for resolving regional and international issues. This is reflected in the 2015 Diplomatic Bluebook, where an extensive emphasis is placed on the strategic partnerships for achieving influence and economic advantages. The ambition is to increase these benefits through the trust that is being established from the internationally publicised Japanese involvement in humanitarian and security related missions. This can help to gain global attention for achieving other Japanese foreign policy intensions, such as “ [...]to double foreign companies' direct investment in Japan to 35 trillion yen by 2020...it is crucial to develop a governmental framework including the establishment of a system necessary for the improvement of the investment environment in Japan, responding to the needs of foreign companies” (Cultural Diplomacy 2015, 306). Therefore, it is clear that Japan is seeking the interest of economic partnerships abroad, and with Estonia having made substantial developments in cyber-security and IT-technology, it would be logical for both to cooperate in order to achieve common gains. In this case, the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy becomes a crucial element in establishing mutual trust, creating positive image perceptions, and gaining trust in each other's cultural values — a necessary motivational factor for constituting a potential for long-term partnerships

As previously mentioned, Japan has already achieved an exceptional level of global presence, and established a strong identity that is well known for traditional cultural values as well as achievements in science and technology. Some cultural writers such as McDouglas (2002, 45), described a massive shift in Japanese influence, claiming that despite economic failures, the nation has excelled in the export of pop culture on a massive scale and hence positioned itself in the role of a “cultural superpower”. As these cultural products are extensively gaining attraction from a global market, it does not prove that this is in any way beneficial for diplomatic advances. As these are distributed through strong market forces and consumer preferences, not intentionally a result of promotion by the Japanese government, it does not provide sufficient interest toward Japanese traditional culture and targets only a specific audi-

ence (Lam, 2007, 350). On the other hand, the Japanese Embassy in Estonia has been supporting the annual Japanese Anime Film Festival for already ten years, and this is gaining local popularity with each year, bringing Japanese pop-culture under public attention. However, there are criticisms in regard to the popularisation of the new Japanese cultural products, such as *anime*, *manga* and *J-pop*, as some argue that this is not a truthful representation of the society (Watanabe 2012), and is reflecting artificial commercialistic values that are not traditional to the true culture. Therefore, it could be said that this is undermining the traditional Japanese values and presenting a false external image of a highly consumeristic artificial society

Although the Japanese government is attempting to utilise global fascination with these specific products, there are limitations that are obstructing the success of the effort for cultural diplomacy. Despite the fact that Japan has successfully accomplished global influence in regard to culture, with extensive influence on trade and economics, there are still unresolved issues, and some of these are embedded in incoherent public diplomacy policies. McConnell recognises a key matter of concern in the structure of policy instruments that have been implemented with the idea to internationalise and improve the reputation of Japan. With the example of Japan Exchange and Teaching program (JET), the government project lacks communication between the different organs that are involved, resulting in the communication of unintended messages (2015, 18). This shows the importance of continuing maintenance and management work of cultural diplomacy, as even though Japanese reputation may be positive, errors in method can be destructive and undo any previously successful outcomes. Although Japanese government expenditure on culture, recreation and religion has increased by 6,2% between 2007 and 2014 (OECD 2016), and the government acknowledges the need to use soft power for gaining more influence. As highlighted in the 2015 Diplomatic Bluebook, Japan officially recognises that strategic information communication for the promotion of political views and has highlighted this as a justification for the budget for cultural diplomacy for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The government has highlighted key methods to gain the goals mentioned above (Cultural Diplomacy 2015, 306):

- 1) education programs in which Japanese language is promoted, information on studying in Japan is to be provided, youth educational exchange programs initiated, and alumni network building through diplomatic missions;
- 2) increasing Japanese presence in international sports, especially in regard to 2020 Olympics in Tokyo;
- 3) expand the opportunities for cultural exchange programs and increase support for researchers of Japan studies;
- 4) promotion of Japanese traditional and pop-culture as well as gain awareness and understanding for foreign cultures.

Currently, some of the highlighted objectives have been introduced in Estonia as a means of cultural diplomacy through the support of the Japanese Embassy in Tallinn. For example, Estonian students are offered the opportunity for an exchange program financed by the Japanese Government; there are various language programs offered to different levels of education, and Japanese art exhibitions are organised with the initiative of the Embassy in Tallinn. In addition, Estonian culture has been acknowledged in various ways, such as financial support for the construction of the Tallinn Music Academy by the Japanese government, and *Praemium Imperiale 2014* award presented to the Estonian Maestro Arvo Pärt (Embassy of Japan in Estonia 2016). However, although these efforts are likely to be positive in regard to encouragement for cultural and social bridge building between the two countries, the results also depend on how much information realistically reaches the public. It is important that these efforts are visible from both sides, without giving a negative impression of intrusive government behaviour in social affairs. Thus, when an Estonian concert in Japan is financed and supported by the Estonian government, publicity and reach of the event is equally as important as the event itself. Therefore, this research attempts to draw a comparison between the actual initiatives of cultural diplomacy by both countries, and how much these efforts reach the public attention.

### 3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Survey results

The results collected from the surveys have proven to be useful in explaining the information flow of cultural awareness of the two respective countries, as well as provided insight into the relative identity perceptions (see Table 3 and Table 4). What is particularly noteworthy is that the majority of participants from the sample group of Estonian students, perceive Japan as an important partner for Estonia, but do not believe this to be the case *vice versa*. This may be an indication of negative self-bias due to a local impression of not possessing valuable global relevance due to various factors, such as small population size, area proportion and political positioning. On the other hand, this can also communicate a view of Japan as being a dominant actor and not necessarily requiring the economic and political alliance for succeeding in its ambitions.

Table 3. Survey results for Japanese nationals residing in Estonia

|  | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) |
|--|-----------|--------------|
| There is enough information available about Estonia in Japan                                   | 25        | 75           |
| The information about Estonia in Japan reflects your understanding of reality                  | 50        | 50           |
| Estonia is an important partner for Japan  | 75        | 25           |
| Japan is an important partner for Estonia  | 75        | 25           |
| Japan finances cultural projects in Estonia  | 75        | 25           |
| Estonia finances cultural projects in Japan  | 25        | 75           |
| It is important to have educational exchange programs between Estonia and Japan                | 100       |              |
| There are enough opportunities for exchange programs between young people of the two countries | 25        | 75           |

Source: (Compiled by the author on the basis of research survey)



However, both sample groups agreed that Japan plays a meaningful role for Estonia, indicating that the partnership is a valuable asset for at least one side, and shows that co-operation would be justifiable goal to work towards. In addition, the majority of Japanese participants believed co-operation to be equally important for both countries. Although the Estonian group does not concur to the same opinion, the likelihood of this being a reflection of poor self identity perception is a factor that can alter the direction of behaviour. Nonetheless, it can still be deduced that a partnership between Estonia and Japan would contribute advantages to both countries, and proceeding forward with this would be in their good interest.

Table 4. Survey results for students of International Relations residing in Estonia

|  | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) |
|--|-----------|--------------|
| There is enough information available about Japan in Estonia                                   | 40        | 60           |
| Estonia is an important partner for Japan  | 30        | 70           |
| Japan is an important partner for Estonia  | 85        | 15           |
| Japan finances cultural projects in Estonia  | 65        | 35           |
| Estonia finances cultural projects in Japan  | 35        | 65           |
| It is important to have educational exchange programs between Estonia and Japan                | 100       | 0            |
| There are enough opportunities for exchange programs between young people of the two countries | 30        | 70           |

Source: (Compiled by the author on the basis of research survey)

Furthermore, on the basis of the findings it can be said that having educational exchange programs between Estonia and Japan is outmost crucial, as 100% of both sample groups agreed with the statement. Despite the acknowledged importance of this, the reflection of the sample groups shows a general opinion that there are not enough opportunities in regard to educational exchanges, or at least not that the public is aware of. Even though the reality may differ, as there are such programs available, the benefits would be enhanced if the efforts of initiating and creating educational exchange programs would be more visible and thus, available to the public.

On the other hand, it could be argued that those who are interested in such opportunities will have access to this information through the relevant sources, such as internet and Embassy consultations. Yet, the individuals who would potentially have interest in these programs, and have not been exposed to any information regarding these, may miss out on opportunities due to the lack of public promotion. Therefore, the findings from the survey are practical in deducting one specific error in the methods of cultural diplomacy, this being poor communication efforts that lead to disadvantageous information gaps.

Another finding that can be derived from the survey results is the perception of government support toward cultural projects. More specifically, the majority opinion remarks on a lack of support from the Estonian government toward such programmes and this is reflected in the answers from both sample groups. This is another indication of communication errors, that may have been overlooked when composing a methodology for diplomatic cultural intentions. This can be a result of preeminent focus being placed on the implementation of the actual projects, and thus undermining the importance for publicising and raising awareness on these endeavours. As discussed previously when reviewing the cultural diplomacy of both country in regard to each other, there are various cultural projects that are funded by both governments, and are intended to integrate individuals and organisations in the cultural network development. Even though the results show the subjective opinions of individual experience, it may be true that the efforts toward cultural exchange could be enhanced and publicised to a broader audience.

The qualitative data has been useful in the analysis of the general opinion regarding the level of importance in the bilateral relations of Estonia and Japan, and providing important information on clarifying the existence of a lack of information in respect to the cultural activities that take place between the two countries. In addition to the empirical data that was transferred into relevant statistical evidence, the survey also incorporated open-ended questions, which provided an opportunity to extend an explanation of the answers and thus, present qualitative information. This proved efficient in giving in depth insight into the different sources that people are gaining cultural information from, and illustrated expectations and impressions based on experiences. For example, when looking at the answers from the sample group of Japanese nationals that reside in Estonia, it can be concluded that these individuals

were not exposed to, if at all, to any information on Estonia or its culture before arrival. The majority described their encounters with Estonian culture to be very little, or from dialogue with acquaintances, family, and through university networks. Answers included statements such as “encountered a female student from Estonia in my university,” “mainly from family,” and “media”. There was very little reference to any association to cultural diplomacy initiated projects, apart from study opportunities that are available between Japan and Estonia. In addition to this, when asked about their expectations on Estonia before arrival, the answers were either negative connotations, using key words such as “cold” and “poor”; or stating that they lacked any clear assumptions about the country. On the other hand, when asked to compare their experience in Estonia and their prior expectations, there were more positive remarks than negative ones. A common reference was the surprise on Estonian advancements in technology, especially in IT convenience and moreover, frequent references to the friendliness of people were made, and the beauty of the country despite its small size. Some negative observations included the impression of poverty and wide class differences, including issues with integration in regard to the Russian population. Overall, the majority of accounts reflected positivity toward the living conditions in Estonia, and expressed surprise in their view of reality.

The contrast between expectations prior to arrival and after living in Estonia, reflects yet again an information gap that can cause negative outcomes. Although the individuals from the sample group lacked knowledge on the country, they still decided to emigrate regardless of this. However, there can be extensive opportunity costs of not providing sufficient information on Estonia, as enhancement of cultural export to Japan and implementing efficient methods for promotion, can ultimately establish higher country awareness. This would be beneficial for not only tourism and the movement of people, but for instigating larger interest in Estonia and producing opportunities in other fields. Therefore, from interpretations from the survey results, it can be asserted that there is a shortage of information on Estonia available in Japan, and this is providing distorted and incoherent perceptions about the country.

On the contrary to the information on Estonia in Japan, the survey results demonstrated strong cultural diplomacy tactics adopted by Japan. The other sample group disclosed a more positive selection of representations in experiences regarding Japanese culture, as there was a vast variety of answers that included aspects of a diverse range of cultural encounters.

The accounts included positive perceptions such as noticing *Sakura* trees by the Japanese Embassy in Tallinn, as well as drawing attention to the Japanese Anime Film Festival, and various other Embassy funded events: including art exhibitions, open lectures, and educational opportunities. This shows that these events have reached public attention, and have even established building specific associations that relate to Japanese culture, such as perceiving *Sakura* trees as a traditional symbol. Establishing familiarity with culture and values is the utmost important first objective in cultural diplomacy, as this is the crucial step for identity building and for accomplishing credibility. Based on the results of the survey, it may be implied that currently in Estonia, there is a wide spectrum of information available on Japan, and some of this can most likely be accredited to the efforts of the Embassy and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although these conclusions are interpretations of opinions based on small sample groups, this information can be valuable in further research and analysis, providing a foundation for development of cultural diplomacy and establishment of bilateral relations. This data can be utilised for composing recommendations based on current information, and for conceiving ideas on areas that require improvements.

### **3.2 Recommendations based on the results**

The results of the survey provided a few significant indicators or dysfunctions in the current methods of diplomacy, on which the acquired knowledge can be utilised for in developing functional alterations in techniques for improving the cultural relations between Estonia and Japan. As reflected from the results that provided data regarding the reach of information and availability of cultural experience opportunities, there is a significant lack in the provision of government support in reinforcing publicity. In addition, there is not much evidence that there is enough action taken to promote Estonian culture in Japan, despite funding national musicians to hold concerts in Japan, and instigating educational exchange opportunities. Although there are some efforts to make Estonia attractive through the display of cultural values, it is not made publicly visible and thus, does not reach a wide audience. As a consequence, there is a missed opportunity for increased interests, causing a gap of potential in various fields.

Heightened country awareness and Estonian identity creation in Japan, can be established through changes in current approaches. The emphasis on economic partnerships co-operation in science and technology development has taken current priority, neglecting the need to strengthen ties through social means. The existing cultural projects are not under the public attention as they are not promoted appropriately and therefore, the resources are partly wasted as not all benefits are achieved. Taking this into consideration, it can be suggested that for improved transfer of cultural information, the method of diplomacy should be adjusted for balancing the selected messages as well as choosing how these are communicated. As it is evident that Estonian businesses are interested in the Japanese market, considering the previously mentioned delegation to Tokyo, they might consider agreeing on a unified image that they will convey in regard to national values. This can be aided through co-operation with government institutions and dialogue between the organisations.

Recognising that there is a lack of familiarity with the Estonian culture, as also shown by the results of the survey, can be used as an advantage. The organisations that will potentially form new partnerships in Japan can significantly contribute to building a strong identity for Estonia, through the instigation of a pre-planned agreement on specifically picked national symbols and cultural characteristics. This is due to the notion that there is not much previous knowledge on the country in Japan and hence, increasing the likelihood for the lack of existing prejudices. Therefore, this can be used as an opportunity to strategically form a desired image of Estonia, through choosing cultural messages that would be specifically attractive to the Japanese society. For this reason, the suggestion for improving Estonian cultural diplomacy in Japan is to increase the emphasis on public awareness and publicity, and collaboration between Estonian organisations and relevant government institutions.

When discussing the cultural diplomacy of Japan in Estonia, the evidence provided in the survey conveyed positive assurances of a successful methodology. Japan has already demonstrated a variety of cultural attributes, and achieved a level of social connection to these specific products or behaviours in affiliation to the national identity. On the other hand, despite that there may already be high country awareness of Japan in Estonia, a progressive new approach could prove advantageous in increasing the relevance toward Japan as a country of interest in regard to tourism, and potential business opportunity. The first step of cultural

diplomacy has been reached, as Estonian residents can distinguish relevant Japanese culture. Yet, that Japan is more than merely a cultural superpower, and in order to demonstrate its relevance, specific features should be highlighted and more detailed connections drawn to the common interests of the two countries. This would prove that despite distance and social foundations, Japan can provide a beneficial partner to Estonia. For this reason, the possible alteration that can be applied to the current methodology is to increase attention to possible collaborative projects between the two countries, and create realistic associations between Japan and Estonia through public events such as open lectures on future possibilities.

In conclusion, despite the appearances of a successful cultural diplomacy by Japan in Estonia, outdated methods are merely reassuring already established national identity but not providing enough leeway for progress. Developing new procedures that would reduce the gap between the two cultures and demonstrate the existence of common interests, could institute enthusiasm for visiting Japan, and for co-operation potentials. This also partly applies for the cultural diplomacy of Estonia, as the ultimate goal would also be to increase interest in the country and attract tourists and investors. However, Estonia might consider increasing its efforts to raise recognition through deploying more public events that would exhibit Estonian culture in Japan. Although information on Estonia is easily accessible through the internet, it would be useful to achieve an introductory level of awareness to instigate further interest.

## CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this research was to provide evidence for the justification of cultural diplomacy, as government investments in this method would be valid when it is implemented efficiently. Considering that the system is a socially constructed notion that is conceived on the foundation of individual experiences and abstract cognitive interpretations on which configuration is contingent on environmental stimulation. Ergo, behaviour could be altered through environmental modifications, as this would change the social circumstances through exposure to new values, and consequently lead to a transformation of ideas based on interpretations of the surrounding conditions. As decision making is influenced by the construction of social affiliations and values, it means that behaviour is purely conditional. Therefore, exposure and familiarity to attractive cultural elements can facilitate a shift in intellectual patterns and through time, fundamentally transform behavioural attributes. Under these circumstances, it can be suggested that through introducing selected cultural attributes to a specific state of interest, it is possible to strategically modify behaviour to gain social, economic, and political leverage. Based on this concept of social constructivist theory, cultural diplomacy can be a powerful instrument in achieving national advantages.

However, the mere implementation of the method is not enough to reach the potential benefits. There are particularly important factors that need to be considered in each separate case. The targeted country should be relevant to achieving sustainable advantages, and not chosen purely on the basis of non-applicable attributes. In addition, once the intended country is chosen, it should be delicately calculated which specific cultural messages will be communicated, picked accordingly to assumed preferences of the selected country and the expected objectives. The focus of this research was to analyse the effectiveness of the cultural diplomacy mechanisms between Estonia and Japan, as the two countries have recently demonstrated growing interest in bilateral relations in the fields of science and technological development. Therefore, increasing efficiency in cultural diplomacy can be used as an instrument to support progress in the inter-state relations between the two countries.

The results of the survey for this research reflected that this has been effective to a certain extent. High accomplishments have been achieved in the case of Japan deploying cultural diplomacy in Estonia, as a wide variety of cultural products have been promoted, catering to a range of audiences, and establishing country familiarity through unique cultural attributes. On the other hand, information providing an understanding of Estonian culture in Japan, is lacking due to dysfunctions in the utilised methods of cultural diplomacy. This has led to knowledge gaps and misunderstandings concerning identity perceptions, and missing opportunities in potential interests in the country. Thus, Estonia needs to increase efforts in implementing more programs to introduce national traditions and values in Japan, and through this gain public attention. Specific cultural characteristics that would appeal to Japanese people should be selected for this process in order to ensure that the information communicated is relevant and would stimulate highest possible interests. Estonian organisations seeking partnerships in Japan should cooperate through the help of government institutions, and work together in the procedure of choosing these cultural characteristics. Through government initiation of cultural programs, and collaboration between the different actors, a more cohesive method would be produced, increasing efficiency and assuring that resources are allocated sufficiently.

When it comes to diplomatic relations between Estonia and Japan, there is a heavy focus on business and science based network development. This is supported by both governments through allocating financial resources as well as human resources, as both countries are providing assistance to individuals and organisations through their respective Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is clear, that the co-operation between the two countries is perceived as important, hence the governments attention toward creating economic bridges. However, for enhancing relationships further, each should prove efforts for cultural communication in order to establish credibility and attain the trust and respect of the other. The instrument to achieve this is cultural diplomacy. This method integrates non-government actors in identity building and creation of positive association through social affiliations, and therefore can reach the capacity of influence. In conclusion, Estonia and Japan have shown potential in becoming successful innovation partners, whilst both require modifications of methods used for cultural diplomacy to ensure that the relationship has a solid foundation and sustainability.



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