

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN EFFECT:
A MULTINATIONAL STUDY OF HOW
BENCHMARKING CONSTRUCTS THE FINNISH
NATIONAL IMAGE**

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Author: Ryan Hemingway

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Supervisor: Dr. Christian Stutz



**JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ**

ABSTRACT

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The Country of Origin Effect has a substantial influence over the beliefs and behaviours of consumers around the world. Therefore our perceptions of countries around the world plays a significant role in our consumer habits. This thesis explores the construction of national image within the context of the Country of Origin Effect. The premise of this study is that the relationship between country specific shared social reality and a collectively perceived national image will ultimately influences the Country of Origin Effect itself. This study employs discourse analysis of media texts from leading outlets in the USA, UK and Australia in order to explore the discursive construction of the Finnish national image. The results present an overview of how Finland is portrayed by international media as a progressive, innovative and entrepreneurial country. The study also posits a new contribution to the existing Country of Origin literature in the form of a benchmarking phenomenon. The benchmarking phenomenon identifies idealisation and critical self-inspection as two discursive mechanisms that construct the Finnish national image. The implications of this thesis aid in exploring the underdeveloped aspect of the Country of Origin Effect that is the construction of national image.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

The global economy has never been more competitive. Now more than ever, the average consumer is spoiled for choice when it comes to the products, services and brands at their disposal. This is also why now more than ever, companies are leaning on their national identities and leveraging that national image for their own gain. The Country of Origin of a product, service or brand is a highly influential factor in the consumer evaluation process. While current trends are certainly moving towards more nationalistic product preferences, consumers are more conscious of where their imported products originate. Consequently, a strong national image attached to a product or brand can be the difference between success and failure.

Nations are actively crafting their own brand, attempting to paint a picture to the world about what they have to offer. For some nations, their image is stereotypically engrained into our popular culture. Think of German engineering, Japanese electronics, French wine and American entertainment. Over years of economic activity and production, these nations have forged a strong reputation in certain industries. However, not every nation has a so stereotypically identifiable reputation. This raises the question of how national images are created.

Country of Origin has been a popular topic of research and discussion for decades (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002; Schooler, 1965). Research has shown that Country of Origin does indeed have an effect on consumer behaviour (C. Min Han, 1989). Known as the Country of Origin Effect, the national image of a country has been found to influence consumer beliefs which in turn influences their purchasing decisions. However, what is of interest to this study is the precursor to the Country of Origin Effect, that is, how national image can be constructed in different national settings. We each live in a shared social reality, defined by the institutions around us. This reality inherently influences our world view and our collective perception of other countries.

Finland, and its national image, is to be the subject of this study. Finland has emerged in the 21st century as an innovative and progressive nation competing on the global stage (Ryan, 2008). The reinvention of their economy from agricultural and forestry based to a high tech, has resulted in some of the world's most influential and valuable brands: Nokia, Kone and Supercell. Some of these brands, such as Nokia, have played a major role in shaping the reputation of Finnish industries like technology and IT. As a rising tide lifts all boats, Nokia demonstrates the value of influential brands to the national image, just as a national image can be a source of value to a brand. This study seeks to explore the way in which Finland's national image is constructed by the media in different

national settings. Using discourse analysis of media texts, this study will develop the core themes used by the media to construct the Finnish image in their respective settings. Using the results of the study and with reference to the existing literature, this paper will attempt to make theoretical propositions that explain how, through the use of media, societies construct a collectively perceived national image of Finland.

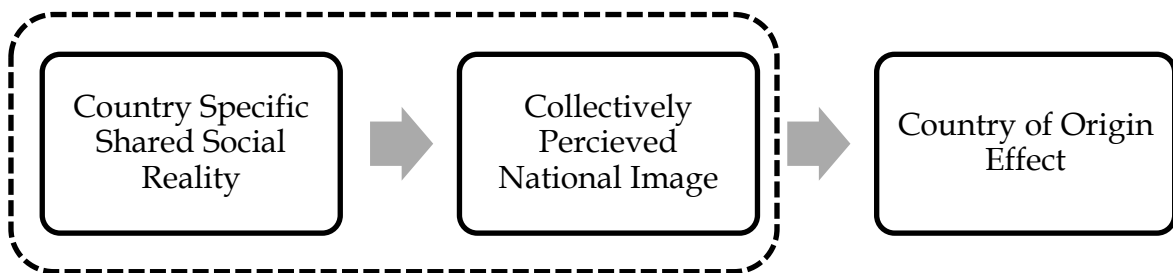
There is a paucity of research on national image in management literature in general (Vaara et al., 2019). This is especially evident within a Country of Origin context which has seen relatively little development conceptually in comparison to empirical studies (Magnusson & Westjohn, 2011). If it has already been established that national image influences consumer behaviour (C. Min Han, 1989; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002), then it is just as important to examine how that national image is ultimately constructed. Media, the people who produce that media and the societies in which it is disseminated and consumed are inherently different around the world (Parker, 2014). This is therefore an interesting phenomena to study since a better understanding of the relationship between shared social realities and the collective perception of national images may allow international managers and marketers to better anticipate the reception of their products and brands across the globe.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis attempts to contribute to the Country of Origin literature by exploring the underdeveloped perspective of how national images are constructed around the world. It could be stated that national image construction is a precursor to the ultimate effects of Country of Origin phenomena. While previous quantitative studies have attempted to empirically measure various Country of Origin Effects themselves (Magnusson & Westjohn, 2011), this study considers the mechanisms by which these national images are created or perpetuated.

This thesis proposes a causal relationship between country specific shared social reality and a collectively perceived national image that ultimately influences the Country of Origin Effect (Figure 1). This relationship between social reality and collectively perceived national image can be explored through the lens of public discourse which is why media texts serve as units of analysis. Therefore, it is important to begin by laying out the foundations of the Country of Origin literature and the Country of Origin Effect. From there, we can essentially work backwards to identify and discuss the factors and elements that influence the phenomena.

Figure 1: Causal Relationship



2.1 Country of Origin Effect

Country of Origin (COO) has previously been defined in both broad and narrow terms. At its narrowest, COO equates to the 'made in' label and refers to the country of manufacture or assembly (Rashid et al., 2016; Nagashima, 1970). Equally as narrowly, it has also been defined as the country in which the corporate headquarters are located (Johansson et al., 1985). The trouble with these narrow definitions are that in today's globalized economy the location of corporate headquarters, the origin of the raw materials, the country of design and the country of manufacture

may all be different. Manufacturing and assembly alone often occur in multiple countries making it impossible to determine a single Country of Origin (Bartosik-Purgat, 2018).

Thakor & Kohli (1996) expanded the definition of COO by introducing the concept of brand origin. They argue that previous definitions of COO, which equate to 'made in' labels, are only concerned with the Country of Origin at the product level. Therefore, they offer a more inclusive definition of brand origin as "the place, region or country to which the brand is perceived to belong by its target consumers" (Thakor & Kohli, 1996, p. 27). Notably, this definition introduces regional origins in addition to national origins. However, most consequential is the use of the term 'perceived'. Thakor and Kohli noted that ultimately, the effect that the COO has on the consumer is to influence their decision to purchase one product over another. As such, in that moment of transaction, the actual place of origin is irrelevant and the consumers perceived origin is what will influence the purchase decision (Thakor & Kohli, 1996, p. 28).

For this reason, this paper along with other scholarly articles, prefers a broader definition that COO is the national identity that is perceived to be attached to a product, service or brand. Within this national identity is a representation or an image of the country. It is informed by stereotypes, representative products, industrial and economic development, history, politics and tradition (Nagashima, 1970). Consequently, this image will vary across the world.

The Country of Origin Effect (COE) is the influence that a country's image has on consumers when evaluating and assessing products or brands (Schooler, 1965; Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Nagashima, 1970; Bartosik-Purgat, 2018). Research suggests that this COE evaluation process is inherent amongst all consumers and is automatic and beyond our control (Liu & Johnson, 2005). COO can effect consumer behaviour in terms of quality assessment, brand evaluation and brand equity (Iacob, 2016). This ultimately manifests in the consumer's decision to purchase one product over another.

The theory behind how COO effects consumer decision making is that when consumers do not have specific knowledge about a product, they draw from secondary data to evaluate the product or brand to make a decision on the purchase (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; C. Min Han, 1989; Ryan, 2008). While many factors contribute to that evaluation process, price being one of them, COO plays a significant role. Studies have shown that the consumers existing knowledge and perception about the perceived Country of Origin plays a role in the decision to choose one product or brand over another (C. Min Han, 1989). According to Han's study there are two distinct cognitive states in which national image effects consumer behaviour.

First, when the consumer has an understanding or can make comparisons to other products produced in the country. For example, a consumer knows that German cars have a reputation for being reliable. They are aware of and value German car brands like BMW, Mercedes, Audi and Porsche. Therefore, they decide to purchase a car from Volkswagen, rather than Toyota, because they apply the reputation of the other German brands onto the Volkswagen.

The second scenario is when the consumer has no specific knowledge of the products typically originating from a country. This scenario has been dubbed the Halo effect in which consumers use general knowledge of the Country of Origin to make relatively arbitrary judgments of the product or brand. For example, Norway is generally known to be an arctic country, proficient in winter sports. From that national image, a consumer may infer that a ski jacket from a Norwegian brand is better than a ski jacket from a South African brand. In both cases, national image directly effects the consumer beliefs about product attributes which in turn influences their evaluation of the products and ultimately their decision to purchase.

2.2 Collectively Perceived National Image

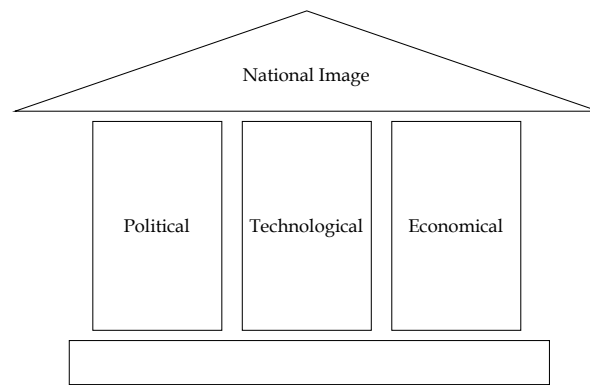
This raises the issue for consideration in this thesis. If national image has such an effect on consumer behaviour, how then is that national image formed? It is important to differentiate between national identity and national image. A national identity can manifest in many different ways. It is held by the individual or the collective as a means of belonging to a greater community (Vaara et al., 2019). National image on the other hand, is how others perceive a national identity. It could be described as the projection of that national identity.

The image of a country is ultimately in the eye of the beholder and will therefore change depending on which country is being viewed from where (Bartosik-Purgat, 2018; Semaan et al., 2019). For example, due of historical, cultural and political differences, the United States' image will be very different in Australia than it is in Iran. The subjective nature of national image can be summarised by Anderson (1983) who famously describes nations and their national image as 'imagined communities'. This effectively conceptualizes the abstract nature of a national image.

The challenge, therefore, of any study seeking to explore this domain is how to define, measure and capture such an abstract phenomenon. This study starts with the premise that a nation's image is the sum of all its parts. Martin and

Eroglu defined it as “the total of all descriptive, inferential and informational beliefs one has about a particular country” (Martin & Eroglu, 1993, p. 193). This could include economic development, cultural stereotypes, geography, history, culture and other social factors. National image is also a multidimensional construct (C. Min Han, 1989; Martin & Eroglu, 1993). While the list of factors influencing national image are practically endless, Martin & Eroglu (1993) identified three dimensions to national image which serve to capture the collective. These dimensions are displayed in Figure 2 below as pillars upon which national image rests. These dimension are Political, Technological and Economic. For the purposes of this thesis, these dimensions serve as a framework to measuring the evidently elusive and abstract construct that is national image.

Figure 2: Dimensions of National Image



On an individual basis, national image perception will be influence by personal first hand experiences such as travel. However, a collectively perceived national image is one that is institutionalised among the collective society. The question of how to examine that collectively perceived image has been considered in previous research. In their analysis of the construction of the Austrian identity, De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak note that through discourse, a national image is “produced, reproduced, transformed and destructed”(De Cillia et al., 1999, p 153). That is to say, that through our communication to and about a nation, we construct and modify our image of that nation. They argue that an imagined national image becomes a social reality in the form of beliefs when subjects of influence such as politicians, intellectuals and media, publicly discourse through channels such as newspaper, television, schools or politics (De Cillia et al., 1999). Therefore, it is through media that this study will explore the collectively perceived national image.

2.3 Country Specific Shared Social Reality

It's clear from the COO research that products and brands carry with them a national image and that this national image plays an important role in the consumer evaluation process. This thesis attempts to contribute to the understanding of the COE by considering how consumers might arrive at their perception of a foreign national image by exploring the construction of a collectively perceived national image. To reach this ultimate destination, we must examine country specific shared social reality.

Social reality has been defined as "the process whereby people continuously create, through their actions and interactions, a shared reality that is experienced as objectively factual or subjectively meaningful" (Wallace & Wolf, 1999, p. 277). A leading authority on the construction of social reality is John Searle. He best describes social reality by comparison to what he terms brute facts and institutional facts (Searle, 1995, p. 2). Brute facts are universal and objective. In contrast, institutional facts are those that rely on human creation.

This study seeks to apply the concept of a shared social reality in a more practical way, rather than philosophical. As previously noted, national image is an abstract concept and that is because nations themselves are socially constructed institutions. Social reality is predicated on the idea that our perception of reality is informed, guided and constrained by the institutions that surround us. Institutions such as government, media, marriage, religion, language or education. This concept can be difficult to comprehend due to its invisible nature (Searle, 1995). We are each born into a world in which these institutions have already long been established. We take for granted the fact that these institution and influences on our lives only exist because the collective community continues to perpetuate their existence.

Searle places particular emphasis on the role of language in the construction of a shared social reality. He argues that in order to establish and maintain the institutions that make up our societies, we must be able to communicate ideas and thoughts in a way that transcends barriers of distance and time (Searle, 1995). Afterall, what is more important, the court house or the doctrine of the rule of law. In practical terms, one should consider how difficult it would be to communicate such a complex and nuanced idea as a national image, without the use of language. Searle goes as far as saying that, "some thoughts are of such complexity that it would be empirically impossible to think them without being in possession of symbols" (Searle, 1995, p. 64). Thus, language is both the tool and the building blocks from which our shared social reality is created.

Our worldview is just one element of our shared social reality. Inherent to each country are the institutions that influence their reality. The media are one of those substantial institutions of significant influence and outreach. It therefore stands to reason that through the media, our shared social realities shape and influence our collective perception of the world. This ultimately contributes to, if not forms the basis of, our collective perception of other countries. This therefore supports the use of media texts as a unit of data to explore the relationship between shared social reality and collectively perceived national image. Through discourse analysis of media texts, one can investigate the mechanisms through which societies construct a view of the world and a more specifically a national image.

3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis employs discourse analysis of media texts from the leading outlets of the USA, UK and Australia to explore how the media, as a social institution, constructs the Finnish national image in different national settings. The purpose is to identify the recurring and diverging themes that appear throughout the media coverage. By identifying the Finnish national image and the discursive mechanisms at work, this thesis seeks to make a theoretical proposition as to how national images are constructed by foreign media.

3.1 Discourse Analysis as a Method

Discourse analysis offers a framework through which we can conceptualise and analyse abstract phenomena such as institutions and societies (Phillips et al., 2008). Discourse shapes our understanding of reality and yet our reality in turn shapes our discourse (Langley & Abdallah, 2011). Because of this back and forth tension, discourse analysis represents a living account of our shared social reality. Our discourse changes and adapts as our society changes and adapts.

Parker (2014) provides a popular definition of discourse as being “a system of statements which constructs an object” (Parker, 2014, p. 5). In order to conceptualise how and where this discourse manifests, we must define the term ‘texts’. According to Parker, discourse can be found at work within texts. In this respect, texts are more than just words written on a page. Texts can take any form whether it be writing, speech, image, music or symbol (Langley & Abdallah, 2011; Oswick et al., 2000). Discourse is therefore more than a single text. It is a collection of texts and the process through which they are produced, disseminated and interpreted (Langley & Abdallah, 2011; Parker, 2014; Phillips et al., 2008).

Discourse itself is shaped by existing social structures (Fairclough, 1992). For example, in many countries around the world, students address their teachers by their title Mr, Mrs, Professor and so on. This demonstrates the established social hierarchy of the student teacher relationship. However, discourse as a practice has the potential to influence and modify these structures (Fairclough, 1992). For instance, starting a conversation to discuss why students must submissively address teachers in such a formal way may provoke a change to that established social hierarchy. First at the institutional level and perhaps later on a national scale. Consequently, discourse is a source of data that simultaneously reflects, influences and constructs socially abstract phenomena.

In the case of this study, national image is the abstract phenomena of interest. As defined by Anderson (1983), national image is imagined and therefore the construction of a national image is sufficiently abstract that only through analysing the way we talk about it, can we gain an insight into its existence.

Discourse analysis has been employed before as a method for investigating national identity construction (De Cillia et al., 1999; Hernández, 2008). Hernández (2008) used discourse analysis of newspaper articles to explore the construction of the Gibraltar national identity during their 2002 sovereignty referendum. De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak (1999) employed discourse analysis of historical texts to analyse the construction of the Austrian national identity.

Discourse analysis as a method of research in management and strategy studies has gained legitimacy in recent years with works that attempt to dispel the presumption that discourse analysis is only a tool for other social sciences such (Parker, 2014; Vaara et al., 2019). This thesis will demonstrate the value of discourse analysis in conceptualising how a social construct such as national image can be developed in different national settings.

Outlined below in Table 1 is an overview of the methodological steps taken in this analysis. Adapted from the works of Aguinis, Ramani and Alabduljader (2018), the table present a systematic framework for identifying literature, articles and other content for the purpose of analysis. Each step and process is later explored in greater detail.

Table 1: The Methodological Process

Steps	Process	Description
Step 1	Research Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the overarching goal of the study • Set parameters to limit the scope and focus the study. This includes identifying a time period in which articles may be gathered and in the case of this thesis, identifying a geographic setting for the study • Consider the type of content to be analysed: journal articles, news article, books, trade magazines ect.
Step 2	Data Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider which sources are most appropriate for their study. (Factors to consider: reputation, reliability and comparability) • Sources should fit the purpose of the study • Identify the databases in which articles from the selected sources can be accessed
Step 3	Article Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a method of case selection (Seawright & Gerring, 2008) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Eg. Typical cases, diverse cases and extreme cases that represent the larger case population • Justify the selection based on the restraints and research goals
Step 4	Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execute the discourse analysis following existing frameworks (Joutsenvirta & Vaara, 2015; Langley & Abdallah, 2011)

3.2 Research Context

This thesis will explore how the media constructs the Finnish national image in different national settings. The goal is to examine which reoccurring and differentiating themes arise in the media's portrayal of Finland. In doing so, the study seeks to identify any discursive mechanisms at play which serve to construct the national image.

This study is set in three comparable settings: the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK) and Australia. These settings are geographically diverse, situated in North America, Europe and Asia-Pacific respectively. However, their shared historical, political, societal and lingual features make them comparable settings in which to explore the construction of a common foreign national identity: Finland. Each setting has a different level of interaction with Finland in terms of trade, tourism and other cultural exchanges. Their geographic proximity to Finland may also be an influencing factor. By analysing the construction of the Finnish national image in each of these settings, this study can compare and contrast the results and attempt to explain the factors inherent within each society that may influence the perception of that image.

In order to research national image construction, this study will make use of newspaper texts as units of analysis for this discourse analysis. The scope of this study is also limited to the time period of 2016 to 2020 inclusive. This five year period provides a relevant window through which to view current national image trends.

3.3 Data Sources

In order to study texts that conceptualise and construct the national image of Finland, texts should be gathered from comparable sources open to the public. To achieve a broad and encompassing media image of Finland, three sub-domains of media will be explored across each of the nations. These domains are public broadcast services, business orientated newspaper outlets and more generally circulated newspapers. While there is inevitable overlap between these sources in terms of their content, spreading the collection of cases across these sources in a more systematic way will produce more varied and representative results. The selected sources have been set out in Table 2 below.

Joutsenvirta and Vaara (2015) justify the use of newspaper articles for the purpose of discourse analysis. In their 2015 study, Joutsenvirta and Vaara gathered their primary data from the leading newspaper of each of the three

nations concerned in their study. They argued that the leading newspapers both reflect and influence public opinion (Joutsenvirta & Vaara, 2015, p. 746).

In 2021, newspapers, and by extension their corresponding news outlet, must be defined more broadly than the traditional print media. All the source publications of this study have both a print and online presence. These media outlets produce and distribute texts across a variety of mediums including written articles, video and audio. Therefore, texts that have been published digitally are for the purpose of this study, just as relevant as those in print. Texts from these sources are accessible via academic online databases such as ProQuest International Newsstream and through the direct online archival database of each newspaper. Alongside the texts themselves, all available metadata is accessible via these databases.

An important element of discourse analysis is the assessment of the sources to identify potential biases that may be inherent within them. While all individuals should exercise their own judgment in assessing the potential biases of media outlets, outlining a brief description of each source will aid in distinguishing them from each other. It should also be noted that much of the corporate ownership of the news media across the US, UK and Australia is owned either directly, or via subsidiary corporations, by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.

Table 2: Article Sources and Publications

Publication	Number of Articles Collected	Description
USA		
Wall Street Journal	9	The Wall Street Journal was found in 1889 and has become the leading business focused newspaper in the USA. It has a high ethical and journalistic reputation and is largely considered to be a centrally biased outlet. The Wall Street Journal is currently owned by Dow Jones & Co., a subsidiary of News Corp (<i>About Us - The Wall Street Journal</i> , 2021).
New York Times	6	The New York Times is an independently owned newspaper under the New York Times Company (<i>Company</i> , n.d.). It is highly regarded both within the USA and internationally as a publication of the highest integrity. Despite its name, the New York Times is a nationally circulated newspaper.
PBS	6	PBS was established in 1969 and is an organisation of public media outlets across the USA. Its stated purpose is to serve “the American public with programming and services of the highest quality, using media to educate, inspire, entertain and express a diversity of perspectives” (<i>Mission & Values</i> , 2020). PBS is a private, non profit corporation owned by its member media stations.

United Kingdom		
The Economist	11	The Economist is an independently owned outlet under the Economist Newspaper Ltd ('Frequently Asked Questions', 2020). The Economist is internationally recognised for its in depth articles that consider issues across the political, economic and technological spectrum.
The Times	9	The Times of London is a daily newspaper published by News UK & Ireland, another subsidiary of News Corp. Founded in 1785, The Times and The Sunday Times are among the most popular newspapers in the UK.
BBC	7	The BBC was founded in 1922 by a Royal Charter with the purpose "to act in the public interest, serving all audiences through the provision of impartial, high-quality and distinctive output and services which inform, educate and entertain" (<i>Charter and Agreement</i> , 2020). It is principally funded by a license fee paid by UK households.
Australia		
The Age	9	The Age is a leading broadsheet newspaper published in Melbourne, Australia. It is owned by Nine Entertainment Co which also publishes a network of newspapers in other capital cities across Australia: Sydney Morning Herald, Brisbane Times and WA today. This network often shares content and articles which are published on all mastheads. The reach of the Age is therefore

greater than just Melbourne, it contributes to and is contributed to by regions across the country.		
The Australian	11	The Australian is a national newspaper published by News Corp Australia, a subsidiary of News Corp. It's reported total monthly reach is 4.5 Million people across print and digital platforms. Founded in 1964 , The Australian is now Australia's largest selling newspaper. The Australian can be considered a centre right leaning newspaper.
ABC	7	The ABC was established in 1932 as a single radio service. It is now one of Australias largest multimedia broadcasters. The ABC is publicly funded and nationally distributed. The Australian Parliament directs the ABC through a charter that requires it to provide "informative, entertaining and educational services that reflect the breadth of our nation" (<i>ABC History About the ABC</i> , 2020).

3.4 Article Selection

This thesis seeks texts that either construct or maintain the image of Finland. The underlying assumption of these texts are two fold. First, that the authors of the texts are constricted by their existing image of Finland. Thus, their texts can be said to reflect the national image. Second, and simultaneously, with every new text produced, authors are modifying or constructing a new image. Together, an examination of these texts offer an insight into the Finnish national image.

This study makes use of purposive sampling in its article selection process. Drawing on the works of Seawright and Gerring (2008) it is reasoned that random sampling is not only impractical in this study but inappropriate. Given the purpose of this study is to explore the presence of the Finnish national image in specific media publications, a random sample would fail to produce results that achieve the study goal. Seawright and Gerring (2008) insist that purposive case selection techniques possess the same objectives as random sampling. First, to achieve a representative sample and second, to achieve useful variation in the dimensions of theoretical interest (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p 296). In other words, this means attaining a collection of newspaper articles that both represents the wider media in the US, UK and Australia while simultaneously being of relevance in constructing or maintaining the Finnish national image.

In order to achieve this result while minimising researcher bias, a systematic process was devised and adhered to throughout the article selection process. A diverse case selection strategy was employed to achieve an exploratory investigation of US, UK and Australian media. Diverse case selection strategy is defined by Seawright and Gerring (2008) as the selection of a set of cases that are intended to represent the full range of factors characterising a causal relationship. They state that, “encompassing a full range of variation is likely to enhance the representativeness of the sample of cases chosen by the researcher” (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p 300).

This was achieved in part by referring back to the dimensions of national image identified in chapter 2.3: Political, Technological and Economic. As part of the selection criteria, articles must address one or more of these dimensions. In practice, this was achieved by drawing a table of each publication in rows and the dimensions as columns. Each newspaper source was searched in turn. When a relevant article was found, a cross was placed in the corresponding box that referred to which dimension that article addressed. Often, articles addressed more than one dimension in which case crosses were placed in multiple boxes. After an initial sample of articles addressed each of the dimensions at least once, and no more relevant articles could be found, the researcher would move onto

the next publication and repeat the process. This system of article selection provided some structure and accountability for the researcher to follow.

The article selection criteria can be summarised as follows:

1. The text must have been published between 2016 and 2020 in a pre-defined source identified in chapter 3.4.
2. The text must substantially construct or maintain the Finnish national image. That is to say, that articles which merely make reference to Finland, but do not contribute to the construction of a national image, should be excluded.
3. The text must address one or more dimensions of national image: Political, Technological and Economic.

Searches were conducted through academic online database ProQuest International Newsstream and through the direct online archival database of each source newspaper. From the initial online searches, the researcher conducted a manual search of the results. By reading the title, abstract and in most cases the full text of the articles, the researcher decided which articles to shortlist and then ultimately include in the sample. This process was all the while guided by the above selection criteria.

3.5 Data Analysis

Once again, Joutsenvirta and Vaara (2015) provide a good framework through which to apply discourse analysis. While the subject of this study is indeed different to theirs, many lessons can be taken from their approach as well as from other more general discourse analysis methodologies (Langley & Abdallah, 2011).

This study followed an abductive research strategy (Corbin & Strauss, 2019), developing national image propositions as they emerge from the texts. The first step of the analysis was to read the texts and gain a general understanding of the different themes that read through them. The formal coding process took a more structured approach.

Coding began with an open coding stage in which texts were analysed line by line and their terminology, arguments, stories and descriptions coded. At this stage of the coding process, codes were made either *in vivo* or otherwise closely to the text. The texts were coded based on not only what they said but what they did (Langley & Abdallah, 2011). Texts were also coded by their

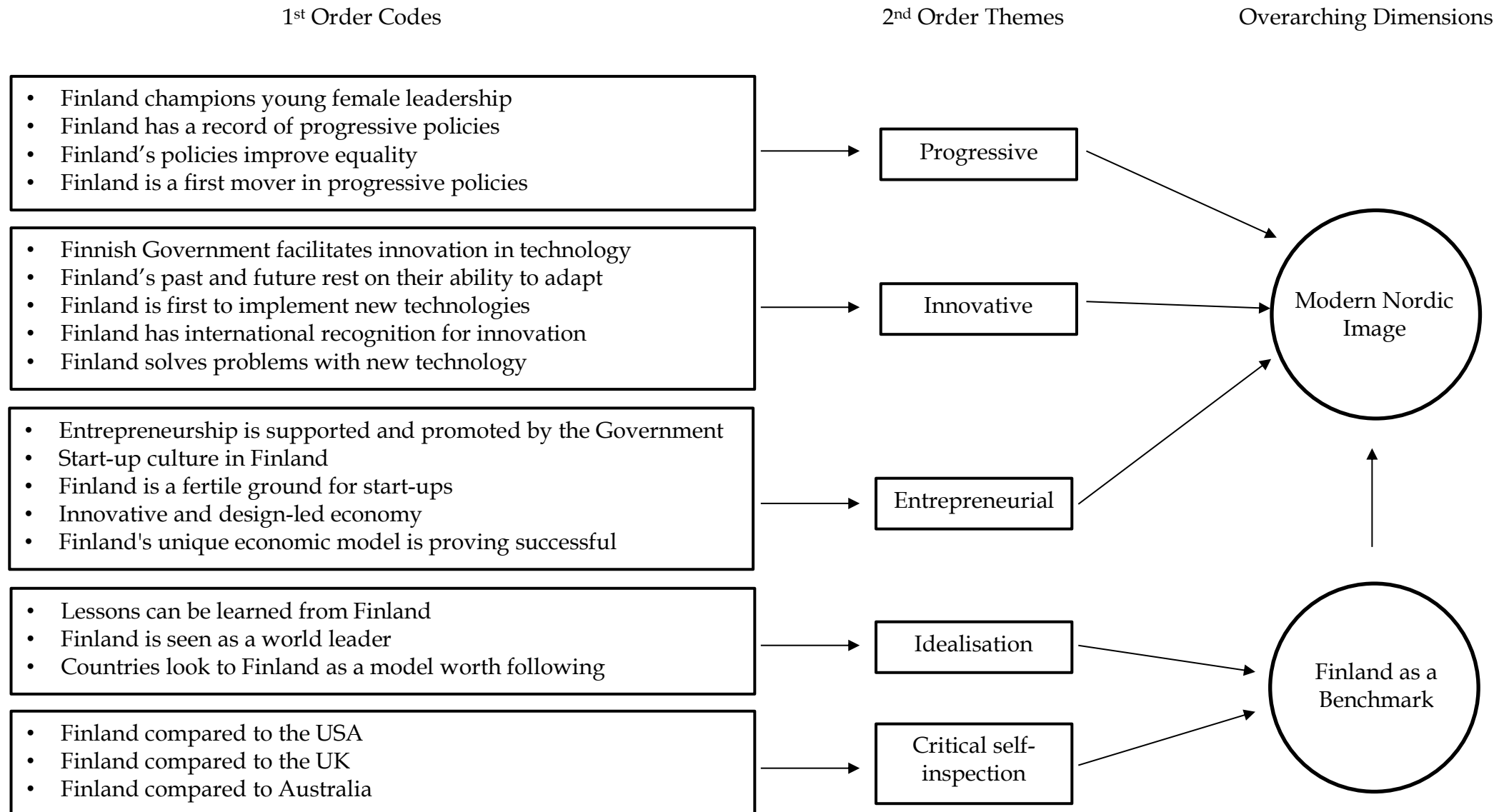
context (Langley & Abdallah, 2011). As previously stated, the meaning and interpretation of a text is greatly influenced by the context in which it is presented.

The next stage of the coding process saw first order codes grouped into greater second order themes. As an iterative process, these themes were constantly compared to the source material and checked for their relevance and accuracy. These themes were also produced with reference to the existing theoretical model. That model being the political, technological and economic dimensions of national image.

Themes were developed first within case. That is to say that the national settings were first analysed individually and only later compared at a thematic level. Themes common to each setting were noted for their ability to transcend national contexts. After an extensive analytical process, it became clear that the results were consistent across the settings and so the analysis was able to be combined at the thematic level.

This entire process was highly iterative and was intended to take specific discourse and produce more and more abstract categories. Once an overwhelming thematic image had emerged and the comparison of themes across all settings no longer provided new insights, theoretical observations were able to be drawn in the form of overarching dimension. The overarching dimensions served to respond to the research questions of how the Finnish national image was portrayed and how it was constructed. The resulting process can be seen below in the Data Structure (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Data Structure



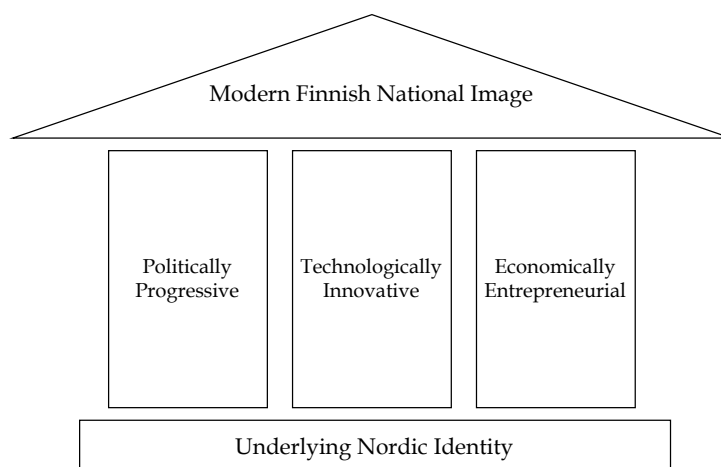
4 RESULTS

The results of this analysis are presented in two parts. The first part describes the Finnish national image that was portrayed by the media. The second part explores how that national image was ultimately constructed. Together, the results present a picture of how the Finnish national image remained consistent across different national settings and how the construction of that image was universal.

4.1 The Finnish National Image

The analysis produced an interesting observation that was consistent across the media representation of Finland. In each settings, media portrayed Finland as a progressive, innovative and entrepreneurial nation. While the individual articles or texts from each newspaper varied greatly in terms of their subject, the analysis was able to extract themes based on the national image dimensions as defined by Martin and Eroglu (1993). Finland was consistently represented as a politically progressive society with a penchant for innovative technology and an entrepreneurial economy. Underpinning and influencing this forward thinking characterisation of Finland was an overt and consistent representation of an underlying Nordic identity. This collectively perceived national image is represented in Figure 4. The modern Finnish national image rests upon the three pillars of national image, which are in tern built upon a Nordic foundation.

Figure 4: The Finnish National Image



4.1.1 Politically Progressive

At the time of writing this study, Finland was making headlines around the world with the appointment of Sanna Marin as the country's new prime minister. Not only was she a female leader but she was also the world's youngest prime minister at the age of 34. While this news event gained attention in its own right, it also served as a conduit through which international media could report on the progressive history of the country. Outlets across the media spectrum were quick to point out that the young PM was raised by same sex parents and that she herself was a mother, prompting further discussion as to just how pragmatic and progressive Finland had become.

"A historic day: the world gets the youngest sitting prime minister and Finland gets a government in which all of the party leaders are women," Petteri Orpo, 50, leader of the conservative National Coalition Party, said. Alexander Stubb, 51, a former centre-right prime minister, tweeted: "Shows that Finland is a modern and progressive country. One day gender will not matter in government." (Women in black take the helm in Finland, The Times, 2019)

Finland's image as a politically progressive nation was clearly a focal point for international commentators. Considering that it was the first country to give both men and women the right to vote and run for office, Finland justifiably deserves its progressive reputation. This history of progressive policies was acknowledged within the texts.

Finland has an established history of very forward-looking social policy. Honoring that tradition, and the public's support for it, means properly setting up large-scale research and trials. (Universal Basic Income Didn't Fail in Finland. Finland Failed It., New York Times, 2018)

Finland's progressiveness was praised in two ways. Firstly, by making note of Finland's willingness to pilot or implement new policies. Secondly, by scrutinising the novelty of the policies themselves. This was so often achieved by drawing comparisons to the media outlet's host country, an important discursive mechanism that will be discussed further in the results. In subject areas such as universal basic income, equal parental rights and same sex marriage, Finland was recognised for being among the first to move and enact policies deemed too progressive in the relatively more conservative USA, UK and Australia.

Table 3: Representative Evidence of Politically Progressive

Progressive
<p>Code: Finland champions female leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Finland may frequently top lists for gender equality. But Prime Minister Sanna Marin has taken the fight to end the gender gap one step further and let a 16-year-old girl fill her seat for the day.” (Girls Takeover: Teen becomes Finland’s PM for the day, BBC, 2020) <p>Code: Finland has a history of progressive policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Whatever its flaws, the pilot is a good example of the Finnish penchant for social experiments.” (Northern pilot; Testing basic incomes in Finland, The Economist, 2017) <p>Code: Finland’s policies improve equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Finland’s new government has announced plans to give all parents the same parental leave, in a push to get fathers to spend more time with their children.” (Finland to give dads same parental leave as mums, BBC, 2020) <p>Code: Finland is a first mover in progressive policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Finland was one of the first movers” (The lapsing of Finland’s universal basic income trial, The Economist, 2018)

4.1.2 Technologically Innovative

A far cry from its agricultural past, Finland's modern national image portrays an innovative and high tech society, willing and able to invest in future technology. Just as London emerged as a financial centre in the 19th century, Helsinki is poised to emerge as a centre for technological innovation and unique design.

Over the years, SLUSH has helped bring investment and know-how to Finland's flourishing tech sector, which includes gaming giants Supercell and Rovio, helping to cement Helsinki's place at the core of a dynamic Nordic tech ecosystem. (Finland Is Flourishing After 100 Years of Independence; 'Nordic model,' innovation focus help drive high quality of life and growth, though aging population, productivity pose challenges, Wall Street Journal, 2017)

This journey towards a modern, technologically adept image is exemplified by the posterchild for Finnish innovation and technology: Nokia. Nokia began life in the 19th century as a humble mill in rural Finland. With the emergence of the IT industry in the 20th century, Nokia adapted and transformed itself into what was once the world's largest mobile phone company. With the entry of Apple, and the consequential downfall of Nokia's mobile phone branch, the company transformed again to its current incarnation as a network giant. Today Nokia, along with neighbouring Sweden's Ericson and China's Huawei, is again a world leader in 5g networking technology.

The Finnish company, which had nearly disappeared, has transformed itself into a global manufacturer of telecommunications equipment. (Mobile phone pioneer Nokia plays both sides of the fence as US puts pressure on Huawei, The Australian, 2019)

This story of rise and fall and rise again categorises the Finnish penchant for innovation and adaptation. In international media, Nokia seems synonymous with Finnish technology. However, the characterisation of innovation in technology did not end with references to Nokia. This theme of Finland being the first to adopt new technologies continued with examples as light hearted as an application for a national emoji to the more serious business of storing radioactive nuclear waste underground. Finland has received recognition from around the world for its ability to solve problems with new technology. It seems that so often when Finland features in the news, it does so at the helm of a novel and advanced technology.

Table 4: Representative Evidence of Technologically Innovative

Innovative
<p>Code: Finnish Government facilitates innovation in technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Putting an independent tech firm like MaaS Global rather than an existing transport operator in charge of the app has some big advantages. A tech firm may be more innovative and more willing to take risks than a big incumbent.” (It starts with a single app; Transport as a service, The Economist, 2016) <p>Code: Finland’s past and future rest on their ability to adapt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Nonetheless, Finland's destiny may hinge more on its capacity to innovate than government action.” (Finland Is Flourishing After 100 Years of Independence; 'Nordic model,' innovation focus help drive high quality of life and growth, though aging population, productivity pose challenges, Wall Street Journal, 2017) <p>Code: Finland is first to implement new technologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Most nations keep the waste above ground in temporary storage facilities, but Onkalo is the first attempt to bury it for good.” (Finland to bury nuclear waste for 100,000 years in world's costliest tomb, ABC, 2016) <p>Code: Finland has international recognition for innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Finland is well-placed to find new sources of growth. According to a report on competitiveness from the World Economic Forum, it ranks second globally for innovation.” (Permafrost; Finland’s economic winter, The Economist, 2016)

Code: Finland solves problems with new technology

- “Finland’s answer to this challenge is technology – unsurprising in a country that claims to have the biggest number of digital health startups per person.” (Finland turns to technology to help frail old people live at home, The Economist, 2020)
-

4.1.3 Economically Entrepreneurial

One of the unique insights of this study was the revelation of the overlap between the political, technological and economic dimensions of the Finnish national image. This was evident when exploring the economic dimension specifically. At first glance, one might say that the combination of progressive policies with an innovative tech sector results in an entrepreneurial economy. While this characterisation is perhaps a little over simplified, the core message holds true.

In Finland, progressive forward thinking policies have fostered an environment in which highly skilled, highly aspirational and innovative entrepreneurs are able to invest their time in start-ups. The resulting image is one of an entrepreneurial utopia in which the government and the private sector are aligned in their goals. Entrepreneurs enjoy strong public support whether it be through education, grants or social schemes. This has fostered an entrepreneurial culture in Finland that has not gone unnoticed by international media.

Startups are an ideology among young Finns. (Permafrost; Finland's economic winter, The Economist, 2016)

Finland's buzzing with high-tech skills and start-ups. (Nokia: Life after the fall of a mobile phone giant, BBC, 2016)

The exact recipe for this apparent success has been a cause for debate among international commentators looking to emulate the Finnish model. Connections are often drawn to the high educational standards, social security systems and high quality of life. Some have pointed out that a highly educated and highly skilled workforce in a market that does not host as many large corporations as the USA for example, leads individuals to go out on their own. This was again seen in the collapse of Nokia. Without an institutional employer, highly skilled workers channelled their energy into their own start-ups, all the while supported by Finland's social safety net.

While in reality, Finland is perhaps not quite the economic utopia that international media portray. However, there is undoubtedly a unique formula in Finland that has seen social culture and deliberate policy actions unlock the entrepreneurial potential of the country.

Table 5: Representative Evidence of Economically Entrepreneurial

Entrepreneurial
<p>Code: Entrepreneurship is supported and promoted by the Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Encouraging [startups] is a priority of the government. Much of a EUR 1.6 billion (\$1.8 billion) initiative to promote growth over the next three years will foster the use of new technology.” (Permafrost; Finland’s economic winter, The Economist, 2016)
<p>Code: Start-up culture in Finland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “More important, the success of SLUSH appears to be helping to drive a cultural shift both among younger Finns, who have embraced the startup culture, and in the public sector, turning Finland into a laboratory for new ideas on how to harness technology to wider social challenges.” (Finland Is Flourishing After 100 Years of Independence; 'Nordic model,' innovation focus help drive high quality of life and growth, though aging population, productivity pose challenges, Wall Street Journal, 2017)
<p>Code: Finland is a fertile ground for start-ups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Though fledgling, Salo's revival provides a window into how the ruins of a large tech business can become fertile ground for startup industries.” (Nokia Town Seeks Rebirth --- After cellphone- manufacturing collapse, companies tap Finnish city's tech talent to fuel startups, Wall Street Journal, 2016)

Code: Innovative and design-led economy

- “They boast the world's best school system, an innovative design-led economy and a highly literate culture despite the linguistic oddity that is Finnish” (Steamed to perfection, The Age, 2019)

Code: Finland's unique economic model is proving successful

- “It's a part of the world that most politicians and economists prefer not to think about. Why not? Because its performance laughs at all they believe about how to run a successful economy.” (Viking lessons to be learnt, The Age, 2019)
-

4.1.4 The Underlying Nordic Identity

After an analysis of 71 texts from 9 news outlets across 3 countries, it became clear that there was an underlying foundation upon which each of the above three pillars of national image stood. This foundation was both a source of identity and influence for many elements of the Finnish national image. This foundation being Finland's Nordic identity.

This additional fourth and final dimension was necessary to encapsulate the Finnish national image. This dimension ran concurrent to the previous three and formed the underlying identity that was portrayed across the media. Consistently and overwhelmingly, Finland was positioned as a Nordic nation.

This revelation may at first seem obvious and not necessarily noteworthy. However, a brief look into the country's past will reveal that it has not always been so clear where Finland sits on the European divide. A long history of rule between Sweden and Russia meant that Finland has somewhat awkwardly straddled the line between east and west, never quite fully committing either way. To its west is Sweden, the European Union and a largely progressive European agenda. To its east lies Russia, the conservative giant with whom the EU takes a collectively critical stance against. Of its EU counterparts, Finland shares the longest land border with Russia, an ominous reminder of a dark and difficult past. Finland's relationship to its neighbours has therefore not always been so straightforward.

However, what is clear from the analysis of these media texts is that in the eyes of the USA, UK and Australia, Finland is firmly and unequivocally portrayed as a member of the Nordic community. This is achieved through a variety of discursive mechanisms. Most obvious and frequent of these is the simple use of the word 'Nordic' when introducing or referring to Finland.

The Nordic country appeared to have discovered a way to get brilliant results without the discipline and intense work-load of East Asian champions like Japan and South Korea, which were the other top scorers at the time. (The parable of Finland, The Economist, 2019)

She will be the third female prime minister in the Nordic country. (Finnish minister Sanna Marin, 34, to become world's youngest PM, BBC, 2019)

For Nordic chic, there's no better place. (A most modern Europe, The Age, 2020)

In addition to this simple identification of being a Nordic country, Finland was also compared most often with its Nordic neighbours. This had the effect of once again reaffirming Finland's place among its Nordic neighbours by drawing attention to the fact that Finland's policies and priorities were aligned with the Nordic and western community.

Other Nordic countries have also grappled with the need to cut costs. Sweden is to gradually raise its retirement age and has opened up parts of the healthcare system to the private sector in a bid to boost efficiency. Denmark will gradually increase the retirement age to 73 – the highest in the world – while cutting taxes and unemployment benefits to encourage people to work more. (Finland's government falls after attempts to reduce healthcare spending fail, ABC, 2019)

As some nations scramble to find protective gear to fight the coronavirus pandemic, Finland is sitting on an enviable stockpile of personal protective equipment like surgical masks, putting it ahead of less-prepared Nordic neighbors. (Finland, 'Prepper Nation of the Nordics,' Isn't Worried About Masks, New York Times, 2020)

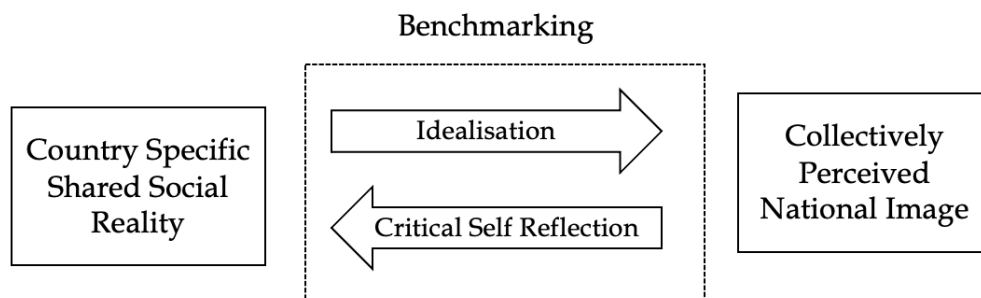
Just like its Scandinavian neighbours, the country has parental leave legislation allowing time off for both parents, with a few weeks reserved for dads only. (Finland names three 'top dads', BBC, 2019)

This combination of Nordic positioning and comparison was an underlying theme across the political, economic, technological dimensions. Central to the image of Finland in the USA, UK and Australia was the Nordic model which seems to be a source of influence for Finland and for which Finland seems to be a posterchild. As a result, this analysis positions the Nordic identity as a foundation upon which the three dimensions or pillars of national image are constructed (Figure 4).

4.2 Finland as a Benchmark

Having identified the media's portrayal of the Finnish national image in the preceding section, attention is now drawn to the way in which that image was constructed. There is a clear and recurring phenomenon that occurs when international media report on or about Finland. Across the media, Finland is consistently employed as a benchmark. This benchmarking phenomenon appears to occur as a result of idealisation of the subject country and critical self-inspection of the home country. In this case, the critical reflection of the USA, UK and Australia and the idealisation of Finland. This benchmarking phenomenon is represented below in Figure 5.

Figure 5: The Benchmarking Phenomenon



4.2.1 Idealisation

The idealisation of Finland was a theme that emerged from the texts. Media from the USA, UK and Australia consistently utilised the Nordic nation as an example of a better way of doing things. Finland was not idealised in terms of overall economic output, which is consistent with the fact that Finland's GDP is well below that of the USA, UK and Australia. However, while overall output was not celebrated, the economic and social culture was.

Idealisation was achieved through different discursive mechanisms. A prominent example being a call to emulate Finland in different subject areas. This was often followed by a form of critical self-inspection in which the author of the text decided their own country had fallen behind. This was exemplified within an educational context.

We should take a lesson from Finland, follow doctors' orders and build our schools, homes and communities on the learning language of children: play. (To Really Learn, Our Children Need the Power of Play; The U.S. can learn a big lesson from Finland's education system: Instead of stress and standardized testing, schools should focus on well-being and joy, Wall Street Journal, 2019)

The outcome, and the reason why Finland's system is so highly regarded, sees student teachers taken from the top 10 per cent of graduates. They must have a masters degree before entering the classroom, they are recognised as leading professionals and they are highly paid in a system which is free from kindergarten to university, and where there is little homework. The Finnish education system is one of the best and its principles are worth emulating. (Finland's Education System, The Age, 2018)

An alternative mechanism by which media discursively idealised the Finnish national image was through the use of rhetoric which positioned Finland among the best in the world in any given field.

Such benefits and various income redistribution measures help explain why the poverty rate and income inequality in Finland are among the lowest in the world. (Universal Basic Income Didn't Fail in Finland. Finland Failed It., New York Times, 2018)

The four Nordics are right at the top when it comes to the smallest gap between rich and poor, with Canada, Australia, Britain and the United States right at the bottom. (Viking lessons to be learnt, The Age, 2019)

The effect that this idealisation had on the texts was to place Finland in a position of authority and reverence within the context of that text. This contributed towards a benchmarking phenomenon for the simple reason that in order to look towards a nation as a model worth emulating, that nation must be held in high regard.

Table 6: Representative Evidence of Idealisation

Idealisation
<p>Code: Lessons to be learned from Finland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “When visiting the Finnish repository, authorities from elsewhere, be they American, Chinese, Australian, Japanese or British, learn that safeguarding the future is not just a question of seismology, technology, sociology and cash. It is also an ethical one.” (To the next ice age and beyond; Disposing of nuclear waste, The Economist, 2017)
<p>Code: Finland as a world leader</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Nordic country appeared to have discovered a way to get brilliant results without the discipline and intense work- load of East Asian champions like Japan and South Korea, which were the other top scorers at the time.” (The parable of Finland, The Economist, 2019)
<p>Code: Countries look to Finland as a model worth following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Its "Nordic model" based on robust institutions and a strong social safety net, has become a beacon for developing countries, particularly those seeking to rebuild after conflict.” (Finland Is Flourishing After 100 Years of Independence; 'Nordic model,' innovation focus help drive high quality of life and growth, though aging population, productivity pose challenges, Wall Street Journal, 2017)

4.2.2 Critical Self-Inspection

When Finland is the subject of a text, the media consistently compare their own country to Finland within the context of that text. Measuring domestic performance against Finland was a common and recurring theme throughout this study. This critical self-inspection occurred across a wide range of subject areas but it was perhaps most prevalent in social contexts. This can be seen for example in the commentary surrounding the appointment of PM Sanna Marin.

Women in Finland with babies and toddlers have just as many hours in the day as women everywhere. What is done differently is that the society and government take on many of the responsibilities that are left to mothers in Australia. In Finland this freeing-up of time allows mothers to have more choice in how they spend their time - for example, choosing to govern the country (In Finland, it's fine to be a mum and a PM, The Age, 2020)

In the above example, the Australian media drew attention to the fact that mothers in Australia receive less support than their Finnish counterparts. In doing so, they highlight an issue in the Australian society and point to a possible solution in the Finnish society. This contributes to a benchmarking effect by inherently positioning both societies, within this particular context, upon a spectrum of best practices. Clearly in the above example, Finland is positioned ahead of Australia on this spectrum and is held out to be a benchmark in this category.

This same discursive process can be seen again in a text discussing Finland's bid for national emojis. Critical self-inspection was employed again to highlight the relatively conservative society of the USA in comparison to a progressive Finland.

Ms. Theman, who leads Finland's emoji lobbying, worries conservative American cultural values will prevail. The cartoon people in Finland's sauna emoji are naked, but don't show any private parts. If the symbol is rejected for its nudity, Ms. Theman says Finnish people will be hurt. (Finland Thinks Your Phone Needs a Sauna Emoji --- Nordic country is first to lobby to have a national symbol added to smartphones, Wall Street Journal, 2016)

Once again, this sample of text positions Finland ahead of the USA on a spectrum of conservative to progressive political and social values. This critical self-inspection is a process by which the media as a national institution reflect upon their own nation and society. In doing so, the media are contributing to the continued perpetuation of their country's specific social reality.

Table 7: Representative Evidence of Critical Self-Inspection

Critical Self-Inspection
<p>Code: Finland compared to the USA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Meanwhile, in school districts in Texas, Oklahoma, South Carolina and New York, tens of thousands of children are being given up to 60 minutes of daily outdoor, free-play recess. These experiments are directly inspired by Finland's schools – and educators are reporting sharp improvements in academic performance, concentration and behavior.” (To Really Learn, Our Children Need the Power of Play; The U.S. can learn a big lesson from Finland's education system: Instead of stress and standardized testing, schools should focus on well-being and joy, Wall Street Journal, 2019)
<p>Code: Finland compared to the UK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Ms Saarikko, 33, has a husband who works full time. Their three-year-old child attends day care, which is free or inexpensive in Finland. By contrast, Britain has the most expensive childcare costs in the OECD as a percentage of parents' income.” (Finland is first country where fathers do most of the childcare, The Times, 2017)
<p>Code: Finland compared to Australia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Creating more crisis accommodation will not fix Australia's homelessness problem... He said Finland had investigated the issue of homelessness and decided "it's not that complex"... "From 2008 to 2015 they built 6,000 units specifically for homeless people." These permanent, supported homes have reduced Finland's need for crisis accommodation, he said.” (Homelessness: What can Australia learn from Finland's housing solution?, ABC, 2017)

4.2.3 Benchmarking in Action

The benchmarking phenomena occurred in a variety of subject areas and contributed to the development of each of the three dimensions of national image. Featured below is an example of the benchmarking phenomena in action, taken from a New York Times article reporting on Helsinki's newly constructed, state of the art library, Oodi. This text is a particularly relevant sample as its subject area contributed to the political, technological and economic image of Finland. This combination of idealisation and critical self-inspection was on display in the commentary surrounding the opening of the library with all its high tech features and equipment. The text makes multiple attempts to idealise Finland and achieves this by way of discursive rhetoric that portrays Finland as a leader in the field.

The Nordic countries are emerging as leaders in library design. (Helsinki's New Library Has 3-D Printers and Power Tools. (And Some Books, Too.), New York Time, 2018)

It is an ambitious attempt by one of the most literate and digitally savvy nations in the world to reinvent the library for its population's future needs. (Helsinki's New Library Has 3-D Printers and Power Tools. (And Some Books, Too.), New York Time, 2018)

The Nordic countries have been faster to embrace digital technology than most, and Mr. Laitio argued that Oodi points to a way forward for library systems across the world that have struggled with digitization and budget cuts. (Helsinki's New Library Has 3-D Printers and Power Tools. (And Some Books, Too.), New York Time, 2018)

To compliment this idealisation, the text employed critical self-inspection of the host country, the USA, in addition to their contemporary Britain. This was achieved by contrasting Finland's increased priorities and large investment in public libraries with the relative decline of the US public library system.

Finland's high-profile investment in the public library system runs counter to trends in the United States and Britain, where many libraries have faced drastic budget cuts in recent years. Last year, a column in The Guardian argued that the cuts to the British system, which increasingly relies on volunteers, had been so severe that "the U.K. no longer has a national library system." (Helsinki's New

Library Has 3-D Printers and Power Tools. (And Some Books, Too.), New York Time, 2018)

With their generous publicly funded benefits, Nordic countries place a high premium on social integration and education, and, based on 2014 figures from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Finnish government spends more than one and a half times as much per capita on libraries as the United States. (Helsinki's New Library Has 3-D Printers and Power Tools. (And Some Books, Too.), New York Time, 2018)

When read together in the context of the article, these discursive features produce a benchmarking phenomenon. By simultaneously placing Finland upon a pedestal and critically reflecting on their domestic performance in comparison to Finland, the media inherently and perhaps inadvertently construct the Finnish national image.

5 DISCUSSION

This study set out to explore the question of how the Finnish national image was constructed in different national settings. This was answered in two parts, first by exploring how Finland was portrayed internationally and secondly by identifying which mechanisms were used to create that image. Across international media, Finland was consistently portrayed as a progressive, innovative and entrepreneurial country. On the question of how national image was constructed, the results suggested that through a combination of idealisation and critical-self inspection, the media inadvertently constructed an image of Finland by employing the country as a benchmark.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This thesis identified that among the Country of Origin literature, there was an underdeveloped element to the Country of Origin Effect. Much of the existing research focused on how national image influenced consumer behaviour with little regard to how that national image was constructed (C.M Han, 1990; Magnusson & Westjohn, 2011; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002; Thakor & Lavack, 2003). The thesis was therefore successful in addressing this gap in the research by exploring the media's role in constructing national image. By identifying a benchmarking phenomenon as a discursive mechanism employed by international media, this thesis posits a new contribution to the literature surrounding country image and the Country of Origin Effect.

The results showed a two way relationship between shared social reality and perceived national image (Figure 5). Idealisation and critical self-reflection represented a benchmarking phenomenon that exhibited the back and forth nature of national image construction. It displayed that national image was not simply a one way projection from one country to another. It was a process whereby the receiving society interpreted, modified and moulded a collectively perceived national image. So while the three settings of this study ultimately arrived at a consistent national image of Finland, each society through their media institutions, performed their own critical self reflections and idealisations.

This benchmarking phenomenon seems to indicate that media within the larger economies of the USA, UK and Australia utilised Finland as a means of checks and balances against their own societies. This leads one to examine the role of the media in the construction of a national image. As a substantial institu-

tion of influence within our shared social realities, the medias role as a commentator and 'watchdog' for society is to keep their policy makers accountable and their society informed. In this sense, they are often referred to as the fourth pillar of government. Perhaps this use of Finland as a benchmark is just one example of how media advocate for change and inform society of alternative considerations. In the pursuit of societal change and commentary, media inadvertently constructed a progressive, innovative and entrepreneurial image of Finland by highlighting the perception that their own nations are falling behind in those areas.

This benchmarking phenomenon can have a direct effect on Country of Origin theory. As previously noted by Han (1989), the halo effect sees consumers draw from their general perception of a country when evaluating a product or brand. In the case of Finland, it is clear that the media's benchmarking strategies have positioned Finland ahead of their host countries across a range of societal metrics. It could therefore follow that consumers who have interpreted that media's portrayal of Finland might reasonably perceive Finnish products and brands superior to those who have not received the same benchmarking treatment. In this sense, the benchmarking phenomenon would directly influence consumer behaviour. With further exploration of the benchmarking phenomenon across a wider range of societies and cultures, the scale of that influence can be uncovered.

5.2 Practical Implications

The results of this study may be of particular practical relevance to international managers and marketers of Finnish firms. Those firms operating internationally or looking to enter a market such as the USA, UK or Australia, may draw value from the insights this study has revealed in the way that Finland was portrayed by international media. The knowledge that foreign media, and by association the societies they represent, perceive Finland to be a cutting edge, forward-thinking nation, may serve to influence export and marketing decisions. For international marketers looking to lean on Finland as their Country of Origin, this study may offer some confidence that the image of Finland is likely to strengthen their own brand image.

5.3 Limitations

It must be noted that the true influence of the Country of Origin Effect has been challenged by some scholars who have found limited support for a COE (Knight et al., 2007). However, a review of 94 empirical studies found that 88 produced results to support the phenomena (Magnusson & Westjohn, 2011). While the COE certainly appears to be adapting to increased globalisation, the continued research of the topic offers sufficient support to the legitimacy of the phenomena.

Additionally, while this thesis attempts to encompass a range of societies within the study, the researcher was limited by their linguistic abilities. As a result, media texts were collected from only English sources. This also relates to criticism that COO research is generally US centric and results are not necessarily transferable (Magnusson & Westjohn, 2011). The researcher recognises the societal commonalities between the USA, UK and Australia may have contributed to the result of a consistent Finnish national image. It must be considered that due to the relatively insignificant role that Finland plays in each of the host countries, only a surface layer image was produced.

5.4 Future Research

This study would benefit from supporting research in two primary directions. First, an empirical quantitative study involving consumers in the USA, UK and Australia to determine any correlation between the results of this study and actual consumer beliefs. It would be a worthwhile attempt to see whether the consumers' perception of Finland aligns with the media's portrayal of Finland. This would serve to support the theory that media as a social institution influences consumer world views. Additionally, a quantitative study could help confirm the existence of a benchmarking phenomenon.

The second direction of future research could see this study expanded across new research settings, cultures and languages. This could occur both with and without Finland as the subject national image. If maintaining Finland as the subject national image, the expansion of national settings to a larger and more diverse group would serve to test whether Finland's national image remains consistent across a wider group and whether the benchmarking phenomenon is present. Additionally, changing the subject national image away from Finland would explore the media's use of benchmarking against countries other than Fin-

land. It would be interesting to see whether this phenomenon is unique to Finland or whether it is a feature of international media commentary on foreign nations.

6 CONCLUSION

The Country of Origin Effect has a substantial influence over the beliefs and behaviours of consumers around the world. Therefore our perceptions of countries around the world plays a significant role in our consumer habits. With a rise in global market activity, it is now more important than ever to explore just how we as a society arrive at the perceptions that we possess.

Finland made for an interesting subject to study national image construction. Constantly portrayed as a progressive, innovative and entrepreneurial Nordic nation, Finland enjoys an overwhelmingly positive national image. However, the most important discovery of this thesis was the benchmarking phenomenon. Through idealisation and critical self-inspection, the benchmarking phenomenon displays strong support for a two way relationship between country specific shared social reality and a collectively perceived national image that ultimately influences the Country of Origin Effect.

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APPENDIX 1 LIST OF ARTICLES

Publication	Article Title	Date
USA		
The New York Times	Happy 'National Jealousy Day'! Finland Bares Its Citizens' Taxes	2018
	Helsinki's New Library Has 3-D Printers and Power Tools. (And Some Books, Too.)	2018
	Universal Basic Income Didn't Fail in Finland. Finland Failed It.	2018
	Finland Is a Capitalist Paradise	2019
	Finland, 'Prepper Nation of the Nordics,' Isn't Worried About Masks	2020
	Why Are Women-Led Nations Doing Better With Covid-19	2020
PBS	Same-sex marriage just became legal in Finland	2017
	North Korean diplomat heads to Finland for talks with U.S., South Korea	2018
	USA_PBS_2019_Finland again tops list of happiest nations, U.S. ranking drops _ PBS NewsHour.pdf	2019
	Finland votes in world's youngest prime minister, 34- year- old Sanna Marin	2019
	Trump holds joint news conference with Finland's president	2019
	Finland deploys coronavirus-sniffing dogs at main airport	2020
Wall Street Journal	Finland Thinks Your Phone Needs a Sauna Emoji --- Nordic country is first to lobby to have a national symbol added to smartphones	2016
	Fitch Downgrades Finland's Rating, Second Agency to Do So; Rating firm cites country's weak economy, larger debt load	2016
	Nokia Town Seeks Rebirth --- After cellphone-manufacturing collapse, companies tap Finnish city's tech talent to fuel startups	2016
	So Long, Sweden Nordea to Move Due to Regulation	2017

	How Europe Can Work With Trump; Finland, Sweden and a quiet trans-Atlantic defense success story	2018
	Nokia Gets Small Signal Boost From 5G; Amid a backlash against Huawei, investors are eager to gauge any boost for European rivals like Nokia	2019
	Small Talk Is Tough for Finns. So They're Taking Lessons. 'I Love Your Shirt.'; Schools and tutors offer courses in casual conversation; 'It does not come naturally to Finns'	2019
	To Really Learn, Our Children Need the Power of Play; The U.S. can learn a big lesson from Finland's education system Instead of stress and standardized testing, schools should focus on well-being and joy	2019
	Finland Is Flourishing After 100 Years of Independence; 'Nordic model,' innovation focus help drive high quality of life and growth, though aging population, productivity pose challenges	2017
United Kingdom		
	Nokia, Life after the fall of a mobile phone giant	2016
	Finland has second thoughts about its women soldiers	2018
	Finland country profile	2019
BBC	Finland names three 'top dads'	2019
	Finnish minister Sanna Marin, 34, to become world's youngest PM	2019
	Finland to give dads same parental leave as mums	2020
	Girls Takeover_ Teen becomes Finland's PM for the day	2020
	It starts with a single app; Transport as a service	2016
	Permafrost; Finland's economic winter	2016
The Economist	Schools in Finland; Helsinking	2016
	Northern pilot; Testing basic incomes in Finland	2017
	To the next ice age and beyond; Disposing of nuclear waste	2017

	Not finished - The lapsing of Finland's universal basic income trial	2018
	The Economist explains - Why is Finland so happy	2018
	How straight is the gate	2019
	The parable of Finland	2019
	The populists hit back	2019
	Prescribing tablets - Finland turns to technology to help frail old people live at	2020
The Times	Finland is first country where fathers do most of the childcare	2017
	Finland's jobless get money for nothing in pilot scheme	2017
	A weekend in ... Helsinki, Finland	2018
	Finns scrap €560-a-month universal income experiment	2018
	A weekend in... Turku, Finland	2019
	Finland focuses on homes first, then treatment	2019
	Women in black take the helm in Finland	2019
	Finland grants new fathers up to seven months of parental leave Finland	2020
	Finland set to stub out smoking by 2030	2020
Australia		
ABC	Finland to bury nuclear waste for 100,000 years in world's costliest tomb	2016
	Santa Claus busy preparing for Christmas at Lapland home in Finland	2016
	What can Australia learn from Finland's housing solution	2017
	Australia must fix school inequity to create a top education system	2019
	Finland's government falls after attempts to reduce healthcare spending fail	2019
	Finland's new 34-year-old prime minister to be youngest in the world, backed by all-female leaders	2019
	Finland plans to give dads equal parental leave to mothers in push to change attitudes, improve equality	2020

The Age	Finns learning lessons from Victoria	2017
	Give those old, dull garden tools the chop Outdoor decks and gardens	2017
	FINLAND'S EDUCATION SYSTEM	2018
	Huawei on the way out Vodafone CEO 5G Networks will exclude Chinese suppliers	2018
	Let's stop fixating on a Finland fantasy	2018
	Steamed to perfection WHERE FINLAND	2019
	Viking lessons to be learnt	2019
	A most modern Europe Cover Story	2020
The Australian	In Finland, it's fine to be a mum and a PM	2020
	Across a Colourful Finnish Line	2016
	Universal basic income would 'push GST to 40pc'	2017
	Dial the moon for your next live streaming hit	2018
	Letter to the Editor	2018
	Huawei hopes 5G ban temporary	2019
	Mobile phone pioneer Nokia plays both sides of the fence as US puts pressure on Huawei	2019
	Backburn 'not so vital if forest floor waste harvested'	2020