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DIGITAL ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

**NATIONAL IDENTITY REPRESENTATION IN DIPLOMATIC
COMMUNICATION:
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF ITALIAN EMBASSY NEWS**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 National Identity in the contemporary global context	
1.2 Why the representation of national identity is important	
1.3 Objectives of the thesis	
1.4 Structure of the thesis	
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: NATIONAL IDENTITY	4
2.1 Definitions of National Identity	
2.2 Fundamental features of National identity	
2.3 National Identity and National Branding	
3. THE AUTHORS' CONCEPTS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY	11
3.1 National Identity as a Historical and Constructed Concept	
3.2 National Identity as a Dynamic and Contested Phenomenon	
3.3 Cultural and Symbolic Expressions of National Identity	
3.4 National Identity as a Strategic and Diplomatic Resource	
4. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN	17
4.1 Introduction to research	
4.2 Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity in Japan	
4.3 Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity in the United States	
4.4 Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity Brazil	
4.5 Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity in France	
4.6 Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity in Australia	
4.7 Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity in Ethiopia	
4.8 Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity in the United Arab Emirates	
4.9 Comparative Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity Across Different Countries	
5. CONCLUSION	33
6. REFERENCES	35

1. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, national identity has become an important factor in how countries present themselves and interact with international audiences. Beyond citizenship and political affiliation, national identity includes cultural traditions, historical heritage, values, symbols, and collective memories that shape both a nation's self-perception and its image abroad.

In recent decades, national identity has become closely connected to public diplomacy and nation branding. Governments and public institutions actively promote selected aspects of their identity in order to strengthen international reputation, cultural influence, and economic attractiveness. Among these actors, embassies play a particularly important role as official representatives of the state, communicating national values and priorities to foreign audiences.

The representation of national identity is significant because it can influence how a country is perceived by foreign governments, investors, tourists, students, and international organizations. Through official communications, cultural initiatives, and diplomatic activities, states can shape their international image and reinforce their presence in the global arena.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze how Italian national identity is represented through the official communications of Italian embassies abroad. The study focuses on embassy publications from Japan, the United States, Brazil, France, Australia, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates. Through qualitative content analysis, the research identifies the main themes and dimensions of identity promoted in different international contexts and compares similarities and differences among the selected countries.

The thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework of national identity and its relationship with nation branding. Chapter 3 reviews the author's concepts of national identity and analyses of them. Chapter 4 describes the research methodology and presents the empirical analysis of embassy communications. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the main findings and provides conclusions regarding the representation of Italian national identity in different international environments.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: NATIONAL IDENTITY

2.1 Definitions of National Identity

National identity is a complex and multidimensional concept that refers to the ways in which a nation understands itself, represents itself and is recognised by others. It is not limited to political belonging or citizenship, but includes historical, cultural, symbolic, emotional and social dimensions. National identity is formed through a combination of shared memories, common myths, public culture, language, traditions, legal institutions, territory and collective values. It provides individuals with a sense of belonging to a wider community and allows nations to distinguish themselves from other nations.

One of the most influential definitions of national identity is provided by Anthony D. Smith, who identifies several fundamental components: a historic territory or homeland, common myths and historical memories, a common mass public culture, common legal rights and duties for all members, and a common economy with territorial mobility. This definition is particularly important because it presents national identity as a structured phenomenon rooted in both material and symbolic elements. Territory, laws and economy provide institutional and practical foundations, while myths, memories and culture create emotional and symbolic attachment.

However, national identity cannot be understood only as a set of objective characteristics. Benedict Anderson defines the nation as an “imagined community”, suggesting that national identity is also based on imagination and shared perception. Members of a nation will never know most of their fellow citizens personally, yet they imagine themselves as part of the same collective community. This means that national identity is not simply something that exists physically; it is also constructed mentally and symbolically. People identify with the nation because they believe in a shared bond, common destiny and collective belonging.

This imagined dimension does not make national identity unreal. On the contrary, national myths, symbols and narratives can have very real emotional and political power. Flags, anthems, national heroes, historical events and cultural traditions may be symbolic, but they strongly influence how people perceive themselves and their country. National identity therefore exists both in lived experience and in collective imagination.

National identity is also not a fixed or unchangeable concept. Bhikhu Parekh argues that identity is neither completely fixed nor infinitely flexible. It can change over time, but only within the limits created by inherited history, culture and collective memory. This perspective is important because it avoids two extremes: on the one hand, the idea that national identity is permanent and unchangeable; on the other hand, the idea that it can be freely invented without limits. National identity is instead shaped by continuity and transformation at the same time.

Similarly, Bond, McCrone and Brown emphasise the creative reconstruction of national identity. They argue that nations often reinterpret their past for contemporary purposes. Elements of national history may be repeated, recovered, reinterpreted or rejected depending on present social, political or economic needs. This shows that national identity is not only inherited from the past, but also actively reconstructed in the present.

Another important aspect of national identity is that it is not experienced in the same way by everyone. Thompson argues that the nation should not be seen as a unitary entity in which all members think, feel and act in the same way. Individuals engage with national identity differently depending on their personal experiences, social position and interactions with others. Therefore, national identity is not homogeneous. It contains different meanings for different groups within the same nation.

This internal complexity is particularly visible in the distinction between civic and ethnic identity. Civic identity is based on inclusive citizenship, shared legal rights and political participation. By contrast, ethnic identity is based on common culture, religion, language or ancestry. Tolz highlights the difficulty of reconciling these two forms of belonging, especially in societies characterised by cultural diversity. This tension demonstrates that national identity can be inclusive and exclusive at the same time, depending on how it is defined and represented.

National identity can be defined as a dynamic system of meanings through which a nation understands its past, expresses its culture, organises collective belonging and communicates its distinctiveness to others. It includes both objective elements, such as territory, institutions and legal rights, and symbolic elements, such as myths, memories, language, culture and stereotypes. It is historically rooted, socially constructed, emotionally powerful and constantly reinterpreted.

2.2 Fundamental features of National identity

The fundamental features of national identity include historical, cultural, symbolic, social and communicative elements. These features are important because they explain how national identity becomes visible, meaningful and emotionally powerful for both internal and external audiences.

The first fundamental feature is the historic territory or homeland. A nation is often strongly connected to a particular territory that is perceived not only as a geographical space, but also as a symbolic homeland. This territory carries historical memories, emotional meanings and collective associations. Landscapes, cities, monuments and natural landmarks can become powerful symbols of national identity. For example, iconic landscapes are often used to represent countries visually because they immediately communicate a sense of place and belonging. Mountains, coastlines, rural landscapes or historic urban spaces may become part of the national imagination and contribute to the external image of the country.

The second feature is the presence of common myths and historical memories. National identity depends on narratives about the past. These narratives may include moments of victory, suffering, resistance, foundation, independence or cultural achievement. Myths and memories do not only describe the past; they also help create a shared sense of meaning in the present. They allow individuals to feel connected to previous generations and to imagine themselves as part of a long historical continuity.

At the same time, historical memories can be selective. Nations often choose which elements of the past to emphasise and which to ignore. Bond, McCrone and Brown identify several processes through which national identity can be reconstructed. Reiteration involves the mobilisation of

historically positive elements of national identity. Recapture refers to the attempt to revisit past success in response to contemporary problems. Reinterpretation means presenting historically negative elements as neutral or even advantageous in the present. Repudiation involves excluding negative features from contemporary constructions of identity. These processes show that national identity is not a passive inheritance, but an active reconstruction of the past.

The third feature is common public culture. Culture is one of the most important and distinctive components of national identity. It includes language, literature, music, sport, architecture, food, art, traditions and communication styles. Culture gives a nation its uniqueness and allows it to express its identity in visible and emotionally meaningful ways. It is also one of the most authentic foundations of a nation's image, because it reflects the life of reality, creativity and symbolic heritage of a society.

Language is especially important because it shapes how people communicate and interpret reality. Language is not only a technical tool for communication; it also reflects social relationships, cultural values and ways of thinking. Different languages do not simply describe the same reality with different words; they can express different social worlds. This means that language plays a central role in the construction and communication of national identity. Accents, dialects, registers and linguistic styles can also become important markers of belonging.

Literature is another important cultural expression of national identity. Novels, poetry, theatre and other literary forms can communicate the inner world of a nation more deeply than official campaigns. Literature can shape how a country is imagined by foreign audiences and can contribute to the symbolic image of a nation. It can also function as a cultural bridge, allowing external audiences to access the values, emotions and experiences of another society.

Music also contributes to national identity because it combines emotion, memory and cultural expression. Traditional music can represent continuity with the past, while modern musical forms can demonstrate innovation and openness to global influences. Music is therefore able to communicate both heritage and modernity. It can express national character in a way that is immediate, emotional and accessible to international audiences.

Food and drink are among the most every day and recognisable expressions of national identity. Food communicates culture, lifestyle, territory, tradition and social values. It is also closely connected to public diplomacy and soft power because it allows countries to present themselves through positive and familiar experiences. Food can therefore become both a cultural expression and a strategic instrument for communicating national identity.

Sport is another powerful dimension of national identity. It generates strong emotions and collective pride, especially during international competitions. Sport can unify a nation by creating shared moments of belonging, but it can also reveal internal divisions related to regions, ethnicity or politics. Football clubs, national teams and international sporting events often become symbolic spaces where national identity is performed and represented.

Architecture and art represent the visual and spatial dimensions of national identity. Buildings, monuments, museums and artistic works can express national values, historical memory and cultural imagination. Architecture can physically embody national ideals, while art can shape

perceptions of place and belonging. Museums are particularly important because they organise and display material culture, creating narratives about the nation and its history.

Another fundamental feature of national identity is the existence of visual and sonic symbols. Flags are among the most powerful visual expressions of national identity. They are widely recognised and often used as shorthand for country-of-origin. National anthems represent sonic manifestations of identity and are strongly connected to emotion, pride and collective belonging. Uniforms, traditional dress, iconic voices and famous individuals can also become recognisable signs of national identity.

National identity also includes legal and political dimensions. Common rights and duties contribute to the civic dimension of belonging. They define who belongs to the political community and what responsibilities members share. However, in a globalised world, some legal and economic features have become less exclusively national, especially because of supranational institutions and international integration. Nevertheless, the emotional and cultural dimensions of national identity remain powerful.

A further fundamental feature is the tension between unity and diversity. Many nations contain different cultural, ethnic, linguistic or regional groups. This creates a challenge: national identity must create a sense of unity without erasing internal diversity. If nation-building relies only on one dominant cultural group, it may exclude others. On the other hand, if diversity is recognised and integrated carefully, it can become an asset. For this reason, national identity should be understood as a plural and negotiated concept rather than a single homogeneous essence.

Finally, stereotypes and external perception are also connected to national identity. Nations are often perceived through simplified images, which may be positive, negative or neutral. These stereotypes can influence tourism, exports, investment and international reputation. Sometimes external audiences have limited knowledge of a country, which creates an identity-image gap: the difference between how a nation understands itself and how it is perceived by others. This gap can be intensified by media representations, films or cultural artefacts that produce distorted images of a nation.

Therefore, the fundamental features of national identity include homeland, memory, culture, symbols, language, traditions, legal belonging, social diversity and external perception. These elements do not operate separately; they interact with each other and together shape how a nation is understood internally and externally.

2.3 National Identity and National Branding

National identity is closely connected to nation branding because the essence of any authentic nation brand must be rooted in the real culture, history and values of the nation. Nation branding cannot be understood as a simple marketing activity. Branding a nation is very different from branding a commercial product because a nation is not a manufactured object with artificial differentiation. A nation contains people, history, culture, institutions, landscapes, traditions,

conflicts and emotional meanings. For this reason, a credible nation brand must be based on a deep understanding of national identity.

National branding refers to the strategic communication and management of a country's image to influence how it is perceived by external audiences. It may be connected to tourism, exports, foreign investment, diplomacy, culture and international reputation. However, effective nation branding cannot be reduced to advertising campaigns or promotional slogans. If it is disconnected from national identity, it risks appearing superficial, artificial and unrepresentative.

The relationship between national identity and nation branding is therefore essential. National identity provides the cultural foundation, while nation branding selects, organises and communicates certain aspects of that identity to specific audiences. The most authentic differentiator of a nation's brand is not an invented slogan, but the reality of the nation's culture. Language, literature, music, sport, architecture, food, art and public culture all embody the identity of a nation and can become meaningful elements of a branding strategy.

At the same time, nation branding must be careful not to simplify national identity excessively. Since national identity is complex and internally diverse, any attempt to present it as a single fixed image may create tensions. A nation brand that ignores internal diversity may be rejected by citizens or criticised for excluding certain groups. For this reason, inclusive stakeholder participation is important. A successful nation branding strategy should not be imposed from above, but should involve different cultural, social, public and private actors.

This is especially important in societies where there are tensions between civic and ethnic identities. If a nation branding campaign promotes only one ethnic, regional or cultural image, it may deepen internal divisions rather than create unity. By contrast, an inclusive approach can transform diversity into a strength and present the nation as plural, dynamic and culturally rich.

Another important issue is the identity-image gap. This gap emerges when a nation's real identity is not understood or appreciated by external audiences. It can happen because of limited knowledge, indifference or negative stereotypes. External perceptions of a country may be shaped by films, media narratives, historical associations or product experiences. When these perceptions are negative or inaccurate, they can damage the nation's image. In such cases, short-term public relations may provide temporary support, but long-term improvement requires deeper and more strategic communication of culture and identity.

Stereotypes are particularly relevant in nation branding. They can influence how foreign audiences perceive a country, its people and its products. Some stereotypes may be positive and useful, while others may be damaging and difficult to change. Nation branding can help counter negative stereotypes, but only if it is supported by consistent cultural, economic and diplomatic communication. Because people often edit, select or rearrange attributes when forming a country's image, ongoing research is necessary to understand how a nation is perceived in different markets.

Country-of-origin associations are also important. National symbols, such as flags, are often used by companies to emphasise the origin of their products. This can strengthen the connection between products and national identity. However, it can also create risks, because not all products using national symbols are necessarily high quality. For this reason, countries may create official

organisations, logos or trademarks to protect the reputation of national products and services. Such mechanisms can help connect national identity with quality, trust and credibility.

Nation branding also requires adaptation to different international contexts. A country may emphasise different aspects of its identity depending on the audience it wants to reach. This does not mean that identity can be invented freely, but rather that national identity can be communicated selectively and contextually. For example, a country may highlight cultural heritage in tourism markets, innovation in investment markets, food and lifestyle in export markets, and democratic values in diplomatic contexts. This reflects the idea that identity is fluid but not limitless.

Public diplomacy and soft power are also central to the relationship between national identity and nation branding. Soft power is based on attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. Culture, values and identity can therefore become sources of international influence. A nation that is admired for its culture, institutions, creativity, lifestyle or values can gain reputational advantages. Public diplomacy supports this process by using strategic communication, news management and relationship-building to reach foreign audiences.

Cultural programmes are one of the main tools of public diplomacy. Through exhibitions, language promotion, educational exchange, museums, literature, food events, music and artistic initiatives, countries can communicate their identity in ways that are more credible and emotionally engaging than traditional advertising. In this sense, culture becomes not only an internal expression of identity but also an external instrument of international communication.

Nevertheless, nation branding must remain authentic. If national identity is over-instrumentalised or treated only as a marketing resource, it may lose credibility. Stakeholders must voluntarily recognise and support the nation brand. A branding strategy cannot succeed if citizens, institutions, businesses and cultural actors do not feel represented by it. Therefore, coordination is important, but it should not be based on imposing artificial narratives. Instead, coordinating bodies should identify synergies among different stakeholders and help connect cultural, economic and diplomatic initiatives.

The relationship between national identity and nation branding can therefore be summarised in three levels. First, national identity refers to the deeper cultural, historical, symbolic and emotional meanings of the nation. Second, nation branding is the strategic process through which selected elements of this identity are communicated to internal and external audiences. Third, the value created by these perceptions can influence tourism, exports, investment, diplomacy and global reputation.

In conclusion, national identity is the foundation of nation branding. Without a deep understanding of national identity, nation branding becomes superficial and weak. A strong nation brand must be rooted in real cultural expressions, historical memory, public values, symbols, landscapes and social practices. At the same time, it must recognise that national identity is dynamic, diverse and contested. For this reason, successful nation branding requires authenticity, inclusiveness, cultural sensitivity and long-term strategic communication. It must not simply promote an image of the nation, but communicate a credible and meaningful representation of what the nation is, how it understands itself and how it wishes to be perceived by others.

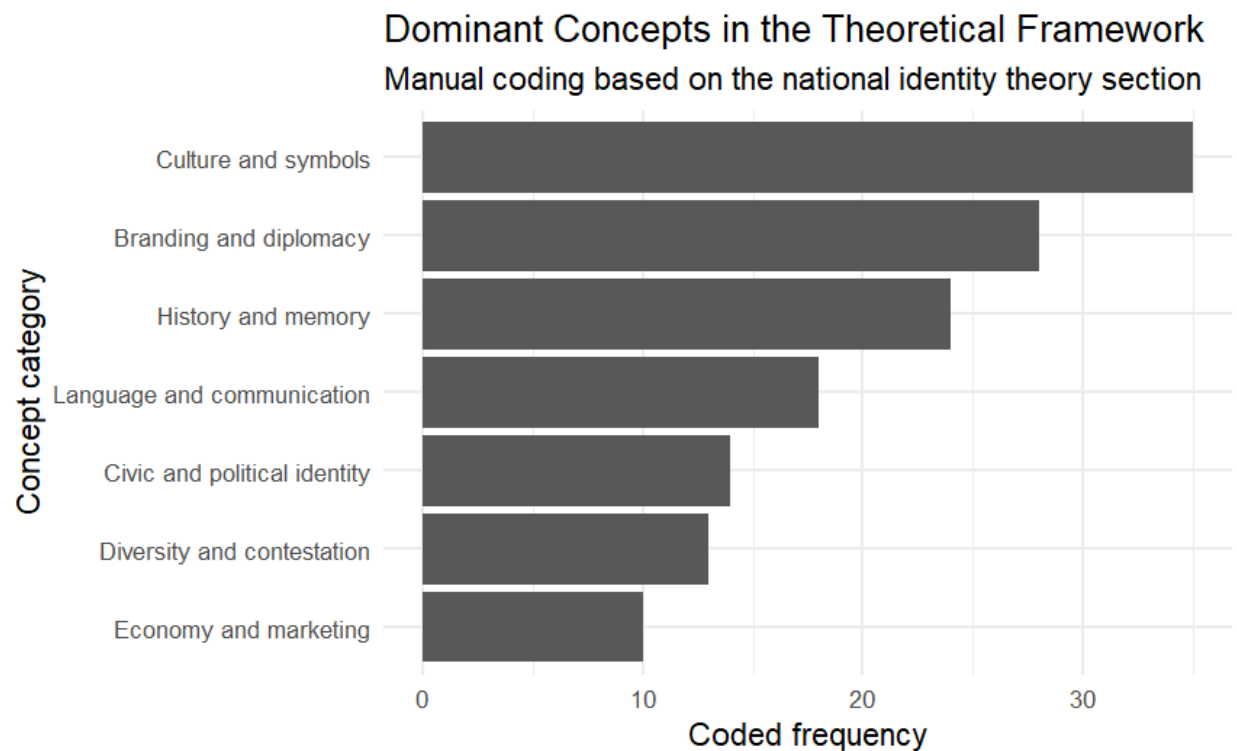


Figure 1. Dominant Concepts in the Theoretical Framework

The numbers on the horizontal axis show the coded frequency, meaning how often each concept category was mentioned in the theoretical framework and classified as part of national identity. The chart shows that “culture and symbols” was the most frequently coded category, followed by “branding and diplomacy” and “history and memory”. This means that national identity in the theoretical section is mainly associated with cultural, symbolic, diplomatic and historical elements.

3. THE AUTHORS' CONCEPTS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

3.1 National Identity as a Historical and Constructed Concept

One of the central debates within the literature on national identity concerns the question of whether nations are natural historical entities or socially constructed communities. The authors examined national identity from different theoretical perspectives, yet together they demonstrate that identity is deeply connected with history, collective memory, symbolic imagination and social construction.

Anthony D. Smith (1991) provides one of the most influential and foundational definitions of national identity. According to Smith, national identity is based on “a historic territory, common myths and memories, a shared public culture, common legal rights and duties, and a common economy.” His perspective emphasises the structural and historical dimensions of identity. For Smith, nations are rooted in continuity with the past, and people develop a sense of belonging through shared memories, myths, institutions and cultural traditions. National identity therefore emerges not only from political structures, but also from emotional attachment to a collective historical experience.

However, this historical and structural approach is challenged by Benedict Anderson (1991), who famously defines the nation as an “imagined community.” Anderson argues that members of a nation will never personally know most of the people belonging to it, yet they still imagine themselves as part of the same collective community. Unlike Smith, Anderson shifts attention away from territory and institutions toward symbolic imagination and psychological belonging. In this interpretation, national identity exists because individuals mentally construct a sense of collective unity. The nation is therefore not purely objective, but socially imagined through communication, symbols and shared narratives.

This constructivist interpretation is further developed by Ernest Gellner (1983), who argues that nations are not natural entities but products of historical and social processes. Gellner rejects the idea that nations have existed eternally; instead, he views nationalism as something created within modern political and economic development. His approach is particularly significant for later critiques of nation branding, especially in the work of Nadia Kaneva. Kaneva argues that nation branding often assumes that nations possess a stable and authentic essence that can simply be promoted internationally. Drawing on Gellner’s constructivist perspective, she challenges this assumption and argues that national identities are historically contingent, socially constructed and constantly changing.

The idea that national identity can be actively constructed is also central to Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983), who introduce the concept of “invented tradition.” According to these authors, many traditions that appear ancient are in fact relatively recent creations designed to establish social cohesion and reinforce collective identity. National identity is therefore not only inherited from history but can also be strategically produced in the present. Their theory demonstrates how nations selectively reinterpret the past to legitimise political and cultural unity.

At the same time, Richard Finlay (1994) warns that invented traditions may create artificial and mythologised versions of national identity. He argues that elites may selectively construct historical narratives to promote specific political visions of the nation. Nevertheless, Smith offers a more balanced interpretation by suggesting that even newly created traditions can acquire emotional legitimacy if they become connected to a shared sense of collective memory.

Another important contribution is provided by Bhikhu Parekh (2000), who argues that national identity is neither fixed nor infinitely flexible. Identity can evolve over time, but it remains connected to inherited cultural frameworks, historical memory and social continuity. Ross Bond, David McCrone and Alice Brown (2003) expand this idea by arguing that national identity is constantly reconstructed through reinterpretation of the past. According to these authors, societies selectively preserve, reject or reinterpret historical elements depending on contemporary political and economic needs. This perspective is particularly important because it demonstrates that national identity is not static but continuously renegotiated within changing historical contexts.

Taken together, these authors demonstrate that national identity cannot be understood as a purely natural or permanent phenomenon. Instead, it is historically shaped, socially imagined and continuously reconstructed through collective memory, myths, symbols and political narratives. The nation therefore emerges as both a historical reality and a cultural construction.

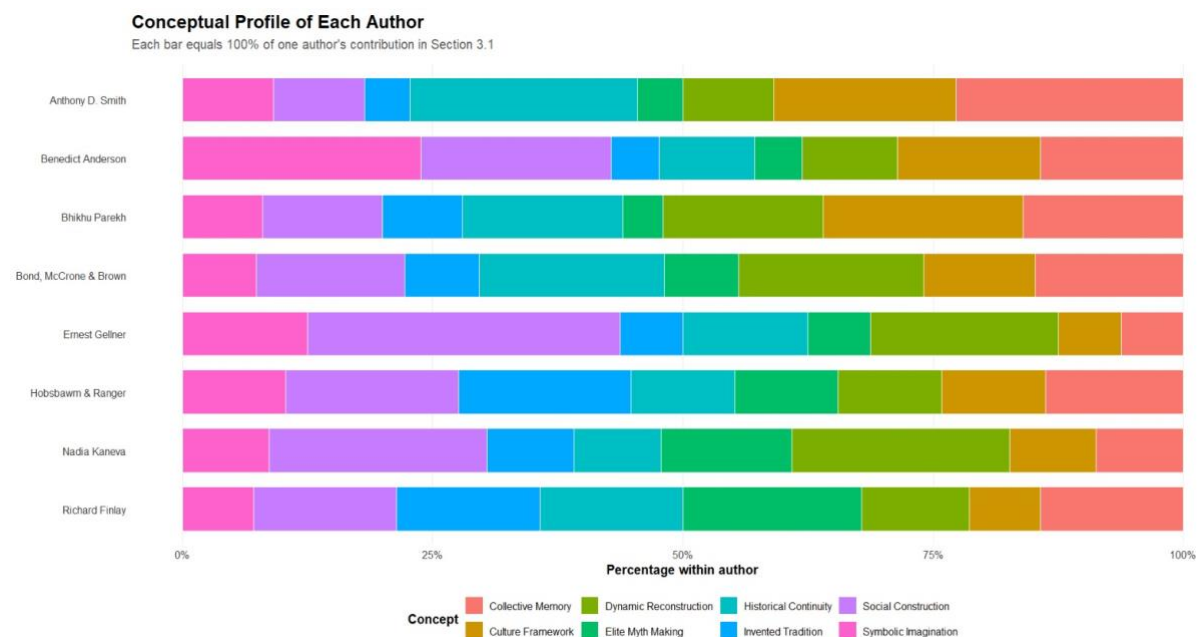


Figure 2. Conceptual profile of authors in Section 3.1.

The figure shows the relative thematic emphasis of each author's contribution to the theory of national identity. The percentages are based on manual qualitative coding and indicate analytical emphasis rather than statistical frequency.

3.2 National Identity as a Dynamic and Contested Phenomenon

Beyond its historical foundations, national identity is also presented by many authors as a dynamic, contested and internally diverse phenomenon. Rather than representing a single unified experience, national identity is interpreted differently by various social groups and individuals.

John B. Thompson (2001) argues that national identity is not experienced uniformly. Individuals engage with the nation differently depending on their social background, personal experiences and cultural context. This means that national identity is not equally meaningful for all members of society. Some individuals may strongly identify with national symbols and traditions, while others may experience weaker or more fragmented forms of belonging. Thompson's perspective

challenges simplistic assumptions that nations possess one coherent and universally shared identity.

Similarly, Vera Tolz (1998) highlights the tension between civic and ethnic forms of identity. Civic identity is based on citizenship, political participation and shared institutions, whereas ethnic identity relates to common language, religion, ancestry and cultural heritage. These two forms of identity do not always coexist harmoniously. In multicultural societies, tensions may emerge between inclusive civic values and more exclusive ethnic definitions of national belonging. Tolz therefore demonstrates that national identity often involves competing interpretations of who truly belongs to the nation.

The contested nature of identity is further reinforced by Nadia Kaneva, who criticises essentialist understandings of nation branding. Kaneva argues that branding strategies frequently simplify national identity into fixed and marketable images. According to her, such approaches ignore the internal complexity, contradictions and historical changes that characterise real national communities. She rejects both originalism, which assumes that nations possess an authentic core identity, and essentialism, which treats national identity as stable and unchanging. Instead, Kaneva views identity as fluid, contested and politically negotiated.

The dynamic nature of identity is also visible in the work of Bond, McCrone and Brown (2003), who explain that nations constantly reinterpret their historical narratives according to present needs. Historical memories are not simply preserved; they are selectively mobilised and reconstructed. This demonstrates that national identity is continuously shaped by contemporary political, economic and social circumstances.

Parekh's argument also contributes to this interpretation. Although identity changes over time, it cannot be completely reinvented without limits. Historical continuity still matters, but this continuity is constantly negotiated and adapted to modern conditions. National identity therefore exists in a constant balance between stability and transformation.

These authors collectively show that national identity is not homogeneous or universally experienced. Instead, it is characterised by diversity, negotiation and internal contestation. National identity is shaped through social interaction, political interpretation and cultural negotiation, which means that it remains open to reinterpretation rather than permanently fixed.

3.3 Cultural and Symbolic Expressions of National Identity

While some authors focus on historical and political dimensions of identity, others emphasise the importance of culture and symbolic representation. In this perspective, national identity becomes visible through language, communication styles, traditions, stereotypes, art, food, sport and other cultural expressions.

Niranjan Pant (2005) describes culture as one of the most distinctive yet intangible elements of a nation. Culture provides uniqueness and differentiates one society from another, although it is often difficult to define precisely. Victoria Rodner (2020) further demonstrates that cultural institutions such as museums contribute significantly to the communication of national image. Similarly, Frank Bradley (2005), Muhlbacher (1999) and Torelli (2021) connect culture with international marketing and consumer behaviour, arguing that cultural values shape how countries, brands and products are perceived internationally.

Communication styles also play an important role in expressing identity. Edward T. Hall (1976) distinguishes between high-context and low-context cultures. High-context cultures rely heavily on implicit communication, shared understanding and non-verbal cues, whereas low-context cultures depend more on direct and explicit communication. Mead (2005) expands this framework by explaining that high-context cultures are usually associated with stronger interpersonal relationships and slower-changing social patterns. These theories demonstrate that national identity is not expressed only through symbols and traditions, but also through everyday practices of communication.

The relationship between culture and psychology is explored by Jennifer Aaker and Williams (1998), who show that emotional responses vary across cultures. Their research demonstrates that individuals from different cultural backgrounds respond differently to concepts such as empathy, pride and happiness. However, Takano and Osaka (1999), Peng (1997) and Briley (2000) criticise overly simplistic cultural classifications. They argue that cultures are complex systems composed of multiple layers and cannot be reduced to simple binaries such as individualism versus collectivism. These authors are important because they warn against reducing national identity to rigid stereotypes.

Ethnocentrism represents another important cultural dimension. William Graham Sumner (1906) introduced the idea that individuals often evaluate other groups according to the standards of their own culture. Usunier and Lee (2005) further explain that people frequently interpret foreign cultures through their own cultural frameworks. Keillor and Hult (1999) include ethnocentrism within broader national identity structures together with cultural heritage and belief systems. Lilli and Diehl (1999) additionally argue that identity is shaped through comparison between ingroups and outgroups. National identity therefore depends not only on internal belonging, but also on differentiation from others.

Language is also presented as a fundamental component of identity. Edward Sapir (1929) argues that language shapes social reality because different language's structure different ways of understanding the world. Sharon Macdonald (1997) adds that meaning is inseparable from social context and communication practices. Language therefore functions not merely as a communication tool but as a cultural framework through which identity is interpreted and reproduced.

Also, literature, music, food, sport, architecture and art as symbolic expressions of identity. Literature communicates the psychological and cultural worldview of a nation more deeply than official political narratives. Music emotionally connects tradition and modernity, as shown in Devine's discussion of Scottish identity. Food and gastronomy also play an important role. Rockower (2020) describes food as an instrument of gastrodiploamcy, while Rethy and Siriwat (2020) define food diplomacy as a form of cultural diplomacy capable of communicating national values internationally.

Sport represents another highly emotional dimension of identity. Bradley (1995) demonstrates that sport can reflect internal national divisions, while Motion (2003) shows that it can also create unity and collective pride, as in the case of New Zealand's All Blacks. Tuck (2003) further explains how media narratives reinforce national myths and symbols through sport. Similarly, Knott (2017), Jun and Lee (2007) and Rein and Shields (2007) show that sport contributes significantly to nation branding and international visibility.

Finally, architecture and art express the visual and spatial dimensions of national identity. Hess (2000) demonstrates how architecture can physically construct national identity, especially in post-colonial contexts. Rodner and Kerrigan (2018) argue that art shapes perceptions of place and

belonging, while Goudie (2020) highlights its role in strengthening social cohesion. National identity therefore becomes not only narrated and imagined, but also visually experienced.

To sum up, these authors demonstrate that national identity is deeply embedded in cultural symbols, communication practices and everyday social life. Through culture, identity becomes visible, emotionally meaningful and internationally recognisable.

3.4 National Identity as a Strategic and Diplomatic Resource

In contemporary global society, national identity is increasingly connected with diplomacy, strategic communication and international image management. Many authors therefore analyse how identity becomes transformed into a resource for nation branding, public diplomacy and soft power.

Joseph Nye (2003) defines soft power as the ability to influence others through attraction rather than coercion. According to Nye, culture, political values and national identity have become important sources of international influence. In this sense, national identity is no longer only an internal cultural phenomenon but also a strategic diplomatic resource.

Leonard (2002) develops this perspective by explaining that public diplomacy involves strategic communication, relationship-building and international information management. States actively communicate selected aspects of their identity to improve their global image and strengthen international relationships.

Simon Anholt (2007) further argues that successful nation branding depends on public credibility and stakeholder acceptance. A national image cannot simply be artificially invented; it must correspond to social reality and public perception. Surowiec (2017) similarly warns that excessive instrumentalisation of identity may damage authenticity and public trust.

One of the most important theoretical debates within this field is represented by the contrast between Nadia Kaneva and Natasha Grand. Kaneva criticises nation branding because it often simplifies national identity into generic and marketable stereotypes. According to her, branding tends to ignore historical complexity and social contradictions. Natasha Grand, by contrast, adopts a more practical perspective and argues that national identity can be transformed into a coherent strategic narrative capable of guiding branding activities. For Grand, simplification becomes necessary in order to communicate identity effectively to international audiences.

This theoretical tension is illustrated through the cases of Japan and Ireland. Nancy Snow's analysis of Japan demonstrates that even countries with strong global reputations experience internal contradictions that complicate nation branding. Social tensions related to gender, modernisation and globalisation reveal the fragmented nature of Japanese identity. Conversely, Una Fitzgibbon's analysis of Ireland shows how nation branding can succeed when it reflects authentic cultural practices and stakeholder engagement. Ireland's food branding strategy successfully combines sustainability, agriculture and national landscape within the Origin Green programme, creating a credible and coherent international image.

Within this context, it is also important to distinguish between national identity, nation branding and nation brand equity. National identity refers to the deeper historical, cultural and symbolic meanings through which a nation understands itself. Nation branding represents the strategic communication process through which selected elements of this identity are promoted

internationally. Nation brand equity refers to the economic, political and reputational value generated by these perceptions, including tourism attractiveness, export value, investment potential and soft power influence.

These authors demonstrate that national identity has become increasingly important within international communication and diplomacy. However, successful nation branding requires authenticity, credibility and sensitivity to the internal complexity of identity itself. National identity cannot simply be reduced to marketing slogans; it must remain connected with real cultural, historical and social practices.

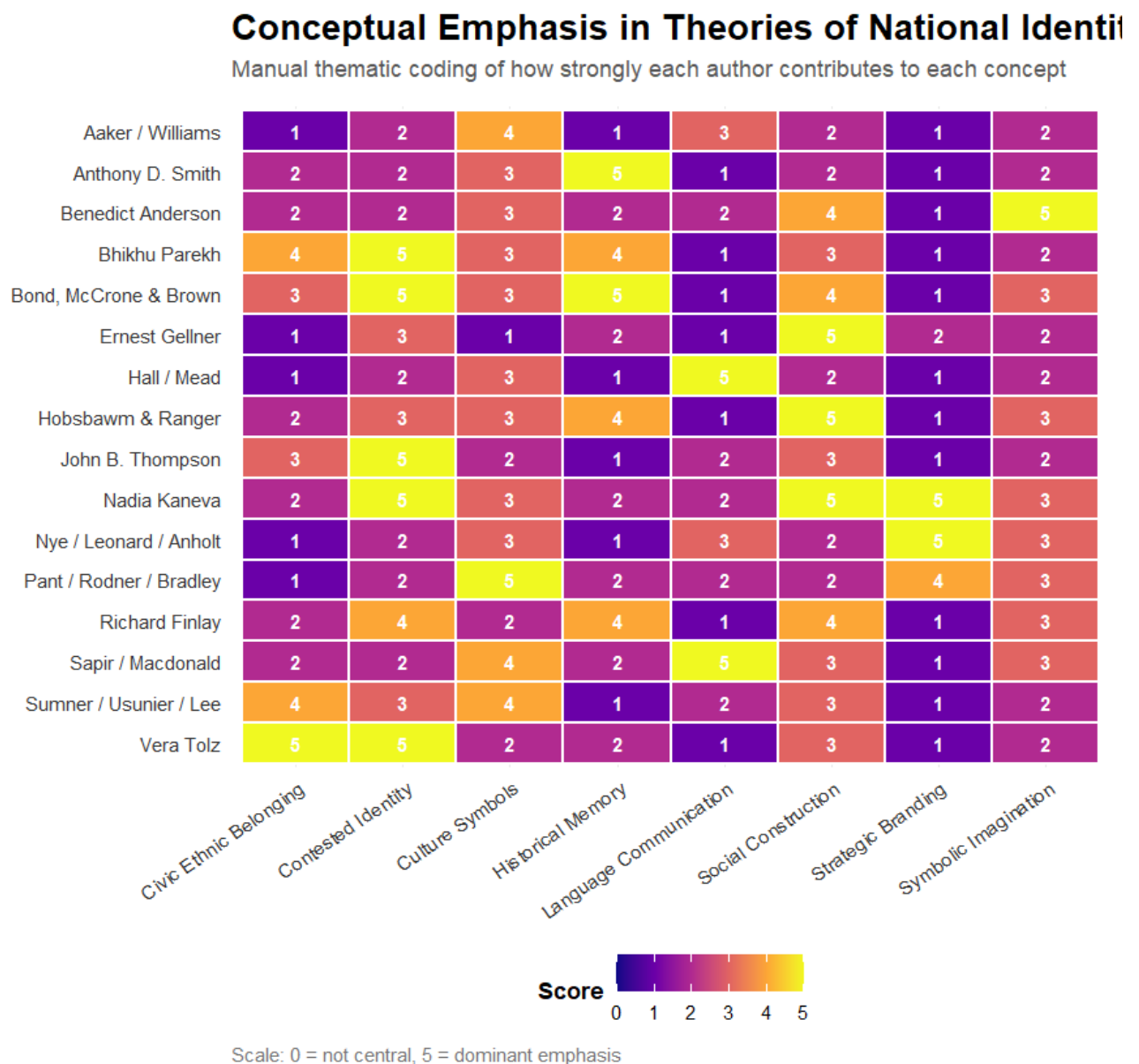


Figure 3. Conceptual emphasis in theories of national identity.

The heatmap shows how strongly each author contributes to the main theoretical dimensions of national identity. The values are based on manual thematic coding, where 0 indicates that a concept is not central and 5 indicates dominant emphasis.

4. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Introduction to research

This study is based on a qualitative content analysis of official communication published by Italian embassies in different countries. The research aims to examine how Italian national identity is represented abroad through diplomatic communication and which dimensions of Italy are emphasized in different geopolitical and cultural contexts. The analysis focuses on the way embassies describe Italy in relation to culture, economy, innovation, education, diplomacy, security, international cooperation, and social values.

The empirical material used in this research was collected from the official websites and news sections of Italian embassies operating in various countries, including the Japan, United States, Brazil, France, Australia, Ethiopia and UAE. The selected texts consist mainly of official press releases, institutional announcements, cultural initiatives, economic reports, scholarship programs, security updates, and diplomatic events published during 2026. These materials were chosen because they represent official state communication and provide direct insight into the image of Italy promoted abroad by diplomatic institutions.

The research adopts a comparative approach. Each embassy communication was analyzed in order to identify recurring themes, dominant narratives, and specific elements associated with Italian national identity. Particular attention was given to differences between countries and regions, with the objective of understanding how the representation of Italy changes according to political, economic, cultural, and strategic contexts. For example, some embassies emphasized innovation, economic cooperation, and technology, while others focused more on culture, security, education, or humanitarian assistance.

The analysis was conducted through thematic categorization and interpretation of the selected texts. Key concepts, institutional language, repeated expressions, and strategic priorities were examined to identify the main dimensions through which Italy presents itself internationally. This methodology allows a deeper understanding of how diplomacy contributes to the construction and communication of national identity in the contemporary global context.

The analysis was conducted using manual thematic coding. Each embassy publication was read and coded according to recurring identity dimensions, including culture and creativity, language and education, innovation and technology, economic diplomacy, civic and institutional identity, humanitarian cooperation, security and crisis management, and strategic partnership.

The percentages and visualizations do not represent statistical measurement of the whole embassy communication, but analytical emphasis within the selected sample of texts.

4.2 Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity in Japan

The analysis of the official news published by the Italian Embassy in Japan demonstrates that Italian national identity is represented mainly through culture, creativity, language promotion, cultural diplomacy and the combination of tradition with innovation. In the Japanese context, Italy

is presented as a country of artistic excellence, refined cultural heritage and internationally recognised creative industries, while simultaneously promoting modernity, technological cooperation and youth exchange.

One of the most dominant dimensions identified in the analysed news is the cultural dimension of national identity. The “Festival del Cinema Italiano in Giappone” represents a significant example of how Italy communicates its identity abroad through cinema and audiovisual production. The Embassy describes the festival as “one of the most prestigious and effective events of Italian cinema abroad,” presenting Italian cinema as both an artistic expression and a strategic instrument of cultural diplomacy. References to directors, actors, Cinecittà and Italian audiovisual production construct an image of Italy as a country with strong cultural prestige and creative influence in the international cultural market.

The analysed news also highlights the symbolic role of cinema as part of Italian national identity. Expressions such as “stile del cinema italiano,” “produzioni italiane,” and “riferimenti imprescindibili nel panorama culturale mondiale” reinforce the idea that Italy is internationally associated with artistic quality, imagination and aesthetic sophistication. The repeated references to Tokyo and Osaka audiences, as well as the fact that 40% of the films presented later obtain Japanese distribution, demonstrate that Italian culture is represented as globally attractive and commercially relevant.

Another important dimension emerging from the analysis is the connection between culture and economic diplomacy. The Ambassador Mario Vattani explicitly describes cinema as “un asset strategico della diplomazia della crescita.” This demonstrates that Italy does not present culture only as heritage or entertainment, but also as an economic and diplomatic resource capable of attracting investments and supporting the creative industries. Similar to the French and American contexts, Italy seeks to modernise its international image by combining cultural prestige with economic competitiveness.

The analysed news additionally emphasises the importance of language and educational diplomacy. Several publications concern scholarships, teacher training and the promotion of Italian language courses abroad. The contributions for courses dedicated to teachers of Italian language and the scholarship programs aim to strengthen “la promozione della lingua e della cultura italiana.” Language is therefore represented as a fundamental carrier of cultural values, communication styles and intellectual traditions. Through the promotion of Italian language teaching, the Embassy contributes to reinforcing Italy’s soft power and cultural visibility in Japan.

Another significant dimension is the representation of Italy through youth mobility and people-to-people exchanges. The new Working Holiday Agreement between Italy and Japan is presented as an opportunity for young people to experience the culture and lifestyle of the host country directly. Expressions such as “comprensione reciproca,” “esperienza di immersione quotidiana,” and “rafforzamento degli scambi tra le giovani generazioni” demonstrate that national identity is communicated through interpersonal interaction and everyday cultural experience. Italy is therefore represented as an open, internationally connected and culturally accessible society.

The analysed publications also reflect the importance of historical continuity and diplomatic partnership. The repeated references to the “160° anniversario delle relazioni diplomatiche bilaterali” construct Italy and Japan as two nations linked by long-term mutual respect and cultural

dialogue. Italy presents itself not only as a European country promoting culture abroad, but also as a strategic partner engaged in sustained bilateral cooperation with Japan.

The institutional dimension of national identity is additionally visible in the Embassy's administrative communication, including scholarship announcements, sponsorship initiatives and recruitment notices. These publications reinforce the image of Italy as an organised and institutionally active state capable of coordinating cultural, educational and diplomatic initiatives internationally.

The examined news demonstrates that the Italian Embassy in Japan represents Italy primarily through artistic excellence, cultural prestige, language promotion and creative industries. Italian national identity is communicated as a combination of tradition, aesthetic refinement and innovation. In the Japanese context, Italy appears as a globally respected cultural nation capable of transforming its heritage, cinema, language and creativity into instruments of international influence and diplomatic cooperation.

4.3 Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity in the United States

The analysis of the official news published by the Italian Embassy in the United States demonstrates that Italian national identity is represented mainly through innovation, economic strength, scientific cooperation, cultural heritage and strategic partnership.

One of the most dominant dimensions identified in the analysed news is the representation of Italy as a modern and innovation-oriented nation. Multiple publications emphasise cooperation in artificial intelligence, quantum sciences, biotechnology, cybersecurity, aerospace technologies and advanced supply chains. In the "U.S.-Italy Dialogue on Trusted Technologies," Italy is presented as an active democratic actor participating in the global technological competition between democracies and authoritarian systems. Expressions such as "trusted technologies," "innovation," "technology advances freedom," and "democratic leadership" connect Italian national identity with values of technological progress, security and international responsibility. This representation contributes to the external perception of Italy not only as a country of culture and history, but also as a modern scientific and technological power.

The news additionally highlights the economic and industrial dimension of Italian national identity. In the "Villa Firenze Talks" dedicated to the Italian economy, Italy is represented as economically resilient, financially stable and internationally attractive for investments. References to "extraordinary resilience," "stable growth," "industrial strengths," and record bilateral trade figures construct an image of Italy as a competitive and reliable economic partner. The Embassy repeatedly stresses industrial sectors such as pharmaceuticals, mechanics, automotive production and luxury goods, reinforcing Italy's identity as a country associated with high-quality manufacturing, industrial expertise and global economic influence.

Another important dimension emerging from the analysis is the communicative use of cultural heritage and historical continuity. While the majority of publications focus on technology and economic cooperation, cultural identity remains visible through references to Italian civilization,

architecture and cinema. The exhibition “The Etruscans: From the Heart of Ancient Italy” symbolically connects Italy’s ancient historical roots with its modern international presence. Similarly, the mention of Renzo Piano’s architecture and Italian cinema at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures reflects how Italy continues to project soft power through globally recognised cultural achievements. These examples demonstrate that Italian national identity abroad combines historical heritage with contemporary innovation.

The analysed news also strongly reflects the strategic and diplomatic dimension of national identity. Italy is consistently represented as a close ally of the United States and as an active participant in transatlantic cooperation. Frequent references to “shared democratic values,” “strategic partnership,” “bilateral cooperation,” and “allied innovation” construct Italy as a nation deeply integrated into Western political, scientific and security networks. In the Space Dialogue and Science and Technology Cooperation meetings, Italy is portrayed as an equal and trusted partner in areas connected to national security, space exploration and emerging technologies. This contributes to an external image of Italy as internationally influential, technologically capable and geopolitically relevant.

The analysis further demonstrates that the Embassy actively promotes the idea of “Sistema Italia,” which integrates diplomacy, business, science, culture and innovation into one coordinated national image. Through meetings with entrepreneurs, scientists, researchers, investors and Italian-American communities, the Embassy presents Italy as globally connected and internationally competitive. National identity is therefore communicated not only through traditional cultural symbols, but also through networks of innovation, investment and scientific cooperation.

The examined publications show that Italian national identity in the United States is represented through a combination of cultural heritage, technological modernity, economic competitiveness and democratic partnership. Italy is portrayed as a country capable of preserving its historical and cultural uniqueness while simultaneously positioning itself as a strategic actor in innovation, science and global cooperation.

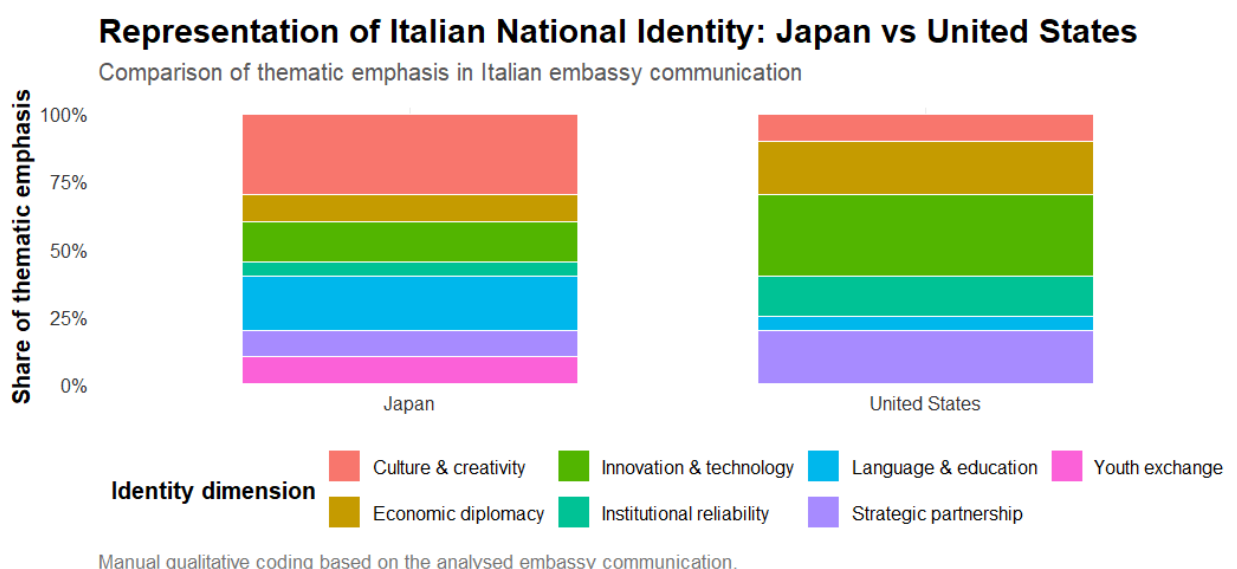


Figure 4. Representation of Italian national identity in Japan and the United States. The figure compares the relative thematic emphasis of Italian embassy communication in two host-country contexts. The percentages are based on manual qualitative coding and show analytical emphasis rather than statistical frequency.

4.4 Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity in Brazil

The analysis of the official news published by the Italian Embassy in Brazil demonstrates that Italian national identity is represented mainly through culture, education, design, scientific cooperation and the preservation of connections with Italian communities abroad. In comparison with the United States, where the representation of Italy focused strongly on technological leadership and strategic partnerships, the Brazilian context presents Italy more visibly as a cultural, educational and historical actor with strong soft power projection.

One of the most dominant dimensions identified in the analysed news is the cultural dimension of national identity. Several publications emphasise the promotion of Italian language, architecture, design and cultural heritage. The Italian Design Day 2026 represents a particularly important example of how Italy communicates its national identity abroad through cultural excellence. Expressions such as “eccellenza del design e dell’architettura,” “tradizione,” “patrimonio architettonico,” and “innovazione e sostenibilità” construct an image of Italy as a country deeply connected to artistic creativity, aesthetic quality and historical continuity. The Embassy presents Italian architecture and design not only as cultural products, but also as symbols of national identity and international prestige.

The analysis also highlights the importance of historical continuity and cultural memory. During the Italian Design Day event, Ambassador Alessandro Cortese described Italian cities, buildings and spaces as “the result of a history built over time.” This reference connects national identity with heritage, collective memory and the preservation of historical spaces. The emphasis on restoration, conservation and architectural renewal demonstrates how Italy communicates the value of tradition while simultaneously promoting innovation and sustainability. This combination allows Italy to appear both historically rooted and modern.

Another significant dimension emerging from the analysis is the communicative role of education and language. Multiple announcements concern scholarships, academic mobility and professional training programs related to Italian language teaching. Programs such as “Study in Italy” and “Invest Your Talent in Italy” present Italy as an internationally attractive educational destination associated with high-quality universities, professional development and academic excellence. The repeated references to engineering, architecture, economics, management and innovation demonstrate that education functions not only as a cultural instrument, but also as a strategic mechanism for strengthening Italy’s global influence.

The news concerning Italian language teaching additionally reinforces the linguistic dimension of national identity. The course “Nuove frontiere nella didattica della lingua italiana” promotes the diffusion of Italian language and academic culture abroad. Language is represented as an important carrier of cultural values, communication styles and intellectual traditions. Through the promotion of Italian language education, the Embassy contributes to the international visibility of Italian culture and strengthens Italy’s soft power presence in Brazil.

The analysed publications also demonstrate the importance of scientific and cultural cooperation in the representation of national identity. Initiatives supporting researchers, professors, experts and cultural operators are presented as instruments for developing long-term partnerships between Italian and foreign institutions. Terms such as “partenariati strategici,” “progetti culturali e scientifici,” and “cooperazione culturale” reinforce the image of Italy as an internationally collaborative and intellectually active nation.

Another relevant aspect identified in the analysis is the maintenance of connections with Italians living abroad. News regarding pensions, consular services and employment opportunities at the Italian Consulate in São Paulo demonstrates the Embassy’s role in supporting the Italian diaspora in Brazil. This reflects the civic and social dimensions of national identity, showing that belonging to the Italian nation extends beyond territorial borders and continues through institutional support and administrative communication.

The examined news demonstrates that the Italian Embassy in Brazil represents Italy primarily through cultural heritage, educational attractiveness, linguistic promotion and international cultural cooperation. Italian national identity is communicated through soft power instruments that emphasise creativity, historical continuity, academic excellence and cultural prestige. At the same time, the Embassy reinforces Italy’s image as a globally connected nation capable of combining tradition, innovation and international cooperation.

4.5 Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity in France

The analysis of the official news published by the Italian Embassy in France shows that Italian national identity is represented mainly through political cooperation, European partnership, economic integration, Made in Italy, innovation and diplomatic solidarity. In the French context, Italy is not presented only as a cultural country, but also as a strategic European actor closely connected to France through institutions, trade, security and shared international responsibilities.

A dominant dimension identified in the analysed news is the political and institutional dimension of national identity. The visit of the President of the Italian Senate, Ignazio La Russa, to France highlights the importance of interparliamentary cooperation between the two countries. The signing of a “Protocollo di cooperazione” between the Italian Senate and the French Senate presents Italy as a state with strong democratic institutions and an active role in European political dialogue. This reflects the civic and legal dimension of national identity, where Italy is represented through its institutions, parliamentary traditions and formal diplomatic relations.

Another important element is Italy's role in international cooperation and global responsibility. The participation of the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Edmondo Cirielli, in the G7 Development Ministerial in Paris connects Italian identity with development, humanitarian support and international partnership. The references to vulnerable populations, food security, resilience, disaster risk reduction and global health present Italy as a country engaged in addressing global challenges. The mention of the Mattei Plan also strengthens the image of Italy as an actor with its own strategic approach to development, especially in Africa.

The news also constructs Italy as a country strongly linked to France through solidarity and security cooperation. The messages of condolence for the death of French soldiers in Lebanon and Erbil show Italy's diplomatic closeness to France and its commitment to peace and international stability. Expressions such as "solidarietà," "vicinanza," "missione di pace," and "diritto umanitario internazionale" represent Italy as a nation that values humanitarian law, peacekeeping and alliance loyalty. This contributes to an external image of Italy as a responsible and supportive partner within the European and international security framework.

The economic dimension of national identity is particularly visible in the news related to the Made in Italy Day and the report on investments, partnerships and trade between Italy and France. The Embassy presents Italy as a competitive industrial and economic system, not limited to traditional stereotypes of "Fashion, Food and Furniture." The reference to Italy as the seventh world exporter, with around 13,000 innovative startups and strong supercomputing capacity, challenges simplified external perceptions of Italy and promotes a more modern image based on innovation, technology and industrial strength. This is especially important because it reduces the identity-image gap between traditional stereotypes and contemporary Italian reality.

The report on Italy-France economic relations further reinforces this representation. Evidence such as the 112 billion euros in bilateral trade in 2025, France as Italy's second commercial partner, and the presence of Italian investments in France demonstrates the depth of economic integration between the two countries. Italy is therefore represented as a productive, export-oriented and strategically relevant economy. The repeated use of expressions such as "sistemi industriali e produttivi fortemente legati," "eccellenze," "investimenti reciproci," and "Sistema Italia" constructs national identity through economic reliability, competitiveness and institutional coordination.

The cultural and symbolic dimension is also present, especially through the concept of Made in Italy. However, in the French context, Made in Italy is not presented only as tradition or lifestyle, but as a combination of creativity, excellence, innovation and competitiveness. The Embassy uses Made in Italy as a flexible symbol that includes fashion, food and design, but also startups, artificial intelligence, sustainability, smart manufacturing and digital transformation. This shows how Italian national identity is communicated as both historically recognisable and future-oriented.

The analysed news demonstrates that the Italian Embassy in France represents Italy as a politically mature, economically integrated and diplomatically responsible European nation. Italian national identity is communicated through democratic institutions, solidarity with allies, economic strength, innovation and the modernisation of Made in Italy. In this context, Italy appears not only as a country of culture and heritage, but also as a strategic partner capable of contributing to European cooperation, global stability and technological competitiveness.

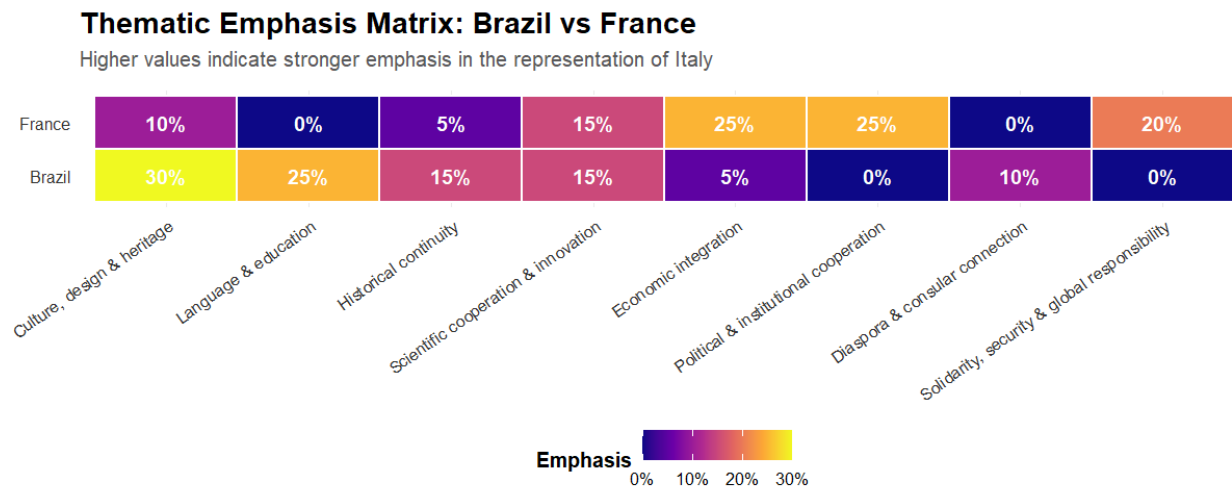


Figure 5. Thematic emphasis matrix: Brazil and France.

The matrix compares the main dimensions through which Italian national identity is represented in the official communication of the Italian Embassies in Brazil and France. Higher percentages indicate stronger analytical emphasis within the selected embassy communication.

4.6 Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity in Australia

The analysis of the official news published by the Italian Embassy in Australia demonstrates that Italian national identity is represented mainly through economic diplomacy, support for Italian communities abroad, historical memory, education and institutional responsibility. Compared to other countries analysed, the Australian context places stronger emphasis on the relationship between the Italian state and Italians living abroad, reinforcing the transnational dimension of national identity.

One of the most visible dimensions identified in the analysed news is the civic and institutional dimension of national identity. Several publications concern consular assistance, constitutional referendum procedures, visa information and emergency communication for Italian citizens abroad. The referendum-related announcements emphasise democratic participation and legal belonging beyond national territory. Italian citizens residing in Australia are presented as active members of the national community through their voting rights and institutional connection with the Embassy. References to legal procedures, deadlines and penalties for double voting reinforce the image of Italy as a democratic and legally organised state.

The analysed news also highlights the protective role of the Italian state toward its citizens abroad. Publications regarding travel disruptions, visa extensions and cyclone alerts in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea show the Embassy acting as a source of security, guidance and assistance. Expressions such as “si invitano i connazionali ad adottare prudenza” and the provision of emergency contacts construct an image of Italy as a responsible state that maintains continuous support for its citizens internationally. This contributes to the emotional and social dimensions of national identity, where belonging to the nation continues even outside the homeland.

Another important element emerging from the analysis is the economic dimension of national identity. The initiative “Business Insights from Italy – a letter to international investors” explicitly aims to create “una nuova narrativa sulle prospettive economiche italiane” and promote the strengths of the “Sistema Paese.” Italy is therefore represented as an economically attractive, investment-oriented and internationally competitive country. The use of expressions such as “growth diplomacy,” “international investors,” and “Sistema Paese” demonstrates how economic communication becomes part of the international projection of national identity. Similar to the cases of France and the United States, Italy seeks to modernise its external image by emphasising economic opportunities, competitiveness and institutional coordination.

The educational and cultural dimensions of national identity are also strongly present in the analysed news. Scholarship programs offered by the Italian government aim to promote “cooperazione culturale, scientifica e tecnologica” and “la diffusione della conoscenza della lingua e cultura italiana.” Through these initiatives, Italy presents itself as a country associated with academic excellence, scientific cooperation and cultural attractiveness. Education functions as a soft power instrument that strengthens Italy’s international visibility while simultaneously promoting Italian language and cultural identity abroad.

The analysed publications additionally reveal the importance of historical memory and collective identity. The news regarding the “Giorno del Ricordo” commemorating the victims of the foibe and the Istrian, Fiuman and Dalmatian exiles demonstrates how Italy preserves and communicates national historical narratives internationally. References to memory, sacrifice, peace and solidarity reinforce the symbolic dimension of national identity. The ceremony connects Italian identity with collective remembrance and historical continuity while simultaneously linking national memory to broader European values such as peace and coexistence.

Another relevant aspect is the role of the Italian diaspora in the construction of national identity abroad. The repeated references to “connazionali,” Italian residents abroad and Italian communities demonstrate that the Embassy considers emigrant communities an integral part of the nation. National identity is therefore represented as transnational rather than strictly territorial. Institutional support for Italians abroad reinforces emotional attachment to the homeland and maintains the connection between citizens and the Italian state across geographic distance.

The examined news demonstrates that the Italian Embassy in Australia represents Italy primarily through democratic belonging, institutional protection, historical memory, educational cooperation and economic diplomacy. Italian national identity is communicated not only through culture and heritage, but also through the active relationship between the state and Italians abroad. In the Australian context, Italy appears as a globally connected nation that combines institutional responsibility, economic modernisation and strong ties with its international communities.

4.7 Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity in Ethiopia

The analysis of the official news published by the Italian Embassy in Ethiopia demonstrates that Italian national identity is represented mainly through humanitarian cooperation, healthcare assistance, international solidarity, historical memory and educational diplomacy. In the Ethiopian

context, Italy is presented less as an economic or technological power and more as a responsible international partner committed to development, human dignity and long-term cooperation.

One of the most significant dimensions identified in the analysed news is the humanitarian and social dimension of national identity. The inauguration of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at the Tikur Anbessa Hospital in Addis Ababa strongly represents Italy as a country engaged in healthcare development and international assistance. Expressions such as “rinnovato impegno,” “cure neonatali di alta qualità,” “pazienti più vulnerabili,” and “investire nella vita, nella dignità e nel futuro” construct an image of Italy based on solidarity, care and human-centered cooperation. The Embassy explicitly connects this initiative with the “traditional Italian commitment” to the Ethiopian healthcare sector, reinforcing the idea of long-term partnership and continuity.

The analysed news also highlights the role of development cooperation in the representation of national identity. Italy is portrayed as an active actor supporting hospital reconstruction, medical training, emergency response and healthcare infrastructure. References to “Cooperazione allo sviluppo italiana,” “sviluppo delle competenze,” and “rafforzare i sistemi sanitari” demonstrate that Italy presents itself as a nation contributing to social progress and institutional capacity-building in partner countries. This creates an external image of Italy as a responsible and supportive international actor committed to sustainable development.

Another important dimension emerging from the analysis is educational and cultural diplomacy. The scholarship programs offered by the Italian government aim to promote “cooperazione culturale, scientifica e tecnologica” and “la diffusione della conoscenza della lingua e cultura italiana.” Through these initiatives, Italy is represented as an accessible educational destination and as a country interested in intellectual exchange and international academic cooperation. Similar to the cases of Brazil and Australia, education functions as a soft power instrument through which Italy promotes language, culture and scientific collaboration abroad.

The civic and institutional dimension of national identity is also visible in the referendum-related announcements and consular communications. The Embassy emphasises democratic participation, legal responsibility and institutional transparency through detailed voting procedures and references to constitutional rights. Italian citizens residing abroad continue to be represented as active members of the national community through electoral participation. This reinforces the idea that Italian national identity extends beyond territorial borders and includes civic belonging and legal attachment to the state.

Historical memory and collective identity additionally play an important role in the analysed publications. The commemorations of the “Giorno del Ricordo” and the “Giornata della Memoria” demonstrate how Italy communicates national and European historical narratives internationally. The repeated references to memory, victims, peace, responsibility and anti-Semitism connect Italian identity with democratic values, human rights and collective remembrance. Expressions such as “la Memoria è una responsabilità collettiva verso il futuro” and “mai più” reinforce the moral and ethical dimensions of national identity. Italy is therefore represented not only as a nation with historical memory, but also as a country actively promoting dialogue, tolerance and peace.

The analysed news further demonstrates that the Embassy uses institutional communication to project reliability and responsibility. Even technical announcements concerning visa system interruptions or consular procedures emphasise transparency, organisation and attention to

citizens’ needs. This contributes to the representation of Italy as an efficient and institutionally organised state.

The examined publications show that the Italian Embassy in Ethiopia represents Italy primarily through humanitarian engagement, development cooperation, democratic values and historical responsibility. Italian national identity is communicated through solidarity, healthcare assistance, education and collective memory rather than through economic or geopolitical dominance. In the Ethiopian context, Italy appears as a nation focused on partnership, dignity, social support and long-term international cooperation.

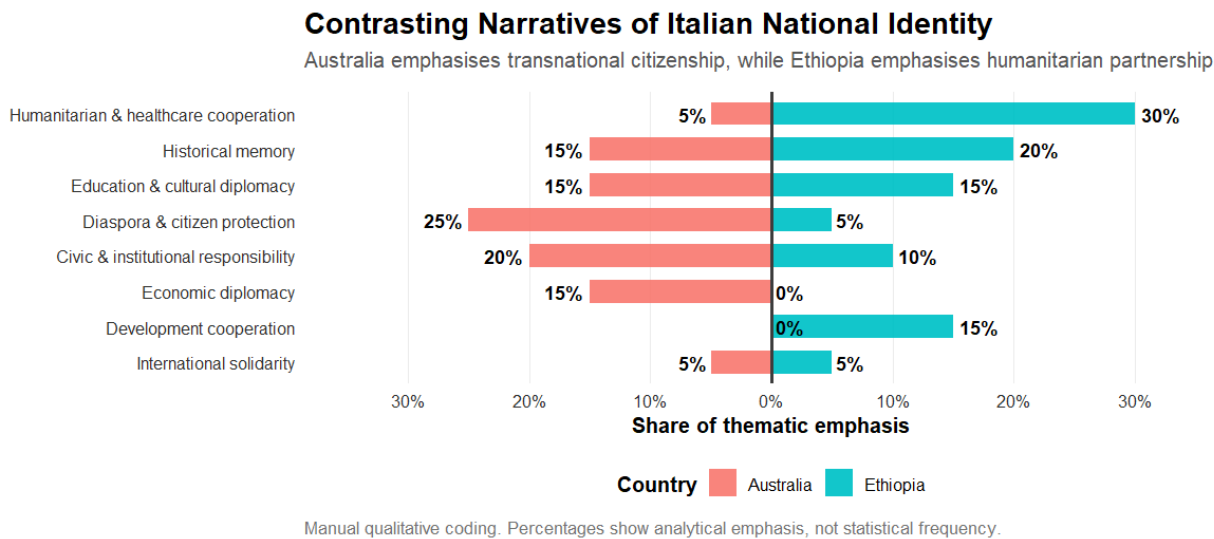


Figure 6. Contrasting narratives of Italian national identity in Australia and Ethiopia.

The figure compares the thematic emphasis in the representation of Italian national identity in two embassy contexts. Australia is shown on the left side of the chart, while Ethiopia is shown on the right side. The values indicate manual qualitative coding of analytical emphasis rather than statistical frequency.

4.8 Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity in United Arab Emirates

The communication strategy of the Italian Embassy in United Arab Emirates presents Italy primarily as a responsible, protective, and highly organized institutional actor capable of managing international crises and ensuring the safety of its citizens abroad. Unlike the communication observed in countries such as Japan or the United States, where Italian national identity is projected through culture, innovation, cinema, and economic excellence, the Saudi case is dominated by security-oriented diplomacy and consular assistance. This reflects both the geopolitical instability of the Gulf region and the practical priorities of the Italian community living or travelling there.

A central element emerging from the analyzed texts is the constant emphasis on crisis management and citizen protection. The Embassy repeatedly encourages Italians to avoid non-essential travel, monitor official communication channels, and follow local security instructions. Expressions such as “massima cautela”, “shelter in place”, and recommendations to avoid military infrastructures

and strategic energy sites construct an image of Italy as a state deeply concerned with the safety and wellbeing of its citizens abroad. The repeated references to emergency systems, geolocation applications, WhatsApp channels, and crisis-unit communication demonstrate a highly institutional and operational form of diplomacy focused on efficiency, coordination, and reliability.

The texts also highlight Italy's identity as a technologically organized and globally connected state. The Embassy promotes the use of digital platforms such as "Viaggiare Sicuri", "Dove Siamo nel Mondo", Fast-it, and online visa systems. This creates a representation of Italy not only as culturally influential, but also as administratively modern and capable of operating effectively in complex international contexts. In this sense, digital diplomacy becomes part of the construction of national identity.

Another important aspect concerns Italy's role within international mobility and transnational networks. Several notices relate to scholarships, pension systems, pilgrimage management during Hajj, and cross-border movement within Gulf countries. Through these activities, Italy presents itself as an active global actor that supports educational exchange, maintains institutional ties with Italians abroad, and facilitates international circulation. The scholarship announcements, in particular, continue the broader diplomatic narrative already visible in other embassies: Italy promotes itself as a center of higher education, scientific cooperation, and cultural attraction.

Economic diplomacy is also present, although less dominant than in the U.S. or French cases. The publication "Business Insights from Italy – a letter to international investors" projects an image of Italy as an innovative and competitive economy with strengths in intellectual property, research, cosmetics, and technological development. Here, national identity is associated with economic dynamism, industrial specialization, and investment opportunities. This narrative aligns well with the strategic and business-oriented environment of the Gulf region, where economic credibility and international partnerships are particularly valued.

At the same time, UAE case reveals how Italian national identity abroad is highly adaptive. In a politically sensitive and security-focused environment, the Embassy reduces emphasis on artistic symbolism or historical heritage and instead prioritizes stability, protection, institutional trust, and operational capacity. This demonstrates that Italian embassies do not communicate a fixed and universal identity; rather, they selectively emphasize different dimensions of "Italianità" depending on the geopolitical, economic, and social context of the host country.

Dominant Diplomatic Narrative by Country

Aggregated comparison of soft power, innovation/economy and security/institutional protection

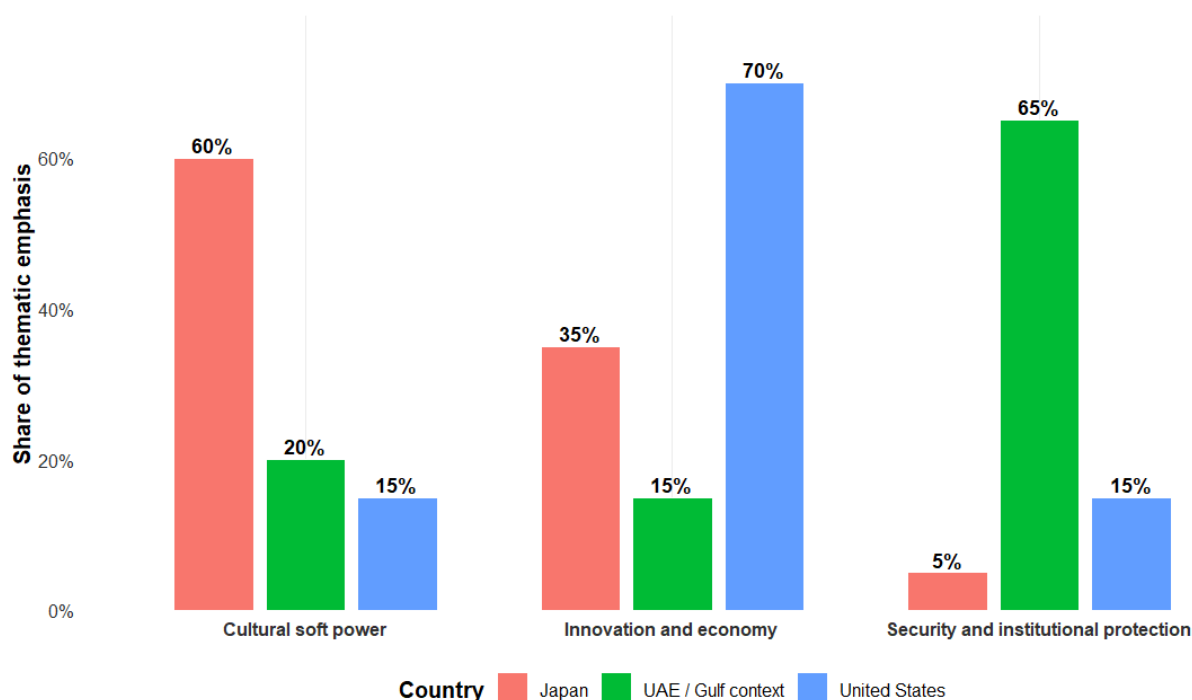


Figure 7. Dominant diplomatic narratives of Italian national identity in Japan, the United States and the United Arab Emirates.

The figure compares three aggregated narratives through which Italian national identity is represented abroad: cultural soft power, innovation and economy, and security and institutional protection. The percentages are based on manual qualitative coding and indicate analytical emphasis rather than statistical frequency.

4.9 Comparative Analysis of the Representation of Italian National Identity Across Different Countries

The comparative analysis of the official communications published by Italian embassies demonstrates that Italian national identity is not represented as a fixed or universal concept. Instead, it is highly adaptive and strategically adjusted according to the geopolitical, economic, cultural and social characteristics of each host country. Although some recurring elements remain visible in all contexts — such as the promotion of Italian culture, education, institutional reliability and international cooperation — the intensity and hierarchy of these dimensions vary significantly from country to country.

One of the clearest patterns emerging from the analysis is the division between countries where Italy projects primarily soft cultural power and countries where Italy emphasizes strategic, economic or security-oriented diplomacy. In Japan and Brazil, the representation of Italian national identity is strongly centred on culture, creativity, language, architecture, cinema and education. In these contexts, Italy is presented as a country of artistic prestige, aesthetic sophistication and cultural excellence. Italian identity is associated with cinema festivals, design events, language promotion and historical heritage. These countries receive the most emotionally symbolic and

culturally refined version of “Italianità,” where Italy becomes a producer of beauty, creativity and intellectual influence.

Japan represents the strongest example of cultural diplomacy combined with innovation. Italian cinema, audiovisual production and artistic heritage are used not only as cultural symbols but also as strategic diplomatic tools connected to economic growth and international influence. The Japanese case demonstrates how Italy transforms culture into a form of soft economic power. Brazil, on the other hand, places stronger emphasis on language, architecture, restoration and academic exchange. Here, Italian identity is communicated through historical continuity, educational attractiveness and cultural cooperation. Compared to Japan, the Brazilian communication appears less technologically oriented and more connected to heritage, social relationships and cultural diffusion.

A completely different representation emerges in the United States and France, where Italian national identity is projected mainly through economic competitiveness, innovation, scientific cooperation and strategic partnership. In these contexts, Italy seeks to modernise its international image and move beyond traditional stereotypes associated only with food, fashion and tourism. The United States represents the most future-oriented and technologically advanced version of Italian identity identified in the research. Artificial intelligence, quantum sciences, cybersecurity, aerospace cooperation and advanced manufacturing dominate embassy communication. Italy is portrayed as an innovation-driven democracy deeply integrated into transatlantic scientific and security networks.

France presents a similar but more institutionally European version of Italian identity. While innovation and startups remain important, greater emphasis is placed on political cooperation, bilateral integration, diplomacy and industrial interdependence. The Italian Embassy in France repeatedly highlights trade data, investments, parliamentary cooperation and European coordination. In this context, Italy is represented not only as a cultural nation but as a mature European power with economic relevance and diplomatic credibility. Compared to the United States, where innovation is associated with global technological competition, the French case focuses more on integration, strategic complementarity and shared European leadership.

Australia occupies an intermediate position between institutional diplomacy and diaspora-oriented communication. Unlike the American or Japanese cases, the Australian context focuses strongly on the relationship between the Italian state and Italians living abroad. National identity is communicated through democratic participation, referendum procedures, visa support, emergency communication and historical memory. Italy is represented as a state that protects and maintains connections with its citizens regardless of geographical distance. The repeated use of the word “connazionali” reinforces the transnational nature of Italian identity. In Australia, Italian national identity appears less symbolic and more civic, administrative and community-oriented.

The Ethiopian case presents perhaps the most humanitarian representation of Italy identified in the research. Here, Italy is associated primarily with healthcare cooperation, development assistance, dignity, solidarity and long-term partnership. The communication strategy avoids strong references to economic power or cultural prestige and instead constructs Italy as a morally responsible international actor committed to improving living conditions and strengthening healthcare systems. Humanitarian diplomacy becomes the dominant mechanism through which national

identity is communicated. In this context, Italy's image relies more on ethical legitimacy than on economic or cultural influence.

The UAE case differs significantly from all other analysed countries because security and crisis management dominate embassy communication. The geopolitical instability of the Gulf region strongly shapes the representation of Italy. The Embassy emphasises protection, operational efficiency, emergency coordination and institutional reliability. Expressions related to caution, emergency alerts, military risks and crisis management appear far more frequently than references to culture or heritage. This demonstrates that Italian national identity abroad can become highly pragmatic and security-oriented when the surrounding environment requires it. Nevertheless, even within this security-focused communication, Italy continues to promote education, investment and institutional modernity through scholarships, digital platforms and economic reports.

The comparison between all analysed countries reveals that certain dimensions of Italian national identity are consistently present but differently prioritised. Culture and language dominate in Japan and Brazil; innovation and technology dominate in the United States; political integration and economic partnership dominate in France; civic protection and diaspora relations dominate in Australia; humanitarian cooperation dominates in Ethiopia; while institutional security and crisis diplomacy dominate in UAE.

This comparative structure demonstrates that Italian diplomacy operates through a flexible model of national identity projection. Rather than promoting one homogeneous image of Italy worldwide, embassies strategically adapt communication according to local expectations, bilateral priorities and geopolitical realities. Italian national identity therefore functions as a multidimensional diplomatic resource capable of combining culture, innovation, economy, humanitarianism, institutional reliability and strategic cooperation depending on the international context.

The research additionally shows that the concept of "Sistema Italia" plays a central unifying role across all cases. Although each embassy emphasizes different dimensions, the overall communication strategy consistently attempts to connect culture, economy, education, diplomacy and institutions into one coordinated international image. This allows Italy to maintain coherence in its external identity while simultaneously adapting its narrative to different global environments.

The analysis ultimately demonstrates that Italian national identity abroad is dynamic, relational and context-dependent. Italy does not project the same image in every country; instead, it selectively amplifies those aspects of national identity that are most effective, relevant and strategically beneficial within each international setting.

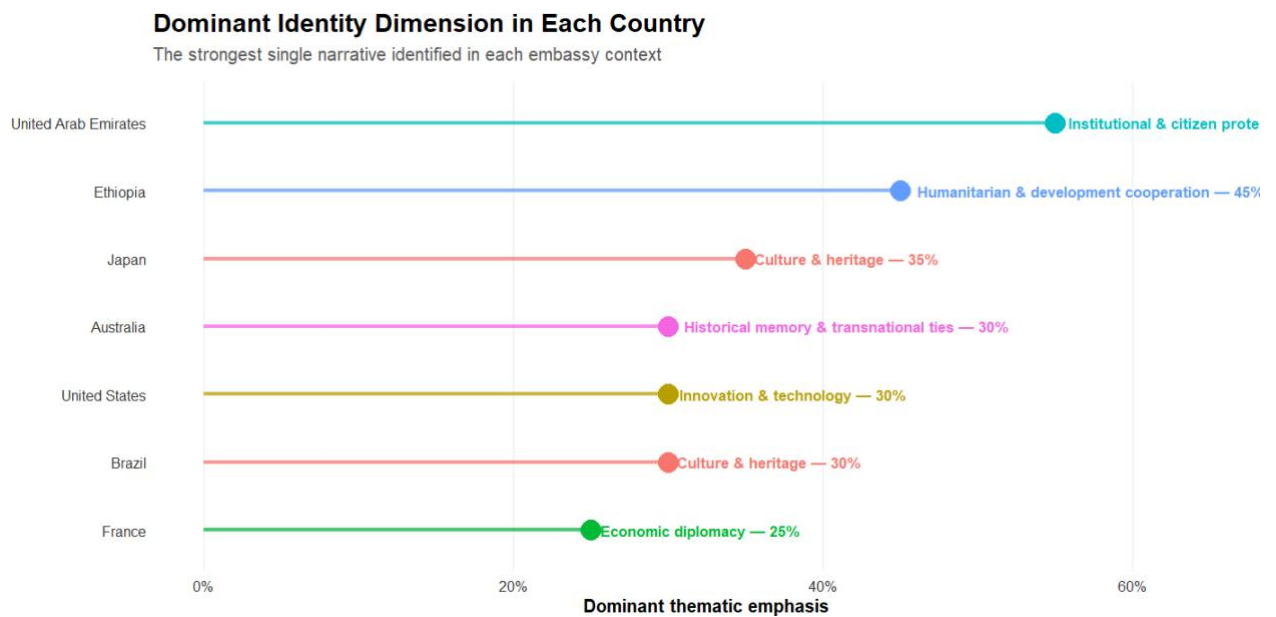


Figure 8. Dominant identity dimension in each country.

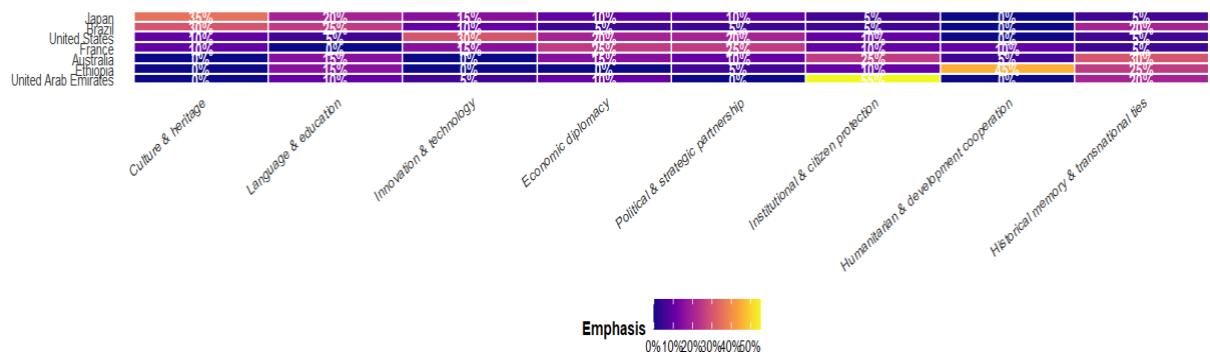
The figure shows the strongest single thematic dimension identified in each analysed embassy context. It highlights the main narrative through which Italian national identity is represented in Japan, Brazil, the United States, France, Australia, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates.

Comparative Analysis of Italian National Identity Across Countries

Italian embassies adapt the representation of Italy according to cultural, economic, institutional, humanitarian and geopolitical contexts.

Comparative Matrix of Italian National Identity Abroad

Thematic emphasis across all analysed embassy contexts



Manual qualitative coding. Percentages indicate analytical emphasis, not statistical frequency.

Macro-Narratives of Italian National Identity Abroad

Aggregated comparison of all analysed countries

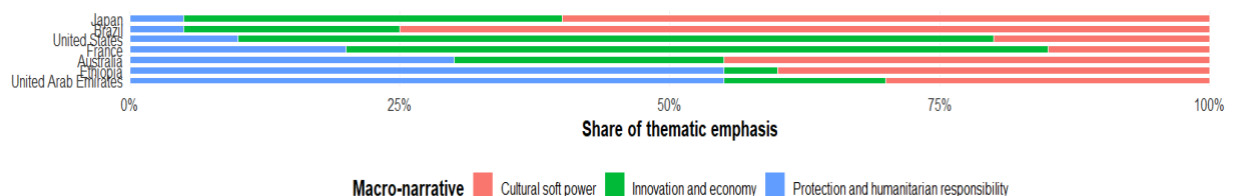


Figure 9. Comparative analysis of Italian national identity across countries.

The figure compares how Italian national identity is represented across Japan, Brazil, the United States, France, Australia, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates.

5. CONCLUSION

The present thesis examined how Italian national identity is represented through the official communication of Italian embassies operating in different international contexts. The research was based on a qualitative content analysis of official publications released by the Italian Embassies in Japan, the United States, Brazil, France, Australia, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates. The objective of the study was to identify the principal dimensions of Italian national identity promoted abroad and to understand how diplomatic communication adapts these representations to different geopolitical, economic and cultural environments.

The theoretical framework demonstrated that national identity is a multidimensional concept composed of historical, cultural, symbolic, political and social elements. The literature also showed that national identity is not fixed or static, but continuously reconstructed through communication, collective memory, public diplomacy and nation branding. In contemporary international relations, national identity has become an important strategic resource that allows states to strengthen their international reputation, cultural influence and diplomatic presence.

The empirical analysis confirmed that Italian embassies actively contribute to the communication of national identity abroad. However, the findings reveal that Italian national identity is not represented through a single universal narrative. Instead, embassy communication adapts to the specific priorities and characteristics of each host country while maintaining a coherent connection with broader Italian values and interests.

The research identified several recurring dimensions of Italian national identity. Culture, education, language promotion, international cooperation, institutional reliability and diplomatic engagement appeared across the analysed embassy contexts. Nevertheless, significant differences emerged regarding the degree of emphasis assigned to each dimension.

In Japan and Brazil, Italian identity was represented predominantly through culture, creativity, language, architecture, cinema and educational initiatives. In these countries, Italy was portrayed as a nation of artistic excellence, cultural prestige and historical heritage. By contrast, the United States and France emphasized innovation, scientific cooperation, economic competitiveness, technology and strategic partnership. These representations projected an image of Italy as a modern, innovative and economically dynamic country capable of contributing to global technological development and international cooperation.

The Australian case highlighted the importance of civic belonging, institutional support and the relationship between the Italian state and Italian communities living abroad. In Ethiopia, Italian identity was primarily communicated through humanitarian assistance, healthcare cooperation, development partnerships and solidarity. Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates presented a more pragmatic and security-oriented representation focused on crisis management, citizen protection, institutional efficiency, digital coordination and diplomatic reliability.

The comparative analysis demonstrated that Italian diplomacy follows a flexible communication strategy. Rather than promoting a standardized image of Italy worldwide, embassies selectively emphasize different aspects of national identity according to local expectations, bilateral priorities and regional circumstances. This adaptive approach allows Italy to maintain both consistency and relevance in its international communication.

At the same time, the concept of “Sistema Italia” emerged as an important unifying element across all cases. Despite differences in emphasis, embassy communications consistently linked culture, education, diplomacy, innovation, economic development and institutional credibility into a broader and coherent representation of Italy. This suggests that Italian diplomacy seeks to project a comprehensive national image that combines tradition and modernity, cultural heritage and innovation, soft power and strategic cooperation.

The findings of this study support the argument that national identity should be understood as a dynamic and context-dependent process rather than as a fixed set of characteristics. Italian embassies play an important role in this process by adapting national narratives to different international audiences while preserving key elements of Italian identity. Through diplomatic communication, national identity becomes an effective instrument of public diplomacy, nation branding and international engagement.

This research presents certain limitations. The analysis was limited to a selected number of embassies and focused on official communications published during a specific period. Future studies could expand the sample to include additional countries, compare different diplomatic actors, or examine changes in identity representation over longer periods of time. Furthermore, future research could investigate how foreign audiences perceive these diplomatic messages and whether embassy communication effectively influences international perceptions of Italy.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that Italian national identity abroad is multidimensional, adaptive and strategically communicated. The official communication of Italian embassies does not simply describe Italy; it actively shapes how the country is perceived internationally. Through culture, innovation, education, diplomacy, humanitarian cooperation, institutional credibility and citizen protection, Italy constructs a diverse yet coherent international image. This confirms that Italian national identity abroad is not a fixed national essence, but a flexible diplomatic resource adapted to the specific conditions of each international context.

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