

Queering in Nation Branding

A case study of the use of queering in the nation branding strategy of
the Netherlands during the Eurovision Song Contest 2021

by

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Abstract

This thesis researched if and how queering is used in nation branding strategies during the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC). The theory shows that, despite the large body of literature on nation branding, the queering aspect has received little attention. Queer politics in nation branding strategies have the power to reinforce or deconstruct the heteronormative framework. This thesis investigated how the Netherlands used queering in its nation branding strategy during the Eurovision Song Contest using Qualitative Content Analysis and Discourse Analysis. The study demonstrates that the organization committee of the Netherlands employs sources such as the theme, logo, hosts and interval acts for its nation branding strategy. Moreover, it shows that all these elements also contain queer aspects. Finally, it will be argued that including several queer individuals and challenging heteronormative binaries such as male-female in the Netherlands' nation branding strategy during the Eurovision Song Contest can be labeled as homonationalism and can deconstruct the heteronormative framework.

Keywords: Nation Branding, Queering, Eurovision Song Contest, The Netherlands, LGBTQ+, Popular Culture, LGBTQ+ Politics

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List of abbreviations

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
EBU	European Broadcasting Union
ESC	Eurovision Song Contest
IR	International Relations
LGBTQ+	Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender-Queer
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

#Openup was the theme of the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) 2021 in Rotterdam. Finally, after a year of absence because of the COVID-19 crisis, the contest could take place again.

Every year since 1956 the Eurovision Broadcasting Union (EBU) organized the Eurovision Song Contest. During this contest, countries get the opportunity to present themselves to viewers from all over the world by sending in original acts. The initial goal of the contest was to connect the Western European countries through popular culture (Jordan, 2014: 50). However, since the start of the contest, many more countries have entered the competition. Currently, with approximately 183 million viewers from all over the world, the contest is one of the most central cultural events of the world (EBU, 2021a). Hence, with so many viewers and participating countries from various parts of Europe, this event is also politically important and an interesting opportunity for countries to demonstrate their nation to a global audience.

Participation in the event is perceived as a performance and a confirmation of a nation's Europeanness (Borneman & Fowler, 1997). At the same time, as countries demonstrate that they belong to the European community, they also emphasize their ethnic and national identity (Yair, 2019: 1015; Bolin, 2010). The ESC used to be a highly political event with countries conveying political messages in their songs (Jordan: 2014: 53). However, the organization of the contest, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), tried to make the event non-political by implementing rules stating that songs cannot contain political messages. Despite this regulation the ESC is still a highly political event by nature, just because states are competing against each other. Eurovision is a place where “cultural struggles over the meanings, frontiers, and limits of Europe, as well as similarities and differences existing within Europe, are enacted.” (Gluhovic, 2013: 3). Moreover, certain political messages are allowed by the EBU to be presented on stage such as messages about equality, acceptance and diversity.

Because the rules of the EBU leave room for countries to demonstrate certain (political) messages on stage, the ESC is a tool for nations to present themselves to other countries in a process that can be defined as nation branding (Aronczyk, 2008). Through the songs, participating countries can showcase parts of their culture such as costumes, traditions and national identity to the rest of Europe. The organizing country has even more opportunities to promote its country. For example, it can show parts of the landscape through the so-called Postcards. These Postcards are an introduction to the performances of the participating countries. Also, the host country gets to choose the presenters and guest appearances. Moreover, this country gets to choose an act that may or may not be competitive but can represent something distinctive and exceptional to that country at Eurovision (Russel, 2021). Another way a country can present itself is through national identity. Especially host countries incorporate parts of their national identity in the Eurovision show (Baker, 2016). One of the main featured aspects of national identity during Eurovision is (sexual) diversity and acceptance.

Eurovision has been linked to LGBTQ+ politics because it has produced a narrative of sexual citizenship progression that has a connection to European liberalization (Baker, 2016: 99). LGBTQ+ inclusivity has become a component of the 'European identity'.

But how do countries incorporate LGBTQ+ politics at the Eurovision Song Contest? And what role do LGBTQ+ politics play in the nation branding strategies?

This research will examine how nations use queering in nation branding during the Eurovision Song Contest. The nation branding literature and queering literature will be connected and applied to one edition of the Eurovision Song Contest. The case that will be used is the Eurovision Song Contest 2021 in Rotterdam. The focus will be on the host country: the Netherlands. This case is selected because it is a recent case to which little research has been done. Also, the Netherlands is manifesting itself as an advocate for queer rights outside of the Eurovision Song Contest. Even though the Contest provides a chance for patriotic exhibition and international promotion for all participants, when looking at the number of invested resources, the ordinary Eurovision delegation is not conducting the same nation branding strategy as the host country. Therefore, the focus of this thesis is on the host nation; the Netherlands. How did the Netherlands, as a host country, apply nation branding strategies? To what extent was queering an important part of this nation branding? And what implications did this have?

1.2 Existing literature

Existing literature can be found on the topics of nation branding, queering strategies and the connection between queering and nation branding.

Nation branding allows countries to manage and influence the image they present to the world. This image is important for the national and international context. Countries try to create a distinctive image (Aronczyk, 2008). Nation branding is characterized by the soft power it produces and serves as a national discourse for an international context (Nye, 2004; Aronczyk, 2008). Countries invest in resources to present themselves in such a way that it advances their touristic and economic interests, or that it improves its reputation in international politics. Branding strategies are not just limited to nations but can also be (indirectly) used on the continent-level (Dinnie, 2007). Especially the host nation has a great opportunity to present the country to the international audience (Arntsen, 2005: 147; Aronczyk, 2008). In the case of a participating country, the performing artist(s) can be perceived as the 'brand ambassador' of that nation (Aronczyk, 2008: 54).

Queering, also referred to as queer reading, is the theory of challenging heteronormativity and normalized binaries (Richter-Montpetit & Weber, 2017). It explains why some subjectivities are treated as 'normal' while others are treated as 'perverse'. Moreover, queering gives attention to concepts as queer culture, heteronormativity (Berlant & Warner, 1998), homonormalization (Roseneil, et al., 2013) and the connection between heteronormativity and homonormalization (Duggan, 2002). Related to the

concept of queering, queer politics has become an important topic in the domestic and foreign policies because it has gained significance in European and world politics (Slootmaeckers, Touquet & Vermeersch, 2016).

Further existing research on the ESC focuses on the importance of the LGBTQ+ community for the event. Several performances during the ESC have celebrated queer approaches to issues regarding gender, sexuality, and feminism (Yair, 2019: 1019). LGBTQ+ individuals are celebrated during the event as a sign of modernity. These individuals show that Europeanness is linked to humanitarian and liberal ideas.

The connection can be made between nation branding and queering. Politicians and other actors employ a variety of tactics to achieve their objectives. These objectives might include belonging to or resisting a certain international political community by demonstrating how diverse and accepting a nation is. This is important because there are sexualized orders in the political community (Weber, 2016: 12). Countries can use nation branding as a soft power instrument to attain these objectives (Saunders & Vessels, 2017). This concept of using queering in foreign policy is captured in the term 'homonationalism' (Puar, 2007). In contrast to 'homophobic others', nations demonstrate their uniqueness or modernism by showing their tolerance for LGBTQ+ people.

1.3 Relevance

The scientific relevance of this thesis lies in several factors. First, popular culture is slowly receiving more attention from International Relations (IR) scholars but remains underexposed. It is relevant for a better understanding of international relations (Enloe, 1996). Some scholars argue that we are entering an era of 'hypermediatization'; the real is prefigured by a popular culture representation which causes blurring the line between popular culture and politics (Eichner & Waade, 2015). Others claim that popular culture has become the 'battleground' on which foreign policy issues are decided (Takacs, 2015). Hence, more research is needed to put the relation between popular culture and IR higher on the research agenda (Daniel & Musgrave, 2017).

Furthermore, in recent years, there has been an increasing interest in researching the Eurovision Song Contest. However, a lot of studies have a cultural or communication perspective. Not much research has yet been done on the Eurovision Song Contest from an IR perspective. By giving more attention to Eurovision from an IR perspective, knowledge is gained about how soft power can be deployed by countries in non-traditional ways of diplomacy. Besides that, this thesis contributes to the literature about the Eurovision Song Contest, also known as Eurovisiopsology (Gatherer, 2006).

But most importantly, while there is already existing research on nation branding, queering has been left out of the equation. It is important to include queering in nation branding strategies because human rights narratives constitute a mechanism for countries to position themselves in the global system in relation to other countries. In this regard, they are a subject of research for IR scholars (Ammaturo,

2015: 1151). Countries can use queering in nation branding in the context of ‘homonationalism’ (Puar, 2007) where countries use queering in their foreign policy as both a strategic and ideological tool to set themselves apart from less accepting and ‘modern’ countries. This encourages the normalization of LGBTQ+ politics and individuals. However, queering in nation branding can also be used as ‘pinkwashing’, where countries ‘misuse’ LGBTQ+ progressive politics as a cover to move attention from controversial actions by the government (Baker, 2016: 102).

This thesis also has societal relevance. What seems to be just a fun singing competition, proves to be an event through which we can study the international relations within Europe and between Europe and the rest of the world.

Moreover, the ESC is an important event for understanding the current political and economic relations across Europe (Yair, 2019: 1023). Even though the EBU tries to portray one united Europe when organizing the Eurovision, the nation branding strategies of the participants tell a different story. The ESC reflects alliances within Europe but also shows the national animosities and cultural traumas that take place, or have taken place, within the continent.

Researching queering in nation branding strategies is of interest because it reflects the societal struggles within society between homonormativity and heteronormativity. While nations use queer politics in their nation branding strategies and demonstrate their acceptance, this demonstrated brand is not always as inclusive and still within the boundaries of the heteronormative framework.

1.4 Research question

This thesis aims to show that countries use queering in nation branding at the ESC and that this use of queering can have different motives and implications. This brings us to the following research question:

How do countries use queering in their nation branding strategy during the Eurovision Song Contest?

1.5 Research design

As mentioned above, this thesis will make use of a case study. The single case study that is selected for this thesis is the Eurovision Song Contest 2021 in Rotterdam. Moreover, this case can be perceived as both a typical and atypical case. It is a typical case because the Netherlands is already a frontrunner in supporting LGBTQ+ rights and will therefore most likely also promote queer aspects during Eurovision. It can also be perceived as an atypical case because Eurovision is a unique event where nation branding strategies can be a bit bolder than in other settings (Stepień, 2019: 6). The reasons that this case is selected for this thesis is because of the connection between the ESC and International Relations, the ESC and nation branding, and the ESC and queering.

The methods of analysis that will be used in this thesis is Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) complemented with parts of Discourse Analysis. By combining these two methods both the amount of queering used in the nation branding strategy and the contextual implications of this use can be examined. QCA is a method that can systematically describe the meaning of qualitative data (Schreier, 2012: 1). The purpose of content analysis is to quantify the presence of certain concepts. Discourse Analysis is an appropriate method to give meaning to the analyzed data (Meyer, 2001: 16). Moreover, it is a suitable method for this thesis because it focuses on unequal power relations (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, cited in Phillips & Hardy, 2002: 25).

1.6 Reading guide

The theoretical framework will follow the introduction. It includes an elaboration on the theories about nation branding and queering and the connection between these two concepts. First, it describes the nation branding theory. Then the theory addresses the gap in nation branding theory and link the concepts of nation branding and queering.

The theoretical framework is followed by a description of the methodology. The methodology chapter will justify the decision to use ESC 2021 as a case study. Following that, more will be said about the thesis' main analytical tools, Qualitative Content Analysis and Discourse Analysis. The operationalization follows the justification of the analysis methods. The methodological chapter concludes by critically reflecting on the data sources.

Chapter four covers of the analysis. The analysis discusses and connects the Netherlands' nation branding strategies during the ESC 2021 through the assumptions to the nation branding theory. Then the use of queering in this nation branding strategy is analyzed. Finally, the implications of this use of queering will be discussed.

This thesis closes with a conclusion. In this conclusion the research question will be answered. Furthermore, the concluding chapter discusses the limitations of this research and makes recommendations for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This theoretical framework starts with explaining the concept of nation branding by using the theories of various economic, sociological, cultural, and international relations scholars such as Anholt (2008), Kaneva (2011), Volcic & Andrejevic (2011), and Bolin & Miazhevich (2018). These scholars explain not only the concept of nation branding and why countries use nation branding, but also the successes and risks of nation branding. Besides nation branding, this section will also touch upon continent branding because it is important for the remainder of this thesis.

After reviewing the nation branding literature, the weaknesses in this literature are discussed. The main problem with the mainstream nation branding literature is that it leaves out the issue of gender and sexuality. Moreover, this chapter will argue why it is essential to incorporate queering into nation branding strategies. The concept of queering will be explained, and important concepts of queering in literature, such as heteronormativity (Berlant & Warner, 1998) and homonormativity (Roseneil et al., 2013), will be discussed. The concept of queer will be applied to nation branding, and the risks of queering nation branding strategies will be examined. Throughout this theoretical chapter, several assumptions are derived from this theoretical framework which will be used in the analysis of this thesis.

2.2 Nation branding

Nation branding is a strategy in which nations highlight certain positive aspects of a country and promote these aspects to foreign actors such as governments, media, or citizens (Aronczyk, 2008). The goal of nation branding is to influence the behavior of these foreign actors through soft power (Gilboa, 2001; Nye, 2008). States strive not only for economic or military power, but also for political power (van Ham, 2001). Nation branding can have different purposes and recipients; reactive and proactive purposes, conflictual and integrative purposes, and domestic and international targets (Aronczyk, 2008). A nation brand should have a strong brand essence and brand ambassador (Bolin & Miazhevich, 2018). This means that the core of the brand must be clear and that an appropriate public figure must represent and convey the brand. Also, the media plays a critical role in the successful distribution of the nation brand (Gilboa, 2001). Furthermore, continents can use branding to showcase their unique features to the rest of the world.

However, there are some risks involved in nation branding. Non-state actors can also participate in nation branding activities, which makes the branding strategy uncoordinated and undemocratic (Browning & Ferraz de Oliveira, 2017). Non-state actors do not have to consider the wishes of citizens as much as state actors do. Also, by promoting the core identity of a nation, the plurality of the culture is disregarded (Aronczyk, 2008).

Finally, some fundamental gaps can be identified in the nation branding literature. Besides the lack of focus on implications instead of strategy applications, the main blind spot can be identified in the missing gender and sexuality perspective (Kaneva, 2011).

In the following sections, I will first explain what nation branding is and how it is used. Hereafter, I will elaborate how nation branding works and how countries can use it successfully. Then the concept of continent branding will be touched upon. This concept is related to nation branding but has slightly different implications. Finally, the risks of nation branding as well as gaps in the nation branding literature will be addressed.

2.2.1. What is nation branding?

Nation branding can be perceived as a post-modern form of statecraft (Kaneva, 2011). It is inspired by corporate branding and draws a connection between nationalism and marketing (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011: 598). Instead of nation-building, a strategy with a domestic focus, nation branding has an international focus. It is about selectively highlighting and showing certain aspects of a business, or in this case a nation, that a country wants to show to the outside world, while putting less emphasis on the aspects that are not positive for the country's reputation (Fan, 2009; Aronczyk, 2008). The nation brand should have profitable associations that can boost a national image globally (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011: 604). Thus, nation branding is a means to promote a state's national identity. Nation branding is also referred to as public diplomacy, which is about managing the international community's opinion towards a certain country. The national narrative is translated so that it is suitable for the global context. By communicating with foreign actors, public diplomacy tries to influence their actions; the goal is to affect the behavior of the foreign government (Gilboa, 2001: 4). It is an extension of traditional diplomacy (Wang, 2006: 91).

Nation branding happens alongside and in tandem with the neoliberal historical context (Bolin & Miazhevich, 2018: 530). This is commonly expressed in IR theory as a shift from a Hobbesian world of 'territorial states' to a Lockean world of 'competition states.' (Moisio, 2008). Shifting away from war, the balance of power and resource monopolization moves towards an emphasis on trade and cultural capital, where status and success are tied to one's perceived attractiveness instead of one's military capabilities (Browning & Ferraz de Oliveira, 2017: 485). This was set against a larger backdrop in which post-Cold War 'globalization' is considered the new paradigm for geopolitical thought. The geopolitical and geoeconomic worlds are colliding in unprecedented ways (Browning & Ferraz de Oliveira, 2017: 482). The status of a country in international politics is determined not only by their military and economic power, but also by the country's overall image (Kaneva, 2011: 125). Therefore, the use of soft power is important (Nye, 2004). A nation's distinctive image is mostly reflected in its national identity. Nation branding is the power to produce narratives of the social realities of nations (Bolin & Miazhevich, 2018: 529; Taylor, 2002). It is crucial that this distinctive image that a country is trying to brand is

unambiguous and not too complex. To make the message understandable, the production of a national identity to promote to the rest of the world is done in an undemocratic manner (Jansen, 2008). Moreover, in an era of capitalist globalization, nation branding can also be perceived as the continuation of warfare by other means (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011: 599; Browning & Ferraz de Oliveira, 2017: 483).

Furthermore, nation brands develop over time and can only be incrementally adapted (Aronczyk, 2008: 52). That is why those strategies are implemented for a more extended period. Countries often employ the strategy when organizing large events such as the Eurovision Song Contest, the Olympic Games, or the FIFA World Cup. These events attract much international attention that can benefit the host country (Bolin & Miazhevic, 2018: 528).

Nation branding can moreover be defined differently depending on the focus of the strategy. There is a 'product related', a 'national level', and a 'cultural focus' definition (Fan, 2005: 5-6). Because this thesis has an International Relations focus, the 'national level' definition, which comes close to the 'public diplomacy' definition, is the most relevant. The national-level definitions indicate "a country's overall image and positioning or to its brand equity (e.g., Japan as a "technological powerhouse"; the United States as a "beacon of democracy")." (Kaneva, 2011: 122). Brand equity is used to indicate the relative value of a certain brand because of its reputation. Nation branding is defined as "a process by which a nation's images can be created, monitored, evaluated and proactively managed in order to improve or enhance the country's reputation among a target international audience" (Fan, 2009: 6).

Assumption 1: Countries will use a nation brand that will evoke a positive international reaction and boost the national image of that country in the global world.

Assumption 2: With its nation branding strategies, countries will try to emanate a clear distinctive image.

2.2.2 Why do countries use nation branding?

Through nation branding, countries can control and manage the image presented to the rest of the world of their respective country. Nation branding can also be used as a strategy to take attention away from past events or policies. By focusing on another aspect of a specific country, the government hopes to camouflage the negative characteristics of that country. By pretending to be the better version of itself, the country tries to become more desirable and attractive to the world (Valaskivi, 2013: 6). This created image can attract the 'wanted' investments, talent, trade, and tourism and enhance the country's competitiveness (Valaskivi, 2013). Moreover, nation branding is an essential strategy in the competition with other nations for a limited pool of resources (Aronczyk, 2008: 42).

Nation branding is thus a tool for achieving goals that could otherwise not be achieved (Saunders & Vessels, 2017: 433). Examples of these goals are getting a good national reputation and influencing the policy of a foreign country.

Nation branding is thus not only economically profitable, but it also has strategic and political effects (van Ham, 2001: 3). Nations compete against each other to get as many resources as possible. This competition is not only about economic or military power, but also about political power (van Ham, 2001). Political power reflects a country's ability to influence and control political decisions. Governments are often as concerned with positive public relations as with economic benefits. This is because of a shift from "the modern world of geopolitics and power to the postmodern world of images and influence" (ibid.: 4). The competition between nations was put in charts like the Nation Brand Index and the Good Country Index. The Nation Brands Index, developed by nation-branding researcher Simon Anholt, measures the reputation of countries from all over the world (Ipsos, 2021). For a significant part, a nation's reputation is determined by the opinion of the foreign public and is about having a good name in international society (Wang, 2006). In the last decade, popular perception has thus become particularly important in international diplomacy (Wang, 2006: 91). Moreover, foreign countries collectively assess a nation's image and use this image to explain or behave future actions subsequently.

So, nation branding strategies aim to target and attract external audiences through information management. Soft power is important because it can reinforce hard power, as information and communication are becoming more important and relying on hard power is insufficient to reach the nation's goals (Wang, 2006: 92). Reputation is an instrument of power, specifically soft power (Wang, 2006: 91; Nye 2008). Soft power is "the ability to shape the preferences of the other" (Nye, 2008: 95). It is related to the concept of 'public diplomacy'. This soft power, gained by the nation branding strategy, can also be used for changing the policy in another country. By affecting the hearts and minds of foreign people, who then will pressure their government, public diplomacy tries to change a particular policy within a foreign country (Gilboa, 2001: 5).

Moreover, some small states use nation branding as a strategy for survival (Peterson, 2006). Their goal is to seek recognition and legitimacy from the international community for their nationhood.

Lastly, nation branding can have various purposes and recipients. First, it can serve reactive and proactive purposes (Aronczyk, 2008). A country can use nation branding to establish a specific image of the country about its own initiative, but it can also respond to another country's strategy.

Second, this strategy can have domestic and international targets because national identity is domestically and internationally constructed (Aronczyk, 2008: 56). On the domestic level, nation branding can generate a positive representation of international decisions to manage consensus over international and foreign politics. Domestically, the nation branding strategy should convince the local public that the government makes the best possible decisions abroad. An extensive nation branding

strategy can unite local and national interests by attracting international legitimacy (Aronczyk, 2008: 42). Internationally, the identity takes shape through supranational policies while, domestically, this identity takes shape through collective action by citizens or social engineering. Therefore, we must perceive national identity as mutually constitutive (Aronczyk, 2008: 56).

Lastly, nation branding can have conflictual and integrative purposes (Bolin, 2010). When the strategy is used for conflictual purposes, the country wants to stand out and highlight the aspects that make it different from other countries. Nation branding may be used for integrative goals, such as wanting to fit in a certain international community. For example, European countries may highlight aspects that are also critical European values. In that case, nation branding can be a performance of Europeanness (Jordan, 2014: 53). Countries want to integrate into the European community. Their nation branding strategies are aimed at belonging instead rather than authenticity (Bohlman, 2007: 46).

Assumption 3: Countries can choose to adopt a conflictual and/or integrative strategy in their nation branding campaign.

Assumption 4: Countries will brand their countries within certain normativities to reduce the chance of negative collateral effects.

2.2.3 How does nation branding work?

Nation branding happens intentionally and unintentionally. This is because nations are already de facto a brand, without the intervention of nation branding strategies (Aronczyk, 2008). In these instances, nation branding can be perceived as an ‘organic process’ because factors such as a country’s history have already determined or shaped its brand (Loo & Davies, 2006: 198).

For nation branding to be effective, a country should first think of its brand essence: what makes this country special and what is profitable to show to the outside world? The effectiveness of this brand essence can be determined by the ability of the country to balance the four ‘spheres of identification’: standardization, difference, rationality, and emotionality (Aronczyk, 2008: 53). The brand should be distinguishable from its counterparts. It must stand out. However, the identity of the nation cannot be too unique. Nation branding strategies must use functional similarity to remain rooted in the international context. These strategies also need to have emotional and rational components. The emotional component ‘humanizes’ the brand to acquire loyalty. The rational component as the centerpiece of the nation branding strategy is vital to develop economic and political capital (Aronczyk, 2008: 53).

Nation branding can take place through various sources such as artists, exchange students, exhibitions, trade associations, and the media (Gilboa, 2001). The media are especially crucial in nation branding

because it is the most accessible to the general public and has a very visual strategy (Gilboa, 2001: 4; Aronczyk, 2008). The media's role in diplomacy has been enlarged because of interconnected developments in politics, international relations and mass communication (Gilboa, 2001: 2)

Visual elements of nation branding can be symbols, colors, logos, flags, slogans, etcetera (Aronczyk, 2008: 44). For example, to promote the computer industry in its country, Estonia called itself E-stonia (www.e-estonia.com). Although straightforward strategies such as using a logo or a slogan are still being used, more comprehensive approaches are being utilized as well. Instead of just launching a marketing campaign to boost tourism and investments, countries want to achieve other goals such as a good international reputation. The kind of medium a country chooses also matters (Bolin & Miazhevich, 2018: 534). It will affect how the message is perceived and who the target audience is. The brand can also need a 'brand ambassador' (Aronczyk, 2008: 54). This can be a mythical figure but also an actual person.

Citizens should become a part of the nation branding strategy because they have to 'live' the brand (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011). Hence, brand co-creation is important. Brands should be rooted in the countries 'history, culture, and policy' (Wang, 2008: 18).

Assumption 5: The media will play an important role in disseminating the nation branding strategy of countries.

Assumption 6: The brand a country uses in its strategy is rooted within that country's society.

2.2.4 Success of nation branding

The direction of the causation between countries that are strong brands and countries that produce strong brands is uncertain (Fan, 2005: 9). Moreover, nation branding is a strategy that asks for a long-time perspective and does not produce immediate results (Anholt, 2008). Actors that use the nation branding strategy should be aware that quickly changing the image of a country by nation branding is impossible. The only thing that can be achieved, as a collateral effect, is the improvement of reputation (Interview with Anholt, 2012, as cited in Valaskivi, 2013: 15).

2.2.5 Continent branding

The branding strategy is not just restricted to nations. Cities and continents can use branding as well to promote their unique identity. Countries are also affected by the image of the continent to which they belong (Dinnie, 2007: 475). That is why the nation branding strategy of a state is always connected to the way the continent is perceived. A nation can decide to go along with or challenge the continent's identity depending on whether a country wants to belong to or move away from this international

political community. For example, as a continent Africa is perceived as poor, underdeveloped, and corrupt. However, individual African countries can use nation branding strategies to promote a better image of themselves (Osei & Gbadamosi, 2011). In comparison, Europe is perceived as liberal, enlightened, democratic, and peaceful. The continent identifies itself versus the rest of the world as barbaric, conservative, poor and racist (Jones & Subotic, 2011). Many European countries go along with that narrative and promote themselves as democratic and accepting.

Assumption 7: The image of the continent where the country is located, plays a significant role in the nation branding strategy.

2.2.6 Risks of nation branding

The risks identified for nation branding strategies also apply to continent branding. Important to note is that not only governments can conduct public diplomacy (Gilboa, 2001: 6). Non-state actors such as private individuals and groups can join in this strategy too. On the one hand, this can be beneficial for the nation branding strategy because the brand is carried throughout the nation and gets a bigger promotion platform. On the other hand, this can be a risk because governments lose control over their message/brand and the promotion can become fragmented and uncoordinated. Hence, the 'core identity' becomes unclear. Another issue is that nation branding can become undemocratic when branding strategies are outsourced and citizens have little say in the production of the brand (Browning & Ferraz de Oliveira, 2017: 487).

As argued above, it is important to have a 'core idea/identity' for a nation branding strategy to be effective. However, this can come with some costs. In this core identity, the internal differentiation within a country, such as competing visions and a plurality of voices, cannot be considered (Aronczyk, 2008). Not every citizen would be able to recognize their perception of the nation in the promoted 'national identity'. This can cause internal resistance towards the nation branding strategy and cause the strategy to be less effective. The nation branding strategy can only be successful if the citizens also live the brand (Browning & Ferraz de Oliveira, 2017: 487). Otherwise, the brand becomes implausible. Therefore, to avoid resistance within a country to the nation branding strategy, only benign elements are permissible within the nation branding strategy.

Another problem when implementing a nation brand is a conflict between the economic and political sectors (Kaneva, 2011: 130). Political interest (human rights, conflict, standing out, making a statement) can differ from economic interest (stability, fitting in, etc.). For example, the interest of the political sector can be to promote human rights and therefore brand the country as having an outstanding record concerning human rights. By doing so, it can create conflict with other countries who do not agree with these norms. This conflict would be detrimental to the economic sector, because the economic interest is served best when there is a stable international climate, and a country blends in with other countries (Snidal, 1996)

Finally, nation branding can be perceived as propaganda (Snow & Taylor, 2006). Nation branding is then seen as a tool of distortion and manipulation and creating ‘false consciousness’ under foreign populations and governments. Like propaganda, nation branding, public diplomacy and competitive identity are different concepts for the same reputation-based actions (Browning & Ferraz de Oliveira, 2017: 489). The only things that are variable between these concepts are the actors and target audience.

Assumption 8: Because the nation branding strategy is mostly produced in an undemocratic manner, there will be some domestic resistance against the promoted national identity.

2.2.7 Critical reflection of nation branding literature

There are several critical gaps in the literature on nation branding. Nation branding research with a dissensus/constructivist orientation is still the smallest body of literature compared to works on nation branding based on other research orientations than economic ones (Kaneva, 2011: 131). This has several implications.

First, in the nation branding discussion, critical voices focus on the consequences of nation branding rather than its applications (Kaneva, 2011: 131). What is missing in the nation branding literature, is a consideration of the cultural and political ramifications of treating countries like brands (Kaneva, 2011). For example, the cultural and political consequences of the reinterpretation of national identity as a commodity are understudied (Kaneva, 2011: 132).

The main blind spot of nation branding literature, however, can be found at the intersection of national identity with other mechanisms of collectivity and identification, which have been largely disregarded in previous critical nation branding studies (Kaneva, 2011). As Kaneva points out, “[t]he narratives of nation branding certainly constrain national individuals within a commercial logic, but they do so in gendered and racialized ways, as well” (Kaneva, 2011: 132). A related gap in nation branding literature, which is interesting for this thesis, is the lack of narratives about gender and queering. For example, in Keith Dinnie’s (2015) voluminous book about nation branding, the word gender appears only three times and there is not a single mention of ‘queer’ or ‘LGBT(Q+)’. This demonstrates that gender and sexuality are topics receiving little attention in nation branding literature. Moreover, gender and sexuality have also been left out of the equation in mainstream diplomacy literature (Aggestam & Towns, 2019). Gender thus finds hardly any mentioning in nation branding literature. However, it is crucial to give it a central position when thinking about nation branding strategies to reveal the implicit masculinist and heteronormative logic of nation branding strategies (Kaneva & Cassinger, 2022).

To help fill the gap in the nation branding literature with respect to gender and queering, this thesis will connect the concepts of nation branding and queering. In the remainder of this theoretical chapter, I will

elaborate on why a 'queer perspective' should be adopted, what such a perspective entails and how queering may be used by states as part of their nation branding strategies.

2.3 Queering & LGBTQ politics

There are many reasons why it is essential to incorporate queering in nation branding. This section will argue that the most important justification is that nation branding strategies can reinforce or deconstruct heteronormativities in society. This is because despite countries' support for and use of queer initiatives in promoting their national identity, the actual acceptance of queer individuals does not always match the nation brand. Queering focuses on how queer individuals are deployed in world politics and challenge heteronormative binaries. The concepts of heteronormativity and homonormativity, and especially the connection between these two topics, expose the queer assumption that even though queer individuals are accepted and promoted by a certain nation, this does not mean that the heteronormative expectations and traditional binaries are challenged.

This section will first discuss why it is important to examine queer in light of nation branding. It will then argue how countries employ queer politics, define the concept of queer and finally demonstrate the importance of heteronormativity and heteronormativity in nation branding.

2.3.1 Why is it important to consider queering in nation branding?

There are several reasons why it is essential to consider queering in nation branding, including the importance of identity politics in global politics, the inclusion of only a few individuals in a country's nation branding strategy and the way queering challenges heteronormativities.

First, identity politics is becoming an essential issue in global politics (Dhawan, 2016: 61). Queer rights are used to judge a country's modernity and civilization (Slootmaekers, Touquet & Vermeersch, 2016: 1). However, sometimes there is a discrepancy between the tolerance that is promoted and the tolerance that is really implemented in a country. So, it is crucial to examine whether countries use queering in their nation branding strategy for purely strategic reasons, as in the case of pinkwashing which will be discussed more elaborately further below (Schulman, 2011), or whether they also have some ideological reasons to promote queer rights in the international community.

Another important reason to study queering in the nation branding narrative is that often only one identity is included in the nation branding strategy to make the branding campaign unambiguous and more successful. This, however, means at the same time other individuals are excluded. Other forms of national and racial othering suffer due to the politics of inclusion (Klapeer, 2017: 45). Representation of other individuals matters because it can be helpful in increasing the self-esteem of marginalized groups and can assist in reducing stereotypes of those groups (Nadal, 2021).

Furthermore, queering challenges the normalized individuals and binaries. It critically reflects on the way heterosexual individuals are being normalized in contemporary society. Queering, contrary to

other movements within the IR literature, also essentializes the role of gender and sexuality in international relations (Weber, 2016).

Finally, the main reason to study queering in nation branding is to determine the extent to which nation branding reinforces or challenges either heteronormative or homonormative norms and individuals (Berlant & Warner, 1998; Roseneil et al., 2013; Duggan, 2002; Oliveira, Costa & Carneiro, 2014). Heteronormative and homonormative societies can negatively affect individuals that do not fit into the norm. Are countries opting for the integrative strategy, where only 'normal individuals' (Weber, 2016) are being used to not disturb the process of nation branding? Or do countries opt for a conflictual strategy and set themselves apart from other countries by using 'perverse' (Weber, 2016) individuals such as the black homosexual or the transgender person?

2.3.2. How do states use queer politics?

In Europe and North America, institutional norms surrounding non-heteronormative sexualities have been radically restructured since the late 1960s (Roseneil et al., 2013). In the last decades, there has been decriminalization of homosexuality which has also been integrated into equalizing laws, an establishment of institutions to protect gay men and lesbians from discrimination, and, recently, the growing acceptance of same-sex romantic partnerships and parenting (Roseneil et al., 2013: 188). Even though same-sex couples and gay parenthood have been legitimized, it is still subject to resistance from conservative and right-wing parties that have roots in the Christian tradition (Lasio, Oliveira & Serri, 2020: 27). Moreover, as argued earlier, the politics of inclusion comes at the expense of other types of national and racial othering (Klapeer, 2017: 45). As Butler states it: "to be legitimised by the state means to enter into the terms of the legitimation offered there and to find out that one's public and recognisable sense of personhood is dependent on the lexicon of that legitimation" (Butler, 2002: 17).

Identity politics is gaining importance in foreign policy (Dhawan, 2016: 61). Queer rights are increasingly being used as a yardstick for a country's overall human rights performance (Slootmaekers, Touquet & Vermeersch, 2016: 1). Although queer rights have gained significant symbolic importance in European politics and discourse through initiatives such as pride parades and awareness weeks, this symbolic politics sometimes contrasts with the amount of actual transformative legislation in this domain (Slootmaekers, Touquet & Vermeersch, 2016: 4).

2.3.3 What is queering?

Queering is the method of using queer theory applied to topics to challenge heteronormativity and normalized (sexual) binaries. Even though there is still debate around the term queer (Richter-Montpetit & Weber, 2017: 2), many scholars use the queer definition of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick: "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the

constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality, are not made (or cannot be made) to signify monolithically" (Sedgwick, 1993: 8). Queering is sometimes also referred to as 'queer reading'.

By perceiving identity as something that has become naturalized via cultural and societal practices rather than natural in and of itself, queer studies are concerned with the political implications of the binary and non-binary conception of identity and analyzes and challenges these traditional binaries and normativities (Richter-Montpetit & Weber, 2017: 2). It is about researching how sexualized subjectivities are perceived by society in either/or terms rather than and/or and neither/nor terms (Weber, 2016). Moreover, queering pays attention to why some subjectivities in society are perceived as 'normal' while others are perceived as 'perverse'.

Queer IR challenges the personal-to-international institutions, understandings and practices that constitute homosexuality and the homosexual (Weber, 2016: 11). It looks at how these figurations are deployed in world politics. As a result, queer IR calls into question the widely held belief that gender and sexuality are trivial topics in international relations.

2.3.4 Important concepts of queering

Heteronormativity, homonormativity and the connection between these two concepts are important topics for queer theory because they reflect the societal position towards queer individuals. Moreover, it is essential to understand these topics to see how these concepts influence nation branding strategies.

2.3.4.1 *Heteronormativity*

Heteronormativity, a concept that Berlant & Warner also call 'national heterosexuality', can be defined as "the mechanism by which a core national culture can be imagined as a sanitized space of sentimental feeling and immaculate behavior, a space of pure citizenship" (1998: 549). In a heteronormative society exists a hegemonic national public around sex that promotes pro-heterosexuality and contra-queer policies (Berlant & Warner, 1998). Nostalgic family values play a crucial role in this national heterosexuality.

In the heteronormative society, there is a traditional separation between the private sphere (where intimacy belongs) and the public sphere (where politics belongs). The heterosexual society has influenced citizens to associate both their politics and themselves with privacy (Berlant & Warner, 1998: 553-554). Because intimacy is not part of the public sphere, it prevents non-normative sexual cultures from arising publicly. People should be a good citizen in the public sphere (Berlant & Warner, 1998: 553). Because heterosexuality is institutionalized, people who fit these norms have more power and privilege in society than those who do not (Oliveira, Costa & Carneiro, 2014: 45). Non-heterosexual forms of behavior are stigmatized and oppressed.

In heterosexual culture, the love narrative is one of intimacy and family. This symbolizes a deep and natural sense of belonging to society (Berlant & Warner, 1998: 554). This ‘natural sense of rightness’ that is entrenched in not just purely sexual activities but in broader aspects of social life – is what Berlant & Warner (1998) call ‘heteronormativity’ (p. 554). Heteronormativity thus constitutes a politics of truth (Foucault, 1978). This politics of truth holds a dominant sexuality and other ‘peripheral sexualities’ (Foucault, 1978: 38). Binaries such as male-female, heterosexual-homosexual, and femininity-masculinity are normalized. These binaries create ‘normal’ and ‘perverse’ subjectivities.

The normativity of heterosexuality is established and reified by legal, cultural, and institutional standards (Oliveira, Costa & Carneiro, 2014: 45). Moreover, heterosexuality is not only presumed but also actively legitimized and rewarded.

2.3.4.2 Homonormalization

The landscape of heteronormativity has shifted dramatically with the rise of European ‘homotolerance’ and the gradual normalization of queer sexualities. This can be defined as a process of ‘homonormalization’ (Roseneil et al., 2013). There has been a normative change in legitimation, protection, and recognition of LGBTQ+ rights (Roseneil et al., 2013: 173). It can be claimed that homotolerance has been institutionalized.

The term homonormalization refers to the interconnection between modern queer human rights politics (such as gay-parenting and same-sex marriages), the expansion of the pink economy (gay tourism), the nationalization and commodification of queer into the national identity (through pride marches) and the legitimization of homosexual policies (Puar, 2007; Dhawan, 2016: 52). It caused a transformation of the perception of queer people: from individuals associated with death, illness and crime because of the AIDS pandemic and prostitution to citizens associated with ideas of (family)-life (Puar, 2007: xii).

2.3.4.3 Connection between heteronormalization and homonormalization

Queer scholars criticize the progressiveness of homonormativity. They argue that homonormativity sustains heteronormativity because it does not challenge the values and assumptions of heteronormativity (Duggan, 2002; Oliveira, Costa & Carneiro, 2014: 46). Dhawan also critiques the queer ideal of the transgression of heteronormativity (Dhawan, 2003: 22). Queer politics is broader than just resisting hetero norms; it also challenges other hegemonic structures (Puar, 2007: 22-23). Homonormativity lets non-heterosexuals fit within the neo-liberal political framework. It reinforces heteronormative expectations about sexualities and gender systems (Oliveira, Costa & Carneiro, 2014: 46). This persistence of heteronormative assumptions becomes clear when language is taken into consideration. Terminologies such as ‘same-sex marriage’ or ‘family of choice’, which address non-heteronormative intimacies, still preserve the essentialist place of the family and monogamy that are

dominant within the heteronormative framework (Oliveira, Costa & Carneiro, 2014: 49-50; Lasio, Oliveira & Serri, 2020).

According to critical scholars, homonormativity is taming queer challenges through privatization and depoliticization (Duggan, 2002). Heterosexual intimacy is also belonging to the private sphere. However, it is under certain circumstances allowed in the public sphere, while homosexual intimacy, even in a homonormalized society, is limited to the private sphere (Duggan, 2002).

‘Homosexuality’ and ‘the homosexual’ are commonly perceived as either normal or perverse (Weber, 2016, 12). The ‘others’ are divided into degrees of worthiness (Oliveira, Costa & Carneiro, 2014: 47). A ‘normal queer person’ is likely to be European, white, homosexual, male, married, and probably has a wish for children. Black, non-Western, non-male, and non-monogamous queers are perceived as ‘perverse queer persons’. This divide can be identified as sexual-racial others (Puar, 2007: 2): some individuals can integrate into the heteronormative society while others continue to exist on the periphery of the normative sphere (Ammaturo, 2015: 1153).

Lastly, heteronormativities and homonormativities are not stable because figurations of what it means to be ‘homosexual’ change through time and space (Weber, 2016: 16).

Assumption 9: Because the brand has to be rooted in society to prevent too much domestic resistance (see assumption 8), the nation brand of a country will most likely not challenge heteronormative expectations about gender and sexuality.

2.3.4 Limitations of queering politics

Although LGBTQ+ rights remain a contested subject in some countries, respect for LGBTQ+ rights has become a key aspect of foreign world politics (Dhawan, 2016: 61).

While there is compelling evidence of the creation of a new homotolerant European legal and policy norm, there is a distinction between enacting laws and policies that promote LGBTQ+ equality and the elimination of heteronormativity (Roseneil et al., 2013: 187). Even though policy changes, culture does not necessarily change (McNamara et al., 2021). Thus, discrimination based on sexual orientation still takes place, even though the policy and legislation have changed. Existing inequalities of class, ethnicity and gender are unaffected by ‘diversity strategies’, which further marginalizes an unmanageable kind of difference (Montegary, 2010: 333).

Furthermore, not all queer individuals are accepted. “Every production of ‘identity creates exclusions” (Duggan, 1994: 5). White gay men are presented as the representative homosexuals. Groups such as lesbian women and black gay men are not represented as much. This distinction between the normal and perverse homosexual (Weber, 2016) can be linked to the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). It describes how gender, class and race are connected to each other.

A final limitation of queering politics is that sexualities are perceived to be fixed. Someone is or homosexual or heterosexual. In this narrative, sexualities are mutually exclusive (Duggan, 1994: 4).

However, sexualities do not have to be mutually exclusive. Someone can identify themselves as either homosexual or heterosexual, but also as bisexual and/or pansexual, depending on time and place (Weber, 2016).

2.4 Queering and Nation Branding

This section argues that countries use queering in nation branding to show that they are modern, civilized countries on the ‘right side of history’ and to distinguish themselves from the less-civilized others (Weber, 2016). Countries adopt this strategy because there are sexualized orders in the international political community. Puar (2007) defined the use of queering in foreign politics as ‘homonationalism’. Because countries want their message to be unambiguous, they use strategic essentialism (Duggan, 1994). However, countries can deploy the queer nation branding strategy for strategic purposes instead of ideological purposes. This is labeled as ‘pinkwashing’ (Schuman, 2011).

This section first argues why countries choose to utilize queering in their nation branding strategy and in what context this happens. Finally, there will be a critical reflection on the use of queering in nation branding strategies.

2.4.1 Why do countries use queering in nation branding strategies?

Nations may utilize queering in their nation branding strategy because the use of a state’s progress toward accepting LGBTQ+ rights as human rights can serve as a criterion for progress in the international political community (Weber, 2016: 16). The aim is to be ‘on the right side of history’.

Furthermore, countries may use queering in foreign policy to present themselves as more civilized than states that do not embrace LGBTQ+ rights and impose sanctions on them (Weber, 2016: 16). It can thus be a tool to distinguish oneself from the ‘other’. Promoting LGBTQ+ rights can be advantageous for a country’s international reputation (Nogueira, 2017: 556). Moreover, some countries use LGBTQ+ norm entrepreneurship as a low-cost foreign policy.

2.4.2 In what context are queering and nation branding connected?

All politics is performance (Saunders & Vessels, 2017). This means that politicians use certain strategies to reach their political goals. These goals can be to belong to or resist a particular international political community. Nation branding is a soft power tool for countries to achieve these goals. As part of cultural diplomacy, which is mostly used in nation branding strategies, countries can specifically adopt sexual diplomacy: using gender and sexuality discourses in public diplomacy to build mutual understanding (Valaskivi, 2013).

There are sexualized orders in international relations (Weber, 2016: 12). This implies that some sexualities are perceived better or more civilized than others. So, if nations want to be perceived as open-

mindful and progressive and be against conservative/family-values countries, they can choose to use queer politics in their nation branding strategies: they use queering in nation branding.

Puar describes the trend of using queering in strategies for international politics as homonationalism (Puar, 2007). This concept builds on the critique of Duggan (2002) about the relation between heteronormativity and homonormativity. Puar defines homonationalism as: “a facet of modernity and a historical shift marked by the entrance of (some) homosexual bodies as worthy of protection by nation-states, a constitutive and fundamental reorientation of the relationship between the state, capitalism, and sexuality” (Puar, 2013: 337). Homonationalism thus refers to a period in which nations can showcase their distinctiveness or modernism by displaying their tolerance for queer individuals, as opposed to ‘homophobic others’. Moreover, unlike modernity, there is no option to withdraw from homonationalism; states can only resist or re-signify it (Puar, 2013). Opponents of queer rights can either resist it by portraying these queer values as Western, neo-colonial ideas or aim to re-signify this by connecting the concept of modernity to ‘traditional heteronormative values’ (Puar, 2007). Homonationalism has shaped international politics since LGBTQ-friendliness has become an essential criterion in determining a country’s modernity. In the international community, countries will be judged on their LGBTQ+-friendliness, irrespective of whether countries support queer rights (Slootmaeckers, Touquet & Vermeersch, 2016: 3).

To make the queer message that a country wants to transfer clear to the public, the message is simplified. This is called strategic essentialism (Duggan, 1994: 6). While some countries acknowledge the diversity within the LGBTQ+ community, the community is ‘essentialized’ to make the nation brand clear and understandable. This understandability of the brand is essential for nation branding to be effective (Bolin & Miazhevich, 2018). Strategic essentialism can reproduce heterosexist norms by not challenging these norms and excluding certain individuals from the LGBTQ+ community from the narrative.

Countries are also aware that the use of LGBTQ+ politics in nation branding strategies can risk absorption into the dominant society because it is not radical enough (Lasio, Oliveira & Serri, 2020: 33). The strategy is not bold enough and will therefore not generate enough soft power to make a real impact in the international society. A country will choose such a strategy to not stand out too much and keep the domestic public satisfied. The brand manager should be normal or perverse to be used as a nation branding tool (Weber, 2016). Otherwise, it becomes too difficult for the mainstream public to understand the meaning of the message. However, a too radical strategy can fall short of offering a convincing alternative policy (Lasio, Oliveira & Serri, 2020: 33).

Assumption 10: Countries will use strategic essentialism to make their message understandable for the general public.

2.4.3 Critical reflection of using queering in nation branding

Queering in nation branding can be used by countries with other intentions than promoting queer rights in the international community. One of these other intentions is pinkwashing.

Historically, the term pinkwashing was coined by Breast Cancer Action to define the misuse of the Pink Ribbon logo by companies for marketing purposes (Blackmer, 2019). Nowadays, pinkwashing is also used as the name for the promotion of queer rights for own advancement and downgrading others while not living up to these queer rights yourself. Countries employ gender and sexuality politics to legitimize other, less popular policies on the international level (Dhawan, 2016: 51). This term is primarily used in relation to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, where Israel is promoting its nation as ‘an international gay vacation’ but at the same time violates the rights of Palestine’s and ‘whitewashes’ the atrocities against Palestine in the name of ‘protecting the gays’ (Schulman, 2011). According to the pinkwashing narrative, Israel uses gay rights as an intentional means to hide ongoing human rights crimes against Palestinians under an appearance of modernity symbolized by Israeli gay life.

Pinkwashing can be perceived as a concrete manifestation of homonationalism. Countries brand themselves as queer friendly but do not respect queer rights (Ward, 2008). They take advantage of the international trend of promoting diversity as a sign of modernity. The overall consequence of doing these things: it interrupts the mainstreaming of queer politics (Montegary, 2010: 334).

According to Puar, there is a difference between homonationalism and pinkwashing. While pinkwashing is a state practice, homonationalism is “the historical convergence of state practices, transnational circuits of queer commodity culture and human rights paradigms, and broader global phenomena such as the increasing entrenchment of Islamophobia” (Puar, 2013: 337).

Two other negative consequences of using queering in nation branding strategies are the stigmatization of non-European areas such as the Middle East and the global South as backward and repressive (Dhawan, 2016: 51) and the fact that unless the outward promotion of queer rights, heterosexuality is still embraced to domestically define and built a nation (Dhawan, 2016: 57).

Assumption 11: Countries can use queering in nation branding for ideological purposes and/or purely strategic purposes.

2.5 Conclusion

This theoretical framework discussed the concepts of nation branding, queering and the connection between nation branding and queering. First, the use, success, and risks of nation branding were addressed. Countries will use a nation brand that will evoke a positive international reaction and boost the national image of that country in the global world. With this strategy, they will try to emanate a

distinctive image. The media play a significant role in spreading the nation brand to foreign places. Nation branding strategies can be conflictual and/or integrative. The choice for the strategy will partly depend on the continent brand. Furthermore, because nation branding is often produced in an undemocratic matter, there will be some domestic resistance against the nation brand. Therefore, it is important that the nation brand is rooted within the society of that country. Countries will thus try to reduce the negative collateral effects of nation branding.

Hereafter, the main gaps in nation branding literature and why the missing gender and sexuality perspective is problematic were discussed. This gap in literature is essential to research because countries can reinforce or challenge heteronormative expectations with their nation brand.

Finally, the concepts of queering and nation branding were connected with the help of theories of 'homonationalism' (Puar, 2007), 'strategic essentialism' (Duggan, 1994) and 'pinkwashing' (Schulman, 2011). Countries use strategic essentialism to make the nation brand comprehensible for the general public. Furthermore, countries can use queering in their nation branding strategies for ideological and strategic purposes (Homonationalism) or just strategic purposes (Pinkwashing).

We can now apply these concepts to a case: How the Netherlands used queering in its nation branding strategy during the Eurovision Song Contest of 2021.

3 Methodology chapter

This chapter will elaborate on the methods used in this thesis. First, the choice to assess the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands during the ESC 2021 as a case study will be justified. After this, the methods of analysis will be discussed. This thesis will make use of Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) combined with aspects of Discourse Analysis. Then the theoretical concepts will be operationalized. The discussion of the data sources will follow the operationalization. The methodological chapter concludes with a critical reflection of the used methods and data sources.

3.1 Discussion of case study method

A researcher must decide if they wish to research a large number of cases superficially (large N) or only one or a few cases in depth (small N) (Gerring, 2006: 1). The research on a small N of cases can be defined as a case study. A case study is not a research technique but an approach to focusing on a case's particular details in a real-world context (Stępień, 2019). A case study can be defined as "[...] an empirical inquire that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (Yin, 1989: 23). The fundamental feature that sets case studies apart from other methodologies is its "reliance on evidence drawn from a single case and its attempts, at the same time, to illuminate features of a broader set of cases." (Gerring, 2006: 29). There are various kinds of case studies. First, the distinction can be made between explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive case studies (Baxter & Jack, 2008: 548). The second distinction is made between single, holistic, and multiple-case studies (Baxter & Jack, 2008: 547). Lastly, case studies can be typical, atypical, or extreme (Stępień, 2019: 5-6).

This thesis will use the Eurovision Song Contest in Rotterdam in 2021 as a single case study. The emphasis will be on the Netherlands, the host country. This case was chosen because it is a recent case with limited prior research. Moreover, the Netherlands demonstrates its commitment to LGBTQ+ rights outside of the Eurovision song contest. Therefore, it is interesting to research how the Netherlands incorporated queering in the ESC 2021. Although other countries will compete in the ESC in 2021, the focus will be on the host country because the ordinary Eurovision delegations are not following the same nation branding strategy as the host country in terms of resources invested (Carniel, 2019: 11). Moreover, this research represents an exploratory case study. Because prior research has not connected the concepts of nation branding, queering and the Eurovision Song Contest, this research is new in International Relations.

This case can be perceived as both a typical and atypical case. On the one hand, it is a typical case because the Netherlands is already promoting LGBTQ+ rights, so it is likely that the Netherlands will

promote include some queer elements in its nation branding strategy during the ESC. On the other hand, the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands during the ESC 2021 is an atypical case because the case has some unique features (Stępień, 2019: 6). Regular nation branding strategies are usually within certain boundaries to avoid backlash from the domestic public (Wang, 2008: 18). A nation's brand must correspond to the values and norms that live in a society. However, the ESC is an extraordinary contest where these boundaries are less clear so that a nation brand could be a bit bolder than in other settings. Moreover, it is an atypical case because the branding is not done by the government of the Netherlands but by the organization committee of the ESC 2021 under the guidance of Sietse Bakker, the executive producer of the show (Consultancy.nl, 2021).

The following sections will elaborate further on the choice for the 2021 edition of the Eurovision Song Contest. The relationship between ESC and international relations is first discussed. Then will be analyzed how Eurovision is tied to nation branding. After this, the relationship between the competition and queering will be discussed. Finally, it will be argued why the Netherlands is interesting to use as a case study.

3.1.1 Eurovision Song Contest & International Relations

The first reason to choose Eurovision as the case for this research is that the contest has a lot of (international) political aspects. Cultural traumas and national rivalries are frequently hidden behind the scenes of the ESC. "Countries hold grudges for decades, and the ESC is one seismograph for detecting them." (Yair, 2019: 1024). Data from Eurovision as well as the methodologies used to analyze it, may have broader implications for understanding European political and economic relationships (Yair, 2019: 1023). Eurovision may thus sometimes be viewed as a light-hearted version of diplomacy, as it depicts a setting in which nationhood is questioned, defended, and challenged (Rehberg, 2007: 63). Nevertheless, Eurovision also provides a platform for nations to strengthen their bilateral ties or initiate dialogue and collaboration with countries they may not have already had strong ties (Borić & Kapor, 2017: 230).

Although the EBU has banned the use of political messages during the event, the songs and other statements during the ESC, such as flags, images and symbols, still contain an (implicit) political message (Bohlman, 2007: 57). As Carniel, 2019 stated, "In the context of Eurovision, all acts are political and all interactions must be framed in terms of diplomatic relations" (p. 18). Also, the voting procedure during Eurovision has everything to do with the current political situation. For instance, bookmakers predicted that Ukraine would win Eurovision 2022 (Jensen & van Vliet, 2022). While Ukraine was in fourth place before the war, the war influenced the predicted position of Ukraine. Also, it is notable how the presence of a national head of state and other prominent people, as well as other important marks, elevates the political impact of the ESC (Bolin, 2010: 130).

The ESC is a platform for soft power politics such as nation branding and cultural diplomacy. The contest even uses diplomacy-language by referring to the participants as 'delegations' (Carniel,

2019: 1). The contest thus can be perceived as an example of cultural diplomacy: culture is used as a diplomatic instrument to advance national interests (Carniel, 2019: 3). In contrast to traditional diplomacy, which can be stiff and uncomfortable, cultural diplomacy is a more informal way of strengthening diplomatic relations (Borić & Kapor, 2017: 227). By some scholars, cultural diplomacy is also described as the ‘third pillar of foreign policy’, besides the conventional spheres of diplomacy such as politics and economy (Borić & Kapor, 2017: 225). A multitude of governmental, non-state and industry entities, including the media, fans and the performing delegations, use culture in the Eurovision Song Contest for financial and political interest. Individual spectators might unwittingly act as actors of state politics and identity in a global context (Carniel, 2019: 6-7).

Eurovision has grown in popularity, with broadcasts in 36 countries and an annual audience of nearly 200 million people, making it an effective medium for establishing a sense of belonging to the European Union (Eurovision, 2021). Sometimes more so than traditional European institutions, which are often perceived as inaccessible and intangible to ordinary citizens (Borić & Kapor, 2017: 227). Thus, Eurovision is a mega-event comparable to big sports events such as the Olympics. A mega-event always has important political implications (Baker, 2016: 104). Now that it is clear why Eurovision is important for IR, the next section will discuss how the ESC is connected to nation branding.

3.1.2 Eurovision Song Contest & nation branding/continent branding

Another reason for choosing this case is that Eurovision has a clear connection to nation branding. The ESC provides a large audience venue where countries may showcase themselves to a European and even a global public (Borić & Kapor, 2017: 230). It can be an excellent opportunity to promote the culture and identity of a nation. Especially hosting the ESC is an opportunity for a nation to ‘sell your country through popular culture’ (Carniel, 2019: 10). The performance of a delegation at the ESC is a type of nation branding generated by non-state actors (Carniel, 2019: 1-2).

“There are (at least) two basic values at play in relation to the ESC: on the one hand, the idea of the nation state and, on the other, the value of Europeanness” (Bolin, 2010: 131). So, the ESC can be perceived as both an integrative and conflictual event. In most cases, host nations clearly support European integration, choosing “civilised hybridity instead of deliberate authenticity” (Bohlman, 2007: 46). The Eurovision Song Contest celebrates the idea of Europe as a modern, liberal, peace-loving, diverse and cosmopolitan continent (Yair, 2019: 1015). Participating in Eurovision is thus a declaration of a country's European identity as well as a demonstration of Europeanness. The ESC has evolved into a cultural institution and a rhetorical tool for nation-building (Jordan, 2014: 53). Hence, countries should be especially aware of the domestic implications of their nation branding strategy during the Eurovision because many domestic viewers will consume the presented image of the country (Carniel, 2019: 11).

Bringing in some fun is important in the nation branding strategies during the Eurovision song contest (Carniel, 2019). Because the ESC is primarily an entertainment show, the political message within the nation brand should be presented in a subtle way. One of the ways fun is brought into the

show is through the eccentric people, performances and statements during the ESC. The following section discusses the connection between the ESC and queering in more detail.

3.1.3 Eurovision Song Contest & queer(ing)

The ESC is also a fitting case because it has a lot of connections to queer topics. Eurovision is tied to queer politics and the contestation of the notions of European security, membership, and identity by organizers who linked it to a specific form of displaying sexual difference (Baker, 2016: 106). It is an event that demonstrates both queerness and national identity (Baker, 2016: 102). Although the EBU bans political messages from the event, celebrating LGBTQ+ individuals is allowed. These diverse individuals represent Europe's shared liberal and humanistic ideals (Yair, 2019: 1020; Bohlman, 2014).

The ESC has become a site of LGBTQ+ politics because European liberalization is connected to the development of sexual citizenship (Baker, 2016: 99). Eurovision gives many different significant actors, such as host states/cities and journalists, the possibility to represent certain political (particularly national) identity narratives, using queer-coded characteristics as one of the elements (Mitrović, 2010). Eurovision is also a tool for explicit queer advocacy.

The ESC thus serves as a vital platform for a rising debate over liberal gender promotion as a European principle (Carniel, 2019). Although Eurovision has incorporated (some) gay, lesbian and trans individuals, larger LGBTQ+ equality narratives around Eurovision frequently rely on a more ambiguous 'rainbow' signifier. This signifier is less about emancipatory politics and has more to do with a narrative of European exceptionalism concerning modernization and human rights. (Baker, 2016: 101). There is still debate over these 'European values.' For example, Turkey decided not to participate in the contest anymore after the victory of Conchita Wurst in 2014 (Moore, n.d.). In the previous sections, there has been argued why the ESC is a suitable case. The next section will elaborate on why the Netherlands is an appropriate case for this research.

3.1.4 The Dutch situation

The Dutch case is interesting to research because, on the one hand, the country is a frontrunner in accepting queer people and promoting LGBTQ+ rights. On the other hand, there is still a part of the population that has not entirely internalized these values.

The Netherlands has been at the forefront of promoting sexual freedoms since the 1960s' 'sexual revolution.' (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011: 625). The sexual liberation of the Netherlands is reflected in legal equality: prostitution became legalized in 2000 and same-sex marriage was legalized a year later (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011: 625; Rijksoverheid, n.d.). From 2001 on, same-sex couples were also allowed to adopt children. The Dutch government is committed to strengthening the social position of transgender individuals and offers grants to organizations working on gender and LGBTQ+ equality (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). It is also possible in the Netherlands to change the gender on official documents.

Almost the whole Dutch political landscape, from far left to far right, now accepts progressive ideas about LGBTQ+ rights still controversial in many other western nations (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011: 626). Queer rights have even become an element of the Dutch government's immigration approach; they are a part of Dutch citizenship (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011: 626).

However, legal equality does not necessarily lead to social equality: queer people are still discriminated against in Dutch society. Queer people are accepted only under certain conditions (Buijs et al., 2009). Even though Dutch people are relatively positive about homo- and bisexuality, the acceptance has not increased over the last years (Huijnk, 2022). For example, visible intimacy between people of the same sex is still sensitive and acceptance of transgender individuals and sexual diversity is less than that of gay and bisexual people. The Netherlands adopts a heteronormative discourse (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011). Although the Dutch society can be identified as a homonormalized society, the heteronormative expectations still play a significant role. This causes queer people to behave safely within the heteronormative framework (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011: 629).

Another reason the Netherlands is an interesting case research is because the country has been involved in the contest since 1956. It is one of the "Founding Seven" of Eurovision. This long-lasting connection with the ESC, combined with the stance of the Netherlands towards LGBTQ+ rights makes it a suitable case for this thesis.

3.2 Discussion of method of analysis

The primary method that will be used in this thesis is Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). It will be complemented with parts of Discourse Analysis. The goal of content analysis is to deduce the meaning and intention of data by examining the frequency and usage of words, pictures and patterns used in the data (Neuendorf, 2017). Discourse Analysis is a type of qualitative research that looks at how discourse legitimizes and gives meaning to social activities and institutions (Halperin & Reath, 2012: 309). The components of a discourse can be revealed through linguistic and semiotic analysis (Halperin & Reath, 2012: 309). While other methods can also disclose aspects of a discourse, Discourse Analysis is a method that understands the meaning of a discourse within a broader context. As a result, Discourse Analysis examines not just the data itself but also the relationship to its context, as well as the larger power and authority relationships that define that context (Halperin & Reath, 2012: 309-310). By using the Discourse Analysis method complementary to QCA, the researcher can be more interpretive in doing research. Qualitative Content Analysis complemented with Discourse Analysis is thus the most appropriate method to conduct this research because not only the amount of queering used in nation branding strategies is of interest, but also what the implications are of this use of queering.

Qualitative content analysis is a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data (Schreier, 2012: 1). “Content analysis is a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method, including attention to objectivity/intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing based on theory) and is not limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented” (Neuendorf, 2017: 17). The goal of QCA is to quantify the presence of topics and concepts.

Some scholars argue that Discourse Analysis is a part of content analysis (Neuendorf, 2017), while others see it as a different method. I will not go into detail on this discussion but will use parts of the Discourse Analysis method complementary to content analysis for this thesis. Other measurement forms can be used in conjunction with content-analytic measurements (Neuendorf, 2017: 3). Hijmans describes some of the main qualitative analytic methods that are used in media content analysis, such as rhetorical analysis, narrative analysis, Discourse Analysis, interpretative analysis and critical analysis (Hijmans, 1996). For this research, I will opt for Discourse Analysis because it is a popular method for analyzing public communication and is useful for providing contextualization.

Complementary to content analysis, Discourse Analysis will be used to interpret the selected data from content analysis. Discourse Analysis will be used to give meaning to those queer outings analyzed in the qualitative content analysis.

Even though there are multiple different methods of Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is the most appropriate method for this thesis. It is a hermeneutic process: it is about “grasping and producing meaning relations” (Meyer, 2001: 16). CDA “focuses on the role of discursive activity in constituting and sustaining unequal power relations” (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, cited in Phillips & Hardy, 2002: 25). Critical Discourse Analysis thus makes a plea for the socially discriminated (Meyer, 2001: 15). Therefore, it is a very suitable method for this thesis because this thesis deals with queer individuals who are still a marginalized group in most societies. Discourse Analysis gives one potential interpretation of the content, and there can be many other interpretations (Duncan, 1996: 161). Furthermore, Discourse Analysis is suitable because it not only focuses on linguistics but offers a method for analysis for a broader range of data such as music and video (Meyer, 2001: 15; Jäger, 2001: 46). This difference is also identified by Gee (2005) as a discourse with a ‘little d’ which deals mainly with language, and Discourse with a ‘big D’ involves analyzing “various sorts of object, symbols, tools, and technologies” (Gee, 2005: 7).

First, Qualitative Content Analysis is used to determine if and how queering is used in the nation branding strategy. This content analysis examines all the data with the help of codes and focuses on the quantitative assessment of the relevant content. It illustrates what kinds of concepts and arguments are prominent or essential in the general discourse. Applied to this study, this means quantifying the nation branding strategy and the prevalence of queer issues and capturing how these queer issues are being

framed in the data. QCA is an appropriate method because there is some degree of interpretation necessary to arrive at the meaning of the data, especially when this meaning is not obvious (Schreier, 2012: 2).

After that, this analyzed data from QCA will be further analyzed with the help of Discourse Analysis, to determine the exact meaning of this use of queering. Moreover, through Discourse Analysis it will also be possible to determine how queering in nation branding by the Netherlands in the context of ESC 2021 enhances or challenges the heteronormative expectations. Discourse Analysis is a valuable method to take the context into consideration and look for the deeper meaning of the data.

3.3 Operationalization

3.3.1 Assumptions specified to the Netherlands

The assumptions made in the theoretical framework are translated to The Netherlands during ESC 2021 case.

Assumption 1: The Netherlands will use a nation brand that will evoke a positive international reaction and boost the national image of the Netherlands in the global world.

Assumption 2: The Netherlands will try to use its nation branding strategy to emanate a clear distinctive image.

Assumption 3: The Netherlands will choose to adopt a conflictual and integrative strategy in their nation branding campaign. Integrative to show that the Netherlands is one of the 'core' European countries that supports diversity, conflictual to show that the Netherlands is 'more' open and accepting than some other European countries.

Assumption 4: The Netherlands will brand its country within certain normativities to reduce the chance of negative collateral effects.

Assumption 5: The media will play an important role in disseminating the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands.

Assumption 6: The brand that the Netherlands uses in its strategy is rooted within its society.

Assumption 7: The image of Europe will also play a significant role in the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands.

Assumption 8: Because the nation branding strategy is mostly produced in an undemocratic manner, there will be some domestic resistance against the promoted national identity.

Assumption 9: Because the brand has to be rooted in society to prevent too much domestic resistance, the nation brand of the Netherlands will most likely not challenge heteronormative expectations about gender and sexuality.

Assumption 10: The Netherlands will use strategic essentialism to make its message understandable for the general public.

Assumption 11: The Netherlands will use queering in nation branding for ideological purposes and strategic purposes.

It is also important to note that when the analysis describes the Netherlands' nation branding strategy, it is the strategy devised by the organizing committee of the Eurovision Song Contest 2021, not the Dutch government.

3.3.2 Codes

In this thesis, the focus will be on nation branding and queering. Therefore, the codes will also relate to nation branding and queering during the ESC 2021. The nation branding codes that will be used for the analysis will be deductively derived from the theoretical chapter and the assumptions that followed from the theory. This coding tree can be found in Appendix 1.

The codes on queering will be inductively derived as the data is analyzed. There are no preconceived notions, but the coding will be a ground-up approach. In this thematic analysis approach the researcher identifies patterns in the data and derives meanings and themes from these patterns to create a narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are some steps that should be followed when doing this thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, the researcher must familiarize themselves with the data. Then, some initial codes must be created. In the next step, the researcher will decide which parts of the data to code. Because this approach is an inductive approach, new codes will be added if necessary. When performing the initial inductive coding there will be coded on word, visual and symbolic level. These three levels are chosen because they are suitable for analyzing the selected video data.

The coding will be performed using the coding software Atlas.ti. I selected this program because it supports video data and it presents the coded data in a structured way.

3.4 Discussion of data sources

Two types of sources will be used for this thesis: video and text. The primary source used is the video content from the Eurovision Song Contest 2021. The choice for this edition of the contest is explained in the previous section on the case study. This video content consists of three shows: two semi-finals and one final of 127 minutes, 127 minutes and 237 minutes respectively. Besides the television broadcasts, I have collected some other sources that will be analyzed. These other sources consist of websites and interviews that give more information about the context of Eurovision 2021. The sources that will be analyzed are in English or in Dutch. I chose to analyze the Dutch broadcasts of Eurovision because I could upload those broadcasts into the coding software Atlas.ti. The Dutch broadcasts are supported by the presentation of the background narrators. These comments are not considered in the analysis because every country has its own broadcasts with narrators in their own language. The comments from the Dutch narrators thus will not give more information about the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands during the ESC 2021.

The video content from Eurovision 2021 will provide evidence for how often queering is used during the contest. In this study, the entire event, except for the performances and interviews of the participating countries, is regarded as a Dutch country branding campaign. These performances and interviews can be interpreted as nation branding by other countries and are not within the scope of this research.

The other video and textual sources will be used to give more background information on the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands. These sources will explain some choices that were made during the event such as the theme, the host city and interval acts.

3.5 Critical reflection of methods used

3.5.1 Case study

Case study research occasionally receives criticism because, in comparison to quantitative methodologies, its design is less regimented (Gerring, 2011: 1136). Therefore, the researcher should put more emphasis on adding structure to their research. Another main criticism of case studies is the concern of external validity: case studies are not generalizable (Alnaim, 2015: 30; Tellis, 1997). However, case study research can be generalized to theories that represent the extent of the case theory (Demetriou, 2009). Furthermore, the reliability of the case study can be affected by the subjectivity of the researcher (Demetriou, 2009). This concern can be overcome by using multiple data sources and reviewing the research by another researcher (Alnaim, 2015: 30).

When critically reflecting on this case study, this methodological chapter adds structure to this research. Moreover, multiple data sources are used in this case study. Not only are the broadcasts of the Eurovision 2021 examined, but additional sources will also be analyzed to develop a better understanding about the context of the contest as well. Another limit that can be identified in this

research is that this thesis only covers one edition of the Eurovision Song Contest. The case study would be more robust if the research was conducted over several years. However, because of this research's time frame and scope, the choice was made to examine just one edition of the Eurovision Song Contest.

3.5.2 Method(s)

Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)

The strengths of QCA are that it provides understanding and knowledge of the studied subject and that it is a systematic way of analyzing qualitative data (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992: 314). A weakness of QCA is that it is a method that analyzes data from a specific point of view. Some other methods can take more points to view into account (Schreier, 2012: 3). QCA does not give a complete overview of the data but specifies from a specific angle (Schreier, 2012: 4). Nevertheless, this is no issue for this research because this research aims to focus on specific aspects of Eurovision. QCA is therefore an appropriate method to focus on certain aspects of the data.

(Critical) Discourse Analysis

One of the strengths of Discourse Analysis is that it can analyze difficult questions which do not have easy, straightforward explanations (Wodak, 1999: 186). However, some scholars have indicated some weaknesses in Discourse Analysis. According to critics of Discourse Analysis, it is a method that relies on interpretation. Widdowson (1995) argues that different interpreters can have different interpretations of the data because of their experiences which can lead to different discourses on the same data (Widdowson, 1995: 168-169). However, because Discourse Analysis is concerned with theories of power and ideology, as well as the examination of issues such as language, media, gender and ethnicity, it is impossible not to adopt a political stance (Fairclough, 1996: 52). Moreover, Widdowson also critiques Discourse Analysis for its conceptual confusion (Widdowson, 1995: 159). However, not only Discourse Analysis deals with methodological challenges such as conceptual confusion (Ballinger & Payne, 2000: 570). Moreover, the advantage that Discourse Analysis has compared to other methods is that Discourse Analysis does not claim to be without prejudice. It is aware of its own partiality (Fairclough, 1996: 53).

3.5.3 Data sources

Using video content as a data source has various advantages. First, it is a real-time sequential medium. This means that video data enables the researcher to see the video in a new way by speeding up or slowing down the video (Jewitt, 2012: 4). Moreover, video data can capture non-verbal cues (Wang & Lien, 2013). Issues that can arise when researching video content are the necessity to comprehend a video's history, production context, original purpose and audience, as well as how these variables are entrenched in the video and what is lacking from the video record (Adami, 2009). Video data can

magnify minor events or trivial details. This problem is accounted for when using videos that capture longer time scales to put the video content into a broader perspective (Snell, 2011). One of the most prevalent drawbacks of video data is that it might result in the acquisition of vast volumes of rich data (Jewitt, 2012: 6). This limitation can be overcome by first analyzing the video data more quantitatively and selecting the most appropriate data for the study a researcher is conducting. This selection of the data can then be qualitatively analyzed (Jewitt, 2012: 6). Lastly, decisions by the producers of the video, such as camera position, when and what is selected to be captured and so on, limit and shape video data. This makes that videos only provide one perspective of a certain event (Jewitt, 2012: 8). However, this one-sided perspective and the decisions made by the producers are not a limitation for this research because this perspective and decisions are of interest for this thesis as they are a part of the nation branding strategy.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter clarified how the research question – How do countries use queering in their nation branding strategy during the Eurovision Song Contest? – will be answered. This will be accomplished through performing a Qualitative Content Analysis complemented with aspects of Discourse Analysis of the Eurovision 2021 case, where the focus will be on the host country of the ESC 2021.

4. Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This analysis is composed of several parts. The chapter starts with a brief overview of the context in which the ESC 2021 occurs. Second, the general nation branding strategy of the Netherlands during ESC 2021 will be analyzed. The next part of the analysis will address how queer aspects are incorporated into the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands. Subsequently, the meaning of the incorporation of these queer aspects into the nation branding strategy will be interpreted. Finally, throughout this analysis will be reflected on the extent to which this case matches the assumptions derived from the theoretical framework.

4.2 Overview context Eurovision Song Contest 2021

Before the Eurovision Song Contest 2021 will be analyzed, it is critical to consider the context of this event. First, the context of the Netherlands in 2021 is described. Next, this section will elaborate on the context of the ESC in 2021.

4.2.1 The Netherlands in 2021

The Netherlands, like the rest of the world, was still captivated by the corona pandemic in May 2021. The solidarity that this pandemic initially evoked among the Dutch population had turned into polarization by the course of 2020. This was partly due to the conspiracy theories circulating on social media, the rough start of the vaccination campaign and the ever-changing corona measures (Geels, 2021). There were also regular demonstrations against the corona measures. Because of these measures, big events with many people could not take place. However, Eurovision 2021 could proceed with a limited audience because it was part of the FieldLab events, a collaboration between the event sector and the Dutch government that tried to organize ‘corona-safe’ events (Redactie Trouw, 2021). At the same time, other issues were at stake in the Netherlands in May 2021. Many Dutch people had become more aware of issues such as the environment and racism in recent years (Essity, 2021; Kester, 2020). This awareness manifests itself through demonstrations and debates on social media about these topics. The Netherlands has been a leader in LGBTQ+ rights since 2001 and the issue is still on the political agenda, as evidenced by the debate on conversion therapy (Het Parool, 2021). The Black Lives Matter movement has had an impact in the Netherlands as well (Kester, 2020). It got people in Dutch society thinking about how racism is still present in the Netherlands. In addition, issues such as institutional racism in the tax administration have been exposed (Kester, 2020). Moreover, this movement heightened the scrutiny towards the slavery in Dutch history (Meershoek, 2021).

4.2.2 Eurovision in 2021

Originally, the Netherlands was supposed to host the ESC in 2020 due to the winning artist Duncan Laurence that represented the Netherlands in 2019. However, preparations had to be halted in March 2020 due to the emerging coronavirus. As a result of the pandemic, the 2020 edition of the Eurovision Song Contest was canceled (Eurovision, 2020). The Netherlands was able to host the contest again in 2021. However, until April 2021, it was not clear if an audience was allowed at the event (Redactie Trouw, 2021). It was evident that the 2021 edition of the ESC would be different from previous editions. The staff, delegations, and press had to stay in the created 'Corona Bubble' (Kompeer, 2021). Moreover, there was no physical Eurovision village where the Eurovision fans and delegations could party. Instead, an online Eurovision village was created. What did remain the same as in previous editions was that no political messages were allowed on stage. Hence, Belarus was forced to withdraw because the song submitted was too political (Eurovision Song Contest, 2021). However, messages about diversity, racism, and inclusivity are allowed at the contest and are also largely being propagated on the Eurovision stage in recent times. This manifests itself through performances of queer people such as Dana International, a transgender pop-artist from Israel. She represented Israel in the 1998 Eurovision Song Contest, where she took first place. She reappeared on the Eurovision stage in 2019, when the contest was held in Tel Aviv. Dana International performed the song 'Just the way you are' by Bruno Mars, while a kiss-cam was going through the public and mainly filming non-hetero people that were filmed kissing (Davidovich, 2019: 1:33:00-1:34:42). This allowance of political messages such as the previous are relevant in the context of this thesis because it shows the accepting and open environment of the ESC, and thus the environment in which the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands takes place.

4.3 The general nation branding strategy of the Netherlands during the ESC 2021

This section will address the general nation branding strategy of the Netherlands during the ESC 2021. Based on the deductive coding (see Appendix 1), some mixed evidence can be found. In the theory section on nation branding, I predicted that the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands would evoke a positive and distinctive image (assumption 1 & 2), the country would adopt a conflictual and integrative strategy (assumption 3), and that the branding be within certain normativities (assumption 4). Furthermore, the nation branding theory predicted that the media would play an important role in the strategy (assumption 5) and that the strategy was rooted within the Dutch society (assumption 6). The final predictions that can be derived from theory are that the image of Europe will play a significant role in the nation branding (assumption 7) and that there will be domestic resistance against the nation brand (assumption 8).

Assumptions 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 are in line with the findings. The Netherlands tried to evoke a positive and distinctive image and the media play a crucial role in disseminating the nation branding strategy. Moreover, the identity of Europe was kept in mind when designing the strategy. However, as

the case shows assumption 8 contrasts the observations. This case shows no evidence of domestic resistance against the nation brand. Furthermore, assumptions 3 and 4 can be partially confirmed by this case. The Netherlands solely used an integrative strategy and although the aim was to connect and feel united, the nation branding strategy defied some normativities to establish a unique and distinctive event.

This section will first address the choice and creation of the theme and logo for the ESC 2021. Following this, some additional nation branding aspects will be analyzed. This section concludes with discussing the purpose of the nation branding strategy.

The selected theme and slogan of the ESC 2021 was ‘Open Up’. This is also the slogan around which the nation branding campaign was centered. This brand was created by a non-nation state; a Dutch organization committee under the supervision of executive director of the ESC 2021, Sietse Bakker. This runs the risk of making the brand undemocratic because the organization committee, unlike nation states, do not have to justify themselves to the people in the country (Browning & Ferraz de Oliveira, 2017). However, this risk was overcome by the organization of the ESC 2021 by considering the wishes of citizens. The theme ‘Open Up’ was created by talking to over a hundred various people within the Dutch community (Consultancy.nl, 2021). Different perspectives were involved in rooting the brand into the Dutch society. Both famous and ordinary Dutch people were able to contribute their ideas about their interpretations of Eurovision. Especially the citizens of the host city Rotterdam were encouraged to initiate ideas for the development of the theme (Host City Rotterdam, 2021: 97). There was co-creation during the design phase of the nation brand. “Host City Rotterdam made it a priority to meaningfully engage with local entrepreneurs as well as the overall population.” (Host City Rotterdam, 2021: 106). On the one hand, this nation branding strategy goes against the claim of Jansen (2008), who states the nation brand is produced in an undemocratic manner to make it not too complex and unambiguous. On the other hand, it supports the assertion of scholars who stress the importance of rooting the brand in society (Wang, 2008: 18) and living the brand (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011).

According to executive producer Sietse Bakker, the theme ‘Open Up’ conveys the core values of the Netherlands as a country with an open mind to the world, where the citizens dare to give our honest opinion in a respectful way (DWDD, 2019: 1:35-1:45). The theme was originally intended for the 2020 Song Contest, but due to Corona's cancellation of the 2020 edition, it was reused for the ESC 2021. With this slogan, people were encouraged to open up to each other and share their thoughts, stories and music.

CLEVER°FRANKE designed the corresponding logo. It resembles a dark blue circle, with various colored stripes that differ in lengths, which represent the colors of the participating countries’ flags. As a result, the logo radiates both diversity and togetherness (CLEVER°FRANKE, n.d.). Furthermore, it depicts how all participants will reunite during Eurovision 2021 in Rotterdam. This logo can be seen as an example of a visual element of the Dutch nation branding strategy (Aronczyk, 2008: 44).

Even though the core theme of Eurovision 2021 was ‘Open Up’, the theme can be interpreted in four different ways. First, it can be understood as ‘Open up to the future’ (Host City Rotterdam, 2021: 40). This interpretation of the theme had a connection to sustainability and entrepreneurship. The ESC 2021 should become an authentic and modern event and should represent the creativity, originality, and progressiveness of the Netherlands. Second, the theme also could be interpreted as ‘Open up to each other’ (Host City Rotterdam, 2021: 40). ‘Open Up’ should represent the diversity of the Netherlands, and specifically Rotterdam. Moreover, this Song Contest should show the importance of making contact with each other and having new and (unusual) collaborations. Third, it could be read as ‘Open up to realness’ (Host City Rotterdam, 2021: 40). The Song Contest 2021 should give the spectators and visitors of the event a sincere impression. Moreover, the theme could also be interpreted as ‘Open up to celebrate’ (Host City Rotterdam, 2021: 40). Everyone should be able to celebrate (low incomes, people from other cultures, queer people, etcetera). Finally, the theme ‘Open Up’ also encourages people to open up to each other and be accepting and inclusive towards people from other cultures or sexual preferences. These values are in line with the spirit of the Netherlands, which is known for being a progressive and forward-thinking country (Adams, 2019). This interpretation of the theme has some queer aspects to which I will turn, however, later in this chapter.

Because of the different interpretations of the theme, every Dutch citizen would identify in some way with the theme. Hence, the risk of not considering a plurality of voices and thus domestic resistance was reduced (Aronczyk, 2008).

“Everyone needs to feel welcome to come along and celebrate with us, irrespective of their age, income, gender, religion, skin colour, sexual preference or disabilities.” (Host City Rotterdam, 2021: 40).

Besides the slogan and logo, other aspects were used in the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands during Eurovision. In this part I will discuss these other aspects of the strategy such as the postcards, the host city Rotterdam and the references to Dutch (pop)culture.

A common aspect of the ESC events is the so-called ‘Postcards’. These are short clips introducing every participating country before they start their performance. They were also used for the ESC in the Netherlands and as means for nation branding. In this case, the postcards showed visuals that are characteristic of the performing artist within a setting of an important place in the Netherlands. Through these postcards, the audience of Eurovision 2021 gets a glimpse of the Dutch scenery. The postcards are an example of nation branding because they selectively highlight landscapes of the Netherlands that it wants to show to the world while not portraying the less pretty or positive parts (Fan, 2009). Examples of postcards during the ESC 2021 are the Central Station of Rotterdam (Bakker, 2021a: 8:30-8:45); a station in the Netherlands that demonstrates the modernity of the Netherlands. Also, the nature reserves Marker Wadden (Bakker, 2021a: 12:27-12:47) and Broek op Langedijk (Bakker, 2021a:

47:09-47:39) were used as postcards during the contest. These show the distinctive nature that the Netherlands has to offer and could be deployed as a nation branding strategy for tourist purposes.

Besides the nation branding opportunities during the live shows, Rotterdam also had some city branding potential during Eurovision. Rotterdam, where the Eurovision Song Contest took place, was the scene of several performances during the show. Especially two interval performances in the final live show showcased Rotterdam as the host city. First, the performance of the Dutch DJ Afrojack was shot on the white, blue and rainbow illuminated Erasmus Bridge, one of the highlights of Rotterdam (Bakker, 2021c: 2:12:55-2:14:20). Also, Rotterdam was the scene of the performances of some previous ESC winners. These artists performed on rooftops throughout the city (Bakker, 2021c: 2:38:14-2:45:01). These performances symbolize the diversity and modernity of Rotterdam. The other city branding initiatives were visible to the press, visiting delegations and visitors. Examples of these other branding initiatives were the SINGALONG design that was created by the VollaersZwart Studio, which blended national flags with words from Eurovision songs to represent connectedness (Host City Rotterdam, 2021: 24). The design was used to decorate a number of well-known Rotterdam buildings and places. Moreover, the Eurovision trophy was represented by a large statue with a green footprint: 3D-printed and created from recycled PET from the waters of Rotterdam (Host City Rotterdam, 2021: 28). The trophy depicts the city's character, which has been shaped by collaboration and innovation.

This branding outside of the live shows was considered important because the delegations could share their experiences through their social media channels. Moreover, the press from the different countries could convey the brand to their audiences (Host City Rotterdam, 2021: 61). This crucial role of media coverage can also be found in nation branding literature (Gilboa, 2001: 4; Aronczyk, 2008).

The general theme 'Open Up' was also supplemented with Dutch (pop)culture references. The performances were given by renowned, internationally successful Dutch artists such as Afrojack, Davina Michelle and Glennis Grace.

Queen Máxima also made her appearance on the show (Bakker, 2021b: 33:42-34:08). She was interviewed by one of the hosts, Nikkie Tutorials in the 'Look Lab'. Queen Máxima is, nationally and internationally, one of the most popular family members of the Dutch royal family. The presence of such a prominent figure, elevated the political impact of the contest and therefore also the impact of the nation branding strategy (Bolin, 2010: 130).

It was mentioned several times in the branding documents and during the live shows that diversity is an important value for both Eurovision and the Netherlands. This interpretation of diversity goes beyond cultural diversity. I will highlight four aspects of diversity that appeared in and around the show.

First, the Netherlands represents people with disabilities in one of the interval acts during the show. This was reflected by a performance of Redo, a 30-year-old break dancer with various physical disabilities from the Netherlands (Bakker, 2021b: 2:19-4:28). He was the opening act of the second

semi-final. The message conveyed by this performance is that even though someone has a disability, they are still to pursue their dreams and that physical limitations do not have to be an impediment to success.

Second, diversity is also applied to income and social class. The show should be accessible to everyone, no matter if they are rich or poor (Host City Rotterdam, 2021: 40). In line with this intention, approximately 8% of the live show tickets were made available to lower-income city residents through the 'Celebrate Together' program (R2 Research & Cigarbox Advisory Services, 2021: 27).

Another aspect of diversity that was highlighted in the show is racial diversity. One of the characteristics incorporated in the nation brand is that the Netherlands is open up to other cultures (Consultancy.nl, 2021). Moreover, the brand also shows that the Netherlands is a diverse country, both on the part of cultural and sexual differences. In the show, this racial diversity is portrayed in an interval act in the final. The performance included the story of a white girl and a black boy that run away together (Bakker, 2021c: 2:11:04-2:11:08). At first, the father of the girl does not approve the couple, but at the end of the performance, the message is conveyed that music can connect people from different backgrounds (Bakker, 2021c, 2:13:50). Moreover, the Netherlands had chosen Edsilia Rombley, a black Dutch singer, as one of the hosts of Eurovision 2021. The hosts of the Eurovision Song Contests can be perceived as brand ambassadors (Bolin & Miazhevic, 2018). Finally, the performance of the Dutch delegation was indicative of the racial diversity within the country (Bakker, 2021c: 1:46:40-1:49:28). The song was 'Birth of a new age' by Jeangu Macrooy, a black, gay singer. Hope, fresh beginnings, pride, revolt, overcoming hardship and optimism strain against the weight of centuries of cultural oppression are all represented in the song. Sranan Tongo, a local language from Suriname, was also incorporated into the performance.

The final aspect of diversity that is incorporated into Eurovision 2021 is gender and sexual diversity. This appeared in the show through the selection of Nikkie de Jager, a Dutch trans woman, as host of Eurovision and the frequent visibility of queer flags during the broadcast. More will be elaborated on this aspect of diversity in the next section on queering during Eurovision 2021.

The last dimension of the general nation branding strategy that should be discussed is the aim of this strategy. First, the Netherlands wanted to create a distinctive image. This is in line with nation branding literature. Kaneva (2011: 125) stated that it is essential for a country to have a distinctive image in this globalized world. As one of the strategists of the ESC 2021 claimed in an interview, the event should be open, inventive, diverse and authentic (Consultancy.nl, 2021). Cornald Maas, a member of the selection committee for the Dutch entries, labeled the theme to reflect 'Dutch assertiveness'; a call to listen to and connect with each other's stories (DWDD, 2019: 4:50-4:53). The nation branding strategy thus had both a proactive and reactive purpose (Aronczyk, 2008). The Netherlands established a nation brand on its own initiative because it was the host country of Eurovision 2021. However, in creating the brand, there has been some comparison with the nation branding strategies of the host countries of the

ESC in previous years. Eurovision 2021 should be authentic (Consultance.nl, 2021). This authenticity is reflected in the way the interviews and presentation were performed. The show is less scripted than previous Eurovision shows to make the event more sincere.

Furthermore, the executive producer, Sietse Bakker, aimed to produce a Song Contest in which The Netherlands recognized itself and surprised Europe (Consultancy.nl, 2021). So, the developed theme should be appropriate to the Netherlands and the times in which we live but at the same time be unique by looking with inventiveness at the basic elements of the ESC. Also, after the Song Contest, Rotterdam has been recognized as a welcoming, pioneering, innovative, welcoming, diverse and resilient city (R2 Research & Cigarbox Advisory Services, 2021: 7). This global exposure of Rotterdam may have positive consequences for the Netherlands as a whole, challenging stereotypes of the Netherlands such as clogs, cheese, and tulips. Instead, the nation brand aimed to portray the Netherlands as a hospitable, pioneering, innovative, diverse and resilient country (R2 Research & Cigarbox Advisory Services, 2021: 7). The nation brand thus boosted the national image globally (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011: 604).

Second, the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands during the ESC 2021 can be identified as an integrative strategy (Bolin, 2010). The logo evokes a unifying feeling because all the participating countries are incorporated. Instead of focusing on the aspects that divide the countries, the designers looked at what unites them (CLEVER°FRANKE, n.d.). The logo reflects all participating countries. Two colors from the flags of the participating nations are used in each stripe of the of the logo (CLEVER. °FRANKE, n.d.). The angle and distance from the country's capital to Rotterdam determines the country's location in the logo. The Netherlands also ensured that the selected theme was not too coercive; countries should still feel free to send whatever act they like (DWDD, 2019: 5:10-5:15). The Dutch government also emphasizes the collective nature of the song contest in an official message on its website. They state in the message that ESC is a symbol of international cooperation in Europe and stress the importance of putting differences aside – or embracing them (Rijksoverheid, 2021). These integrative and cooperative aspects were also prevalent in the nation branding strategy (Consultancy.nl, 2021). To be integrative, the nation branding strategy had to align with Europe's overall identity. In this way, the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands was affected by the overall image of Europe (Dinnie, 2007: 475).

Third, the Netherlands wanted to create a positive image with the nation branding strategy. It tried to demonstrate that they could pull off an extraordinary show in extraordinary times (Host City Rotterdam, 2021: 49).

This section started off by showing that the public was involved in the creation of the nation brand. This enlarges the likelihood that the nation brand is rooted in society and thus affirms the theoretical expectation stated in assumption 6.

Similar to the way in which the theme itself was selected, its plural meanings are not in line with assumption 8 of the theoretical chapter which suggests that a nation branding strategy is produced in an undemocratic matter, thus domestically resisted against. However, citizens were consulted and could relate to the theme and no evidence could be found on protests against the nation brand.

Furthermore, this case shows that the media, and especially the media channels of the international press and delegations, played an important role disseminating the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands. This is in line with Assumption 5.

Moreover, these observations can be compared with assumptions 1, 2, 3 and 7 derived from theory. Assumptions 1 and 2 are in line with the findings because creating a distinctive and positive image were two of the main purposes of the Dutch nation branding strategy during Eurovision. This case can partially confirm assumption 3. The Netherlands has selected an integrative strategy and the unifying feeling was emphasized. However, no evidence could be found for a conflictual strategy in the documents. Finally, the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands is, to a great extent, influenced by the general image of Europe. Therefore, assumption 7, can also be affirmed.

Overall, the main purpose of the strategy was that the Song Contest would be an open, inventive, diverse and authentic event (Consultancy.nl, 2021). But how is this diversity, and in particular queering, incorporated into this nation branding strategy during the ESC 2021?

4.4 Queering in the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands

Now that the general nation branding strategy of the Netherlands during the ESC 2021 is discussed, it is time to analyze how queer aspects are incorporated in this strategy and what the implication are of this incorporation. The incorporation of queering in the ESC happened intentionally and unintentionally and had various aspects, on the one hand the symbols such as the theme and logo, and on the other hand the participants and the public.

Based on the inductive coding of queering (see Appendix 2), some mixed evidence is found. The theory section on queering and nation branding predicted that the nation brand will not challenge heteronormative expectations about gender and sexuality (assumption 9) and that the Netherlands would make use of strategic essentialism in its nation branding strategy (assumption 10). Furthermore, the prediction that the Netherlands would use queering in their strategy because of ideological and strategic purposes was derived from queering theory (assumption 11). Assumption 11 is in line with the observations. The strategy of the Netherlands can be identified as homonationalism instead of pinkwashing because it has both an ideological and a strategic component. However, as the case shows, no evidence can be found for assumption 9 and 10. Some heteronormative expectation about gender and sexuality are challenged and a variety of queer individuals are given a podium on the Eurovision 2021 stage. Because of this inclusion of various queer individuals, the Netherlands does not use strategic essentialism.

This section is split up in two parts: first will be analyzed how queering is incorporated in the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands. Then, this queering is interpreted and the implications of this incorporation of queering in the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands are discussed.

4.4.1 How is queering incorporated in the ESC 2021?

The theme 'Open Up' was selected because it reflects societal concerns in the Netherlands. Dutch people are concerned about, among other things, intolerance and the erosion of acquired liberties (DWDD, 2019: 1:50-2:05). This also includes worries about intolerance against the LGBTQ+ community.

As stated before, the event should be open, inventive, diverse, and authentic (Consultancy.nl, 2021). This not only includes cultural diversity but also sexual diversity. The Eurovision Song Contest 2021's theme, 'Open up,' aimed to promote openness and respect for diversity (NL Platform, 2021).

Moreover, the promotional video of the theme gives different interpretations of the theme 'Open Up'. One interpretation is "[...] to what we have in common" (Eurovision Song Contest, 2019: 0:46-0:48). This text is supported by an image of a man standing in front of a souvenir store with items printed with a rainbow flag. This frame represents the Dutch culture in two ways. First, the Netherlands is well known for its transformative LGBTQ+ rights and its open-minded culture (Equaldex, n.d.). Second, even though the Netherlands is a diverse country, like the various colors of the rainbow, we still have a lot in common.

The logo can also be perceived as queering in the nation branding strategy. Besides the unifying feeling that it evokes, it also stands for diversity because of the different colors incorporated in the logo. It represents that we are open to whatever the delegations present to us (CLEVER°FRANKE, n.d.). It thus reflects the openness and accepting attitude that is characteristic of the Netherlands.

“The impactful design also encapsulates the event’s modern values of diversity and inclusivity and beautifully complements this year’s slogan ‘Open Up’.” - (CLEVER°FRANKE, n.d.).

One of the reasons that Rotterdam was selected as the host city of the Eurovision Song Contest 2021 was because of its inclusive character (Host City Rotterdam, 2021: 18). Rotterdam is a multicultural city with people of many different nationalities, religions, cultures, values and norms, opinions, and political views (Karakus, van Bockxmeer & Klep, 2017: 8). Furthermore, compared to the national average and other major cities in the Netherlands, Rotterdam has a high proportion of people with low incomes. An essential core value of Eurovision is inclusivity; everyone should be able to celebrate Eurovision. This core value fits Rotterdam’s diverse and open character (Host City Rotterdam, 2021: 36). As a city with many diverse individuals, Rotterdam represents the 'new Netherlands' and exemplifies what occurs when you 'Open Up!' (Host City Rotterdam, 2021: 39). Overall, the nation branding strategy aimed to convey to the Eurovision audience that Rotterdam and the Netherlands have acceptance and inclusivity

as their core values (R2 Research & Cigarbox Advisory Services, 2021: 27). Through Eurovision, the Netherlands showed that it is a progressive country and that it gives attention to all layers of the population (R2 Research & Cigarbox Advisory Services, 2021: 33).

The ESC 2021 was an edition that represented a broad range of LGBTQ+ individuals (Bakker, 2021a; Bakker, 2021b, Bakker, 2021c; Groothuis, 2021). In this section, these queer individuals will be identified.

One of the most prominent queer individuals during ESC 2021 was one of the hosts, Nikkie de Jager. Nikkie is also known as YouTube make-up influencer NikkieTutorials. In 2020 she came out as a trans woman and ever since is she an advocate and key figure in the international trans community (&C, 2022). Nikkie is the first openly trans host of Eurovision. As stated before, the hosts of Eurovision play a key role as brand ambassadors (Bolin & Miazhevich, 2018). The Netherlands selected her as a suitable public figure to convey the essence of the nation brand. Even though the transgender identity of host Nikkie de Jager is not explicitly mentioned during the live shows, it was not left unnoticed. She incorporated the colors of the trans flag in each dress she wore during the contest (Nikkietutorials, 2021). The blue dress she wore in the first semi-final had a reference to the trans flag in the skirt (Bakker, 2021a). The second semi-final dress was covered in white, blue, and pink diamonds (Bakker, 2021b). Finally, the purple dress for the final had some blue and white diamonds on the top of the dress (Bakker, 2021c). Likewise, in her Instagram Post, Nikkie mentioned that it was important to her to show trans representation on the Eurovision stage (Nikkietutorials, 2021). Moreover, during the first semi-final, a few clips were shown from the Looklab, the online-accessible place where Nikkie interviewed all the contestants. The Dutch production chose a clip to broadcast during the live show from Manizha, the Russian entry. In the clip, she states: “So the message is, f*** the stereotypes; be yourself.” This is an intentional form of queer nation branding. The Dutch production team chose to pick a clip that reinforced the diversity aspects of the theme ‘Open Up’.

There were more representations of queer individuals during the show. Between the performances in the first semi-final, Nikkie de Jager announced the online competition where people inspired by the performances on the Eurovision stage could share their own performances. Three entries were shown. It was notable that one of these entries was from a drag queen (Bakker, 2021a: 32:54-33:01). The online competition was also an item between the performances in the second semi-final. Once again, three entries were shown. In these three submissions, there too was at least one with an apparent queer reference (Bakker, 2021b: 32:37-32:40). In the end, the selected top 3 were shown in the final show. The video of @dragsofanarchy was picked as the winner of the ‘Eurovision Challenge’ (Bakker, 2021c: 42:28-42:39). The winning video was from the Instagram account of Drags of Anarchy, a management & booking agency representing Dutch drag queens, starring the Dutch drag queens Megan Schoonbrood and Patty PamPam. By selecting this performance as the winner, the Netherlands

showcased what queer talents it has to offer. Assuming it was a fair competition, this can be labeled as unintentional nation branding.

After the item on the online competition in the first semi-final, a couple of Eurovision fans were surprised in an online video call with Eurovision 2014 winner Conchita Wurst (Bakker, 2021a: 33:55-34:16). First of all, the choice was made to choose the most famous queer winner from recent editions of Eurovision as the surprise guest. Moreover, it is striking that three of the four Eurovision fans in the frame have visual queer references. Two of them have the Pride/Progress-flag hanging in the background. The other one has the lesbian-pride flag as their background in the frame. This item can be interpreted as a sign of great value of diversity for the ESC, Europe and the Netherlands. It shows the diversity of the Eurovision public, so the diversity of Europe, and at the same time showcases this item the willingness of the Netherlands to include diverse individuals in the show.

Another performance that included queer references was the performance of BMX artist Dez Maarsen and ballet dancer Ahmad Joudeh in the second semi-final (Bakker, 2021b: 1:30:28-1:33:58). They performed in the dance act 'Close Encounters of a Special Kind', where the two distinct sports meet each other. The act had a story about resilience and opening up to each other, but also about the connection between two young men. It symbolizes both the connection between two different worlds and the normalization of an intimate bond between two people of the same gender.

Moreover, Jeangu Macrooy represented the Netherlands during Eurovision 2021. Not only can the hosts be perceived as brand ambassadors for the Netherlands during the ESC 2021, but Jeangu also plays an essential role in transferring the Dutch brand (Bolin & Miazhevich, 2018). This act not only stands out for its attention to cultural diversity but also has some queer references. Macrooy himself identifies as a queer person and believes representation matters on the stage of Eurovision for the emancipation of the queer community (AVROTROS, 2021: 17:36-18:10). In the same interview, Macrooy also addressed that he would like to inspire the young queer kids to pursue their dreams. Jeangu has further commented about how essential it is to be a queer black man on the Eurovision stage (Baker, 2021; van de Vendel, 2021). Furthermore, one of the common phrases in Macrooy's song is '*Your rhythm is rebellion*'. This refers to walls you can run into, such as the societal walls around sexuality (van de Vendel, 2021). However, the song reminds people that those walls cannot break you and that we are at the beginning of a new age. Another queer reference can be found in the suit of Jeangu. When performing his song in the final show of the ESC 2021, he purposefully wore a gender-neutral outfit (Groothuis, 2021).

Finally, the most obvious representation of queer individuals was visible at the start of the final show (Bakker, 2021c: 0:52-1:14). In this opening scene, a young woman is driving a van. As she is driving, she looks at a picture on her windshield. This photo shows two young women, one of whom is the driver of the van. She then arrives at the apartment where the other woman from the photo is also located. The scene concludes with a frame of the women being affectionate with each other on the street

in front of the apartment. This scene can be interpreted as a reflection of the Dutch values, where non-hetero relationships are normalized and thus can be shown on the streets.

Additionally, queering could not only be found in the form of queer individuals, but also queer visuals. On several occasions during the shows, queer flags were visible. These flags were not only shown by other delegations, such as Australia waving the trans flag (Bakker, 2021a: 36:01-36:04) but also people in the audience with a queer flag were intentionally portrayed (Bakker, 2021a: 20:25-20:27; Bakker, 2021b: 5:15-5:17; Bakker, 2021b: 2:05:39-2:05:43). These members of the audience intentionally participated in queering, but because they were incorporated in the live show also unintentionally participated in the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands.

The queer aspects of the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands have been discussed above. In the next part, these queer aspects will be further analyzed and connected to nation branding using concepts from the theoretical framework.

4.4.2 What are the implications of the incorporation of queering in nation branding strategy?

This case exemplifies that identity politics is a critical issue in international politics (Dhawan, 2016:1). The identity politics that the Dutch organization committee uses in its nation branding strategy is not just limited to queer individuals but also includes disabled individuals and individuals of color. There are sexualized orders in international relations (Weber, 2016: 12). Promoting LGBTQ+ rights can thus be advantageous for a country's international reputation (Nogueira, 2017: 556). In line with these theories, the Netherlands also uses identity politics to portray itself as a modern and progressive country (R2 Research & Cigarbox Advisory Services, 2021: 33).

Additionally, queer scholars suggest that identity politics and the politics of inclusion can lead to the exclusion of other marginalized individuals (Klapeer, 2017: 45). To make a LGBTQ+ message understandable for the general public, the message gets simplified, and the queer community gets 'essentialized'. This simplification is also referred to as strategic essentialism (Duggan, 1994: 6). However, the theme of Eurovision 2021 'Open Up' includes more than one queer identity. Moreover, not only queer individuals are included but also other marginalized individuals such as people of color, people with disabilities and people of a lower social class. Thus, in contrast with theory the Netherlands does not use strategic essentialism in its queer nation branding strategy.

In the theoretical chapter, the distinction is made between homonationalism and pinkwashing. According to Puar (2007), homonationalism is a period in which countries can demonstrate their uniqueness or modernism by demonstrating tolerance for queer people, as opposed to 'homophobic others.' LGBTQ+ rights have become an important criterion in determining a country's modernity (Slootmaeckers, Touquet & Vermeersch, 2016: 3). Homonationalism has both a strategic and ideological component. Pinkwashing, by contrast, only has a strategic component; countries brand themselves as queer-friendly but do not respect queer rights (Ward, 2008).

When analyzing the case of the Netherlands during the ESC 2021, the strategy seems to exhibit both strategic as well as ideological components. On the one hand, queering in the nation branding strategy is used to broaden people's image of the Netherlands. The strategy is used to defy stereotypes of the country (R2 Research & Cigarbox Advisory Services, 2021: 7) and promote the image of the Netherlands as forward-thinking, progressive and modern (R2 Research & Cigarbox Advisory Services, 2021: 33). On the other hand, not all reasons for incorporating queering in the nation branding strategy were strategic. The Dutch public was involved in establishing the nation brand, so the sentiment of acceptance and inclusivity is also present in a part of the Dutch society (DWDD, 2019: 1:50-2:05). Moreover, the public opinion on LGBTQ+ rights in the Netherlands is rather positive (Equaldex, n.d.). The Netherlands also has actual transformative LGBTQ+ legislation like changing gender on official documents and being able as a queer person to donate blood without being deferred (Equaldex, n.d.) Lastly, the government is committed to strengthening the social position of transgender individuals (Rijksoverheid, n.d.).

Because the Netherlands also has ideological motivations for promoting queer rights and has LGBTQ+ friendly legislation, the use of queering in the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands cannot be marked as pinkwashing. The Netherlands thus does not solely use queering in its nation branding strategy for strategic purposes, but also actively supports queer rights.

So, does the queering used in the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands challenge or reinforce heteronormative assumptions? When analyzing specific aspects of the queer nation branding strategy of the Netherlands, it can be said that some aspects of the strategy reinforce heteronormative expectations (Oliveira, Costa & Carneiro, 2014). In fact, they are examples of homonormalization. The nation branding strategy can be an interconnection between modern queer human rights and politics and a commodification of queer into the national identity (Roseneil et al., 2013). Furthermore, family and monogamy are dominant values within the heteronormative framework (Oliveira, Costa & Carneiro, 2014: 49-50). During the live shows, not all types of 'perverse queer persons' are represented, and the connections showcased did, for instance, not involve any non-monogamous relationships.

However, most of the queer nation branding strategy of the Netherlands does challenge heteronormative assumptions. In the heteronormative society, there is a separation between the public and the private sphere and intimacy belongs to the private sphere (Berlant & Warner, 1998: 553). Not only is heterosexual intimacy taken out of the private sphere into the public sphere, but ESC 2021 did the same with homosexual intimacy. In the opening scene of the final, the young women are a lesbian couple and show their affection on the street (Bakker, 2021c: 0:52-1:14). Non-heteronormative sexualities are thus more visible and challenge the heteronormative framework (Duggan, 2002). Moreover, heteronormativity constitutes a politics of truth that holds a dominant sexuality and other 'peripheral sexualities' (Foucault, 1978: 38). Yet, no dominant sexuality visible during Eurovision 2022. Several sexualities were represented, and they were all treated with respect.

In addition, all kinds of queer individuals were showcased during the event. The show included not only 'normal queer persons', but also some 'perverse queer persons' (Weber, 2016: 12). Also, heteronormative binaries, such as male-female, femininity-masculinity, and heterosexual-homosexual (Foucault, 1978: 38) are challenged. Host Nikkie de Jager is both a woman and transgender, and host-act Jeangu Macrooy identifies as male but wears non-binary clothing.

Based on the observations, assumption 9 which states that the Netherlands will not challenge heteronormative expectations because the brand has to be rooted in society cannot be confirmed. As discussed before, it can be said that the brand is rooted in society because Dutch citizens were involved in creating the brand. Nevertheless, this section points out that the brand also challenges some heteronormative expectations about gender and sexuality such as the visibility of a broad range of queer individuals and challenging binaries such as male-female. Assumption 10, the prediction that the Netherlands will use strategic essentialism to make its message understandable for the general public, can also be rejected. The theme of Eurovision 2021 'Open Up' includes more than one type of individuals; not only does the show include several individuals from minority groups such as black people and disabled people, but the ESC 2021 also showcases diverse individuals from the queer community. Finally, the prediction that then Netherlands uses homonationalism instead of pinkwashing, assumption 11, can be confirmed. The nation branding strategy of the Netherlands has both a strategic and ideological component and can therefore be identified as homonationalism.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter analyzed the case of the queering aspects in the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands during the Eurovision Song Contest 2021. The beginning of the analysis outlined the context of the 2021 Dutch Song Contest. The backdrop of Eurovision 2021 was the COVID-19 crisis and the conflicts it caused in society. To limit contaminations, the event had to be adjusted and parts of the contest had to be organized online. Subsequently, the general nation branding strategy of the Netherlands during the ESC 2021 was addressed. The general theme of the contest was 'Open Up'. The theme had different interpretations, but the theme's main values were acceptance, making contact with one another, diversity, and inclusiveness. Postcards, visibility of the host city Rotterdam and references to Dutch (pop)culture were all part of the nation branding strategy. The main goal of the Song Contest strategy was to organize an open, inventive, diverse and authentic event. Like the nation branding theory, the Netherlands attempted to project a positive and distinct image, and the media played a significant role in spreading the nation branding strategy. Furthermore, the strategy was designed with Europe's identity in mind. However, there were several observations drawn from this situation that contradicted the theory. There was no evidence of domestic opposition to the nation brand in this case. Furthermore, the Netherlands only utilized an integrative strategy, but while the goal was to connect and feel united, the nation

branding plan contradicted several norms in order to create a unique event.

The section that followed, examined how queering was incorporated into the Netherlands' nation branding strategy. First, it was incorporated into contest symbols such as the theme and the selection of Rotterdam as the host city of Eurovision 2021. Through visuals, queering was also incorporated into the nation branding strategy. Various queer individuals were highlighted during the show, and queering was incorporated into clothing and flags. Finally, queering was expressed in words through queer language, anti-stereotype statements and the host act. The queering in the nation branding strategy was examined in the following section of this analysis. It showed that the Netherlands did indeed use queering in its nation branding strategy for both strategic and ideological purposes. However, it did not line up with the other theoretical predictions. This case demonstrates how the brand defies some heteronormative gender and sexuality expectations, such as the presence of a diverse spectrum of LGBTQ+ people and binary terms like male-female. Finally, in contrary to the predictions, the Netherlands did not make use of strategic essentialism.

5. Conclusion

This chapter provides a conclusion to this thesis. It starts with a quick overview of the research, recapping the important points from each of the preceding chapters. Subsequently, the research question are answered based on the analytical chapter. After that, there is a discussion of the thesis' limitations and a reflection on the contribution of this thesis as well as suggestions for further research.

5.1 Summary

This thesis aimed to research if and how queering was used in nation branding strategies during the Eurovision Song Contest. This research was relevant because, despite the large body of literature on nation branding, the queering aspect was under-researched. Moreover, queer politics in nation branding strategies have the power to reinforce or deconstruct the heteronormative framework. The theoretical framework presents the existing nation branding and queering literature. It predicted that the nation brand would only highlight the positive points of a nation, without challenging certain normativities, because of the tentative attitude of many countries in the international political arena. Moreover, predictions based on the queering literature stated that this nation branding strategy would use strategic essentialism and therefore would not challenge the heteronormative framework. Thereafter, the used methodology was addressed. The choice for the ESC 2021 in the Netherlands was justified and the decision to use Qualitative Content Analysis complemented with Discourse Analysis was explained. The fourth chapter consisted of the analysis and presented the empirical findings. These findings were compared with the assumptions derived from the theory. The next section will address the substantive discussion of these findings.

5.2 Discussion of findings

This section will first discuss the empirical findings guided by the theoretical assumptions. Following this, the research question will be answered.

In the methodology, I operationalized the assumptions derived from the theory chapter. I will present the findings in the order in which these assumptions were made.

Assumption 1: The Netherlands will use a nation brand that will evoke a positive international reaction and boost the national image of the Netherlands in the global world. The Netherlands used aspects in their nation branding to evoke a positive international reaction, such as the postcards. Moreover, it demonstrated that it could create an outstanding event amid exceptional circumstances.

Assumption 2: The Netherlands will try to use its nation branding strategy to emanate a clear distinctive image. The Netherlands tried to emanate a distinctive image by organizing an inventive and authentic event. It attempted to make the event more sincere in comparison to previous editions.

Assumption 3: The Netherlands will choose to adopt a conflictual and integrative strategy in their nation branding campaign. Integrative to show that the Netherlands is one of the 'core' European countries that supports diversity, conflictual to show that the Netherlands is 'more' open and accepting than some other European countries. The nation branding strategy of the Netherlands can be labeled as an integrative strategy. This unifying feeling is reflected in the logo of the 2021 contest and is emphasized by the Dutch government. However, in contrast to the theoretical prediction, this case presented no evidence for an intentional conflictual nation branding strategy.

Assumption 4: The Netherlands will brand its country within certain normativities to reduce the chance of negative collateral effects. Even though a conflictual strategy could not be observed, the nation brand contained some aspects outside the normativities. The theme 'Open Up' should, among other things, represent the progressiveness of the Netherlands. This progressiveness was showcased by including several individuals from minority groups, for example. Moreover, the organization of the Netherlands reconsidered some of the core aspects of the Song Contest.

Assumption 5: The media will play an important role in disseminating the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands. The findings in this case were in line with this assumption. The media, and especially the media channels from the international press and delegations, were important tools to convey the Dutch brand to the international audience.

Assumption 6: The brand the Netherlands uses in its strategy is rooted within its society. Even though the Dutch organization committee is a non-nation state, which has no obligation to justify themselves to the Dutch public, they decided to co-create the theme with Dutch citizens. Over a hundred people have been able to contribute to the interpretation of the theme. Hence, the theme 'Open Up' conveys the core values of the Netherlands.

Assumption 7: The image of Europe will also play a significant role in the nation branding strategy of the Netherlands. An important aim of the nation branding strategy was to have an integrative strategy. Therefore, the overall identity of Europe was considered in designing the nation brand.

Assumption 8: Because the nation branding strategy is mostly produced in an undemocratic manner, there will be some domestic resistance against the promoted national identity. The findings do not support this assumption. First, as described above, the nation brand was not produced in an undemocratic

manner: the organization made sure that the Dutch public could contribute to the nation branding strategy. Also, the data showed no evidence of resistance against the promoted national identity.

Assumption 9: Because the brand has to be rooted in society to prevent too much domestic resistance, the nation brand of the Netherlands will most likely not challenge heteronormative expectations about gender and sexuality. The evidence in this case is not in line with this assumption. Even though the brand is rooted in the Dutch society, it also challenges heteronormative expectations about gender and sexuality. Various queer individuals are represented during the live shows and some heteronormative binaries like male-female are challenged.

Assumption 10: The Netherlands will use strategic essentialism to make its message understandable for the general public. This assumption is also not in line with the findings. The nation brand of the Netherlands includes several individuals from marginalized groups. Diverse queer individuals and flags, as well as other individuals from marginalized groups, are represented in the show. Because the inclusion of queer individuals in the show does not lead to the exclusion of other marginalized individuals, the Netherlands does not use strategic essentialism in its nation branding strategy.

Assumption 11: The Netherlands will use queering in nation branding for ideological purposes and strategic purposes. The observations are in line with this assumption. On the one hand, queering was used in the nation brand as a strategic purpose to promote the country as progressive, modern and forward-thinking. On the other hand, it also had an ideological purpose because queer acceptance and inclusivity are also present in the Dutch society. Because the motivations to use queering in the nation branding strategy are both ideological and strategic, the strategy can be labeled as homonationalism instead of pinkwashing.

Finally, the research question presented in the introduction was as follows:

How do countries use queering in their nation branding strategy during the Eurovision Song Contest?

This case study has found that the nation branding strategy during the ESC involves various aspects. First, the country selects a theme and a corresponding logo that runs like a thread throughout the entire contest. Other nation branding opportunities during the ESC are postcards, the host city and the interval acts. These nation branding components were suitable to present the scenery, the (pop)culture and important values of a country to the Eurovision viewers. In consultation with the Dutch public, the organization committee of the Netherlands chose to portray values like diversity and inclusivity.

The nation branding strategy aims to boost the country's international image by presenting a positive and distinctive image to boost the international image of that country. Furthermore, evidence

showed that the Netherlands used an integrative strategy and selected a brand that the domestic public could identify with and surprised the international audience. Because the Netherlands identifies itself as a modern and progressive country, it incorporated queer aspects in its nation branding strategy. These aspects were visible in the theme, logo, host city, representation of queer individuals and queer visuals during the shows.

The queering in the nation brand of the Netherlands could not be identified as strategic essentialism because the nation brand not only included a wide range of queer individuals but also represented other individuals from marginalized groups. Furthermore, this case of queering in nation branding can be labeled as homonationalism instead of pinkwashing as the strategy incorporated both a strategic and ideological aspect. Finally, this case showed that by incorporating many different queer aspects in the show, in a sincere way, the use of queering in nation branding could challenge the heteronormative framework.

5.3 Reflection on research contributions

This thesis has both empirical contributions as well as theoretical contributions. The empirical contribution of this research is to shed light on how queering is used in nation branding strategies during the ESC. While the general spectator of Eurovision does not always notice the strategic use of queering, this thesis has revealed what aspects of the shows contain queer elements. Moreover, this research contributed to the awareness of the implications of this strategic use of queering.

This thesis also has several theoretical contributions. First, research has tested nation branding assumptions in the context of the Eurovision Song Contest. It showed that some observations aligned with the existing nation branding literature, while others were contrasted by the findings. Furthermore, it fills the queer gap in nation branding literature by taking gender and sexuality into account. Even though some existing nation branding literature does take identity politics into account (Kaneva & Cassinger, 2022), this study enriches existing theories about nation branding and the use of queering in international politics. This thesis reflects on how this inclusion of gender and sexuality has implications for how LGBT politics is used in international relations. By giving more attention to Eurovision from an IR perspective, knowledge was gained about how countries can deploy soft power in non-traditional ways of diplomacy.

The research contributions, when considering generalizability, are two-folded. On the one hand, comparable results can be expected in other Western European countries like Denmark, Belgium and Germany that have diversity and inclusivity as their core values too. Their use of queering will likely also have a strategic and an ideological purpose. On the other hand, previous research shows contradictory results for countries like Russia and Israel (Baker, 2016; Carniel, 2015; Cassidy, 2014). Those countries used similar aspects of the contest, like the interval acts for their nation branding strategy, but had a different purpose with the use of identity politics. While they used identity politics

in the Eurovision Song Contest, the promoted LGBTQ+ rights did not match with these countries' actual LGBTQ+ rights protection.

5.4 Limitations of research and recommendations

The concluding section of this chapter will discuss the limitations of the theory and the methodology used in this thesis. Furthermore, recommendations will be made for future studies on queering in nation branding strategies.

When discussing the concept of nation branding in this theory, I chose not to distinguish between the concepts nation branding and public diplomacy because existing literature does not give an unequivocal answer to the exact differences between these concepts (Szondi, 2008). However, making this distinction would help to increase the research' reliability.

In terms of research methodology, the focus on one case study limits the generalizability of the findings and thus the external validity. Case studies have been criticized for lacking generalizability (Yin, 1989). As a result, a common critique of single case studies is that they make it difficult to draw broad conclusions (Tellis, 1997). However, according to Yin (1989), the sample size has no bearing on the nature of the results or the generalizability. Therefore, a single case study may be enough to support the conclusions, but I was cautious with interpreting the results of this thesis.

The internal validity of the results was impacted by the quantity and availability of the data. This research validity could be increased in the future by conducting additional interviews or questionnaires, as currently only videos and additional text sources were used due to time limitation.

Another crucial consideration of this qualitative case study is the validity and accuracy of the interpreted data (Tellis, 1997). My underlying subjectivity has an impact on the outcomes produced. Therefore, I attempted to be as objective as possible in this investigation by being aware of my own opinions and separating them from the interpreted data. As described in the methodology chapter, interpreting the results by using Discourse Analysis can have the disadvantage of just looking at the data from one perspective. Another researcher can interpret the same data differently. As a result, perfect replication of the research is challenging, lowering the research's confirmability.

Nevertheless, the results of this thesis are still valid for capturing how countries use queering in their nation branding strategy. Not only was the video data of the live shows complemented with additional data, but these video and textual sources were also analyzed in the program Atlas.ti in a structured manner to increase the internal validity of this research.

The external validity of this thesis is two-folded. On the one hand, the results are externally valid because the results of other West-European countries like Germany or Belgium would probably be the same because the cultures are comparable. However, this is hard to measure because the context of the ESC changes year by year. These changes can also be observed when comparing the ESC 2021

with the one from the following year. The ESC 2021 played out in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic while the ESC 2022 played out in the context of the war in Ukraine.

To close this thesis, I summarized four recommendations for future research.

1. The case study in this thesis, the Netherlands, was a typical case. Future research can analyze a non-typical case such as an East-European country.
2. Eurovision is an atypical case because the ESC has many connections to the queer community, which causes the nation branding strategies of countries at the ESC to be bolder than their general nation branding strategy. Therefore, it would be interesting to research queering in nation branding strategies in another context than the ESC.
3. The nation brand in this thesis was designed and implemented by a non-nation state. Future research can focus on a case where the nation branding strategy is designed and implemented by a governmental organization.
4. The use of additional data sources could increase the validity and provide several interesting new insights such as the decision-making process behind the scenes and information about the perception of the nation brand domestically and internationally.

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Appendix 1: Deductive coding tree Nation branding

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Code</i>
<i>Nation branding</i>	Positive image
	Distinctive image
	Integrative Strategy
	Conflictual Strategy
	Media influence
	Rooted in society
	Continent branding
	Domestic resistance

Appendix 2: Inductive coding tree Queering

Concept Codes

<i>Queering</i>	Symbols	Theme	
		Host City Rotterdam	
			LGB individual
			TIQ+ individual
		Queer identities	Normal queer individual
	Visuals		Perverse queer individual
		Clothing	
		Flags	
		Queer language use	
	Words	Statements	
	Host act		