A Political Leader's Image in Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding: The Impact of Competence, Charisma, Integrity, and Gender

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Although country image and its potential spillover effects are central research topics in international public relations and public diplomacy, there is a lack of research regarding the effect that political leaders' images have on those of their home countries. Previous research does indicate that a political leader might be highly influential in terms of attracting benefits for their country; however, our study tests for the first time how a political leader's image influences their home country's image by employing a 2 × 3 factorial experimental design. Results confirm the hypothesized spillover effect of a political leader's image on that of their home country, with the integrity of political leaders showing the greatest impact on country image, followed by the competence and charisma dimensions. We also found that the gender of the political leader plays an important role. Future studies should therefore consider and elaborate on this effect in more depth.

Keywords: political leader image, spillover effect, country image, public diplomacy

Country image and its potential spillover effects are central research topics for international public relations and public diplomacy, as it is of great importance for a country to have a positive image that attracts, for example, tourism and investment. In our globalized world, nation image is an important concept as it provides states with soft power, enabling them to achieve positive outcomes through attraction rather than the traditional coercion of military power (Nye, 2008). As states are interested in fostering a favorable position in the world, they need to increase their soft power through portraying the country as an attractive location (Van Ham, 2008). In addition, globalization has had the effect that nation or country images are competing with each other for tourism, investment, or sporting events (Anholt, 2007). Hence, managing the nation's image plays an increasingly important role in modern society (Ingenhoff, Lais, & Zosso, 2013). Although a lot of research is concerned with the factors influencing the image of a country, there is a lack of research regarding potential transfer effects of political leaders' images on those of their home countries. This is despite previous research indicating that a political leader might have a great influence on whether their home country receives such benefits (Balmas & Sheafer, 2013; Yoo & Jin, 2015). Alongside the national image, the image of the country's political leader has gained great importance in the international arena because of an increase in personalized international media reporting (Balmas, 2017; Balmas & Sheafer,

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2014; Lass, 1995). As Snow (2009) argues, a national leader may direct his or her nation's reputation abroad and therefore also serves as a principal agent. Balmas (2018) provides an example: the "Obama effect." It refers to the conjecture that the personality of U.S. President Barack Obama might have had a positive effect on the perception of his home country. But did this positive effect dissolve with the election of Donald Trump in November 2016? The aim of this research is to make the effect visible. We therefore hypothesize that a leader's image influences his or her home country's image, which could have serious implications for that country's image management and public diplomacy. Demonstrating that this effect might have an impact on the study and conduct of public diplomacy, our aim is to identify which dimensions of a political leader's image influence country image most. Focusing on image transfer effects, we hereby address the political challenges of public diplomacy.

Literature Review

In a first step, it is necessary to have a closer look at the terminology underlying this research and position the central terms from a specific perspective, as the use of concepts in international PR research is often problematic: A great number of terms such as *country image*, *country identity*, *nation branding* and so on, exist, and the terminology is used interchangeably for concepts that are in fact different (for an extensive discussion from different disciplines, see Ingenhoff, White, Buhmann, & Kiousis, forthcoming). Therefore, to derive a clearly structured measurement model of the country image, we analyze the terminology that forms the basis of this research.

Public Diplomacy and Country Image in the Study of International Public Relations

First, we differentiate between the key concepts of public diplomacy and nation branding and start with a clear definition. Public diplomacy can be defined as "influenc[ing] favorably public attitudes in ways that will support foreign policy goals in political, military or economic affairs" (Canel & Sanders, 2012, p. 88). The main difference between public diplomacy and traditional diplomacy can be seen in the levels on which they communicate. Whereas "classic" diplomacy includes personal communication between diplomats, public diplomacy is aimed at a foreign country's citizens. Nations employing public diplomacy aim to improve the possibilities of enforcing their interests in a globalized world (Schwan, 2011). Signitzer and Coombs (1992), as well as Van Ham (2008), argue that there has been a shift from traditional diplomacy to public diplomacy—that is, governments are still cooperating in the traditional way, but in addition, foreign publics' perceptions are of increasing importance. Nation branding, in contrast, can be understood as the promotion and development of a country image through marketing activities (Anholt, 2010; Fan, 2006; Hynes, Caemmerer, Martin, & Masters, 2014). Although both public diplomacy and nation branding are concerned with the management of a nation's image, Szondi (2008) argues that they come from different fields: Nation branding originates from marketing, whereas public diplomacy comes from international relations and communications (i.e., international PR). Consequently, in this article we argue from a public diplomacy perspective. Furthermore, the impact of a politician's image on the national image is a public diplomacy issue, as Szondi argues:

> The government's role in communicating with foreign publics is crucial as foreign policy
> priorities can change with the change of government and public diplomacy can easily boil

down to promoting a government (and its foreign policy) abroad rather than promoting the country and its interests. (p. 12)

Therefore, if the government of a country has an influence on perceptions of that country, it might have important implications for managing the national image. This argument can be extended from the policy perspective considered in international relations to the economic advantages that are the goal of managing the national image, such as tourism and investment.

Second, the terms *country image* and *national identity* require further differentiation: Whereas the concept of country image refers to the perception of a foreign public, national identity describes the inhabitants' perceptions of their own country. It portrays the central and unmistakable characteristics of that country that are not altered over a long period of time, and is basically non-rational (Fan, 2010). Furthermore, it signifies how the country and its inhabitants position themselves (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2001). Nation image represents a special kind of image, namely that of the country as a whole. Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002) argue that these images are special because every country or nation has one, even without aiming to create it. Today, however, the great importance of managing the country image lies in the fact that, because of globalization, the international arena has changed.

Research regarding country images has been carried out in multiple fields, leading to a multitude of relevant terminologies and therefore problems in terms of conceptualization and operationalization (Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009). In their latest books on the topic, Ingenhoff and colleagues (forthcoming), as well as Ingenhoff and Buhmann (2018), identify four scientific disciplines that consider country image and develop a conceptualization of it: business studies, social psychology, political sciences, and communication sciences. As a result, the authors argue that, depending on the specific scientific discipline and the study objectives, country images are understood as brand associations, cognitive and/or affective attitudes, stereotypes, self-perceptions (i.e., identity), mass-mediated information, or social reputation. In the study presented here, however, country image is understood from the perspective of communication science, seen as a subjective stakeholder attitude toward a nation and its state, comprising specific beliefs and general feelings held by foreign stakeholders regarding a country (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015b).

The Personalization of Political News and Importance of the Political Leader's Image

The increased personalization of media news reporting is not only an issue on the domestic national level. As Balmas and Sheafer (2013, 2014) argue, media reporting on foreign nations increasingly focuses on the nation's leader rather than international political processes and developments. They see this shift in international news reporting from country to political leader as a result of the media's attempt at making complex information easier to process. As a consequence, a country's image in the media abroad "is becoming to a large extent a reflection of its leader's image" (Balmas & Sheafer, 2014, p. 992). Pancer, Brown, and Barr (1999) found that people's perceptions of foreign leaders' images were more favorable than those of their home countries' leaders, but at the same time less distinct. The reason for this difference might lie in the smaller amount of information readily available about foreign political leaders and a low motivation to actively seek information on them (Pancer et al., 1999). At the same time, news stories connected to a foreign politician's image are often strongly connected to his or her personal qualities and

might therefore be more interesting; thus, the reader might be more receptive to the information provided. Balmas and Sheafer (2014) show that mediated political personalization has become predominant in the international media of the last three decades, focusing "more on foreign leaders and less on other political aspects. As a result, a country's image in the media of a foreign country is becoming to a large extent a reflection of its leader's image" (p. 992).

The Political Leader's Image: State of the Art

As Anholt (2007) argues, a negative image of a country's government might harm its national image: "It is likely that an internationally unpopular government may over a long period cause damage to the 'nation brand' which is very difficult to undo" (p. 273). We therefore propose that perceived associations between the image of a political leader and that of his or her home country can be explained through a so-called image transfer between images of countries and images of sub-country entities such as politicians, domestic organizations, products, and brands, which is defined as a "spillover effect" (Ingenhoff, Buhmann, White, Zhang, & Kiousis, 2018). These transfer effects occur especially when the two entities (political leader and home country) are perceived as having similar traits (Crawford, Sherman, & Hamilton, 2002; Pickett, 2001; Pickett & Perrott, 2004).

H1:   The political leader's image has an impact on the home country's image.

Psychologically speaking, the image-transfer effect can be explained through associative network theory, which holds that people's perceptions of two concepts can be linked in their minds (Gotsi, Lopez, & Andriopoulos, 2011). Although the image-transfer effect seems to be a widely accepted phenomenon in the country-of-origin literature, few studies have set out to identify factors amplifying the effect. Thus, models for measurement and operationalization of the image-transfer effect are lacking. Gotsi and colleagues (2011) carried out one of the few studies in PR research that tried to identify the factors determining how image transfer affects country-of-origin effects, taking the corporate image as an example.

Research on the image-transfer effect from a person onto an object is scarce, however. Some marketing studies have considered factors that influence the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in advertising campaigns (Amos, Holmes, & Strutton, 2008; Lord & Putrevu, 2009; Ohanian, 1990). Celebrity endorsement is a research field in marketing that specifically considers the image transfer from a person onto a company, product, or destination. For example, Kim, Lee, and Prideaux (2014) investigated the image transfer from celebrity tourism onto destination image (a touristic concept) and identified "trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness as the most important attributes of celebrity endorsers" (p. 132).

Furthermore, some studies have investigated the link between political leaders and their home countries. For instance, Golan and Yang (2013) analyzed the effect that Barack Obama had on the perception of the United States in Pakistan, and concluded that his reputation had an impact on communication efforts. Goldsmith and Horiuchi (2009) found that visits by political leaders to foreign countries had a strong potential for image management, arguing that success in changing and improving leader image as well as country image depends on the credibility or controversy of the pre-existing national and personal image. Most recently, Balmas (2018) found that political leaders' images had an impact on the image of the country

they lead. In addition, she found that the personality attributes of foreign leaders had an effect on how people perceived the country they governed, that the leader's attributes were also projected onto the country's citizens, and that they also influenced the behavioral intentions of people regarding their country. Yoo and Jin (2015) found that among South Korean respondents, China's reputation dropped after they were shown a picture of two Chinese presidents. According to the authors, these findings contradict previous research showing that famous CEOs improved company reputation. They see the reasons for these results in negative mass media reporting on socialist China in capitalist South Korea and the Koreans' long-standing negative feelings toward China, notwithstanding the economic ties between the two countries (p. 61). Although the relationship between leaders and country images has often been hypothesized, there is little evidence so far to support the claim.

The Model of the Political Leader's Image

As our image of people in general is a summary of their perceived traits, it is assumed here that the political leader's image consists of a set of personality traits (Garzia, 2013). As Helm (2005) and Eisenegger and Imhof (2008) propose, an image has cognitive and affective–expressive components, and can be seen as an attitudinal construct (Caruana, Cohen, & Krentler, 2006). The cognitive component can be differentiated into a functional–cognitive dimension, which represents the competence of an actor to fulfill the tasks that stakeholders have delegated to him/her, and a social–cognitive dimension, which represents the integrity or trustworthiness that the actor possesses. Finally, the affective–expressive dimension represents the perceived sympathy and fascination that stakeholders feel toward an actor (Eisenegger & Imhof, 2008).

Political communication studies have identified multiple dimensions that form the political leaders' image by applying content analyses mostly to the national election studies of their respective country of research (see Table 1 for an overview). However, there is no consensus on which dimensions should be used to measure political leaders' images (Brettschneider, 2002).

To measure the political leader's image, we identify personality traits commonly employed in political communication studies, as these studies demonstrate that these traits are the basis for assessing images of personalities. In addition, researchers in political communication often differentiate between personal or apolitical and politically relevant or political characteristics (Klein & Ohr, 2000).

***Table 1. Summary of Studies in Political Communication Measuring Candidate Image
Including Country of Research and Dimensions Identified.***

Study	Country	Dimensions	
		Politically relevant	Personal/apolitical traits
Campbell (1966)	United States	Independence Education Leadership Decision-making skills Experience	Integrity Emotional presence Religiosity Individual wealth Family life
Funk (1996)	United States	Competence Integrity	Warmth
Pancer, Brown, & Barr (1999)	United States	Competence Integrity	Charisma
Bartels (2002)	United States	Morality Knowledgeable Strong leadership skills	Inspiring Caring about people
Lass (1995)	United States	Political traits Management traits Integrity	Apolitical traits
Shanks & Miller (1991)	United States	Competence Leadership Integrity	Empathy
Miller & Miller (1976)	United States	Competence Trust Reliability Leadership	Personal traits
Miller, Wattenberg, & Malanchuk (1986)	United States	Competence Integrity Reliability	Charisma Personality
Garzia (2013)	United States	Competence Leadership Integrity	Empathy
Bean (1993)	Australia and New Zealand	Competence Integrity Policy/party/group references	Harmony General likability Other personal traits

Klein & Ohr (2000)	Germany	Party representation Ability to manage state business Problem solving	Trustworthiness Personal life
Vetter & Brettschneider (1998)	Germany	Ability to solve problems Management abilities Integrity	Personal traits
Brettschneider (2002)	Germany	Problem-solving capacity Leadership ability Integrity	Personal traits
Brettschneider & Gabriel (2002)	Germany	Ability to solve problems Management abilities Integrity	Personal traits
Brettschneider & Bachl (2013)	Germany	Problem-solving capacity Leadership ability Integrity	Personal traits

The two personality dimensions that most researchers agree on are competence and integrity (Pancer et al., 1999). Competence can be defined as political leaders' intelligence and commitment toward issues and their ability to solve problems, and therefore refers to the functional–cognitive image dimension identified by Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015b). Integrity addresses whether the politician is trustworthy and honest (Brettschneider, 2002), and fits the social–cognitive dimension. A third dimension often identified is the leadership dimension, sometimes referred to as dynamism or strength (Pancer et al., 1999). As it encompasses a number of characteristics such as decisiveness, organizational talent, or persuasiveness (Brettschneider, 2002), this dimension is politically relevant and comes under the functional–cognitive dimension. Finally, the fourth dimension commonly identified is the personal dimension, which does not directly relate to the political office that leaders hold, but refers to qualities such as their looks or charisma (Brettschneider, 2002), or their "appearance, likability, charm, charisma, and warmth" (Pancer et al., 1999, p. 347), and comes under the affective–expressive dimension.

In summary, the political leader's image can be defined as a set of ideas and beliefs regarding the politically relevant characteristics, represented as *competence* and *leadership skills* within the functional–cognitive image dimension, and *integrity* within the social–cognitive image dimension, as well as the affective–expressive image dimension encompassing the *charisma* of a political leader (see Figure 1).
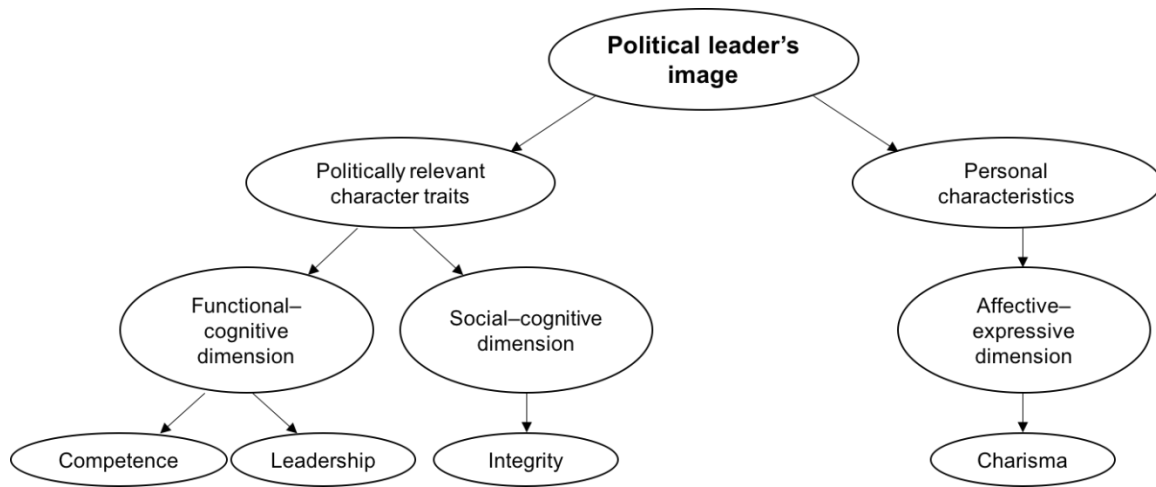
Figure 1. Relationship between politically relevant and personal political leader character traits and the three political leader image dimensions.

Davies and Mian (2010) showed the influence a politician's image has on the party they lead and suggested that the cognitive and affective components of leader image might have differing impacts on the object onto which the image is transferred. Another study demonstrated that the political leaders' image attributes have different effects on their country's citizens (Balmas, 2018). We therefore assume that the functional-cognitive, social-cognitive, and affective–expressive dimensions of a political leader's image vary in their degrees of influence on the image of the country:

H2:   *The dimensions of the political leader's image have varying degrees of influence on the country image.*

A third aspect we investigate concerns the gender of the political leader. Women are still under-represented in leadership positions, and there has been a lot of research in leadership and gender studies regarding the differing perception of male and female leadership styles. There has also been a long-standing debate in the mass media on the leadership differences between men and women (Fitch & Agrawal, 2014; Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014). However, the literature on perceived image differences between men and women is scarce. Therefore, we analyze the potential differences between male and female leader images. As research has shown that candidate gender has an influence on voting (Chiao, Bowmann, & Gill, 2008), a similar effect might hold true when investigating reputation spillover effects. Therefore, we might assume that the gender of the political leader affects which image dimensions have an influence on the country image:

H3:   *The dimensions of the political leader's image that influence the country image differ with respect to the gender of the political leader.*

Method

To test the proposed hypotheses, we combined a 2 (countries and male/female leader) × 3 (reputation dimensions) factorial, between-subjects, experimental design with an online survey with Swiss and German nationals. To control for existing perceptions with respect to a specific political leader, we chose two countries—Denmark and Sweden—with structural similarities to each be the home of a fictitious political leader. It was assumed and controlled for in the questionnaire that Swiss and German nationals are aware of the two countries, but do not have great knowledge of their political leaders. Both Sweden and Denmark are Scandinavian countries that mainland Europeans are not as knowledgeable about as other, larger EU states. Although they are both members of the European Union and NATO, their role in the European Union can be seen as cautious, as both countries have kept their currency and have not become part of the Eurozone (Förster, Schmid, & Trick, 2014). Whereas other studies have employed vignettes characterizing real politicians (Balmas, 2018), this procedure was not employed here as we tried to avoid confounding factors. For example, respondents might have had previous knowledge about the actual political leader's image, and this knowledge might have prevented the experimental conditions being fully controlled. Manipulating the personal characteristics of a leader existing in reality becomes problematic if the respondent knows that this manipulation does not reflect the image of the political leader that they have previously formed. As a result, the respondent might disregard the information provided in the stimulus material and instead adhere to their original interpretation of the information. Another reason for our strategy was to avoid the risk of increased media reporting because of unforeseen circumstances in the period of survey distribution. In this scenario, respondents' awareness of the foreign leader might have been raised unpredictably, which could have led to a bias in the data.

As a result, the present study provided the respondents with stimuli describing a fictitious politician. We used very common Danish and Swedish names, as the real prime ministers also had very typical names: For Sweden, we chose the male name Sven Lundgren and for Denmark the female leader Hanne Thommsen-Møller. As Denmark was led by a female prime minister until 2015, we chose a female head of state for Denmark and a male head of state for Sweden, thereby enabling us to effectively test Hypothesis 3. Second, to avoid distractions from the actual content, we created the fictional newspaper *The Global News*, with the layout kept to a very simplified level, yet still resembling a realistic online newspaper article (see Figure 2). Here, an introductory paragraph giving an initial description of the fictional leader was created, which provided the respondents with a very general idea of the person about whom they were reading, stating that the person was party leader and prime minister of his or her country. This paragraph was used in all the experimental groups; only the names, the country, and the gender-specific words were changed. In the following three paragraphs, the three image dimensions of the political leader (functional–cognitive, social–cognitive, and affective–expressive) were manipulated. Following Funk (1996), in each article one dimension was of high valence and the other two were of low valence.

Figure 2. Screen shot of the stimulus as it was presented to the participants.

Therefore, in the first stimulus, the article highlighted the competence and leadership skills (i.e., the functional–cognitive dimension), but the integrity (i.e., the social–cognitive dimension) and charisma (i.e., the affective–expressive dimension) of the political leader were of low relevance. Leadership skills were seen as high if the prime minister could lead the party out of a crisis and back to its old strength, possessed strong skills, and could implement various laws because of his or her strong self-assertion.

In the second stimulus, the political leader's integrity or trustworthiness was highlighted, but his or her competence and charisma were of low relevance. Trustworthiness was high if the prime minister had not been involved in any big scandals, even though colleagues were targeted; if the leader cared about other people; and if trustworthiness among his or her own people was regarded as very high.

Finally, in the third stimulus, their charisma was highlighted, but the competence and integrity of the leader were of low relevance. The affective–expressive dimension was high if the prime minister possessed a warm, humorous, and charismatic personality, and the rhetorical style was very eloquent and quick-witted. In total, we applied three different stimulus materials, manipulated in two countries, resulting in six experimental groups (see Tables 2 and 3). Using a male and a female candidate also added to the depth of the study, as the possible effect of a woman's image on her home country in comparison to a man's image could be taken into account as well (H3).

In a first step, we measured the country image of both Sweden and Denmark. In a second step, we randomly assigned the subjects to the stimulus material of one of the countries. In a third step, we measured the image of the specific country's leader and the country's image.

Table 2. Distribution of Experimental Conditions Among Experimental Groups and Manipulation of Image Dimensions Within Those Groups.

Group	Functional–cognitive dimension	Social–cognitive dimension	Affective–expressive dimension
1 (Denmark)	High	Low	Low
2 (Denmark)	Low	High	Low
3 (Denmark)	Low	Low	High
4 (Sweden)	High	Low	Low
5 (Sweden)	Low	High	Low
6 (Sweden)	Low	Low	High

Table 3. Summary of the Manipulated Political Leader Image Dimensions.

Dimension	Variable	Valence	
		High	Low
Competence	Education	University degree	University dropout, apprenticeship
	Success	Elected party president with 90% of votes after assuming mandate in parliament	Could not enforce important propositions in parliament
	Success	Could fulfill pre-election promises	Could not fulfill pre-election promises
Leadership skills	Leader strength	Leads party out of crisis, enforces his/her will	Weak leadership style
	Team player	Yes	No
	Self-assertion	Could implement various laws	Could not enforce important propositions in parliament, not very assertive
Integrity	Involvement in scandals	No involvement in any scandals, even when colleagues were under attack	Involved in big scandals
	Trustworthiness	Very high trustworthiness	Lacking in trustworthiness
	Caring about others	Very caring	Not very caring
Charisma	Warmth	Warm personality	Cold personality
	Charismatic personality	Very charismatic	Not charismatic
	Humorous personality	Humorous	Not humorous

Specification of the Measurement Models

The indicators used to operationalize the measurement construct comprise reflective and formative measures. Reflective measures represent the observable indicators of a construct, which are interchangeable in principle as they are the result of the same construct and can therefore be eliminated from the scale. The formative model, however, is composed of the formative indicators or dimensions of a construct, and changing these dimensions would lead to a change in the construct itself (Fornell & Bookstein, 1982; Jarvis, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2003).

        To specify the political leader image model, we followed Helm (2005) and Eisenegger and Imhof (2008), and operationalized the affective–expressive dimension with reflective indicators, as it is assumed that a complete construct lies behind the indicators and that they "reflect" the observable outcomes of the construct, using interchangeable items that can be subjected to an explorative factor analysis (Bollen, 1984; Jarvis et al., 2003). An explorative factor analysis with a principal component analysis with varimax rotation method showed that all items loaded on one factor. In addition, reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .829 for the affective–expressive dimension consisting of four items. The cognitive components of image, conversely, are operationalized by employing formative measures as it is assumed that people's judgments of an image object's functional and social attributes determine the image constructs. For the formative measures, other tests for item analysis need to be employed when constructing a formative index: "content specification, indicator specification, indicator collinearity and external validity" (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001, p. 271). Therefore, the formative dimensions were assessed for multicollinearity, which describes the correlation of independent variables among each other. The variance inflation factor estimates the presence of collinearity and is the reciprocal of the tolerance value. A rule of thumb for interpreting the variance inflation factor argues that values greater than 10 and tolerance smaller than 0.1 might cause collinearity issues (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995; Worm, 2011). Table 4 shows that multicollinearity was not an issue for the indicators of the cognitive image component. As a result, the political leader's image was measured on a 16-item scale (see Table 5).

Table 4. Variance Inflation Factor and Tolerance Values.

Dimension	Variance inflation factor	Tolerance
Functional–cognitive	1.446	0.692
Normative–cognitive	1.349	0.741

Note. Dependent variable: Political leader's image.

Table 5. Items Measuring the Political Leader's Image.

Dimension	Subdimension	Item	Source
Functional–cognitive	Competence	The prime minister is well informed about the important issues that the world and his/her country are facing.	Miller, Wattenberg, & Malanchuk (1986)
		The prime minister uses common sense to solve problems.	Miller et al. (1986)
		He/she is well educated.	Miller et al. (1986)
		He/she is very intelligent.	Miller et al. (1986)
	Leadership	The prime minister is very successful.	Brettschneider & Gabriel (2002)
		He/she possesses strong leadership skills.	Ingenhoff & Sommer (2010)
		The prime minister seems energetic and active.	Brettschneider & Gabriel (2002)

		He/she puts forward new ideas and is creative.	Brettschneider & Gabriel (2002)
Social–cognitive	Integrity	The prime minister is honest and keeps his/her promises.	Miller et al. (1986)
		He/she sticks to his/her principles.	Miller et al. (1986).
		The prime minister accepts responsibility.	Brettschneider & Gabriel (2002)
		He/she is very reliable.	Brettschneider & Gabriel (2002)
Affective–expressive	Charisma	The prime minister is very inspiring.	Miller et al. (1986)
		He/she is a good communicator.	Miller et al. (1986)
		He/she is very likable and gets along well with people.	Miller et al. (1986)
		He/she is very charming.	Pancer, Brown, & Barr (1999)

Next, the post-stimulus country image scale requires validation. We used a four-dimensional country image measurement model proposed by Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015a, 2015b), consisting of both formative and reflective components. The cognitive component (normative, functional, and aesthetic dimensions) delineates the formative and the affective component (emotional dimension) describes the reflective. Hence, an exploratory factor analysis with a principal component analysis with varimax rotation method and a reliability analysis were employed to analyze the emotional country image dimension. The four items ("I like the country," "I am drawn to the country," "The country is fascinating," and "I like the people of the country") resulted in a good Cronbach's alpha of .894 and loaded on one factor (59% explained variance).

To assess the formative dimensions of the country image for multicollinearity, we calculated a linear regression analysis with the emotional dimension as the dependent variable and the normative, functional, and aesthetic dimensions as independent variables. Table 6 shows that multicollinearity was not an issue in the formative dimensions of the country image construct. These findings are consistent with Buhmann and Ingenhoff's (2015a) results.

Table 6. Variance Inflation Factor and Tolerance Values.

Dimension	Variance inflation factor	Tolerance
Functional	2.204	0.454
Normative	2.421	0.413
Aesthetic	1.229	0.814

Note. Dependent variable: Sympathetic country image dimension.

Therefore, the final country image scale includes 36 items measured on a 7-point Likert scale: 17 items measuring the functional country image dimension, nine items measuring the normative image dimension, six items measuring the aesthetic image dimension, and four items measuring the emotional image dimension (see Table 7).

Table 7. The 36-Item Construct Measuring Country Image After Stimulus.

Dimension	Item
Normative	1. The country is very active in protecting the environment.
	2. Planning and taking responsibility for future generations are very important in the country.
	3. The country is known for its strong commitment to social matters (e.g., development aid, civil rights).
	4. The country has very high ethical standards.
	5. The country respects the values of other nations and peoples.
	6. The country takes responsibility for helping out in international crises.
	7. The country has excellent civil rights.
	8. The country has a very just welfare system (e.g., healthcare, pension plans).
	9. The country acts very fairly in international politics and trade.
Functional	1. The country has a very stable economic system.
	2. The country's economy is highly innovative and fit for the future.
	3. The country produces very high-quality goods and services.
	4. The country has highly competent entrepreneurs.
	5. The country is very wealthy.
	6. The country is technologically highly advanced.
	7. The country holds a strong position in the global economy.
	8. The labor markets in the country are equipped with highly competent people.
	9. The country has a globally influential culture.
	10. Athletes and sports teams from the country are internationally highly successful.
	11. The country's government is highly competent.

12. The country has a very stable political system.

13. The country has a well-functioning infrastructure.

14. The country is highly innovative in science and research.

15. The country provides great possibilities for education.

16. The level of education in the country is very high.

17. The country provides internal safety and security.

Aesthetic	1. The country is home to beautiful cultural goods (e.g., arts, architecture, music, film, etc.).
	2. The country has delicious foods and a wonderful cuisine.
	3. The country has a very fascinating history.
	4. The country has beautiful scenery.
	5. The country has a lot of intact nature.
	6. The country has lots of charismatic people (e.g., in politics, sports, media, etc.).
Affective	1. I like the country.
	2. This is an attractive country.
	3. This is a fascinating country.
	4. I like the people of the country.

Sample

The sample was drawn using the German crowdsourcing platform Clickworker. In the United States, Amazon's Mechanical Turk is a similar platform, in which individuals or organizations can employ a large number of people recruited by the website to fulfill specific tasks. Researchers find it promising as survey respondents might be easier to recruit and could provide an alternative to the student samples that are commonly used in social sciences (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). The basic requirement for the sample was that respondents were of German or Swiss nationality or had been living in Germany or Switzerland for a long time, as the choice of countries to be studied (Sweden and Denmark) was based on the respondents' nationality. The mean age (N = 292) was 32.99 years (SD = 9.93), the youngest participant was 18 and the oldest 79 years old, and women composed 52% of the sample.

Results

Validity of the Stimuli

First, we analyzed whether the stimuli were successful by carrying out *t* tests: The index variables for the three dimensions were used as independent variables, whereas the variables that differentiated the experimental groups were used as group variables. Results shown in Table 8 indicate that the experimental manipulation was effective, and respondents rated the political leader image dimension that was highlighted significantly higher than those that were not.

Table 8. Independent Sample **t** *tests Testing for Differences in the Perceptions of the Political Leader Among the Experimental Groups.*

	High valence			Low valence			Levene's test		*t* test	
Dimension	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	Sig.	*t*	Sig.
Functional–cognitive	83	4.96	0.74	209	4.33	0.84	0.347	.556	−5.919	.000
Social–cognitive	115	4.84	0.91	177	4.17	1.09	0.332	.070	−5.490	.000
Affective–expressive	94	4.79	0.92	198	3.73	0.99	0.624	.430	−8.741	.000

p < .01.

Effect of Political Leader's Image on Their Home Country's Image

First, a new grouping variable was calculated, and measuring differences showed that there was a significant difference between the country images pre- and post-stimulus for both Denmark, $F(1) = 26.5$, $p < .05$, and Sweden, $F(1) = 137.86$, $p < .05$, indicating that the stimulus was effective. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is confirmed, as there is an effect of the political leader's image on his or her home country's image.

To test Hypothesis 2, we carried out a multiple regression analysis with post-stimulus country image as the dependent variable and the three political leader image dimensions as independent variables (see Table 9). Results indicate that the political leader's image had a significant effect on the perceived country image (β = .328, $p < .01$), with $F(3) = 11.59$, $p < .01$. However, the dimensions of the political leader's image explained only 10% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = .108$), which is rather low. Nevertheless, Hypothesis 2 is confirmed as all dimensions of the political leader's image have a significant impact on the perceived country image. Results indicate that the integrity of a political leader exerts the greatest impact on the country image and is highly significant (β = .210, $p < .01$). The competence and leadership qualities have the second greatest impact on country image (β = .115, $p < .10$), and charisma exhibits the smallest impact on the perceived country image (β = .113, $p < .10$). These results are in line with those of Yoo and Jin (2015), who also found that attractiveness had a lesser impact on country image than competence (p. 61). This suggests that the more integrity a political leader displays, the better their country of origin is

perceived. Therefore, it can be concluded that the social–cognitive dimension plays the biggest role in determining the perceived country image.

Table 9. Linear Regression Analysis With Country Image and the Index Variables of the Political Leader Image Dimensions.

Variable	B	β	p	Tolerance	Variance inflation factor
Political leader's image	.278	.323***	.001	1.000	1.000
Functional–cognitive dimension	.085	.115*	.079	0.692	1.446
Social–cognitive dimension	.124	.210**	.001	0.714	1.349
Affective–expressive dimension	.066	.113*	.057	0.918	1.089

Note. Dependent variable: Country image. Adjusted R^2 = .108
*p < .10. **p < .05. ***p < .01.

Different Effects of the Political Leader's Image on Selected Country Images

To find out more about potential differences in perceived image between male and female leaders, we calculated another linear regression analysis to answer Hypothesis 3. This time, the data set was split into two groups of respondents, one of which was asked about Denmark and the other about Sweden. The regression model for Denmark was statistically significant, with $F(3)$ = 5.407, p < .05; however, only 8% of variance in the model was explained by the political leader's image. For Denmark, integrity had a highly significant effect on the perceived country image (β = .242, p < .01), indicating that the more trustworthy the political leader was perceived to be, the better the perception of her home country's image (see Table 10). Also, the charisma dimension had a significant impact on the perceived country image of Denmark (β = .164, p < .05). However, surprisingly, the functional–cognitive dimension had no significant effect on the country image of Denmark. The regression model for Sweden was also statistically significant, with $F(3)$ = 7.970, p < .05, and 13% of variance was explained through the dimensions of the political leader's image. The functional–cognitive dimension exhibited the greatest influence on country image (β = .244, p < .05) followed by the integrity dimension (β = .176, p < .10). The charisma of the leader had no impact, however. All in all, Hypothesis 3 is confirmed, as different political leader image dimensions have an impact on country image, depending on the political leader's gender.

***Table 10. Linear Regression Analysis With Country Image of Denmark and Sweden as Dependent
Variables and the Three Political Leader Image Dimensions as Independent Variables.***

Country	Dimension of the political leader's image	*B*	β	*p*	Tolerance	Variance inflation factor
Denmark (female political leader)						
	Functional–cognitive	−.005	−.006	.994	0.717	1.394
	Social–cognitive	.149***	.244***	.008	0.761	1.313
	Affective–expressive	.010**	.172**	.039	0.915	1.093
	Adjusted R^2 = .08					
Sweden (male political leader)						
	Functional–cognitive	.154**	.244**	.012	0.667	1.498
	Social–cognitive	.092*	.176*	.058	0.720	1.390
	Affective–expressive	.025	.047	.568	0.915	1.092
	Adjusted R^2 = .128					

*p < .10. **p < .05. ***p < .01.

Discussion

All in all, we were able to show that a political leader's image has an influence on that of their home country. A country's image is influenced by a multitude of factors and, according to our results, its political leader is one of them. Our results show that there is a significant spillover effect of a political leader's image onto that of their home country. The integrity dimension was the most influential attribute, suggesting that the more trustworthy a political leader was regarded to be, the better the perception of their home country's image. This dimension was followed by competence and leadership qualities, and finally the impact of the political leader's charisma on the home country image.

In a political context, the order of these effects is interesting as it suggests that displays of integrity by a political leader (e.g., honesty, trustworthiness, lack of scandal) might have a stronger impact on their country's image than their competence and likability. Maybe this is because, when dealing with a foreign country of which one has limited knowledge, it is easier to judge a leader's integrity than it is their competence. As integrity is a character trait that we use to judge other people in everyday life, its impact on judging a political leader seems understandable. Nevertheless, it seems surprising that charisma exerted the smallest impact on country image, which suggests that perceived charisma has only a minor impact on national images. This is surprising considering the case of the Obama effect, for which it can be argued that

the former U.S. president's great charisma might have had a positive influence on the United States' image (cf. "Obama's effect on the world," 2009). One argument for the low impact of the affective–expressive political leader image dimension could be that charisma needs to be experienced first-hand rather than just described. It might be that the respondents could not imagine the political leader to be very charming merely from the description of their charm. This question could be addressed in future research. Furthermore, in this study politicians in parliamentary systems were considered. Arguably, leaders in presidential systems might have a different impact on country image; therefore, the implications of a presidential image for the home country's image should be considered in greater detail. For instance, Jarren and Donges (2006, p. 230) argue that it is especially necessary to maintain a good political image in presidential democracies as the political leaders have a stronger influence on the political life than in other state forms.

In addition, we found that the female leader's image had different effects on country image than that of the male leader. A possible explanation could be that the association of female leaders with their country image has different effects than that of male country leaders. These findings are in line with previous research on women in leadership positions indicating that women might be perceived differently from their male colleagues (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). Further studies could therefore investigate in more depth the differences in image between men and women in general and male and female leaders in particular.

Although great care was taken to investigate the research questions in the most effective way, there are some limitations to the study. Although this study was able to show that different image dimensions have an effect on country image, it should be kept in mind that character dimensions are closely interrelated and affect each other: A politician who is perceived as having little integrity might also be ascribed deficient leadership skills (Brettschneider & Bachl, 2013), an important consideration when interpreting the data. In addition, the experimental method we chose to visualize the hypothesized effects might have favored the magnification of the effects to some extent. In a real-life setting, the effects might turn out to be smaller. Also, the duration between measuring country image before and after seeing the stimulus ideally should have been longer to avoid spillover effects. Due to the panel size, however, this was not possible for this research.

Further research could focus on how long the positive or negative effect of the political leader's image on their home country will last. An additional point worth considering is the importance for image creation of familiarity with the foreign leader. Dragojlovic (2013) found that awareness of a political leader might be a moderating factor: Less prominent leaders might have difficulties raising their country's popularity among foreign stakeholders even though they are perceived in a positive way. Although we did not test for this effect in our own research, it is an important point to consider in future research. In a similar sense, politicians in parliamentary systems were considered in this study, but leaders in presidential systems arguably might have a different impact on country image, and therefore, the implications of a presidential image on the home country's image should be considered in greater detail.

In conclusion, this research contributes important insights to the literature on country images as it shows that an effect from the political leader's image on the country image exists. Moreover, a suitable model to measure the political leader's image has been developed and the four-dimensional model of country image by Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015a, 2015b) could be tested, which is important as it represents a

fairly new model. For the management of country image, the results of this study imply that the political leader and his or her politically relevant character traits, as well as personal characteristics, need to be taken into account when employing public diplomacy and strategic country communication campaigns, as the political leader will influence the country image of foreign publics. As countries aim to create and project a favorable image of themselves to gain such benefits as investment and tourism, the international PR of states is an important asset in furthering this goal.

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