The Mexican Reputation

A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE THE STEREOTYPE MEXICO SHARES WITH ITS U.S. DIASPORA

Client
Mexican Ambassador to the United States Eduardo Medina Mora

Advisor
Marshall Ganz

Seminar Leaders
Petia Topalova, Thomas Patterson

25 March 2014

Carlos Quintero Herrera Lasso ● Master in Public Policy 2014
Dante Pérez Esquivel ● Master in Public Policy 2014

HARVARD UNIVERSITY | JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mexican reputation is not well. The images we see and what we hear in the news and conversations convey an image of a country that is chaotic, lawless and underdeveloped. Movies portray us as gardeners and drug-dealers, while pop culture caricatures us as lazy, dimwitted and drunk.

Nation branding is a relatively new concept that has been oversimplified. Its greatest exponents have reduced country reputations, one way or another, to a commodity that can be branded, packaged, and sold to audiences in other countries. A few consulting agencies who lead the world in this approach propose we evaluate it in a linear mode: bad reputation to good reputation. They rate certain categories and determine that a national brand is an aggregate of the scores. Based on these rankings, they propose, you can look at any country in the world and know the performance of its reputation.

Reputations, however, are much more complicated that what they have been though as so far. It is inadequate to categorize someone as having a high or low or good or bad reputation. Good or bad depends on what is being discussed. On the one hand, we tend to evaluate people in terms of their professional skills and accomplishments or how good they are at their jobs. On the other hand, we also tend to rate people on how nice they are or how much we enjoy their company. Both of these dimensions serve completely different purposes. Depending on whether you are about to undertake complicated data analysis, negotiate a deal with a key customer, or enjoy a pleasant evening, your selection of a partner will likely require more information about her reputation than "good" or "bad."

The world is a complicated place. To make sense of it, our brain has to expend large amounts of energy thinking, energy that our body needs for other essential functions. To survive, our brains evolved shortcuts and simplifications to minimize thinking effort. Our mind makes abstractions of what we perceive so that, at the cost of losing some complexity, we can understand them.

In terms of social interactions, these abstractions, shortcuts, and simplifications are called stereotypes. Stereotypes are constructed on two dimensions: on one side, how capable we consider others (competence) and, on the other side, how much we are competing for the same resources, how much we like them and how good we consider their intentions to be (warmth).

For individuals, higher competence tends to be associated with higher warmth because we expect people to be consistent all around. In terms of groups, however, the opposite is true. When we think about groups of people that do not belong to our own group, the more "competent" we think they are, the less "likable" they appear to us. Nobody likes the champion of the league, unless it is our own team.

Stereotypes also help understand and justify power relations. That is, which group is dominant, which is compliant, and how do group actions (active domination) or society's rules, institutions, and expectations (passive domination) perpetuate the status quo. For example, the American mainstream, which constitutes the dominant group within the United States, perceives professionals as highly competent but not nice at all, simultaneously validating an allegedly meritocratic society and justifying the resentment towards professionals' success.

Country reputations are group stereotypes as well. We evaluate countries in terms of how competent they appear to us and how much we like them. To save energy, we process abstract information and turn

it into stereotypes based on our perceptions of competence and warmth. Once established, our brains will automatically exclude information that does not fit the stereotype.

In the case at hand, the Mexican Reputation in the United States, Americans seem to have a category branded as "Mexican." This stereotype has become a reputation of low-competence and low-warmth, which is the worst possible combination.

One of the main reasons that strategies to improve Mexico's reputation are not working out is that, to change our reputation, we have promoted what we ourselves find attractive about our country and then expected everyone else to agree. We have not reflected upon what the other is capable of understanding or how the context of power relations will influence that perception. We have thought of Mexico as this complex concept that people must understand in all of its many dimensions to do justice to who we "really are." A task that, we now understand, is physically impossible.

Another way to think about reputation is as accumulations of filtered images over time. These images are filtered first by the way reality is represented in media or interpersonal contact and second, by the way people select which images to perceive. This two part process creates the stereotype that results in a country's reputation. To change a country's reputation, one must change the available images of that country. Only then will existing stereotypes begin to be displaced. If none of the images fit the stereotype, then the credibility of the stereotype will be questioned and substituted for a more appropriate one.

In the case of Mexico and the United States, there are two main sources of images. First, what the news and the media portray about Mexico, and second, how the media portrays the Mexican diaspora. Notwithstanding which source has the greatest effect, the "Mexican Reputation" affects everyone equally.

Evidence suggests that in terms of perception, the American public does not distinguish between the concepts of Mexico, Mexican, Mexican-American, Latino, or Hispanic. We are all filtered by the same low-competence/low-warmth stereotype. Everything we do reinforces, affects, and transforms this stereotype. That is why our analysis will eventually refer to this shared reputation as the Mexican reputation. Mexicans living either in Mexico or in the United States must jointly seek to change available Mexican images. Uncoordinated, unilateral actions will most likely not have the desired effect.

To start moving in the direction of transforming the reputation, we have proposed that the Mexican Government undertakes the following actions. First, *Mexico should deploy a National Competence Strategy*. Mexico must improve perceptions of its competence through promotion of skills, technology, human capital, or professional acumen. Primarily promoting Mexico's natural beauty, culture, or hospitality carries the risk of being unable to dispel its low-competence stereotype. Furthermore, Mexico must emphasize its present economic prowess. Making references to a state of emergence or great potential will be interpreted as underdevelopment, trapping Mexico in a developing country discourse. Finally, every message, image, or representative Mexico sends abroad must communicate competence. While relevant, likeability is entirely secondary.

Second, beyond projecting competence, *our messages should be simple*. The images Mexico projects abroad must be as simple as the stereotypes they are trying to replace. Only images of competence will improve Mexico's reputation, and only simple images will be understood. Therefore, we should manage

the content of these simple messages. Third, given that *we share our reputation with our diaspora*, we should include it in our reputation enhancement efforts. The Mexican Government must engage leaders of the Mexican diaspora in the United States to being a conversation about our shared reputation, the need to project competence, and the coordination of efforts. Fourth, we must *tell stories that make Mexican competence something habitual*. The Mexican Government should seek to instill competence as a core societal value among Mexicans through grade school curricula, public discourse, and public recognition.

These recommendations have not developed into detailed implementation instructions. Rather, they aim to provoke the deep analysis necessary to start a conversation about Mexico's reputation in the world. In an undertaking as colossal as transforming the reputation of a country as complex and promising as Mexico, there are no easy answers and no gurus. That is why together, as Mexicans, we have to decide where we want to go from here.

2   OUR CLIENT AND MANDATE

This Policy Analysis Exercise was developed to aid our client, the Mexican Embassy in the United States, to better achieve some of its main objectives. These include: to position Mexico as a global actor, improve its reputation, and generate respect and even admiration towards it.[1]

Ambassador Eduardo Medina Mora instructed us to research two related questions: first, whether the Mexican diaspora influences Mexico's reputation in the United States and second, if such influence exists, whether its potential can be harnessed for the benefit of Mexico. The members of his staff with whom we collaborated are Ariel Moutsatsos, Head of the Office of Press and Public Affairs of the Embassy, Alexandra Haas, Head of the Office of Political Affairs and Juan Carlos Lara, Head of the Regional and Hispanic Affairs Office.

We seek to provide the Embassy, and through it the Mexican Government, with concrete recommendations that will help Mexico present a better, more modern and more appealing image that will allow it to fulfill its national objectives.

Our analysis is based on a foundation of sociology, the most current research on communications, behavioral psychology and behavioral sciences. Throughout the paper we will understand what a reputation is as well as the demographics and group dynamics that affect the interaction between Mexico and its diaspora, and how both construct Mexican reputation.

3 A GLOBAL TREND IN NATIONAL REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

3.1 NATION BRANDING

An increasing number of countries are managing their image as a product brand. This strategy, "Nation Branding" has been the main approach to recent national reputation management efforts. During the past two decades, "straight-forward advertising has given way to branding-giving products and services and emotional dimension with which people can identify."[2] This branding phenomenon has become a priority for country advertising efforts, "Singapore and Ireland are no longer merely countries one finds in an atlas. They have become "brand states," with geographical and political settings that seem trivial compared to their emotional resonance among an increasingly global audience of consumers."[3] While nation branding may appear as simple self-promotion, the practice is not limited to projecting an image. Rather, nation branding is meant to recreate the conception of the country at an ideological and practical level.[4]

Nation Branding follows distinct approaches that may seek distinct outcomes. The first and most prominent approach is "technical-economic"[5] which uses nation branding as a strategic tool to enhance a nation's competitive advantage in a global marketplace. The nations brand is used as an instrument akin to a commercial product brand.

The three main assumptions of this approach are: first, that global markets are the drivers of economics and politics. Second, that national well-being is defined primarily in terms of securing an economic competitive advantage, and nation branding is expected to contribute to this by attracting investments, tourists, human capital, or trade. Finally, based on the previous two assumptions, this approach asserts that a parallel between nations and brands is warranted and necessary.[6]

This approach also continues an analytical tradition that preceded nation branding: Country of Origin Effect. A large body of literature has studied how individuals will use information about the country of origin of a product to update their beliefs and perceptions about that product. A logical extension of this effect is to consider that not only products, but people, business, and ideas, from a particular country will be imbued with that country's reputation.

One main proponent of this approach is Wally Olins, who argues that "when it comes to national identity, people can be "motivated and inspired and manipulated" with the use of the same techniques that companies use to brand products."[7]

Exponents of this approach typically see nation branding in various degrees of similarity to public diplomacy and the practice of engaging foreign audiences to promote national objectives. Adherents to this approach often cite Nye's concept of "soft power."
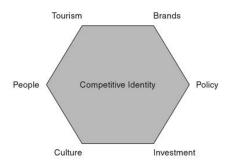
Soft power "is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion of payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideas and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced"[8] One main proponent of this

approach is Simon Anholt, the alleged author of the term "Nation Branding."[a] We will discuss Anholt's contribution and approach in the next section.

Rather than focusing on its commercial or political application, this approach emphasizes an understanding of nation branding discourse as it relates to identity, culture and governance. This approach shows that nation branding limits the range of possible national identity narratives and shapes them for the benefit of external audiences.[9]

3.2   THE SHORTCOMINGS OF NATION BRANDING

Simon Anholt, the most active exponent of the Nation Branding concept, proposes an approach to country reputation management called "Competitive Identity," which he describes as brand management combined with public diplomacy, trade, investment, tourism or promotion. Anholt sees innovation as the most important element of his approach. For him, innovation should permeate the mindset of every individual, stakeholders must be coordinated, and messages must be communicated appropriately.

Source: Simon Anholt, *Brand New Justice* (Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, 2003)

Figure 1. Anholt's hexagon of Competitive Identity[10]

He gives six "natural channels" through which reputation moves: tourism promotion, the use of export brands, the policy decisions that the government makes, the way business solicit investment, through cultural exchanges and cultural activities, and through the people of the country themselves, like leaders and sports stars.

Anholt proposes that the Nation Branding Index, which he designed and manages, is the best tool for measuring national reputation, "each country's score across the six dimensions is succinctly captured in the Nation Brand Hexagon with the total Index score. This tool provides a consistent framework for cross-country comparisons against the key factors impacting reputation, so you can see where your nation's brand ranks and why."[11]

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[a] For a history of the development of the term Nation Branding and its distinction from Public Diplomacy see Gyorgy Szondi. "Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding: Conceptual Similarities and Differences." *Netherlands Institute of International Relations*. 2008. p. 4.

We have identified several shortcomings with the Nation Branding approach. First, the six channels Anholt identifies fail to capture the effect of an important reputation generation for many countries (including Mexico): the country's diaspora. Second, this Index assumes that a country can or should identify and portray a particular identity, denying the diverse composition and experiences of all countries. Third, this approach also assumes that reputation is an objective, independent factor countries must package and deliver precisely and persuasively. However, reputation is a relational concept that cannot be created independently from relations with all stakeholders involved.

Reputation is a game of mutual perception that results from interactions between actors. The interaction itself is the material from which stereotypes are created, and reputations formed. As we will see in the next sections, the mind is not made to process complex information like a hexagon of relevant reputational drivers. The brain will automatically simplify reality to understand it. That is, in the end, what is remembered about a country are not the channels of communication, but rather the content of the reputation.

4 COUNTRY REPUTATION: THE CONTENT AND PROCESS OF STEREOTYPES

4.1 WHY WE STEREOTYPE

In 2002 Daniel Kahneman, a psychologist from Tel Aviv, surprised the world when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics. His position challenged the reigning economic theory so far. He argued that people do not make rational decisions. Rather, we oversimplify the world in order to understand it. We create concepts inside our head to organize and understand what happens outside of it and access information fast and effortless. He calls this, heuristics. "Heuristic is a simple procedure that helps find adequate, though often imperfect, answers to difficult questions."[12] The way we understand the world, Kahneman says, is by creating shortcuts that allow us to answer hard questions with easy and often misleading answers.[13]

There is a physiological reason why heuristics are necessary. Thinking is hard and tiring. It consumes energy. By creating shortcuts, we save our body energy, so it requires less to operate. This helps reduce the physical effort of thinking because "when you are actively involved in difficult cognitive reasoning or engaged in a task that requires self-control, your blood glucose level drops."[14]

We need heuristics to understand the world. In this paper, we analyze why groups do this about other groups. We will sustain that stereotypes function as an image filter that economizes cognitive effort, so that we can minimize confusion.[b] The importance of stereotypes is that they allow us to abstract certain characteristics of groups in order to make a joint evaluation of all of its members, which would be impossible of each of them as individuals.[15] [c]

4.2 REPUTATION AS STEREOTYPES

> *What nation branding concerns is the image and reputation that a nation enjoys in the world. A nation's image is defined by the people outside the country; their perceptions are influenced by stereotyping, media coverage as well as personal experience. Similar to commercial brands, a nation's image can be repackaged, repositioned and communicated in a professional manner.[16]*

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[b] "Lippmann (1965) argued similarly that stereotypes are necessary for our orientation to the world. They are a way of simplifying and economizing and without them, our perception of the world would be like a baby's "one great, blooming, buzzing confusion." Ibroscheva, Elsa and Ramaprasad, Jyotika, "Do media matter? : A social construction of stereotypes of foreigners." *Journal of Intercultural Communication*. Issue 16. April 2008.

[c] Carter argued that, "the individual tries to reduce the heterogeneity of characteristics attributed to a stimulus. He tends toward homogeneity of elements as a means of expending as little effort as possible, using a general basis for evaluation of the stimulus and attributing specific characteristics to it in terms of the general evaluation." (See endnotes for citation).

A simple analysis of the language and the concepts of "stereotype" and "reputation" in terms of their definition in the dictionary, the way they have been understood in academia and their etymology, shows that both concepts could, should and actually are used as synonyms in several contexts.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "reputation" as the common opinion that people have about someone or something or the way in which people think of someone or something.[17] It defines "stereotype" as "to believe unfairly that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same".[18] In academia, stereotypes have been viewed as useful devices for organizing large amounts of information and provide stability and abstraction[19] and regarding countries, reputation has been considered as the aggregate of stakeholders' images of a country over time.[20] Finally, if we look at the etymology or history of the words, we also find that they are very similar. "Reputation" comes from the Latin word reputātiō, which means to reckon or think over[21] and "stereotype" comes from French stéréotype, or stereotype printing, solid plus type, which refers to a metal printing plate cast from a matrix molded from a raised printing surface.[22]

In all three approaches, the functional and semantic connotation of stereotype and reputation are the same. The differences consist of only two things: first, the word "stereotype" tends to have a more negative connotation and, second, that in particular in terms of its etymology it seems to be more rigid, which implies it is more difficult to change.

4.3 STEREOTYPE DIMENSIONS: COMPETENCE AND WARMTH

Social perceptions answer two fundamental questions: what are the intentions of "the other"? And, how capable is "the other" in following through with his or her intentions? [23] The former question relates to a perception of warmth, or how hostile or friendly an individual is to our own interests. The latter question relates to that individual's capacity to carry through those intentions, meaning, that person's competence.

An individual will be evaluated on each of these dimensions, generating a mixed stereotype of warmth and competence. Fiske classifies stereotypes into four distinct categories. Low-competence/low-warmth means that an individual is both hostile to our interests and unable to act upon that hostility. High-competence/high-warmth suggests an individual has friendly intentions and is capable of acting on those intentions. Both of these categories are perceived as unambiguously bad and good, respectively. The two remaining categories, low-competence/high-warmth and high-competence/low-warmth are ambiguous and may be perceived as good or bad depending on other factors.

	Low-competence	High-competence
High-warmth	Ambivalence	Pure Favoritism
Low-warmth	Pure Antipathy	Ambivalence

Table 1. Stereotype Dimensions: Competence and Warmth[24]

While at this stage these questions are posed at the individual level, these two dimensions of warmth and competence are also applicable to perceptions of groups. When people judge individuals, high warmth is

often associated with high competence, because people expect their evaluations of individuals to be consistent. However, when moving from individual to group level, the warmth-competence correlation reverses.[25] When people evaluate groups, high competence is often correlated with low warmth or vice versa.[26]

Our analysis focuses on countries and country diasporas as the relevant groups, for whom warmth and competence are inversely correlated.

4.4 STEREOTYPE DRIVERS: POWER AND COMPETITION FOR RESOURCES DRIVE COMPETENCE AND WARMTH

The warmth and competence dimensions are driven by underlying social factors. First, if groups or individuals are perceived as low social status, then they will be perceived as low competence.[27] Second, groups or individuals perceived as competing for our resources will be perceived as hostile to our interests, and will be perceived as low-warmth.[28] Thus, perception of social status predicts competence perceptions and resource competition perception predicts perceptions of likeability, which is warmth.[29]

In the case of countries, social psychologists have identified specific drivers of warmth and competence. First, perceived conflict between the foreign country and our own country is associated with hostility to our interests. Perceived conflict among the relevant countries is inversely correlated with warmth. Second, the perceived power of the foreign country is a direct predictor of its perceived competence. Thus, perceived power is directly correlated with perceived competence.[30d]

4.5 PERCEPTION CREATION: THE SUPPLY OF IMAGES AND INDIVIDUAL PERCEPTION

The previous section explained how stereotypes of warmth and competence are driven by perceived conflict of interests and status. However, these perceptions themselves are not created in a vacuum. The social construction of stereotypes is the result of a combination of the availability of certain types of images and individual cognitive biases. In the case of countries, two major players in the social construction of stereotypes are the media and members of the diaspora, both are important sources of country images. These images are then transformed into stereotypes through a three step process.

First, a supply of images is created through different sources.[31] In particular, the media creates a disproportionate share of images of foreigners, "for issues and subjects concerning which most personal experience is limited, for example foreigners, television and other media forms may virtually be the only

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[d] We recognize that the model we present could include other dimensions. For example, "the psychologist Paul Slovic has proposed an *affect heuristic* in which people let their likes and dislikes determine their beliefs about the world [...] If you are a hawk in your attitude toward other nations, you probably think they are relatively weak and likely to submit to your country's will. If you are a dove, you probably think they are strong and will not be easily coerced." Kahneman, Daniel. *Thinking, Fast and Slow.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux. New York. 2011. p. 103. However, we believe that the two dimension model we present offers the best tradeoff between usefulness and theoretical complexity.

vivid sources of information."[32] Apart from the media, members of the diaspora represent an important source of country images.

Second, the media (which already has a disproportionate influence) will tend to over represent information that corresponds to stereotypes.[33] The media will also select unusual, extreme, events for coverage because their dramatic effect will boost audience viewership. "An (unusual) event triggers increased media attention; the media set their focus on this specific topic or event; they enlarge it, and by so doing evoke all kinds of social responses, which will in turn become news as well, further stimulating the news wave."[34] Similarly, a country's diaspora rarely constitutes a group that accurately represents the home-country. Various economic, political or demographic factors will result in an immigrant/diaspora particular group with non-representative characteristics. The combined effect of the media and diaspora image sources is an overrepresentation of stereotypical images that is reinforced by the audience's own predispositions and prejudices.

Third, individuals will filter images according to stereotypes to ease cognitive effort. The main mechanism individuals use to filter images into a meaningful whole is stereotypes, which exhibit the bias for extremism similar to that of media coverage. Given that "most prevalent life outcomes are moderately favorable, favorable outcomes are comparatively less extreme than unfavorable outcomes (by virtue of favorable outcomes being closer to our normative experiences); thus, negative behaviors are more likely than positive behaviors to be over-represented in the stereotype."[35]

The selection bias of the media as well as immigration selectivity, combined with the audience's own predilections, results in a societal consensus that creates the stereotype.[e][36] Here, consensus means that a large number of observers share similar representations of given targeted groups, often a group of different national origin, and this image generally endures through time.[37] However, this consensus is far from neutral, as it represents underlying power relationships and socio economic and political dynamics.[38] The following two sections address group dynamics in the content of stereotypes.

4.6   HOW WE STEREOTYPE OTHERS

Mutual perceptions among groups also influence competence-warmth evaluations. First, we tend to reserve the unambiguously good perception of high-competence/high-warmth to our own group (in-group) and allies. And we typically assign those that are not members of our own group (out-group) to the three remaining quadrants.

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[e] Careful readers will notice that, as described, the individuals' stereotypes precede the consensus that allegedly creates the stereotype. This flaw results from the difficulty of describing a simultaneous process linearly. We ask the reader to consider stereotypes and social consensus as a "chicken and egg" problem where the starting point matters less than the dynamic process.

	Low-competence	High-competence
High-warmth	Out-groups Ambivalence	In-group and allies Pure Favoritism
Low-warmth	Rarely used Pure Antipathy	Out-groups Ambivalence

Table 2. In/Out Group Location[39]

Second, we tend to spare most groups from the low-competence/low-warmth stereotype quadrant, choosing instead to cluster them into one of the two ambivalent stereotype quadrants low-competence/high-warmth or high-warmth/low-competence.

In the case of countries, where reputation (or stereotype) is defined as the accumulation of stakeholder images over time, the relevant stakeholders are internal stakeholders (typically the domestic population) and external stakeholders (typically foreign or immigrant populations).[40][41] These stakeholder categories correspond to members of one's own group and members outside of one's own group, respectively.[f]

These clustering dynamics have specific results in the case of in-group host countries and out-group diasporas. A host country will perceive a generic immigrant group as being low-competence/low-warmth. However, when members of the in-group are given additional information about the immigrant group's nationality, income, etc. their perception shifts the specified immigrant group into one of the above mentioned ambivalent clusters.

4.7   HOW POWER RELATIONS DRIVE STEREOTYPES, PREJUDICES AND BEHAVIORS

"Stereotypes reflect the perceiver's knowledge of power relations in society."[42] That is, stereotypes represent our own, mutually held projections upon the world of our social power positions.[43] This power configuration drives both the compensating behavior exhibited by ambivalent stereotypes (the low-high, high-low combinations) and the emotional response that drives behavior.

As explained above, members from outside our own group are rarely relegated to the low-competence/low-warmth category, judged instead as being high on one stereotype dimension and low on the other. Here, the stereotype serves to justify, from the perspective of the dominant group, the power relations present in the status quo.

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[f] More precisely, Fiske uses in-group/out-group to distinguish between the mainstream, reference, dominant culture and specific subgroups. For purposes of our analysis, the distinction in the main text is applicable.
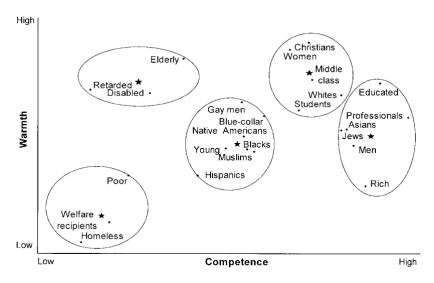
Figure 2. Different Groups by Competence and Warmth[44]

When the out-group is not threatening, the in-group will project its appreciation of the out group's "friendly" subordination by perceiving the out-group with a high-warmth stereotype, while justifying its own advantageous position by attributing it low-competence.[45] Conversely, if the out-group is competent, the in-group will recognize that competence with the high-competence stereotype but will simultaneously justify its resentment of the out-group success by perceiving it as low-warmth.[46]

While reconciling different groups with the power relations of the status quo, stereotypes evoke particular feelings, which then drive behavioral responses, "Different combinations of stereotypic warmth and competence result in unique intergroup emotions—prejudices—directed toward various kinds of groups in society. Pity targets the warm but not competent subordinates; envy targets the competent but not warm competitors; contempt is reserved for out-groups deemed neither warm nor competent."[47] Admiration is reserved to one's own group, and contempt is felt towards out-groups that are neither warm nor competent.

	Low-competence	High-competence
High-warmth	Pity Out-groups Ambivalence	Admiration In-group and allies Pure Favoritism
Low-warmth	Disgust Rarely used Pure Antipathy	Envy Out-groups Ambivalence

Table 3. Prejudices[48]

These various emotions: admiration, envy, pity, and contempt, are neither an exclusive nor exhaustive list of feelings aroused from relations among groups. Rather, they are meant to represent primary drivers of behavioral response. Depending on the way warmth and competence stereotypes are combined, specific actions can be expected.[49]

As we discussed above, the first concern during any interaction with members of a group other than our own is determining whether their intentions are friendly or not. Warmth is the primary dimension for driving active behavior. High-warmth will result in active facilitation (helping), while low-warmth will elicit active harming (attacking).[50] The second concern in group interactions, determining the ability to act on intentions, is related to perceptions of competence, and is secondary to perceptions of warmth. High-competence will result in passive facilitation (association), while low-competence will evoke passive harm (neglect).[51]
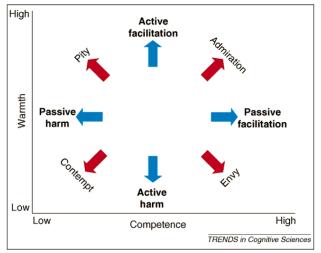

Figure 3. Behaviors from Stereotypes[g]

Each stereotype profile results in particular behavior towards it. Societal groups receive both active and passive facilitation (helping and associating). Out-groups perceived as low-competence/low-warmth (e.g. homeless people) receive both kinds of harm (active attacks and passive neglect).[52] Out-groups perceived as high on one dimension but low on the other will receive the corresponding help but neglect or attack but associate.

Given that consensual stereotypes are a reflection of perceived power relations, not an inherent, immutable reality, it is possible to alter the status quo. "Social influence not only may reinforce the status quo but can lead to change as well. Therefore, interventions as the societal level [...] may be particularly powerful factors in stereotype change and alleviations of prejudice."[53]

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[g]Fiske, Susan T., J.C. Cuddy, Amy and Glick, Peter. Op. Cit. p. 81: "Schematic representation of behaviors from intergroup affect and stereotypes "BIAS" map. Competence and Warmth stereotypes are represented along the x and y axes. Emotions are represented by red arrows on diagonal axes. Thus, groups in different quadrants are rated as receiving one predicted emotional prejudice and two predicted behaviors. Behavioral tendencies are represented by blue arrows on the horizontal and vertical axes. [Taken from Cuddy, A.J.C. et al. The BIAS map: behaviors from intergroup affect and stereotypes. J. Pers. Soc. Psychol. (in press)]"

5 GLOBAL TRENDS: DIASPORAS MATTER IN BUILDING COUNTRY REPUTATION

The previous section described the process of stereotype formation and discussed the particular case of country stereotypes. As explained, diasporas are one of the two main sources of images available to form a stereotype. The crucial role of diasporas comes from the association the host country makes between the diaspora stereotype and the source country stereotype.

As discussed above, American natives (the in-group) rated immigrant groups (the out-group) differently according to their nationality and social class,

For Latin America, U.S. population samples have rated ''Hispanics'' as either average on competence and warmth or low on both dimensions, and migrant workers (a common North American role, currently, for Latinos) have likewise ended up in the lower left corner, low in both attributes [...] [which] suggests that immigrants of Hispanic background or from Latin American nations will be attributed similar stereotypes as Hispanics and migrant workers, the latter association because Latin American immigrants in the US are associated with migrant or farm work.[54]

This finding is evidence that the out-group, the source country or region (Latin America), will be attributed stereotypes from its diaspora group (Hispanics), which is consistent with the expectation that stereotypes attributed to the individual will also be attributed to the group to which the individual belongs.

This finding has not evaded other parts of the world. Several countries in most regions of the world are learning the importance of diasporas in the process of building, affecting or transforming their reputation. Public officials and academics from regions and countries as diverse as India, Great Britain, Turkey, Serbia and Africa, have recognized and often praised the influence the diaspora has on the perception of their home country. Given this relationship, experts argue that diaspora populations must seek to present the same images as does the government of their country.[55]

As seen in Table 4. below, diasporas affect the reputation of their home country in two main ways. First, if they express themselves highly about their country, then they act as can be understood as international promoters. Second, and perhaps most importantly, the perception the host country has of the diaspora itself has an impact on perceptions of the diasporas country of origin.

While these and other countries have recognized this special relationship with their diaspora, a comparative analysis suggests that they have not undertaken active policies to enhance the reality or the perception of their diasporas' success. Rather, home country governments have realized the benefits of their diaspora's success abroad and sought to continue to benefit from the positive association. However, there is no evidence of a systematic, methodical analysis of the content of stereotypes, their development, or improvement. Countries that recognize their diasporas as sources of reputation abroad appear to content themselves with either enjoying the benefits or insulating themselves from the damage, as the case may be.

Government	International Trends by Country or Region
India	Overseas Indian Affairs Minister, Vayalar Ravi, stated in 2007: "Overseas Indians worldwide who are our brand ambassadors produce an economic output of about $400 billion … the fact that every tenth Indian American is a millionaire and every fifth start-up company in Silicon Valley is owned by an Indian, has doubtless, enhanced the image of India." [56]
Great Britain	The Institute for Public Policy Research, a respected British think-tank, recommended: "the UK government should aim to support and encourage its citizens overseas who are already successfully engaging in positive and progressive activities. Through these activities the reputation of Britain abroad is greatly enhanced in ways that no centrally directed campaign could ever achieve. [57]
Turkey	"In the case of Turkey, the latter form of policies has gradually replaced the former. One Turkish MP outlined how Turkish citizens abroad, in particular those living within the EU, could provide economic (remittances) and political (lobbying) support - and by integrating and being good citizens they could give Turkey a better image in Europe." [58]
Serbia	The Serbian Minister of Religion and the Diaspora, Srdjan Sreckovic, said that "those who remain to live abroad after graduation are also valuable as they can be ambassadors of the country in communities where they live, and thus can help improve the image of the state and nation in the world."[59]
Africa	Amini Kajunju, President of the African-American Institute said: "diasporans can help dispel myths and stereotypes about Africa to change the narrative about the continent. All diasporans can serve as brand ambassadors."[60]

Table 4. : Governments and Diasporas

To give a couple of examples, the most important diaspora dimension, competence, has been the main advantage that India has identified for them, since their diaspora members are perceived as having a high status. In Serbia, they see students, which are a group who have a high competence, since after they are done with school they will turn to professionals, as a vehicle to improving the reputation of Serbia in the world.

The perceptions of these countries throughout the world are also affected by their numbers since diaspora members compete for resources with the natives.[61][62]The more members the diaspora has, the higher the percentage of the population that they represent. This will force them to compete with the original population for resources, which in turn, will reduce their perceived warmth.

As we will see in the next section, Mexican authorities have also realized the importance of the effect that the diaspora in the diaspora has in its reputation.

6 THE CASE OF MEXICO

Already, Mexican officials at the highest levels are conscious of how Mexico's image is subject to a number of stereotypes. As Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto declared, the mission of Mexican Ambassadors and Consuls is,

> *to project, worldwide, beyond stereotypes and generalities, the real Mexico [...,]*
> *to show the world the strengths of our country as well as the changes that are*
> *taking place in order to release its full potential.*[63]

The Mexican Embassy also recognizes, and even discerns the potential sources of stereotypes. As argued by Eduardo Medina Mora, Mexican Ambassador to the U.S., "Mexicans on the silver screen are usually portrayed as poor and uneducated at best, corrupt and violent at worst. Even our best actors, like Demián Bichir, cannot escape the gardeners and drug dealers trap for Mexicans in Hollywood." [64]

However, the key to changing Mexico's reputation is not merely a recognition of stereotypical Mexican images, but rather an understanding of the relationship between stereotypes and reputation. Simply put, they are the same concept. Just like reputation can be favorable or unfavorable but not inexistent, stereotypes cannot be eliminated, they can only be changed. To improve its reputation Mexico must increase the competence content of its stereotype.

This task begins with a clear understanding of "Mexican Reputation" in the United States as an idea that transcends the territorial boundaries of Mexico. As the following section explains, U.S. perceptions of Mexico and U.S. perceptions of Mexican-Americans, Mexican Immigrants, or even Hispanics or Latinos in general are so closely linked, that making a distinction between the reputation of Mexico and the reputation of its diaspora is impossible in the eyes of the U.S. population.

6.1 THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEXICO AND ITS DIASPORA IN THE U.S.

The influence the Mexican diaspora in the United States has on Mexico's image is a result of two factors: the size of the diaspora population and the degree to which perceptions of the diaspora and perceptions of Mexico overlap.

The Mexican diaspora in the United States is enormous. After Mexico City, the city with the largest population in the world that identifies itself as Mexican is Los Angeles, California. In 2010, the Hispanic population in the United States was 16%, and people of Mexican origin[h] constituted 63% of that population.[65] Over the last decade the Mexican origin population increased by 54% and had the largest numeric change (11.2 million), growing from 20.6 million in 2000 to 31.8 million in 2010.

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[h] As defined by the U.S. Census: "People of Mexican origin" refers to people who report their origin as Mexican. It can include people born in Mexico, in the United States, or in other countries.
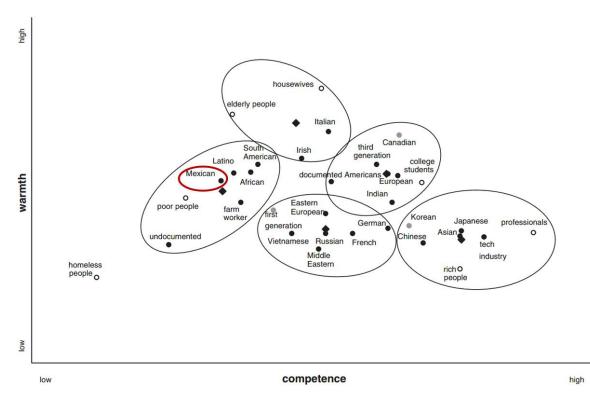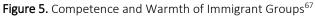
	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Mexican Foreign-born	0.1	0.22	0.48	0.64	0.38	0.45	0.58	0.79	2.2	4.45	8.07	11.87
Mexican ancestry	0.36	0.5	0.73	1.09	1.52	2.12	3.1	4.63	6.87	9.65	14.43	21.21
TOTAL Mexican-origin	0.46	0.72	1.21	1.73	1.9	2.57	3.68	5.42	9.07	14.09	23.2	33.08

Figure 4. Mexican Demographic Growth in the U.S. (Numbers in millions: Note that author appears to have made an error in the census data transcription, replacing 31.8 m with 33.08 m. However, the general point remains accurate.)[66]

Not only is the Mexican diaspora large, but the U.S. population also attributes the stereotype of low-Competence/low-warmth to both Mexican diaspora and Mexico indiscriminately. This failure to distinguish is a result of the stereotypes filtering function. Determining the origin of this low-competence/low-warmth stereotype is beyond the scope of this project. Rather, we argue that the U.S. population applies the same filter, the same stereotype, whenever they perceive images of Mexico or the Mexican diaspora.[i]

Researchers studying stereotypes have found that in the United States, without further information, a generic immigrant is perceived as incompetent and untrustworthy. However, when the term immigrant is paired a nationality or a socioeconomic status, immigrants will tend to exit the incompetent-untrustworthy category, and enter the ambivalent clusters occupied by ethnic groups already present in the population.

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[i] To this point, Douglas S. Massey, from Princeton University, argues that "[w]hen most Americans visualize an "illegal immigrant," they see a Mexican and, if not a Mexican in particular, certainly a Latino (Lee and Fiske 2006)." Massey, Douglas S., "The New Latino Underclass Immigration Enforcement as a Race-Making Institution." *Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality*. (Working paper). p. 7.

Figure 5. Competence and Warmth of Immigrant Groups[67]

When the generic immigrant is described of Mexican or South American origin, they are attributed the same stereotype as the Hispanic population. In the case of the US, and depending on the answers, groups were considered part of a certain cluster or group of immigrants that share certain characteristics. "Comparisons within and between clusters revealed that most immigrant groups received stereotypes similar to their nationality, ethnicity, or in association to their social class within the United States. Furthermore, most are distinct from the prototypical American."[68] Unfortunately, in the case of Mexicans, this stereotype is both low-competence and low-warmth. "The least competent and clearly low-warmth cluster embodied the image of the low-status migrant or farm-worker class: poor people, and African, farm-worker, Latino, Mexican, South American, and undocumented immigrants."[69]

Cluster	Stereotype		Groups
	Competence	Warmth	
In-group and allies	High	High	Americans, college students; Canadian, documented, European, Indian, and third generation immigrants
Neutral	Medium	Medium	Eastern European, first generation, French, German, Middle Eastern, Russian, and Vietnamese immigrants
Successful but not nice	High	Low	Rich people, professionals; Asian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and tech-industry immigrants
Friendly but incompetent	Low	High	Elderly people, housewives; Irish and Italian immigrants
Neither friendly nor competent	Low	Low	Poor people; African, farm-worker, Latino, Mexican, South American, and undocumented immigrants

Table 5. Groups by Cluster[70]

To be clear, Mexico is not being harmed by the U.S. perception of the Mexican diaspora. Rather, both the diaspora members and Mexico are being harmed by the Mexican stereotype, which has its roots in a discourse that both groups have directly or indirectly shaped. Just like all the possible images of the Mexican diaspora are filtered, reduced, simplified to images of drug dealers, high-school dropouts, low-wage workers, and welfare recipients, so too is the complex reality of Mexico filtered down to a corrupt, developing, unstable country. These leftover, filtered images, are the perceptions of Mexico that further reinforce the validity of the low-competence/low-warmth unfavorable reputation that Mexico is trying to escape.

This analysis leads us to conclude that, in terms of helping improve Mexico's reputation, the distinction between the reputation of the country and its diaspora is futile. Regardless of where they live, people of Mexican descent will be perceived as "Mexican." Therefore, the remainder of our analysis will not make a distinction between the reputation of the country and the reputation of its people, choosing instead to analyze the factors that affect Mexican reputation as a general national construct not limited by borders.

6.2   THE MEXICAN REPUTATION

The reality of both Mexico and its diaspora is highly complex. As with any large group of people no individual profile adequately captures the diversity of its members. Mexico resembles a major developed country in some respects, while lagging behind with developing countries in other issues. Similarly, the Mexican diaspora is comprised of entrepreneurs at all levels of success, skilled professionals, competitive students, and low-skilled migrant workers. As we will argue next, the Mexican reputation is based on a complex reality that ignores political borders.

Mexico is a country of contrasts that generates a multitude of images in the realms of its economy, security, and democracy.

In the realm of economy, Mexico is the 11th largest economy in the world, according to the World Bank,[71] and according to Goldman Sachs, Mexico will rise to the 5th place by 2050.[72] In contrast, from 2010 to 2012, poverty in Mexico increased from 45.5% to 46.1%,[73] which means that almost half of Mexico's population lives in poverty.

Mexico's middle class has been continuously growing for the past decade. In 2000, the Mexican middle class represented 38.4% of all homes and 35.2% of the population. In 2010, those fractions had increased to 42% and 39.2%, respectively.[74] This development would suggest Mexico is laying a solid foundation for economic growth, since "the middle class seeks political stability, but at the same time it is capable of instigating economic changes that enable its members to achieve a better quality of life."[75] Undoubtedly, however, Mexico remains a severely unequal society according to the OECD.[76] In fact, out of the 34 OECD countries, Mexico is the second country with the highest inequality (the first is Chile).[j]

In the realm of security, the media have failed to show that violence contained within certain cities, or parts of cities, conveying instead a sense of widespread chaos pushing Mexico into perceived failed state status.[77] The complexity of Mexico's security situation is evidenced by some media outlets questioning Mexico's stability while others praise it. For example, Mexico was ranked number four on Forbes's 2013 edition of "The 10 Best Countries to Retire."[78] That said, no serious official or academic will deny the security challenges facing Mexico. Out of the 50 most dangerous cities in the world 9 are Mexican: Acapulco (3rd); Culiacan (16th), Torreon (18th), Chihuahua (21st), Ciudad Victoria (22nd), Nuevo Laredo (30th), Ciudad Juarez (37th), Cuernavaca (43rd) and Tijuana (47th).[79]

In the realm of corruption and transparency, while focusing on the problems, the media has failed to note Mexico's leadership in access to and transparency of government information. As a study by the University of Pennsylvania asserts: "in the family of freedom of information laws globally, Mexico is a leader, partly because of its Federal Institute for Access to Public Information in Mexico (IFAI) set up under the country's new Transparency Law."[80] However, this does not cancel the fact that Mexico, without dispute, faces the challenge of engrained corruption. In terms of perception, we are ranked in the place 106 out of 177 in the Corruption Perceptions Index for 2013, a place we share with Argentina, Bolivia, Gabon and Niger.[81]

In a different realm, as it was mentioned already, the complex reality that underlies Mexican reputation includes Mexico's diaspora in the United States. Just like Mexico, diaspora members are multifaceted, combining images of poverty and success. For instance, between 2002 and 2007 the number of Hispanic-owned businesses in the United States increased by 43.7 %, more than twice the national rate of 18% percent, and about half of all Hispanic-owned businesses were owned by people of Mexican origin."[82]

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[j] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Society at a Glance 2011: OECD Social Indicators": Inequality is measured by the Gini coefficient. "Values of the Gini coefficient range between 0 in the case of 'perfect equality' (each person gets the same income) and 1 in the case of 'perfect inequality' (all income goes to the share of the population with the highest income)." Chile has a Coefficient of 0.5 and Mexico of 0.48. Far from the OECD average (0.31) and the most equal countries in the world: Slovenia with 0.24, and the Slovak Republic, Denmark and Norway, all with 0.25.

These trends have continued in recent years.[83] In contrast, the median income for Hispanic families in 2009 was $39,000, while the median of all American families was $60,000.[84]

As these examples illustrate, Mexican reputation has a multitude of images from which to draw upon. Why then, do the negative images prevail over the positive images? Because the mind is not made to understand complex realities. Individuals will use stereotypes to filter complexity, and if the prevailing filter is one of low-competence/low-warmth, no amount of variety of images will change perceptions of incompetence or untrustworthiness. To change Mexican reputation, we must change the filter through which its reality is simplified.

6.3 FILTER: THE MEXICAN STEREOTYPE

The Mexican reputation is one of low-competence and low-warmth. That reputation is the filter that simplifies the reality of both Mexico and its diaspora in the United States. As described by a 2011 study by the Mexican Institute at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars:

> *The conventional wisdom in the United States is that Mexico is a mess- nearly a failed state in the opinion of some- unable to move forward in several critical dimensions and mired down in frustrating and rancorous debates that seem never to be resolved: in sum, a backwater hardly worth a second look except for the spillover effects of war against organized crime. This perception is fed by daily reports in the press about yet one more grisly crime, the noise derived from incessant conflicts between leading factions in Mexican politics.[85]*

Corroborating that diagnosis, a 2012 U.S. opinion survey asked respondents to describe the things they had heard about Mexico. Their responses, in order of frequency, included drug violence (81%), murders, shootings or beheadings (42%), that a U.S. Border Patrol agent was killed (39%) and illegal immigration or border crossings (14%).[k][l] When asked the source of these impression, 85% of respondents identified the news, and 8% word of mouth.[86] These findings illustrate the importance of media in selecting the available images of Mexico.

As explained above, the media will not only be a disproportionate source of information on a foreign country such as Mexico, but it will also tend to cover extreme cases that will elicit attention from its audience. Furthermore, according to Brookings Institution, immigrants to the United States (a majority of whom are Mexican) are subject to the same bias in media coverage. In particular, it found that due to the complexities of the immigration debates in the United States, audiences were more easily influenced by the media's overrepresentation of immigrant criminal activity, in particular Hispanic criminality.[87]

These are the available Mexican images that the U.S. population has of Mexico and Mexicans, which both reinforce and correspond to the Mexican stereotype to which they already ascribe:

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[k] Vianobo/GSD&M. "American Attitudes on Mexico." October 2012. Responses do not add up to 100% because respondents could respond with several items.

The Mexican Stereotype	
Perceptions of Mexico	Perceptions of Latinos
50% of people surveyed have an unfavorable or favorable opinion of Mexico Only 17% have a favorable or very favorable opinion of Mexico.	Around 36% of non-Hispanics believe that all Latinos are illegal. Over 30% believe that a majority are illegal.
When asked why they felt this way about Mexico: 72% answered that because of the drugs, cartels, crime, violence and that it is unsafe. 21% said that corruption 7% mentioned illegal immigration	51% believe that Latinos are welfare recipients. 50% think they are less educated 44% think they refuse to speak English 40% think they have too many children 37% think they take jobs from Americans 33% think they don't keep up their homes.
72% consider Mexico somewhat or very unsafe. 12% consider Mexico somewhat or very safe.	71% see Latinos in TV and films as criminals or gang members.
83% describe Mexico's economy as either developing or not developed.	64% see Latinos in TV and films as gardeners.
59% view Mexico as a source of problems for the US. 14% view Mexico as a good neighbor and partner for the US.	71% see Latinos in TV and films as maids.

Table 6. Mexican Stereotypes: Sources: Vianobo/GSD&M[88] and Latino Decisions.[89]

The media coverage of Mexico and the Mexican diaspora, as well as individual predispositions in the U.S. population result in a consensus of a low-competence/low-warmth stereotype. This analysis does not claim to identify where the stereotype originated. Instead, we posit that it has been socially constructed through the particular set of available images to which the U.S. population has been exposed, and from which the U.S. population reaffirms stereotypical preconceptions. Image availability and image selection may result from a variety of factors, but both perpetuate the same stereotype, the same low-competence/low-warmth reputation.

Lastly, when we suggest that the Mexican stereotype results from a consensus, we do not mean to imply that the stakeholders of Mexican reputation embrace that unfavorable stereotype. As discussed above, stereotypes reflect the power relations present in the status quo. That is, the U.S. population justifies its relatively more favorable position (both regarding Mexico and its diaspora) by perceiving the Mexican out-group as low-competence. To the extent the U.S. population views the Mexican diaspora as competing for U.S. resources, and Mexico as a potential source of instability in the region, it also ascribes low-warmth to the Mexican stereotype.

A Case Study: Top Gear and the Mastretta MXT

Three years ago, Mexico witnessed a vivid example of the low-competence/low-warmth content of its reputation. It is one thing to recognize studies of media bias and survey based opinions about Mexico or Mexican immigrants stereotype, it is quite another to see the stereotype present in pop culture, the aggregate ethos of the world.

On January of 2011, during an episode of Top Gear, the popular BBC TV show that reviews automobiles, the series hosts were presented with the Mastretta MXT, a Mexican sports car manufactured by Mastretta Cars, "a Mexican design and engineering consulting firm based in the Mexico City area with more than 20 years of experience in the transportation industry." [90]

While the show hosts are well known for being tough judges, often demanding and politically inappropriate, their dismissive approach during the episode reflected the pervasiveness of the Mexican stereotype. Rather than reviewing the actual vehicle, the show hosts completely disregarded the analysis of the real characteristics of the car and chose instead to expound upon the images they associated with Mexican-ness (See Annex).

> *Why would you want a Mexican car? Because cars reflect national characteristics don't they? [...] Mexican cars are just going to be lazy, feckless, flatulent, overweight, leaning against a fence asleep looking at a cactus with a blanket with a hole in the middle as a coat.*[91]

Here, the reality of both the car and the country from which it originated were completely displaced by a caricature of low-competence/low-warmth, to the point that the actual mechanics and characteristics of the vehicle were no longer relevant.

Just as automobiles reflected national characteristics for the hosts of Top Gear, so too do products, ideas, and people from Mexico project national characteristics to the rest of the world. Therefore, it is incumbent upon every Mexican actor, from business people, to public officials, to citizens to Mexican-Americans, to constantly evaluate whether or not the messages they send and images they project serve to reaffirm or dismantle the low-competence/low-warmth stereotype.

The importance of combating stereotypes is not merely an esthetic exercise or a matter of national pride. Certain stereotypes provoke feelings and prejudices that result in particular behaviors. In particular, the low-competence/low-warmth Mexican stereotype will drive feelings of contempt or disgust. These feelings will then lead the U.S. population to have two behavioral predispositions towards Mexicans. First, Mexicans will be passively harmed because they are perceived as incompetent, and second they will be actively harmed because they are perceived as unfriendly, hostile, or in competition for resources.

Passive harm is a systemic. It "refers to lack of action by the perceiver, but still with impact on the target. Passive harm includes [for example] knowing that an immigrant receives below-minimum wages but refusing to do anything on behalf of that person." [92] More precisely, passive harm is defined as a behavior that,

> *demeans or distances other groups by diminishing their social worth through excluding, ignoring, or neglecting. Relational or social aggression [...] and passive negative coping (e.g., withdrawal of social support [...]) are related concepts. Interpersonal passive harm includes avoiding eye contact, being dismissive, or ignoring out-group members. Institutionally, passive harm involves disregarding the needs of some groups or limiting access to necessary resources such as education, housing, and healthcare. Passive harm acts without the group, denying its existence, harming its members by omission of normal human recognition.[93]*

Examples of passive harm in the United States are abundant. Stories of discrimination against Mexicans are commonplace, and the institutional, legal, and professional barriers facing minorities are common knowledge. However, passive harm also affects Mexico. By diminishing its role in the international community, Mexico faces increasing challenges in its attempts to advance its own international agenda, let alone setting the agenda of other countries. For instance, securing a positions in international organisms has becomes increasingly more difficult for Mexico. Tourists think twice before visiting Mexico, and investors have to be persuaded that Mexico is a safe place to park their money.

Another example is the research which finds that people perform noticeably worse when evaluators invoke traits linked to negative stereotypes, such as race or gender.[94] [m]By helping to perpetuate the simplified reality portrayed, stereotypes become a self-fulfilling prophecy, a pervasive, systemic harm.

Second, Mexicans are also likely to elicit active harm. In contrast to passive harm,

> *Active harm (i.e., acting against) explicitly intends to hurt a group and its interests. Verbal harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and hate crimes all constitute interpersonal active harm. Institutionally, active harm can range from discriminatory policies to legalized segregation to mass interment (e.g., Japanese Americans during World War II) to genocide.[95]*

In the case of Mexico and the United States, active harm takes the form of racism and active discrimination. For immigrants including the Mexican diaspora, Arizona's S.B. 1070, which allows police to question individuals if there is reason to believe that they are in the United States illegally. An example of active harm towards Mexico, the country, is the construction of a fence, and increased border scrutiny between the Mexican and American borders which can only delay foreign trade logistics rather than focusing on improving the logistics and infrastructure.

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[m] Here, the negative stereotypes involve the perceived lower performance capacity of minority or female students.

While active harm may be more visible, it is less pervasive than passive harm. Unlike active harm, passive harm is unlikely to lead to countervailing efforts, advocacy coalitions, or reform. While active harm requires some degree of effort, when the status quo automatically leads to harmful outcomes, participants do not need to expend effort to harm. The pervasive yet hidden channels of passive harm make it, arguably, a more serious threat to Mexicans and Mexico than active harm.

The previous sections have delineated the process of stereotype content formation, as well as the feelings and behaviors such stereotype profiles evoke. We have also identified examples of the types of harm that unfavorable stereotypes can bring upon both Mexico and its diaspora. Undoubtedly, all stakeholders that would benefit from an improved Mexican reputation have an incentive to act. We will focus here on the main stakeholder within our client's realm. What follows is a brief account of what the Mexican Government has attempted in recent years to improve Mexican reputation, a basic analysis of its approach, and recommendations for improvement.

6.4 PAST AND CURRENT EFFORTS TO IMPROVE MEXICO'S REPUTATION

The evidence suggests that Mexico's past administrations have focused mostly on increasing the country's warmth image while neglecting its competence image. Amongst a sample of the U.S. population surveyed in 2012, 77% of respondents agreed with the statement that Mexico has a rich cultural heritage. This cultural richness dimension is more likely to evoke likeability of Mexicans than their competence. In contrast, 65% of respondents believed that Mexico is a dangerous and unstable country, which would suggest a perception of a Mexican government incapable of managing its people and territories.[96]

Certainly, such evidence is only circumstantial. There are a myriad of factors that could have shaped U.S. public opinion. However, a cursory review of Mexican reputational efforts undertaken by the government corroborates the notion that warmth has taken precedence over competence. Several efforts have been made to improve Mexico's reputation, some are past and others ongoing.

During the Calderon Administration (2006-2012), the government launched a campaign to position Mexico Brand (*Marca Mexico*) around the globe. This strategy was led by the Secretariat of Tourism and had as its main objective to reduce the gap between reality and perception in the realms of Mexico's tourism and culture, economy and investment, and sustainability.[97] However, rather than focusing on the content of the message, the campaign focused on specific channels of communication[n] through which to sought to promote overall positive images of Mexico.[98] Unfortunately, by focusing on positive images in general, campaign managers ignored the kind of positive images (warmth v. competence) that would best improve Mexico's stereotype often defaulting to touristic appeal, rather than performance and success. A sister campaign "Mexico, the Place You Thought You Knew," had similar shortcomings.[99]

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[n] The public relations campaign was based on the following axes: 1) Public relations with international media, 2) Public opinion leaders, 3) Image campaign in Europe, 4) Special projects and events, 5) Brand presence, 6) Celebrities as spokespeople and, 7) Online and social network presence.

Current reputational improvement efforts in Mexico have increased the focus on competence, by generating messages that indicate future and current economic power. However, still one of the main focus is on projecting Mexico's likeability (warmth).

One area of competence where Mexican officials have focused is commerce, and Mexico's relevance in the world market. Several facts can be emphasized to show Mexican status: every minute, one million dollars are traded between Mexico and the United States, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that 6 million American jobs depend on trade with Mexico, the United States exports more to Mexico than to the BRICS countries combined, to Japan and China combined, or to France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK taken together and, finally, that Mexico is one of the top three export destinations for 28 different US states.[100] Focusing on these commercial trends can be a starting point to a discourse of status and competence that can improve Mexico's reputation.

Some areas have a focus on future competence. This is the case of the To Move Mexico (*Mover a Mexico*) slogan. In January 2013, at the beginning of the new administration, the Mexican government embraced the phrase, "to move Mexico." This idea captured the spirit of a reform strategy that targeted education, equality, economic growth, strengthening the country's leadership in the world and promoting peace.[101] The intention was to promote credible growth and stability. While helpful to shift the mindsets of Mexicans and foreigners towards Mexico's nascent potential, this campaign remained speculative, stuck half way between the present and the future because it focused on the future capabilities of Mexico rather than its present status. As mentioned above, in terms of perception, people make a direct association between status and competence. A discourse based on what Mexico will become, rather than on the capacities that currently exist only make limited impacts in improving Mexico's reputation. As Duncan Wood, Director of the Mexico Institute at the Wilson Center said, "[t]his is dramatically different from what we've seen before, I reserve judgment for the time being on whether this is all going to work out."[102]

Other fronts have primarily focused on warmth by focusing on likeability (warmth), for example, the tourism campaign "Live it to believe it." This campaign has created a series of short videos that show an English-speaking tourist reminiscing on a trip to Mexico. Elements of warmth are present throughout the video, with the narrator using phrases such as, "the comfort, the colors, the flavors,"[103] and "it's such a peaceful place but so full of life."[104] While these likeable traits are dominant, there are some elements of competence in phrases like, "I never though luxury and nature could go so hand in hand,"[105] which suggest that, by merging luxury and nature, Mexico has the ability to do something that is difficult to do - competence. Unfortunately, those few elements of competence are attenuated by continuously emphasizing desirable goods or services (resources) that are inherent, a product of the past, come without effort or do not require any major skill to obtain - warmth. Examples of warmth trumping competence include, the narrator commenting that Mexico is "a place with the artistic beat of a big city but the flavor of a traditional Mexican town"[106] and "a city with so much history that in many places it seemed that time had stopped."[107]

As explained above, a key driver of Mexican reputation is the perception the U.S. public has of the Mexican diaspora. A preliminary analysis of the diaspora's discourse in the United States suggests that it has had some moderate focus on competence by highlighting stories of successful Hispanics, Mexicans and Latinos in general. However, these stories are often presented as "exceptional," that is, exceptions to

the rule, which is the stereotype. More worrisome is the discourse diaspora leaders have adopted regarding Hispanic demographic growth. The argument has consistently been framed as calls to recognize the economic, cultural and political might of diaspora's growing numbers.[108] Just as an example, representing 10% of the electorate, Latinos were instrumental to the victory of U.S. President Barack Obama in 2012.[109]

While compelling to the internal audience, the demographic might rhetoric is likely undermining the perception of friendly intentions (warmth) within the U.S. public, who perceive a growing Hispanic population as a competitor for resources. Remember that many Americans tend to see Latinos as welfare recipients, not educated, and as people who take American jobs.[110] °

As this section has attempted to show, the messaging Mexico has used to improve the country's reputation has emphasized warmth to the point that, on occasions, it has neglected competence. Even if successful, a strategy that focuses on Mexico's likeability while neglecting Mexico's capabilities could at best result in a low-competence/high-warmth stereotype, which is shared with elderly people or housewives. That stereotype would continue to subject Mexico and Mexicans to passive, systemic harm.

The only benefit of increasing the warmth of the current low-competence/low-warmth stereotype would be eliciting active help. As previously discussed, other things being equal, active help is preferable to active harm. However, because active harm or help requires effort, it is less important than passive, systemic help or harm, where institutions, rules, or expectations can help or hinder Mexicans without requiring any additional effort from the U.S. population. Such an environment can only be fostered by increasing the perception of Mexican competence.

Our preliminary analysis suggests that previous Mexican reputation campaigns, which have focused on warmth rather than competence, have had a limited impact in improving the low-competence/low-warmth stereotype. Our analysis also suggests that the Mexican diaspora's efforts to improve its reputation, while incorporating competence, have framed such status achievements as "exceptional" rather than a regular occurrence. Furthermore, we believe that a discourse that focuses on the influence due to demographic growth may alienate the sympathies of the American public. Thus, the diasporas efforts to improve their image may have also had limited impact.

° During our analysis, we have remained fully conscious and empathetic to the struggles the Hispanic community faces to establish itself as an integral part of American society. Our observation of the resistance and perceptions of threat that will be linked to the growth of the Hispanic population is merely descriptive. Our hope is that our analysis can help our diaspora understand and minimize resistance from the U.S. population as it rises to prosperity in the United States.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE MEXICAN REPUTATION

So far, our analysis has sought to demonstrate that Mexican reputation is a stereotype that simplifies the reality of Mexico and its diaspora through a filter of incompetence and untrustworthiness. We have deliberately emphasized the pervasiveness of this stereotype to demonstrate its existence and stress its harmful effects on all Mexicans. However, this stereotype (and the reputation it fuels) remains a social construct, a convenient idea subject to replacement. To accomplish this shift, we present the Mexican Government with five recommendations based on our analysis. This list is not exhaustive. Rather, it seeks to give the reader a different way to think about reputation, as well as strategies transform it.

7.1 STRATEGY 1: IT'S ALL ABOUT COMPETENCE: DEPLOY A NATIONAL COMPETENCE STRATEGY

Focus on competence, not beauty: Reputation is about what we do best. Our communications with the world should focus on those activities in which Mexico is the best or among the best in the world. This exercise should not be confused with focusing on the uniqueness of Mexico, unless such uniqueness is a result of competence. Stereotypes are a blunt tool that does not distinguish among fields. For example, it would be preferable to be seen as the best carpenters in the world rather than mediocre software programmers. Focusing on competence means promoting those skills we have developed and applied: the things we do. We should not focus on culture or natural beauty: things that have been given to us by history. While these attributes of our country are important, they do not convey competence. We may think we have beautiful beaches, rich culture, and delicious food, but almost everyone else in the world believes the same about their own country. We can only afford to promote the beauty of our country once we have secured an undisputed position as a competent developed nation.

Only the present matters. Not the future. Not the past: Our prospective power is hardly irrelevant. Reputation will only be affected by perceptions of realized potential. The idea, often expressed by Mexicans, that "we have great potential" must be replaced with a notion of current capabilities and competence. Having great potential, by definition, means that the asset in question has not been actualized. It does not exist. And that recurrent reference to unrealized potential may be perceived as a symptom of low competence. We must portray Mexico as a developed, not a developing country. We must talk about the things that we are great at now, not what we will be great at tomorrow.

Nice Nations Finish Last: Unless status has been secured, perceptions of friendliness or niceness will likely harm our reputation. When people think of groups, they tend to associate high-warmth with low-competence. Presenting Mexicans as warm, or nice, or likeable will in turn make people believe that we have a low-status and low-competence. The countries that have a reputation, and the stereotype, that we would like to have, like Asians, do not have a high-warmth stereotype. Warmth is a luxury. We can worry about that once we are considered competent.

Create a Competence Filter: Both our internal and external communications must project competence. This recommendation does not require that Mexico instantly become competent on everything it does. While aspirational, such an objective would be (at least in the short term) impractical. Rather, we recommend focusing on things we do extraordinarily well, or on the extraordinary way in which we do

ordinary or challenging things. Here are examples of messages focusing on competence regardless of the subject-matter:

Security: "Certainly, like many countries, Mexico has a security problem. However, we have confronted this problem by identifying and applying the most effective crime prevention techniques, and the best violence neutralization strategies from all over the world. Here is how we are doing it…"

Economy: "Today, we are the 11th largest economy in the world. It is a highly industrialized and technologically complex economy. We are the leading flat-screen exporter, the 4th exporter of new light vehicles in the world and one of the largest suppliers to the American Aerospace industry."

Tourism: "All over the world, there are countries with beautiful beaches and natural resources, but no other country has perfected the fusion of luxury and natural beauty like Mexico's hotel and resort industry has."[p] "Many countries have archeological sites, but the expertise and engagement of Mexican archeologists will make the Mayan and Aztec civilizations come to life for you."[q]

7.2   STRATEGY 2: THEY WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND HOW COMPLEX WE ARE: MAKE IT SIMPLE. MAKE IT ABOUT COMPETENCE.

Our Brain Is Built to Simplify: The world is a complex place. Our brain is not capable of understanding all of its complexity. That is where stereotypes come into play. They simplify the world by picking out some things and ignoring others, allowing us to digest reality. Providing people with additional information so that they can understand our complex reality is a waste of resources because they will not understand it. We are physiologically, neurologically built to avoid complexity. Therefore, understanding that we are a simultaneously poor and rich country, that we have insecure regions but extremely safe cities is not easy to process.

Build Simple Images of Competence: The images of competence we have to promote should be as simple as the stereotypes they are trying to replace. Granted, that replacement will not happen overnight. Remember that national reputations are accumulations of images over time. The images that have accumulated have portrayed a stereotype of low-competence and low-warmth. To change this reputation, we need to change the content of the images that have accumulated. We change the content by installing a competence filter to the images we project.

7.3   STRATEGY 3: INCLUDE THE DIASPORA. WE SHARE THE MEXICAN REPUTATION.

Promote a Competent Mexican Reputation: It is no longer useful to think of Mexico's reputation. Mexico and its diaspora both are affected by, and together create the Mexican reputation. Through accidents of history, we have landed together in this low-warmth/low-competence stereotype and we will need each

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[p] This idea was extracted from the "Live it to Believe It" campaign. This is an example of how we can improve the framing by focusing on competence.

[q] It is important that we embrace our rich cultural heritage

other to change it. Remember that stereotypes are created by the most salient, most extreme images, but also by those that are most available. Many of these images come from the news, and other media, which include stories covered Mexico and of Mexicans in the United States.

Mexico Means Mexican, Hispanic, and Latino: The Mexican reputation is also shared by the full Hispanic community. The stereotype held by the U.S. population does not distinguish between Mexican, Mexico, Hispanic, and Latino. We are all in the same low-competence/low-warmth cluster. Regardless of what the specific points of the reputation improvement strategy chosen are, if we fail to coordinate with these groups it will be much more difficult to effect the desired change. Therefore, reputation strategists must work with the diaspora leaders in the United States and engage them in a conversation about the state of our shared reputation and the best tactics to, together, infuse it with the notion of competence.

7.4   STRATEGY 4: CHANGE THE NORM: TELL STORIES OF (NORMAL) PEOPLE WHO EMBODY COMPETENCE

Promote Competent Mexicans: Send successful Mexicans around the world to tell their stories, talk about their research, accomplishments, and contributions. Mexican athletes, students, entrepreneurs, civil society leaders, and scientists are all representations of Mexican competence. Let them talk about how they are innovating in business, in science, in art and in policy. Promote new inventions and new ideas. Find the Mexicans that are out in the world that are innovating on their own and support them. However, just as it is important to tell their stories, it is crucial to frame these stories as simply revealing the Mexican norm, the standard we expect of ourselves. Stories about exceptional individuals give audiences an excuse to retain their stereotype. Exceptional images bypass the stereotype filter.

Instill Competence as a Value: Promote competence as a social value through school curriculum, public discourse, and public recognition of Mexicans who are doing extraordinary things, notwithstanding whether they live in Mexico or elsewhere.

Increase Merit-Based Educational Exchanges: The favorable stereotype of competence is often attributed to college students. Mexico could substantially boost the availability of competent images of Mexico and Mexicans by fomenting educational exchanges between the United States and leading Mexican universities. As more people interact with Mexican college students, they will slowly start associating the concepts of "Mexican" with "college student," replacing incompetent images and improving reputation.

7.5   ONE FINAL NOTE: KNOWLEDGE IS POWER. OBTAIN DATA TO MAKE TARGETED INTERVENTIONS.

This project is the first major attempt to analyze Mexican reputation based on stereotypes. The resulting National Competence Approach is a systematic implementation of the insights obtained from that analysis. While the evidence indicates that the main driver of unfavorable Mexican reputation is a low-competence/low-warmth stereotype, much effort was spent gathering data from several, very diverse, sources. If our reader finds our analysis compelling, and concrete steps are taken towards the implementation of these recommendations, it is vital to secure essential data.

We recommend instituting a centralized, ongoing, accessible data gathering process that tracks disaggregated U.S. public opinion about Mexico that includes overall perceptions of competence, likeability and questions that track opinions about Mexican demographics, industry, democracy, etc. That same information should also be gathered for U.S. public opinions about Mexicans living in the United States. Armed with such feedback, not only would the Mexican government (and its diaspora) be better able to target interventions to increase competence and warmth perceptions, but it would also be equipped to monitor and evaluate their effectiveness.

ANNEX

The Top Gear Dialogue[111]

1 May: Chaps. Listen. Have you ever wanted, a Mexican sports car?
2 Clarkson: Yes, I have.
3 Audience: [laughter]
4 May: Well, it's good news, because there is one. And here it is. [shows photo] And it's called the Tortilla.
5 Audience: [loud laughter]
6 Clarkson: It is not. It is NOT called the Tortilla. What's it called?
7 May: [smiling] It's. I can't remember. It's something a bit like that.
8 Clarkson: So you just made up the name.
9 May: Yes I did. I've forgotten.
10 Audience: [laughter]
11 Hammond: Why would you want a Mexican car? Because cars reflect national characteristics, don't they? So German cars are sort of very, well built and efficient.
12 Clarkson: Yeah.
13 Hammond: Italian cars are flamboyant and quick. Mexican cars are just going to be lazy, feckless, flatulent, overweight.
14 Audience: [laughter]
15 Hammond: Leaning against a fence, asleep, looking at a cactus, with a blanket with a hole in the middle on as a coat.
16 Audience and other presenters: [laughter]
17 May: It's-it's interesting, because they can't do food the
Mexicans, can they? Because it's all like sick with cheese on it.
18 Audience: [laughter]
19 Hammond: Refried sick!
20 May: Yeah refried sick.
21 Clarkson: How much is this Mexican sports car?
22 May: The refried Mexican sports car is… 33 thousand pounds.
23 Clarkson: That isn't enough.
24 May: It isn't?
25 Clarkson: No no it isn't, because somebody's paid for that to be developed and it's got to be shipped over. That's 800 quid worth of car there.
26 May: Well you say that but they do say that in their blurb…[holds up paper to read] Rack and pinion steering.
27 Hammond: Wow, it's got steering!?
28 Audience: [laughter]
29 Hammond: I'm sorry but just imagine waking up and remembering, you're Mexican… [breaks up laughing].
30 Clarkson: That'd be brilliant. It'd be brilliant cos- cos you could you could just go straight back to sleep again. [lolls back in chair asleep] Ahh I'm a Mexican I'll just go back to sleep.
31 Hammond: It's all I'm gonna do all day.
32 Clarkson: That's why we're not going to get any complaints about this. Because the in the Mexican embassy, the ambassador's going to be sitting there with the remote control like this [puts head down and starts snoring].
33 Audience: [laughter]
34 Clarkson: They won't complain. It's fine

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