

## **CORPORATE DIPLOMACY AS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF CORPORATE BRAND IDENTITY: THE EXAMPLE OF SWISSQPRINT**

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**Introduction.** In an era marked by geopolitical instability, global conflict, and heightened societal awareness, businesses are no longer viewed as merely economic actors but as societal agents with cultural, ethical, and political influence. Multinational enterprises (MNEs) must increasingly manage their reputations not only through marketing and operations but also through what has come to be known as corporate diplomacy – the intentional engagement with cultural, political, and societal stakeholders to enhance legitimacy and strengthen brand identity [1].

As global consumers become more conscious of the values and identities behind the brands they choose, corporate brand identity (CBI) is becoming inseparable from a company's societal positioning and country-of-origin effect. Particularly, companies rooted in strong national brand imagery (such as Swiss precision or Japanese reliability) leverage cultural elements as part of their corporate identity. This paper focuses on SwissQ, a high-end printing machinery producer from Switzerland, as a compelling case of how corporate and cultural diplomacy can serve as both tools and outcomes of a powerful brand identity.

### **Corporate Diplomacy and Brand Identity: Conceptual Connection.**

Corporate diplomacy is increasingly understood as a strategic process through which businesses seek legitimacy, stakeholder engagement, and symbolic power by aligning their values and practices with broader societal expectations [2, 1]. While public diplomacy serves to improve the perception of a nation's policies abroad, corporate diplomacy works to position a company as a credible, responsible institutional actor within global civil society.

According to Ordeix-Rigo and Duarte (2009) [1], corporate diplomacy goes beyond one-way corporate communication to create platforms for two-way dialogue, shared values, and participatory decision-making. In this sense, corporate diplomacy serves as a tool for managing stakeholder relationships and a signal of brand legitimacy and institutional maturity. When linked with corporate brand identity, this process becomes a powerful differentiator. CBI, as a set of associations and values representing a company, is strengthened by diplomatic activities that demonstrate the company's relevance, responsibility, and resonance with societal values [3].

### **SwissQ: Engineering National Identity into Corporate Brand.**

SwissQprint AG, a niche producer of wide-format UV inkjet printers, exemplifies the fusion of country-of-origin branding and corporate diplomacy. Operating in a niche industry dominated by large multinational players, SwissQ has managed to create a global brand image that is not only technologically advanced but also deeply embedded in Swiss cultural identity [4].

SwissQ's entire brand narrative revolves around the concept of "Swissness." The company emphasizes precision, quality, innovation, and sustainability – attributes strongly associated with Swiss national identity [5]. Its corporate slogan, imagery, and messaging frequently feature Swiss natural landscapes, reinforcing the country's environmentally conscious and precise engineering culture. This deliberate alignment with Switzerland's cultural assets is not incidental: it is a form of cultural diplomacy wherein SwissQ becomes a symbolic representative of the nation's values. According to Zamorano (2016) [6], cultural diplomacy involves the transmission of cultural values, ideas, and identities to foster cross-border relationships. SwissQ accomplishes this not through governmental arrangements but through brand positioning, visual communication, and cultural narratives.

Unlike many state-sponsored cultural diplomacy programs, SwissQ has not entered formal cooperation with government agencies. Nevertheless, the company projects itself as a cultural ambassador, successfully extending its symbolic power abroad. By staying true to its roots (utilizing a predominantly Swiss workforce, maintaining local supplier networks, and emphasizing environmentally friendly production) the company reinforces its credibility and authenticity. In doing so, it contributes to the nation-branding of Switzerland in sectors traditionally unrelated to its identity, such as printing machinery, rather than chocolate, watches, or finance. Moreover, SwissQ's hands-on international client service approach, including a comprehensive distributor network that focuses on post-sale support and collaboration, demonstrates corporate diplomacy in practice. This close client interaction builds long-term stakeholder trust – an essential component of legitimacy as defined [7].

In addition, through organizing and sponsoring international creative competitions and collaborating with artists and designers globally, SwissQ reinforces not only its innovative character but also contributes to international cultural exchange. Such actions enhance its CBI by situating the brand within global conversations on creativity, sustainability, and design – hallmarks of contemporary cultural diplomacy [8].

**Output for Ukraine: Toward Identity-Building through Corporate Diplomacy.** While SwissQ showcases a mature integration of culture and brand, countries like Ukraine are still in the early stages of linking national identity with corporate brand strategy. The ongoing war and Ukraine's efforts to restore its historical and cultural legacy provide a backdrop against which businesses are reimagining their roles. Ukraine's cultural attributes – resilience,

creativity, knowledge, and dedication – can serve as the foundation for a strong CBI if businesses align their branding and diplomacy efforts accordingly. Inspired by global examples like SwissQ, Ukrainian companies have the opportunity to act as cultural ambassadors, using CSR, stakeholder engagement, and storytelling as tools for both brand development and national soft power projection. We can argue that for emerging-market companies, corporate diplomacy may be one of the few effective tools to break through global biases and reconstruct national reputations from within the private sector.

Ordeix-Rigo and Duarte (2009) [1] stress that corporate diplomacy is not aimed at short-term gain but rather at long-term stakeholder commitment, achieved through transparency, shared values, and social contribution. Companies like SwissQ illustrate how corporate legitimacy, once achieved through authentic diplomatic and cultural engagement, feeds back into CBI, reinforcing both symbolic and practical value in the eyes of stakeholders. In this process, CSR serves as a tactic within a broader corporate diplomacy strategy. By aligning CSR with cultural and diplomatic objectives, companies can build legitimacy, influence, and a strong brand identity that withstands reputational and geopolitical risks.

**Conclusion.** Corporate diplomacy represents a crucial strategic process for companies aiming to elevate their corporate brand identity in a world increasingly shaped by cultural consciousness and geopolitical instability. The example of SwissQ demonstrates how a small, niche company can transcend its size and industry limitations to become a cultural ambassador, building a brand that resonates far beyond its products. This model is especially valuable for emerging markets like Ukraine, where businesses must simultaneously construct both national and corporate narratives in the global arena. Whether backed by state institutions or operating independently, companies that invest in authentic, culturally rooted, and diplomatically aware branding strategies stand to gain not just commercial success, but symbolic and institutional legitimacy.

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