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## The Use of Soft Power in Digital Public Diplomacy: the Cases of Brazil and India in the EU

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### *Summary*

The focus of this comparative study is on the use of soft power in the digital public diplomacy of two Global South players, Brazil and India, in EU member states. The main objective of this research is to find out how their embassies use digital diplomacy in communication through their official websites and to identify which soft power resources they dominantly use. Quantitative content analysis and thematic analysis were used to analyze the categories and subcategories on the main menu and special banners on each embassy's home page, and the associated content. Unlike the Indian embassies, which fully embraced digital diplomacy 2.0, the Brazilian embassies do not utilize the full potential of digital diplomacy and primarily remain reliant on websites only. According to this research, the Brazilian embassies in the EU use film as a dominant soft power resource in their digital diplomacy, while the Indian embassies use yoga as a powerful diplomatic tool. Still, both approaches are not enough to attract European publics. There remains a lot of space for improvement and better usage of soft power resources and digital public diplomacy potentials in communicating the powers of Brazil and India in EU countries.

*Keywords:* Soft Power, Digital Public Diplomacy, India, Brazil, Global South

### **Introduction**

For the majority of non-Western, rising economic powers, public diplomacy is recognized as a tool to move upwards in the global order. Melissen writes about the 'rising Rest', thinking of the BRIC's (Brazil, Russia, India, and China),<sup>1</sup> the

<sup>1</sup> In 2003 analysts at Goldman Sachs came up with the acronym "BRIC's economies", or economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. They foresaw that in less than 40 years the BRIC states would catch up with the leading economies of the world thus becoming the "new engine of growth consumer power". However, the term cannot be understood as an analytical category

MIKT's (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, and Turkey), and the other emerging economies in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, which "in an international environment of tectonic power shifts" have and present an intense interest in public diplomacy (Melissen, 2013, p. 7). A strategically communicated public image, which is a tool of power, can help generate better political recognition, better market position, and finally better profits (Ballerini, 2020).

In the mobile, networked and information-saturated 21<sup>st</sup> century, communication patterns changed dramatically. The focus is no longer on the information itself, but on the stories with "the most compelling narrative" which sell and "win the day" (Copeland, 2013, p. 1). Because of these changes, the nature of public diplomacy changed as well in its purpose to make a state noticed by other countries, or remain unnoticed, depending on its political goals. It is often stressed that foreign ministries and foreign services need reform and that "the new diplomacy has been driven by the adoption, within diplomatic institutions and government more generally, of digitally-based systems of data creation, transmission, and storage using the Internet, social media platforms, computers, and a variety of wireless electronic devices" (Ibid.).

The "economic risers" of the Western hemisphere, such as Brazil, are "frustrated that overseas publics see only the divisions in their societies rather than their economic successes" (Melissen, 2013, p. 7). The same is true with India, which is envisioned in the West through stereotypes of a backward poor country known for its malnutrition, human rights violations, and not as a civilization of great importance (Singh, 2012, as cited in Malhotra, 2015, p. 5).

The main objective of this research is to find out how emerging Global South powers, Brazil and India, the members of BRICS and trilateral diplomatic partnership of India, Brazil, and South African Republic (IBSA),<sup>2</sup> practice public diplomacy in the EU in years 2018 and 2019, i.e., how they brand their country and communicate with European citizens through the official websites of their embassies in

since BRIC states greatly differ from one another in matters of internal politics, international goals, and economic structures. The South African Republic joined the group in 2010, making it from then on forward BRICS (Kos-Stanišić, 2010, p. 18).

<sup>2</sup> IBSA is an acronym coined in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century which refers to trilateral partnership of India, Brazil, and South African Republic. This trilateral diplomatic partnership was launched in June of 2003 during the meeting of foreign affairs ministers in Brasilia based on premises of joint interests, with the aim of coordinating actions regarding the trade and security issues on the global level. The identity of South (geographically speaking of South Asia, South America, and South Africa) which IBSA emphasizes closely reminds of the nonalignment. Alas, IBSA's regional identity of the South was not recognized by the international community, especially not by the West. They consider IBSA as a community of "emerging countries", not as collective representatives of the South and its interests (Kos-Stanišić, 2010, p. 18).

EU countries. Within the theoretical framework of the Global South, the main goal of this research is to identify which soft power resources the Brazilian and Indian embassies in EU countries use on their official websites, and to compare which different digital tools and platforms they use. The research was done in 2019, so content analyzed to answer RQ1, 2 and 4 corresponds with that year. To answer RQ3 we analyzed content published in 2018, and the analysis was possible only for Brazil since Indian communication praxis does not include the date of publication (see chapter 4 of this paper). The research questions are:

- RQ1: Which social networks and applications do the Brazilian and Indian embassies in EU countries use to inform and communicate with different audiences?
- RQ2: Which activities of the Brazilian and Indian embassies in EU countries (with an aim to brand the country) are present as a category or subcategory in the main menu and in the special banners on the home pages of the embassies' websites?
- RQ3: Which cultural soft power resources were dominantly communicated in promotion of Brazil on the embassies' websites in EU countries in 2018?
- RQ4: Which soft power resources are dominantly communicated in promotion of India on the embassies' websites in EU countries?

We used quantitative content analysis (Holsti, 1969; Neuendorf, 2002; Riffe et al., 2014) to analyze the usage of social media, social networks, mobile platforms, and applications usage, and to analyze categories and subcategories of the main menu and special banners on the embassies' home pages. The results are presented with the use of descriptive statistics. To analyze the associated content under the categories and subcategories in the main menu and under the special banners on the home pages, as well as to analyze cultural events promoted on the Brazilian embassies' websites in 2018, we used thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) which helped us to organize different topics into clusters. A thematic analysis was also used to code information published about selected events in which a soft power resource was identified. The use of soft power resources was contextualized qualitatively.

This paper consists of an introduction, four sections and a conclusion. The first section provides a theoretical overview of the role of soft power and the digital tools within public diplomacy, the second section provides an overview of Brazil and India as major Global South emerging powers, the third section elaborates the use of soft power and digital diplomacy of Brazil and India, while the fourth section analyses Brazilian and Indian websites of their embassies in EU countries. The conclusion summarizes the research results and provides an evaluation of their attempts to attract European citizens through soft power.

**1. The Role of Soft Power and Digital Tools within Public Diplomacy**

According to Paul Sharp public diplomacy is “the process by which direct relations with people in a country are pursued to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented” (as cited in Melissen, 2005, p. 106). In international relations (IR) the role of public diplomacy, among others, is to brand the country<sup>3</sup> and the nation through its natural beauties, people, historical heritage, culture and arts, sports, but also through finance, the economy, and commercial brands. Its role is to strategically manage communication towards targeted publics in different countries with the main objective to inform and influence them.

Joseph Nye (2011) states that IR theories identify three categories of power – military, economic and ideological-cultural. However, politicians often neglect the latter which is of equal importance as the first two. The first two are recognized as hard power, while the third one is coined as soft power. The right combination of hard and soft power Nye considers to be smart power because of “the ability to combine hard- and soft-power resources into effective strategies” (Nye, 2013, p. 1).

**Figure 1.** Association of Behavioral Types and Features of Hard and Soft Power

	HARD POWER	SOFT POWER
Spectrum of behavior	Command ⇔ Coercion ⇔ Inducement	Agenda Setting ⇔ Attraction ⇔ Cooptation
Most likely resources	Force and sanctions Payments Bribes	Institutions Values Culture Policies

Source: Nye (2011, p. 8), adapted by Rabêlo Neto & de Sousa Filho (2016, p. 38)

In the case of soft power, the ideological and cultural influence seems to be the most significant one when we try to convince others to do something (Nye, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Some scholars, like Abdulsamet Günek (2018), believe that even the branding of states can be considered as a sort of public diplomacy since states with stronger soft power have stronger brand value. Günek concludes that “the country brand has become an important tool of soft power” (Ibid., p. 253).

The goal of soft power diplomacy is to shape the preference of a targeted audience and to produce attraction, to entice and to move people by argument (Nye, 1990; 2008). “In international politics they are the values a country expresses through its culture, through its internal practices and policies, and in the way it handles its relations with others” (Car, Kos-Stanišić & Viduka, 2016, p. 1215). Soft power can be defined as “the ability to get others to want, or accept, what you want” (Vuving, 2009, p. 5). A country’s sources of soft power are its culture (high culture for the elite and popular culture for mass audiences), political values and foreign policies (Madhavi, 2008). Public diplomacy was preceded by cultural diplomacy, which in the words of Milton Cummings is “the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding” (Goff, 2013, p. 2). Still, no matter how many similarities and overlaps they have, it is not possible to equate public diplomacy with cultural diplomacy. According to Goff “cultural diplomacy sits on a spectrum of ideational approaches to diplomacy and is on the soft power side of the equation since it functions by attraction” (Ibid., p. 3).

The main role of foreign policy, conceived as public policy, is to meet the needs of the population, and target national interests, and its principles are to be inclusive, democratic, and participatory. Therefore, soft power diplomacy is “particularly relevant for middle powers” (Bry, 2017, p. 1) that are “neither great nor small in terms of international power, capacity and influence” (Jordaan, 2003, p. 165), or those that are “below that of a superpower, or of a great power, but with sufficient ability to shape international events” (Britannica.com, 2020). Middle powers’ style of diplomacy has been labelled “niche diplomacy”, because they can pursue just limited foreign-policy objectives (Ibid.).

According to María Luisa Azpiroz (2014, p. 2), in the context of globalization, the digital information and communication revolution and the larger influence of civil society in international relations, public diplomacy has evolved into a “new public diplomacy”, which has an approach that is more social. The development of digital technologies transposes diplomatic communication to digital information and communication platforms, and especially to social networks and social media. Therefore, the practices and the context of public diplomacy have become influenced by the availability of these new digital platforms (Hayden, 2018, p. 1). A new challenge for foreign policy makers is to accept technology as a leading factor towards new forms of public action that influences the way countries implement their foreign policy strategies. These new approaches in diplomatic communication are called digital diplomacy (Hayden, 2018). Digital diplomacy or eDiplomacy refers to the use of the Internet and information and communication platforms (social media, social networks and mobile applications) to help achieve foreign policy objectives (Natarajan, 2014). Ilan Manor & Elad Segev (2015) noted two levels of digital diplomacy. The first one comes from the foreign ministry, and the second

one is from the embassies located around the world. According to Bjola (2015, p. 4-6), over the last 10 years, new digital information technologies, and especially social networks, have revolutionized the way diplomacy works. It is an absolute must for diplomats to have competences in three areas – representation, negotiation, and communication – while taking in consideration the fact that lately, communication is becoming the most prominent and it changes the process and the diplomatic profession (Aguirre Azócar & Erlandsen, 2018).

Academic papers that analyze “digital diplomacy 2.0”<sup>4</sup> focus on the use of social networks and social media in diplomacy and can lead to the conclusion that public diplomacy which utilizes only the digital technology of the world wide web (www) could be considered as “digital diplomacy 1.0”. Kent and Taylor (1998) concluded that the world wide web facilitated the acceptance of two-sided dialog with an exchange of views and ideas between a given organization and the public. Furthermore, they offer five principles (preconditions) that are necessary to create a “web-based relationship”.<sup>5</sup> Digital diplomacy 1.0 represented the conceptual change since ministries of foreign affairs were coerced to utilize a model that was completely opposite in comparison to the commonly used one: instead of being secretive and instead of protecting information, ministries and diplomats in general had to become open and to share information. Thus, ministries of foreign affairs were coerced to “adopt dialogic models of communication as opposed to monologic ones” (Kampf, Manor & Segev, 2015, p. 332).

At the end of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the websites of ministries of foreign affairs and those of diplomatic missions of different states contain links that lead to social networks (connect with us) thus representing an “entry ticket” to the higher level – level 2.0 – of digital diplomacy. Still, diplomacy is very slow, and has been very conservative in adopting new digital information and communication platforms. Traditional diplomacy methods remain, no matter how much digital diplomacy has been presented to be beneficiary in the promotion of transparency, accountability and more efficient interaction between countries.

## **2. Brazil and India as Major Global South Emerging Powers and EU Strategic Partners**

During the Cold War, the world was divided into the First, the Second, and the Third World. Western capitalist developed states, spearheaded by the US, belonged to the

<sup>4</sup> The term was launched in 2007 when a few states, through their ministries of foreign affairs, conducted an experiment, while nowadays the use of digital technologies in diplomacy is a global phenomenon (Manor, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> 1) dialogic loop, 2) usefulness of information provided by organizations, 3) generating return visits to a website, 4) interface usability, 5) conservation of visitors (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

First World, communist states, spearheaded by the USSR, belonged to the Second World, while all other underdeveloped and nonaligned states belonged to the Third World. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the emergence of the New World Order, hence the disappearance of the Second World, a change in terminology took place. The world was once again divided, this time into the states of the Global North and the states of the Global South. However, the new “great divide” was not solely geographically determined since “there are Souths in the geographic North and Norths in the geographic South [...] the South represents an internal periphery and subaltern regional position” (Garland Mahler, 2017, p. 1). The designation “Global” meant just that, thus rectifying Brandt’s simplified classification of states in the world,<sup>6</sup> on which the new terminology was based. Siba Grovogui (2011, p. 157) thinks that “the Global South captures the spirit of Third World engagements”. Dirlik (2007) compares the suggestion that the “South must invent itself and acquire visibility on the global scene” with “the philosophy of self-help”. The term Global South is not static, thus in accordance with geopolitical changes it changes its meaning and the states that belong to it, thereby implying that there is no exact division of the states in the world (Wolters et al., 2015).

The term Global South has political weight with positive and negative connotations. Alvaro Mendez (2015, p. 15) emphasizes the positive or rather the empowering aspects. The combined economic output of three leading economies of the Global South – Brazil, India, and China – in 2019 was 2 trillion less than the economic output of the leading state of the Global North – the US.<sup>7</sup> “This surge of the emerging economies is now in process of reconfiguring the political and economic geometry of the international system [...] to reshape – both the formal and the informal institution of global governance” (Mendez, 2015, p. 15). This phenomenon of cooperation between the emerging economies of the Global South, hence “South-South cooperation”, was to be facilitated by BRICS and especially IBSA. Flemes (2009, p. 403) stated that “soft balancing based on a value-driven middle power discourse is a suitable concept to explain IBSA’s strategy in global institutions” because their goal was “to create rules and institutions of global governance”. After the starting zest during the beginning of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in trying to represent one of the bodies of global governance which would bring change to global politi-

<sup>6</sup> The terms South and North were popularized by the Brandt Commission established in 1977 on the suggestion of the World Bank. In the early 1980s the Commission published reports in which the world was divided into the more developed (richer) which was situated, except for Australia and New Zealand, on the northern hemisphere, and the less developed (poorer) which was situated south of the 30<sup>th</sup> parallel (Dirlik, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> GDP Nominal Ranking 2019: 1. USA – 21.4 trillion USD; 2. China – 14.51 trillion USD; 5. India – 2.9 trillion USD; 9. Brazil – 1.8 trillion USD (Statisticstimes.com, 2019).

cal economy and foster the reform of the UN's Security Council, it later came to a standstill which nowadays has resulted in IBSA losing its importance.<sup>8</sup> Economically, all three states competed with each other to enlarge their piece of the export pie on the markets of the Global North, while India and Brazil contested each other for the potential position of a permanent member of the Security Council (Taylor, 2009). Despite the wish to cooperate, they were "natural" competitors.

While in the 1960s and 1970s both India and Brazil were "self-identifying as middle powers", in the 21<sup>st</sup> century each country "re-branded itself through public diplomacy" (Cooper, 2009, p. 29).

According to Maslova and Entin (2019) the BRICS group is no longer "the simple acronym" but a global political player. Scholars still consider Brazil to be a middle power – an emerging (Jordaan, 2003) or global (Malamud, 2011) one. While the status of India is more contested, is it an "emerging great power" because it possesses the hard power (nuclear power, the size of the country, and large population). "India's economic growth and de-facto recognition of the status of nuclear power influenced the attitudes of the international public about India as 'an emerging power with expanding global clout'" (Ritambhara, 2013, p. 1, as cited in Car, Kos-Stanišić & Viduka, 2016, p. 1215-1216). India is very often seen as a "nearly-power that cannot quite get its acts together" although it would have much to offer (*The Economist*, 2013) or "A Would-Be Great Power" which "resists its own rise" (Miller, 2013). In his multi-book essay *Will India Ever Emerge as a Great Power?* Sumit Ganguly (2018) concludes that India has the potential to emerge as a great power, but if India's political institutions will not cope with the extraordinary range of societal demands it will always be country of the future.

Brazil and India are emerging Global South powers, mutual strategic partners (Costa Vazquez, 2019) and strategic partners of the EU as well. The EU commits special attention to their strategic partnership which "seem to constitute a crucial part of its increasingly eclectic approaches to tackling the globalized multipolar world" (Ferreira-Pereira & Vysotskaya Guedes Vieira, 2016, p. 3).

Diplomatic relations between Brazil and the EC/EU were established in 1960 and they blossomed in 2007 with the establishment of the strategic partnership (more in Kos-Stanišić, 2016). Brazil is the largest and economically the most important Latin American country with the unique position as a regional power, one of the leaders of the developing world and emerging world power as well. Brazil is the only Latin American country which cooperates with the EU on all three levels: as a member of The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) on the bi-regional level, as a member of The Southern Common Market (MECO-

<sup>8</sup> IBSA placed their hopes on BRICS because Russia and China are members of the Security Council, but BRICS proved to be a disappointment on this issue (Bhatia, 2019).



SUR) on the sub-regional level, and as a country which has signed the agreement on Strategic Partnership with the EU. The main forum of communication between Brazil and the EU were summits that were supposed to be held every second year, but the last one was held in 2014, so it is easy to assume that EU-Brazil partnership has lost enthusiasm. Although Brazil and the EU do not have any existential conflict of interests or values, but share a common cultural heritage, Miriam Gomes Saraiv (2019) concludes that “the strategic EU-Brazil partnership is deactivated”. Still, the EU is economically an important market for Brazilian goods, especially for raw materials, food, drink, or energy. In 2018 Brazil was the EU’s 11<sup>th</sup> largest imports partner and the 16<sup>th</sup> largest exports partner. In 2018 the Netherlands was the largest EU importer of goods from Brazil (€6 billion), while Germany was the largest exporter to Brazil (€9 billion) (Ec.europa.eu, 2019). Regarding the cooperation between the EU and Brazil, it is important to mention that issues of environmental protection and human rights have been very highly ranked, while after the ascendance to power in 2019 of right-wing president Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, the relations between two parties have grown colder.

Bilateral relations between India and the EU were launched in 1962, and during 1990s the Cooperation Agreement was signed. Thanks to the “multi-tiered institutional dialogue” in the form of India-EU summits the bilateral relations were somewhat improved (Ahuja, 2019). In 2004 India became the EU’s strategic partner, but relations did not fully live up to their expectations. As we mentioned before, the EU envisioned India as a “poor big” country, and not as a great civilization (Singh, 2012, as cited in Malhotra, 2015, p. 5), while India envisioned the EU as a “has-been” power, and not of a greater significance to Asia (Günek, 2018). Under the governance of Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi (since 2014) India-EU relations have improved. Modi realized the soft power potential of India’s diaspora in the EU, which could spread positive information and advocate India’s interests. In 2015 a five-year plan for strategic cooperation (The Agenda for Action 2020) was adopted and stipulated a better and more successful cooperation in matters of foreign and security policy, especially when it comes to counter-terrorism and cyber security. Furthermore, at the end of 2018 the document *Elements of a new strategy for relations with India* was adopted and it recommends a further deepening of the strategic cooperation. The EU is the most significant trading partner of India and the second largest investor in India. “In the challenging regional and international environment, the EU and India share the values of democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms and support the rule-based global order centered on multilateralism. Both represent ‘unions of diversity’ and have important stake in each other’s prosperity and sustainable development” (EEAS, 2018). Iwanek (2019) states that during Modi’s turn as PM, India has been mostly interested in dealing with France, Germany and the UK within the EU member states.

### 3. Brazilian and Indian use of soft power and digital diplomacy

As already mentioned, soft power is very important for middle powers, especially for an emerging one such as Brazil, but it is also important for an “emerging great power” such as India. President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002) with his global policy *diplomacia presidencial* put Brazil back on the international stage. However, only during Lula da Silva’s government (2003-2010), and thanks to the use of its soft power potentials, Brazil was accepted as a major international actor (Bry, 2017). According to Hurrell (2010, p. 60), in the beginning of his term Lula stated that Brazil had been not only a pathetic “small” Latin American country of the Third World that had street children and citizens that only know how to play football and to enjoy the Carnival – but Brazil has had so much more to offer.<sup>9</sup> According to Lula: “This country has greatness...” (Ibid.).

Mathilde Chatin (2016, p. 370) stresses that “Brazil naturally exercises soft power” and looking through Brazilian culture and its impact, the country’s image is originally positive, and it is especially tolerance and racial issues that are recognized as important issues that Brazil copes with well. Brazil relies on soft power to spread information and knowledge on Brazilian values and its worldview. This approach consolidates Brazil’s “position as a global political soft power-player in the international political arena” which is key to success in connecting Brazil with global publics (Ibid., p. 384).

According to the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA, commonly known as the Itamaraty) the concept of Brazilian public diplomacy “has been traditionally associated with the promotion of a country’s image abroad” (Itamaraty.gov.br, 2019) Beside this traditional view, in Brazil, public diplomacy is recognized also as a tool for a greater openness of Brazilian foreign policy to international publics, “to promote democratization and transparency of national public policies” (Ibid.). The role of Itamaraty communication through digital media has reinforced the efforts of public diplomacy in Brazil to promote accountability to society and to receive comments and suggestions that contribute to the formulation of public policies attentive to the evolution of national aspirations.

As stated before, it is believed that soft power is especially relevant for the middle powers in the international arena. Brazil holds the status of a middle power on two of the most important platforms – South-South cooperation and increased presence in international “events”.

In the post-industrial economies, culture has become one of the fastest growing sectors, integrating with the service and leisure sector (Werthein, 2003, as cited in Rabêlo Neto & de Sousa Filho, 2016). Soft power has the ideological power to

<sup>9</sup> According to UNESCO Brazil has 22 World Heritage Sites (Whc.unesco.org, 2019a).

unite society, and culture captures it (soft power). According to Azpiroz (2015), Brazilian cultural diplomacy engaged in actions related to education, science, and culture with an objective to share knowledge and to promote values and dialogue in general. Thus, the promotion of cultural production has a great potential to reach international audiences, and that is why culture can be an instrument of ideological power. Although the Brazilian government had recognized the power of culture diplomacy in the early 1920s (Dumont & Flechet, 2014) and kept developing this approach in diplomacy, Brazil was not recognized as an important global player before the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since then, Brazil's presence in global discussions has become highlighted, while the Brazilian government focused on culture as one of the main tools of soft power diplomacy. The image of a country is its power, soft power. Over the last decades, the image of Brazil has become globally recognized as a very positive, "a happy, multicultural, multiracial, friendly, welcoming place and tolerant country fond of parties, high-spirited and exuberant in nature" (Ballerini, 2020). However, according to the Portland Soft Power Index (Softpower30.com, 2019), Brazil is losing its "power of seduction". After a year-on-year decline on the Soft Power 30 Index, Brazil arrested its slide at the position of 29<sup>th</sup> in 2018, while in 2015 Brazil was 23<sup>rd</sup>. According to Ballerini (2020), currently the most famous Brazilian soft power sources of carnival, bossa nova and soap operas, not to mention football, are under threat.<sup>10</sup>

Gandhi and Nehru emphasized the importance of the soft power of India and they used it in the global anti-colonial movement and later the Non-Aligned Movement (Car, Kos-Stanišić & Viduka, 2016, p. 1215). Public diplomacy was recognized in India as a crucial instrument that the government can use "to mobilize its culture, political values and foreign policies to communicate with and attract the public and government of foreign countries" (Nye, 2008, p. 95).

India's Public Diplomacy Division of MFA established in 2006 is "the only one of a host of players engaged in deliberate or incidental projection of soft power" (Suri, 2011, p. 299), but has been aimed "more at shaping global image than influencing the foreign policy attitudes of foreign publics [...] blurring public diplomacy with public relations" (Hanson, 2012). According to Kalathmika Natarajan a crucial task for countries seeking influence is "providing information and creating favorable knowledge about the country, its policies, and its future role" (Natarajan, 2014, p. 91). Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) tries to maximize the use of new technologies. It considers the Internet as a digital space that enables two-sided communication with the younger publics within and outside of India. India is trying to sell its "better story" by the means of digital diplomacy, and the best example for

<sup>10</sup> More about Brazilian soft power under Bolsonaro in Ballerini, 2020.

that is the website PDD ([www.indiandiplomacy.in](http://www.indiandiplomacy.in)) which represents the virtual archive of India's soft power reach. India's diplomacy is very much active on social media as well. Natarajan (2014, p. 100) believes that India's public diplomacy "has revolved around an overwhelming emphasis on soft power" and that India's political elites should resist these urges. India should not only deal in the promotion of cultural campaigns and tourism, rather it should communicate its political decisions and goals as well.<sup>11</sup>

According to Malhotra, India's soft power resources are spiritual heritage, the movie industry, cuisine, the IT industry, scientific achievements, and India's emergence as a global innovation hub (Malhotra, 2015, pp. 2-3). Mukherjee's (2014, p. 48, as cited in Car, Kos-Stanišić & Viduka, 2016, p. 1216) list of India's soft power resources is longer: "sports, music, art, film, literature, beauty pageantry, anti-colonial history, democratic institutions, free press, independent judiciary, vibrant civil society, multi-ethnic polity, secularism, pluralism, skilled English-speaking workers, food, handicrafts, yoga, status of responsible nuclear power, Bangalore (IT sector), large diaspora".<sup>12</sup> In India, film and Bollywood<sup>13</sup> have been the most influential tools of promoting the country's national culture, heritage<sup>14</sup> and tradition (Kaur, 2002). Bollywood plays an important role in enhancing India's image in Europe. Shashi Tharoor, the former Union Minister of State for External Affairs, was one of the greatest advocates of India's soft power as it was embodied in film and Bollywood, yoga, ayurveda, political pluralism, religious diversity, and openness to global influence (Barrel, 2012, p. 29, as cited in Car, Kos-Stanišić & Viduka, 2016, p. 1216).

Dhruva Jaishankar (2018) believes that India is an example of a state that uses its soft power potentials poorly, and therefore it is not included on the Soft Power 30

<sup>11</sup> Since India's goal is to become a permanent member of the reformed Security Council, it should communicate its extraordinary involvement in the UN's peace-keeping operations, and how it voted and debated in the UN during the adoption of important decisions (Natarajan, 2014, p. 100).

<sup>12</sup> India is one among only 11 countries to create, in 2004, a Diaspora Ministry called the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) that serves to "promote, nurture and sustain a mutually beneficial and symbiotic relationship between India and overseas Indians" (MOIA, 2004). Modern diasporas are "ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands" (Sheffer, 1986).

<sup>13</sup> Bollywood is the name for India's Hindi film industry and it was declared the Indian film industry in 1998. Since then it has been considered an important means of propaganda to promote India's foreign policy goals (see more in Schaefer & Karan, 2015; Maheshwari, 2013).

More on Bollywood as a tool of Indian soft power diplomacy in Car, Kos-Stanišić & Viduka, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> According to UNESCO India has 38 World Heritage Sites ([Whc.unesco.org](http://Whc.unesco.org), 2019b).

Index. The author names several reasons for that – low per capita, bad state-driven cultural diffusion, India’s achievements quite often not even connected to India, and “in many cases India’s appeal is to others in the developing world rather than to high-value or prestigious markets” (Ibid., para. 7).

In historical terms, according to Daya Kishan Thussu (2013, p. 10) Indian soft power was more focused on the rest of the world, and less upon the West. Tharoor emphasized how important it is for the state, instead of having a strong army and economy, to be able to “sell a better story” (Tharoor, 2011). In his view “hard power is exercised; soft power is evoked” and “soft power is not about conquering others, but about being yourself” (Ibid., pp. 3-6). Soft power is not just what we put on display, but also how others see us (Ibid., p. 8).

#### **4. The Analysis of Web Pages of the Brazilian and Indian Embassies in EU Countries**

Brazil has embassies in 24 EU member states. In four EU countries Brazil does not have an embassy – Latvia is represented in the embassy in Sweden, Lithuania is represented in the embassy in Denmark, Luxemburg is represented in the embassy in Belgium, and Malta is represented in the embassy in the Vatican. Indian embassies are also present in 24 EU member states. Estonia is represented in the embassy in Finland, Latvia is represented in Sweden, Luxemburg is represented in Belgium, while Lithuania is represented in Poland.

We coded all the Brazilian embassies’ websites. There were some obstacles in coding the Indian embassies’ websites. Firstly, in Indian digital communication it is not a standard to add the date of publishing, so it was impossible to do the time selection of published articles. Secondly, it was impossible to conduct a search on the Indian embassies’ websites, and we realized that instead of publishing written information, in Indian public diplomacy they prefer publishing pictures and links to YouTube videos (without voiceover) without giving the context, or any textual information to explain the picture. Therefore, only RQ1 and RQ2 apply to both countries, while RQ3 applies only to Brazil, and RQ4 applies only to India.

##### *Digital Diplomacy 2.0 or Digital Diplomacy 1.0?*

Digital diplomacy is becoming a standard in tailoring foreign-policy and in communicating nation-branding messages to local publics which have some unique characteristics. At the beginning of this research, following the research results of Kampf, Manor and Segev (2015), we wanted to find out if the Internet website remains the dominant platform to publish information related to an embassy’s activities and other topics and events recognized as important in communicating Brazilian and Indian foreign policy. The analysis of the digital information communication options of the

Brazilian and Indian embassies in EU countries shows the large difference between these two countries.

The Brazilian MFA (Itamaraty) dedicated a lot of attention to its online presence and its diversification. They launched profiles on social media platforms, and they established channels in different languages. The MFA is active on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, SoundCloud and is involved in blogging. The digital activity differs a lot from one embassy to another. Facebook has become an important tool used to connect with local publics and Brazilian communities abroad.

Still, for Brazilian embassies, their websites remain the dominant source of communication with the publics. All embassies' websites are standardized, following the same visual design, and the same information organization template. On the other hand, the Brazilian embassies' presence on social networks is still unstandardized. It mostly relies on Facebook (17 of 24 embassies), with some use of YouTube as a distribution platform for the video promotion of the country (7 embassies), and of Twitter (6 embassies).

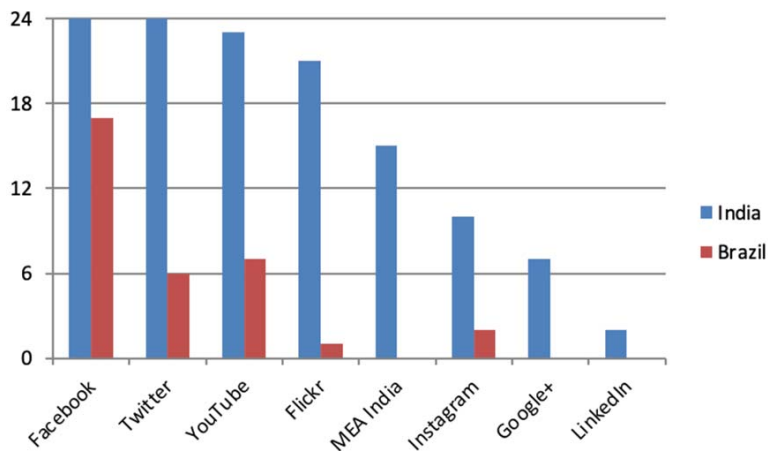
The Indian Ministry of External Affairs' (MEA) approach is much more oriented towards the use of digital technologies and social media platforms to engage with the publics. The Indian embassies' websites are visually standardized but are not standardized at the level of content and information organization. Still, the promotion of social networks and other mobile platforms that the embassy uses follows the same design template. Since 2010 they have been using @IndianDiplomacy Twitter account, followed in 2011 with @MEAIndia as the official Twitter channel for the Spokesperson of the Ministry (MEA, 2019). The MEA India Facebook page was created in 2012, while a mobile application "MEA App" was launched in 2013 (Ibid.). MEA maintains two YouTube channels (MEA India and Indian Diplomacy), and accounts on various platforms like Instagram, Flickr, Google+ and SoundCloud. In 2017 a profile on LinkedIn was created (Ibid.). Indian embassies fully embraced the social media sphere where they digitally communicate with their mobile and networked publics. One of the possible reasons why India is ahead of Brazil is that India is famous for its IT sector, especially Bangalore which is known as the Silicon Valley of India.

To engage in a comparative analysis of the research data, we kept the research focus exclusively on the content published on embassies' websites, being aware that such decision is a limitation of this study when it comes to India.

### *Brazilian and Indian Featured Topics*

The visual identity of the Brazilian and Indian embassies' websites is standardized; still, the embassies do not follow the same content organization in all EU countries. In some countries, websites are organized completely the same, following the same

**Graph 1.** Indian and Brazilian Embassies Presence on Social Media and Mobile Application



Source: Data collected from websites of Indian and Brazilian embassies in EU countries in November 2019.

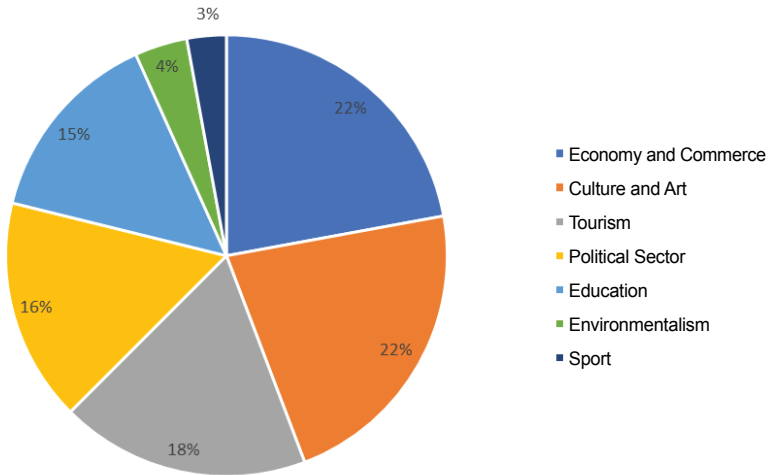
N (India) = 24; N (Brazil) = 24.

main menu and organization of categories, while in other countries there are some minor or major differences. In order to answer RQ2 (which activities of Brazilian and Indian embassies in EU countries (with an aim to brand the country) are present as a category or subcategory in the main menu and in the special banners at home pages of the embassies' websites?), all 48 home pages were analyzed, and many similarities between Brazil and India were recognized (Graphs 2 and 3 on pages 128 and 129).

The websites' main menu categories and subcategories were analyzed using thematic analysis, and they were coded into seven main clusters: Political Sector; Economy and Commerce; Tourism; Culture and Art; Education; Sport; Environmentalism. The clusters largely corresponded to the sources that public diplomacy uses to brand the state.

The category of economy and commerce (including trade and investments) is the most present category in the public diplomacy of both countries (22-23%), followed with very similar proportion of tourism, culture and art, and education (15-22%). There is only a small difference in political issues which are slightly less present on the Brazilian embassies' websites (16%) comparing to Indian (22%).

It is interesting that the environmental issues (climate change, ecology) are completely ignored on the Indian embassies' websites, and hardly present on

**Graph 2.** BRAZIL: Main Menu and Special Banners Categories; N=104

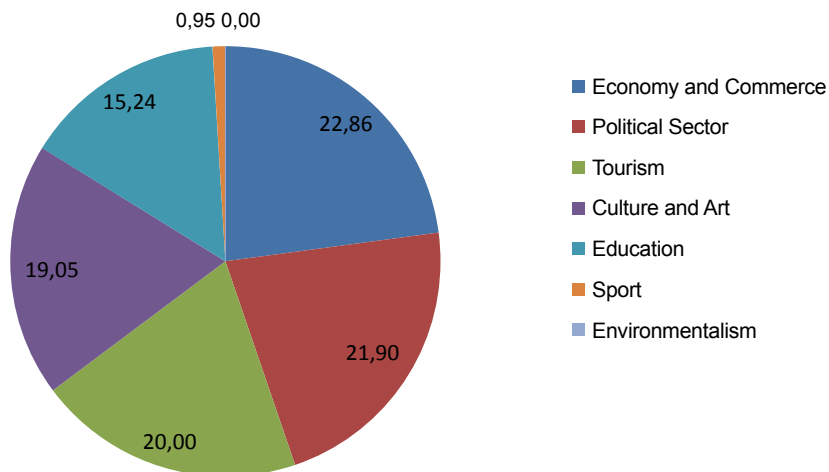
Brazil's (4%). But, as we mentioned before, one of the purposes of public diplomacy, besides drawing a positive image, is to hide “or remain unnoticed for the darker side of their social reality” (Melissen, 2013, p. 7). The fact is that, after Bangladesh and Pakistan, India is the third most polluted country in the world. Pollution is the product of traffic, fossil fuel burning power plants, heavy industries, and the burning of agricultural stubble (BBC, 2019). Brazil is famous for its ownership of “the lungs of the world”, the world’s biggest rainforest and the most biodiverse place in the world – the Amazon, and also infamous for its deforestation. Although the Brazilian government was trying to control deforestation, unfortunately it is losing the battle.

Sport is better recognized in Brazilian public diplomacy as a tool to promote the country and it is especially related to the promotion of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. We expected to see more football and Brazilian football players used as a resource of soft power diplomacy, especially because Brazil hosted 2014 World Cup, but it remains invisible. Indian embassies generally have no sports promoted on their web pages, maybe because the most popular Indian sport is cricket which, besides in the UK, is not practiced in EU countries. But they emphasize yoga which was, in the case of four countries, promoted as a special category of the main menu.

### *Brazilian Contemporary Film as a Digital Soft Power Tool*

To identify Brazil’s cultural soft power tools, we analyzed all the cultural events published on the Brazilian embassies’ websites in 2018. As we mentioned before,

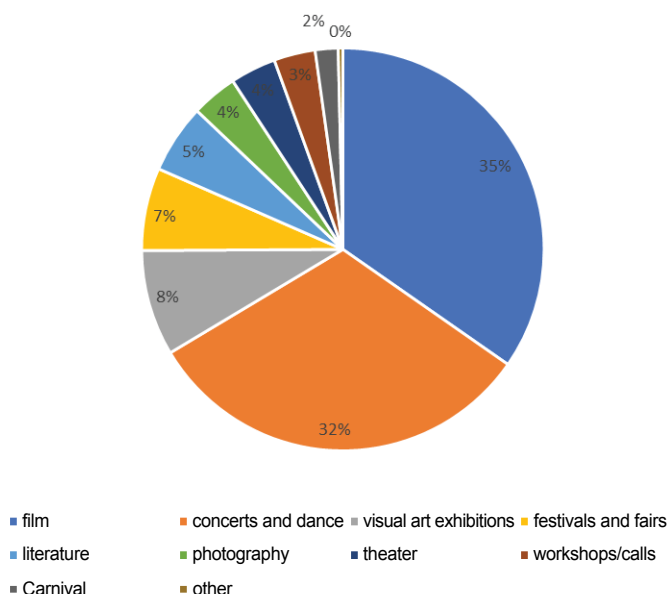


**Graph 3.** INDIA: Main Menu and Special Banners Categories; N=105

soft power is ideologically-culturally oriented and cultural influence seems to be the most important when a country is trying to attract international publics. News and events are published in chronological order. Using thematic analysis all published texts about cultural events were coded into 10 clusters (film; concerts and dance; visual art exhibitions; festivals and art fairs; literature; photography; theatre; culture and art workshops; Carnival; other). After the quantitative analysis (Graph 4 on the next page), in the qualitative section of the research we focused on film and music events (concerts and dance) as they were the most published (film 35%, concerts and dance 32%). We expected that Brazilian embassies will use Carnival as one of the main touristic selling point of Brazil because it could be used as a soft power tool, but it was present in only 2% of the published articles.

In Italy, Germany and Croatia the Brazilian embassies' activities were largely focused on film promotion. In 2018 the Brazilian embassy in Italy organized or promoted 51 film screenings, film days, or film festivals; in Germany there were 17 such events, and in Croatia 15.<sup>15</sup> The question is – why was it film that was selected

<sup>15</sup> There is the Brazilian-Italian Cultural Centre in Rome which organizes regular film screenings every month, and these are promoted on the Brazilian embassy's website. The name of the program is *Cinema Brasileiro*. All the movies were produced in the 2000s. Through the FIBRA (Italian-Brazilian Cultural Foundation) cinema is promoted as one of the six major cultural grounds, and the objectives are to promote Brazilian film, especially contemporary Brazilian film with the new generation of directors, to organize debates about the evolution of Brazilian film, and to support and promote the Brazilian films in film festivals organized in Italy (FIBRA, 2019). In Germany

**Graph 4.** Brazilian Cultural Events in 2018 Published on Embassies Websites; N=271

to become Brazil's digital diplomacy 1.0 soft power tool? According to Dennison and Meleiro (2016, p. 18), at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the audio-visual industry was recognized as a pillar of Brazilian national culture. The production of Brazilian feature films (and international co-productions) grew from 29 films in 2002 to 127 in 2013 (ANCINE, 2012). The Brazilian government recognized the importance of promotion of the film industry and it included it in the 2012 *Plano Brasil Maior* (Plan for a Greater Brazil) – the national strategy for industry, technology, services, and foreign trade (Ibid.). The Brazilian Government supported it through “the expansion and diversification of public investments; fiscal incentives for private investment; tax benefits for broadcasting services and importation of equipment; establishment of credit lines; purchase of institutional advertising space; and investment in channels for public television” (Dennison & Meleiro, 2016, p. 18). Further, a close dialogue with main cinema industries in Europe has been encouraged, and as a result Brazil signed co-production agreements with Germany, Italy, and France – countries that host the festivals with the most important and the most

contemporary Brazilian film screenings and film evenings are organized at least once a month and promoted on the embassy's website. In Croatia film screenings are organized once a month inside the embassy, and there is a week of Brazilian film organized in Zagreb in cooperation with local cinemas Tuškanac and Kinoteka.

prestigious prizes in the world (the Golden Bear in Berlin, the Golden Lion at Venice, and the Golden Palm at the Cannes Festival) (Ibid., p. 22).

Regarding music and dance, in 2018 there were a total of 86 events promoted on the Brazilian embassies' websites, but 72 of them (almost 84%) were published in Germany. These music events consist of all kinds of music, including classical music concerts performed by Brazilian artists, or Brazilian contemporary music concerts performed by singers or bands. No special pattern was recognized and could be coded as a cluster in thematic analysis. On the other hand, when it comes to music, samba dominated. Samba is "the most famous" music and dance, "characterized by 2/4 meter and interlocking, syncopated lines in melody and accompaniment" (McGowan & Pessanha, 2009) which has according to Goldschmitt (2019) the potential to be globally recognized as a Brazilian brand. Samba dance performances and samba dance courses were promoted on the embassies' websites, still samba was rarely related to the Rio Carnival.

Our findings are consistent with Henrickson (2005) that Brazilian cultural diplomacy in the EU is "niche diplomacy" which Brazil practices in order to diversify its modes of political influence, targeting different societal and geographical areas within the EU. Our findings are consistent with other scholars (Zismann & Geisler, 2013, as cited in Rabêlo Neto & de Sousa Filho, 2016) who had recognized film as a powerful tool because "it plays an active role in the formation of identities and international realities". Azpíroz states that cultural diplomacy has a potential to become one of Brazil's main assets on the EU diplomatic scene and a crucial element of its public diplomacy because it has a lot of social components and it "promotes messages in a tangible way, through concrete projects and activities" (Azpíroz, 2015, p. 20).

### *Indian Yoga as a Digital Soft Power Tool*

As explained before, because the publishing dates of news and information are missing, we could not code news published on the Indian embassies' websites and compare it with Brazilian data. That is why we decided to analyze only the information and news published under the main categories and subcategories of the main menu where cultural soft power elements were identified. At the beginning of the research, because of India's fourth position on the list of leading film box office markets in 2019,<sup>16</sup> we expected to see Bollywood as at least one of the most important soft power resources used to promote Indian national culture, heritage, and tradition. However, on the embassies' websites no category, subcategory or special

<sup>16</sup> India shares the fourth position with UK, South Korea and France with 1.6 billion USD revenue, while the first three markets are U.S./Canada (11.4 billion USD), China (9.3 billion USD) and Japan (2.4 billion USD) (Statista, 2020).

banner that appeared promoted Indian film. Information about Indian film festivals and screenings are placed deep into the archives of news which are not possible to track, and impossible to search as there is no search option.

On the other hand, there is a dominance of yoga-related events on the Indian embassies' websites. In some countries (Belgium, Poland, and Spain) yoga is even a special category in the main menu. In Belgium, all information is related exclusively towards the International Day of Yoga (IDY) in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Although no information was added for 2018 and 2019, we found them inside the news section. In Poland, the main menu category is "Yoga and Ayurveda", and besides promoting the IDY celebrations, there is a link to the Ministry of AYUSH (Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) which was formed in 2014. In Spain, the title of the main menu category is "Yoga Corner" where yoga practicing is promoted, and a subcategory is devoted to IDY. Although other countries do not have yoga as a special category, yoga is widely promoted, especially in June when IDY is celebrated.

To contextualize, according to the information published on the analyzed websites, yoga is a 5,000-year-old physical, mental, and spiritual practice with its origin in India. Gradually yoga disseminated across the globe. It was Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi who successfully lobbied the United Nations to designate June 21 International Day of Yoga. The United Nations General Assembly did so in 2014. Modi and his Hindu nationalist-led government use the ancient practice of yoga, together with Buddhism and the Indian diaspora, as a form of soft power to assert India's rising place in the world (Mazumdar, 2018). With the UN General Assembly resolution, yoga received the affirmation "for the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of all individuals" (Singh & Srivastava, 2014). Once considered a religious act, or something confined to Hinduism only, after this resolution yoga was affirmed with global significance. In 2016, the celebration of IDY was organized in the European Parliament<sup>17</sup> which acts as evidence of the power of Indian soft power diplomacy, and yoga has become an important Indian soft power resource. According to information from India's foreign ministry, most of the 191 Indian embassies and consulates worldwide have organized yoga sessions to commemorate IDY.

This Indian example shows how a government decision, with the help of foreign diplomacy assets, can in a relatively short period of time (2014-2019) maximize the effect of a soft power resource such as yoga. And now, with this knowledge, it is understandable why all the embassies have a special banner "Healthcare

<sup>17</sup> Pictures are published on embassy's webpage [https://www.indianembassybrussels.gov.in/pdf/Activity%20Report%20IYD%202015-2016\\_jul\\_27.pdf](https://www.indianembassybrussels.gov.in/pdf/Activity%20Report%20IYD%202015-2016_jul_27.pdf)

Tourism”<sup>18</sup> at the bottom of the home page. The impact of yoga is even larger as it is related to the philosophy mainly based on Hinduism and can be largely spread as a kind of lifestyle, diet preferences (veganism, vegetarianism, etc.) and alternative medicine approaches (e.g., ayurveda, homeopathy).

## Conclusion

Brazil and India, both major Global South emerging powers, are using new public diplomacy to rebrand themselves from undeveloped and backward countries to modern and attractive ones. In order to be more important in global politics, emerging Global South powers need to have partnerships with other important global players, especially from the Global North. The EU is an important player from the North, so to attract more European tourists, investments or to enhance trade, Brazil and India try to seduce citizens of the EU with soft power diplomacy. Besides the traditional way of using soft power in public diplomacy, there is also a new, digital way – to use soft power on the Internet and on embassies’ websites and information and communication platforms is considered to be digital diplomacy.

The main objective of this research was to find out how Brazil and India use digital diplomacy in communication through the official websites of the Brazilian and Indian embassies in EU countries and to identify which soft power resources they dominantly use. Although digital diplomacy is becoming a standard in tailoring foreign policy and in communicating country-branding messages to the local and global publics, the standard varies in different countries. Our research demonstrates that the Internet website remains the dominant platform for Brazilian digital diplomacy in EU countries, so it could be labelled as digital diplomacy 1.0. On the other hand, Indian embassies fully embrace digital diplomacy 2.0 as they use social media, social networks and an official MEA App to communicate with their mobile and networked publics.

Regarding the dominant activities the Brazilian and Indian embassies present as categories and subcategories in the main menu and in the special banners on the embassies’ home pages, we found that clusters largely corresponded to the sources that public diplomacy uses to brand the state, with economy and commerce dominating, followed with very similar proportion of tourism, culture and art, and education, while sport and environmentalism stay invisible. The analysis of cultural soft power resources shows that Brazilian digital public diplomacy focuses on film and music (concerts and dance), while Indian digital diplomacy focuses on yoga. Regarding India, yoga seems a reasonable choice since other Indian soft power resources are not so attractive to European publics. But in the case of Brazil, it is not

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.indiahealthcaretourism.com/>

clear why, besides film, Brazilian embassies did not use other soft power resources, very attractive to Europeans, such as Carnival, or football.

Nevertheless, both Brazilian soft power “film diplomacy” and Indian soft power “yoga diplomacy” as a part of their digital public diplomacy in EU countries are not enough to attract European publics. To enhance the importance of Brazil or India in the field of digital diplomacy in the EU, their foreign ministries should use all the soft power resources appealing to Europeans, and especially in the case of Brazilian embassies, they could attract more citizens by switching to digital diplomacy 2.0.

This research has several limitations. First, we focused only on categories or subcategories in the main menus and in the special banners on the home pages of the embassies’ websites. At this stage, we did not have resources to do the complete text analysis of all published content during the research period. Second, we did not do an analysis of content communicated on social networks and applications, that remains as an option for the second stage of this study. Third, in the qualitative part of the research we focused only on the dominant cultural soft power resources of Brazil, and on yoga as a soft power resource of India. We are aware that in qualitative research every other resource of soft power should be recognized and expanded. And finally, we are aware that without a questionnaire distributed to a representative sample of EU citizens, it is not possible to obtain any information on the impact of Brazil and India’s public diplomacy through their embassies’ websites in EU member states. Still, these limits are a result of conscious decisions, and the most important one is that the embassies’ standards of publishing information are not the same, and therefore the published content often is not comparable. Thus, despite these limitations, we find that at least some important insights have emerged from this preliminary research, and we hope to inspire further research on public diplomacy of Global South players related to the EU publics.

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