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**Health and Health Sector as Part of the Competitive Identity of
Qatar and the United Arab Emirates**

Diploma thesis

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I hereby declare that this diploma thesis is exclusively my work, and I wrote it based on the cited bibliography.

In Olomouc

Signature:

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List of Abbreviations

FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
HMC	Hamad Medical Corporation
ICTs	Information and communication technologies
MOPH	Ministry of Public Health
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PHAB	Public Health Accreditation Board
PHCC	Primary Health Care Corporation
UAE	The United Arab Emirates
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

The last decade has witnessed the increasing importance of the organisation and hosting of cultural and sports mega-events¹ or even smaller sports tournaments and cultural events by non-democratic states that have severe deficiencies in their human rights record. The 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, the Saudi acquisition of the English football club Newcastle United or the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar² are all prime examples of the use of sports and major sports tournaments to improve state's image and hide its severe human rights situation (Mai, 2021).

The examples above also show that hosting such events is no longer the exclusive realm of highly developed western countries. South Africa held the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The 2010 Commonwealth Games were organized in India. Nor can we forget Brazil, which hosted the FIFA World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016. The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar confirms such development, with the country staging different sporting events and financing top Western European football teams (Grix & Lee, 2013, pp. 522–523; Zákřavský, 2016, pp. 20–21). However, Qatar's territorial size and population distinguish it from other countries hosting mega-events. Based on these criteria, Qatar is considered a small state. Moreover, Qatar undermines realistic perceptions of small states and their predicted behaviour through its international and regional activity and visibility (Cooper & Momani, 2011, pp. 115, 127). Just before the start of the World Cup, Qatar was increasingly under enormous media scrutiny for its human rights record. In particular, because of numerous reports of the deaths of migrant workers during the construction of the infrastructure required to host the World Cup, their severe working conditions, undignified salaries, and excessive abuse. The criticism was also related to the position of women in society and attitudes of the state toward the LGBT community (Ingle, 2022).

Countries that host sports events while violating human rights are often associated with the term: sportswashing. This behaviour can be characterised as an abuse of sport to gain international legitimacy, improve own image, soft power, and direct attention elsewhere than to human rights issues (Zákřavský, 2016, p. 16; Zidan, 2022). However, the effort to divert attention from human rights violations does not only lead to the organization of sports events. Another response can be the organisation of cultural mega-events, such as Expo 2020 Dubai.

¹ The 1936 Berlin Olympics, organized by the Nazis, is regarded as the first staging of mega-events to benefit the regime's propaganda and interests (Grix & Houlihan, 2013, p. 579).

² The case of Qatar's hosting and staging of the football World Cup in 2022 is the first-ever organization of this type of sporting mega-event in the Arab region (Al-Shamahi, 2022).

The role of the exhibition was to promote the country's image as an advanced, transparent, and tolerant country. But this time, Human Rights Watch coined the practice as whitewashing (Middle East Eye, 2021). In a globalised world and the world of social networks and media, which allows enormous reach and immediate information accessibility, states are trying to present themselves positively, reach out, attract, and influence international audiences through the organisation of various appealing events (Peterková, 2008, p. 6).

Organising mega-events as part of public diplomacy is an appropriate way to take advantage of the current media environment and technology and win the admiration of international audiences by presenting its attractive culture and brand. The intended result can be an increase in tourism interest or increased investment (Grix & Lee, 2013, p. 529). Currently, there is an increasing emphasis on the branding of individual actors within the international system. Culture, history, and societal identity play a prominent role in these efforts. If the state's brand is positive, it can also impact investment, tourism growth, or a country's status in the international system (Zeineddine, 2017, pp. 589–590). It is precisely the ability to attract, as defined by Joseph Nye³, the leading soft power expert in the field of international relations. He explains soft power as "*the ability to influence others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment*" (Nye, 2008, p. 94).

It is particularly interesting to see how smaller countries apply the abovementioned strategies. That is why Qatar, its football World Cup, the United Arab Emirates, and its Expo were mentioned. Although both can be described as small states⁴ within the Middle East region, they are both visible, certainly in the region and international media. In a region where Saudi Arabia and Iran compete for power, both states are particularly motivated to compensate for their territorial size of the state units, the size of the population, and the expatriate population. In the case of Qatar, there is undoubtedly a need to compensate for the size of the country and the weak capacity to project hard power⁵. Indeed, the behaviour of

³ Joseph S. Nye is a professor and former Dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, political scientist, international relations expert, American foreign policy specialist, soft power expert, former Deputy Undersecretary of State, former chair of the National Intelligence Council, and former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. He is also the author of numerous books on soft power, power and influence, and the U.S. role in the international system (Belfer Center, 2020).

⁴ Qatar has about 2.6 million inhabitants. Of the total population, almost 90% are expatriates (Reid, 2022). Qatar's territory covers more than eleven thousand square kilometres, according to World Bank data from 2020. The total population of the United Arab Emirates is a little over ten million inhabitants. Expatriates make up 88,52% of the country's total population. The total area of the country is 83,600 square kilometres (Global Media Insight, 2022).

⁵ SIPRI's 2019 data show a large gap between the top arms-investing and arms-importing countries in the region – Saudi Arabia, in contrast to Iran and the United Arab Emirates. Qatar invested the absolute least in the period covered (Wezeman & Kuimova, 2019, p. 2). However, this has changed. A new SIPRI analysis from March 2022 highlights that overall, there has been a massive increase in arms imports into the region. Qatar (currently

both states challenges the expectation of the small states in the international system, especially in the volatile MENA region. Through active politics and soft power, they attempt to make their country more attractive and visible, particularly in regional foreign policy (Cooper & Momani, 2011, p. 127; Zeineddine, 2017, p. 591).

Apart from the similarity in classification as small states, both countries hold the highest positions among Middle Eastern countries in the "Global Soft Power Index" between 2020 and 2022. Specifically, the United Arab Emirates held the top spot among regional countries over the entire period, with Qatar being regional number four (Brand Finance, Global Soft Power Index 2020, Global Soft Power Index 2021, Global Soft Power Index 2022)⁶. Moreover, they share similar historical development⁷, vast mineral wealth, and very strategic regional location. The latter two factors greatly enhance the opportunity to be active and more visible within the region, primarily through their public diplomacy and nation branding activity, which should strengthen their soft power, international or regional position and make their global image more attractive.

The precise thesis focus is derived from the content analysis of two websites of the United Arab Emirates – *the Office of Public and Cultural Diplomacy*⁸ and the website of *the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation*⁹ of the United Arab Emirates. Both websites stress the importance of dialogue, stability, peace, and mutual understanding. In particular, the need for education and cross-cultural exchanges to achieve goals that would benefit all actors in the international system is emphasized. In addition to presenting the United Arab Emirates in truly lofty terms, the country's achievements to date, such as its current literacy rate, annual tourist arrivals, and humanitarian support, are also presented. At the same time, the emphasis continues to be on the global cooperation and credibility necessary to tackle contemporary issues affecting the entire planet, such as environmental issues, access to education for all, and gender equality. Finally, the web page of the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation claims that it will

ranked sixth) has even overtaken the United Arab Emirates (presently ranked ninth) regarding global army import rates (SIPRI, 2022).

⁶ Retrieved from <https://brandirectory.com/softpower>

⁷ Maritime trade and the collection of sea pearls played an essential role in the history of both countries. However, their paths diverged after Britain announced its plan to leave the Gulf region. At first, it looked like Qatar would form a confederation with Oman and Bahrain. However, it did not happen, and all the states mentioned became independent countries. It led to the disintegration of the so-called "Trucial States," a group of Gulf entities exclusively under British influence because of the treaties with Great Britain. The rest of the states comprising the Trucial States thus together formed the United Arab Emirates in late 1971 – except for Ras al-Khaimah, which became part of the UAE in early 1972 (Peterson, 2022).

⁸ Retrieved from: <https://opcd.ae/about-opcd/cultural-diplomacy/>

⁹ Retrieved from: <https://www.mofaic.gov.ae/en/the-ministry/the-foreign-policy/cultural-and-public-diplomacy>

continue its efforts to empower women in society, to strive for never-ending development and innovation, or an open and culturally attractive society (Office of Public & Cultural Diplomacy; United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation).

The content of The Office of Public and Cultural Diplomacy page is crucial because it highlights the important role of a country's presentation of its culture or values, which can then facilitate the understanding of practices and traditions to an international audience. A country's attractive reputation can facilitate political or economic cooperation. The institution acknowledges that it primarily focuses on the following areas to achieve its objectives: culture, education, technology, sport, environment, media, and business (Office of Public & Cultural Diplomacy). Combined with a thorough authors' content analysis of the Qatari websites, namely *The Gulf Times* and *Doha News*, or the UAE's online newspapers, such as *The National* and *Gulf News*, which started since the topic selection, the following areas¹⁰ not yet mentioned have been identified, including tourism, transport, health, human rights, the position of women in society, youth, mediation, humanitarian aid, and attitudes toward terrorism and extremism.

The thesis will specifically focus on the selected topic of health in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. The reason for particular selection is that most academic works are concerned with explaining what public diplomacy, nation branding, or competitiveness are in the first place and how they could benefit the state. Moreover, regarding public diplomacy, nation branding, and soft power, the focus is most often on the role of sport, culture, hospitality, or tourism sector. However, the not yet covered area of the health and health sector also undoubtedly plays an essential role in the long-term attractiveness, prosperity, productivity, credibility, and competitiveness of states domestically and globally. Furthermore, the recent pandemic experience highlighted the immense importance of the health of the population as such, but also of the health sector and its quality, credibility, and its capacity.

Therefore, the thesis aims to analyse Qatari and the UAE's public diplomacy, nation branding, and competitive strategy and to extend the existing research on competitive identity with a specific focus on the role of the health and health sector. The thesis is methodologically structured as a comparative case study, qualitative research, attempting to compare the significance of the health and health sector in both countries and their health-related strategies

¹⁰ The importance of these themes is further highlighted by a third website - the government portal of the United Arab Emirates (<https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/federal-governments-strategies-and-plans/the-uae-soft-power-strategy>).

and to research whether there are similarities or differences in how both countries think of and present the health sector domestically, and globally.

It builds on the academic article that focused on the competitive nation branding of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, “*Nation Branding and its Potential for Differentiation in Regional Politics: The case of the United Arab Emirates and Qatar*” written by Zeineddine and Nikolescu. However, the article did not focus on the role of the health sector in both countries. There is no similar research in the Czech academic field to the authors mentioned above or this diploma thesis dealing with competitive identity in terms of differentiating and analysing all three aspects – public diplomacy, nation branding, or competitive identity. In the Czech academic sphere, the focus is primarily on public diplomacy, particularly by Jana Peterková. In relation to nation branding, most Czech authors focus on the perception of a specific case and its brand, especially from the marketing side. The only work that comes close to mentioning strategic policy planning is the thesis of Jiri Drozel, which focuses on the nation branding process in New Zealand and Australia.

The main research question is influenced by Joseph Nye’s theoretical soft power arguments and Simon Anholt’s¹¹ chapter “Public Diplomacy and Competitive Identity: Where’s The Link?” which is part of the book *International Public Relations and Public Diplomacy Communication and Engagement*. Simon Anholt criticizes the excessive use of the term nation branding and the expectation of those who use the term that it is a solution for creating an attractive brand of a country only through marketing strategies and communication. The author strongly opposes this assumption. The solution is not nation branding in its negative connotation, as the author understands, but specific actions and policies are vital to the state’s image. In marketing language, states should thus focus primarily on creating a quality product rather than on ubiquitous advertising. Such a solution can then positively impact the state’s image towards an international audience. Moreover, by only using marketing strategies to make the image of the state more attractive, there is no certainty that this approach will achieve the intended goals. It is precisely the combination of public communication, specific state policy, and branding which Simon Anholt calls “Competitive Identity.” It should be the appropriate tool for achieving national goals (Anholt, 2015, pp. 190, 196, 198, 205). In this line of thinking,

¹¹ Simon Anholt is a strategic policy advisor to representatives of states in more than fifty countries. He is also the author of numerous books. His main subject of interest is the importance of global public opinion and policies that seek to contribute to solving global problems at the expense of passivity and domestic interests (TED).

The research question is:

- *How is the combination of specific health policy, its communication, and marketing or branding practiced by Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in their domestic and foreign policy?*

The hypotheses that the author will try to corroborate are as follows:

- H1: Due to the desire to create an attractive country image in the international system, Qatar focuses solely on communicating and marketing its health sector to achieve its strategic objective.
- H2: Due to the desire to create a credible country image at the international level, Qatar focuses solely on the quality of its health policies without any global communication and marketing.
- H3: Given the desire to create an attractive and credible country image in the global system, Qatar focuses on employing public diplomacy and nation branding in combination with specific and tangible health policies that serve to strengthen its global competitive identity and achieve its long-term strategic goals.
- H4: Due to the desire to create an attractive country image in the international system, the United Arab Emirates focuses solely on communicating and marketing its health sector to achieve its strategic objective.
- H5: Due to the desire to create a credible country image at the international level, the United Arab Emirates focuses solely on the quality of its health policies without any global communication and marketing.
- H6: Given the desire to create an attractive and credible country image in the global system, the United Arab Emirates focuses on employing public diplomacy and nation branding in combination with specific and tangible health policies that serve to strengthen its global competitive identity and achieve its long-term strategic goals.

The aim is to compare the public communication of states and politicians, their public appearances, and actual policies related to health. The result should be the comparison of both states' motivations, strategies, objectives, specific health policies, and their public and global communication and branding. Individual chapters will be structured by first introducing the

relevance of health for Qatar and the United Arab Emirates through official government and state institutional documents. The following section will focus on the practical functioning of the health sector and its health priorities and activity in both countries. The final third section will explain and clarify the state's intentions and objectives regarding the health sector, using the information incorporated in the previous chapters.

Answering the research questions and confirming the hypotheses will be done by analysing the statements of the political leaders of both countries, the governmental websites, strategic documents, and media websites. In addition, government documents presenting and explaining the countries' long-term strategies will be analysed, especially concerning the state's motivation. The information presented in the media will help to distinguish the real motivation and the behaviour of the state and its representatives. It should also enable the monitoring of government policy and activity in the areas of primary interest of the thesis. The thesis will also focus on the significant role of hosting mega-events in both countries, which can be considered the culmination of the long-term state's process of public diplomacy and nation branding. They offer an enormous opportunity for the hosting country to present itself positively, attractively, and credibly through the successful organization of the event. In combination with global social media and communication technologies, they enable the organising state to strengthen and increase its attractiveness and media coverage on a global scale. Thus, the thesis covers the period around the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and Expo 2020.

The thesis consists of two parts, theoretical and analytical. The theoretical part contains five subchapters. First introduces the concept of soft power by Joseph Nye. It is an essential opening of the theoretical part, as soft power figures in all the following subchapters. It, thus, enables an understanding of the motivation and reasons behind the attempt to present itself attractively, which is a critical part of public diplomacy and nation branding. The second subchapter deals with the influence of communication technologies. Their presence and rapid development reinforced their significance as a tool of governments of states and other international actors independent of governments. Current communication technologies make attractive self-presentation worldwide possible and are a significant part of public diplomacy and nation branding.

The third chapter deals with public diplomacy. This section highlights the gradual evolution of public diplomacy from the mere presentation of information and self-image to interactions that have evolved to a primary focus on building and, more importantly, maintaining mutually beneficial relationships, preferably face-to-face. Educational

exchanges, humanitarian aid, or cultural and sporting mega-events can all facilitate interaction and strengthen mutual relations. The opinion of an international audience regarding their positive or negative experience has far-reaching implications for a country and its strategic long-term objectives.

The following subchapter deals with nation branding and illustrates similarities and differences with public diplomacy. It builds on the previous chapters and focuses specifically on the marketing approach of presenting and selling a country or city brand as a product. The last theoretical subchapter is about the concept of competitive identity created by Simon Anholt. Competitive identity differentiates between global communication of its policies (public diplomacy), specific state's policy, and its marketing presentation (nation branding). The division into three parts indicates how the analytical section dealing with Qatar and the United Arab Emirates is organized.

The second part of the thesis, based on its theoretical part, namely its chapters on public diplomacy, nation branding, and competitive identity, aims to identify the Qatari and the UAE health visions, strategies, plans, initiatives, policies, communications, and motivations and reasons behind to answer the research question. Each part presents the state's strategic thinking and motivation, current health policies, communication, and the contribution of the health sector to the successful organisation of football or cultural mega-events. The final part of the thesis offers a comparison of what role the health and health sectors play for both countries, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, in their public diplomacy, nation branding, and how it strengthens their attractive and credible global image and competitiveness.

The theoretical part of the thesis is mainly based on English literature and sources. In the chapter on soft power, the thesis combines Joseph S. Nye's older and more recent articles. The following chapters on nation branding and public diplomacy present practical examples using Qatari or UAE's websites. The thesis attempts to overcome a shortcoming of some academic articles on nation branding and public diplomacy that do not distinguish between both concepts and do not present their differences in their theoretical part.

The last chapter of the theoretical part about competitive identity is based exclusively on the sources of Simon Anholt. Similar to the abovementioned critique, articles and books on competitive identity do not highlight the essential difference between Anholt's competitive identity and nation branding and subsequent competitive brand closely associated with marketing. Thus, the theoretical part dealing with competitive identity presents the difference

in approaching competitive identity and branding in a clear, obvious, and comprehensible way.

The major source for the theoretical part is *International Public Relations and Public Diplomacy: Communication and Engagement (2015)*, edited by Guy J. Golan, Sung-Un Yang and Dennis F. Kinsey, which covers relevant topics: public diplomacy, the gradual development of the relational aspect of the public diplomacy and especially the significant role of the foreigners in impacting the global reputation of the country based on their positive or negative experience, the role of media and social media plays, nation branding, and competitive identity and more, which were however not relevant for the research plan. It offers a comprehensive insight into the partial areas of all three concepts – public diplomacy, nation branding, and competitive identity. The theoretical part of the thesis is therefore influenced by the book's structure and content.

In the case of Joseph S. Nye, particularly his article *Soft power: the evolution of a concept (2021)* is the most useful. The author first distinguishes between soft power and hard power and points out how they complement each other. His explanation of soft power and the importance of the relational aspect of the interaction is crucial for the following chapters of the theoretical part, especially public diplomacy. The article also includes insights from the author's well-known books, including *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*.

Also, three book chapters present the significance of public diplomacy, nation branding, and hosting sporting or cultural mega-events and their impact on strengthening cities' role and influence. The first chapter is written by Sohaela Amiri and Lorenzo K. Grandi in the book *The Frontiers of Public Diplomacy: Hegemony, Morality and Power in the International Sphere (2021)*. Its author is Alexander R. Colin. The second is written by Valentia Burksiene, Vladimir Dvorak, and Gabriele B. Burbulyte-Tsiskarishvili, G. in the book *City Diplomacy: Current Trends and Future Prospects (2020)*, edited by Sohaela Amiri and Efe Sevin. The last is the work of Juan Luis Manfredi Sánchez and Francisco Seoane Pérez in the book *Public Diplomacy and the Politics of Uncertainty (2021)*, edited by Pawel Surowiec and Ilan Manor. The focus on cities is essential as the analytical part will mention the major cities of the two countries in the research, namely Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Doha. Furthermore, it will also present if and how the selected health area strengthens or reinforces the brand of the city and the state.

Central to the presentation of the Qatar government's health strategy was a document from the *Ministry of Public Health, National Health Strategy 2018–2022: Our Health, Our Future*, which demonstrates the importance of health and the health sector to the prosperity

of the entire country. It focuses on current health problems and risks and offers solutions to prevent and treat them. Qatar's *National Vision 2030* also highlights a healthy population as one of its key goals. Regarding governmental policies and domestic and global communication, *Gulf News* and *Doha News* online articles highlighted many health-related initiatives, programs, policies, and statements. However, it must be pointed out that they are not critical enough of the state's political representatives and the country's failings, especially before and during the World Cup when Qatar was under immense international criticism because of its human rights violation of expatriate workers. The integration of the significant role of the health and quality healthcare sector into the country's ambitious vision to reinforce its soft power, attractiveness, and credibility is made more comprehensible by Jad Kabbani's article, *The 2022 FIFA World Cup: Qatar's Catalyst to Propel Development and Soft Power*, which describes the country's strategy and the expected objectives of organizing a sporting mega-event, the football World Cup, in the long and short term, and how it is intended to contribute to the country's attractiveness and bolster its international brand and position.

In the case of the United Arab Emirates, two state websites, *the Ministry of Health and Prevention* and *The United Arab Emirates' Government portal*, were used to outline the country's health strategy and plans. Unlike in the Qatari case, the information had to be obtained from the government and Ministry of Health's websites instead of documents, which similarly outlined their priority areas concerning the population's health and the health sector's priorities. *The National* and *Gulf News* websites, which present health initiatives, plans, programs, or state activity, focus on specific actions by the government and the Ministry of Health.

Similar to the Qatari websites, criticism of government officials and their actions is absent. Thus, the information from the Qatar and the UAE news websites does not serve to investigate whether the national strategies and plans are being met and executed. However, they are used to present the health sector's role in creating a global or regional competitive image of the country. The overall ambition and strategy of the UAE are then brilliantly summarised by Frank Kane in his article *How investment in EXPO will pay off for UAE economy, Burnish Dubai brand*, which is focused on the cultural mega-event, Expo Dubai, and its economic contribution to the United Arab Emirates and the city of Dubai through attractive international and regional brand and competitive identity.

1. Public Diplomacy, Nation Branding, and Competitive Identity

This part of the thesis aims to introduce and explain the key terms and concepts associated with the attractive, legitimate, credible, ambitious, innovative, and unique self-presentation of the state or city. First, the concept of soft power is explained, which is necessary for the comprehension of both the theoretical and analytical parts and is an essential part of public diplomacy, nation branding, and competitive identity. The following chapter seeks to explain the development, especially the current impact of communication technologies that facilitate communication and are integral to public diplomacy, nation branding, and competitive identity. The chapters on public diplomacy and nation branding build on the first two chapters, making it easier to understand the importance of soft power, communication, and mutual relations. However, unlike some academic articles, this thesis does not treat the two concepts as identical. It distinguishes their significance, aims, and contribution to the state, even though they complement each other in many beneficial areas for the state itself. Both concepts also include actual examples of their application. The last chapter on competitive identity clarifies their roles and importance for the research aim of the thesis and its analytical part.

1.1. Joseph Nye and Soft Power

Joseph Nye's concept of soft power itself is not new. In ancient history, there were countless attempts to conceptualize similar efforts to influence the behaviour of others. This chapter will try to emphasize that soft power still plays, or should play, a vital role in the thinking of states, despite events such as the war in Ukraine, China's air manoeuvres around Taiwan, or North Korea's nuclear program. Although the definition of soft power was presented in the introduction of the thesis, as a reminder, it is: "*the ability to influence others to achieve desired outcomes through attraction rather than coercion or payment*" (Nye, 2017, p. 2; Nye, 2022).

Joseph Nye used the term for the first time in his book *The Changing Nature of American Power*, where he concluded that the United States of America¹² was able to achieve its goals not only through military dominance but primarily through an attractive national image. In particular, he highlighted the crucial role of soft power and its contribution to the

¹² Joseph Nye's work focuses mainly on the US and contemporary China and their ability to master soft power. However, as the focus of this thesis shows, the concept of soft power is not only associated with and applied by great powers. Nye makes a similar argument when confronted with criticism that his soft power concept is liberal and Western. Illiberal and non-democratic states can also be attractive (Nye, 2021, p. 6). However, these states do not fulfil all the sub-aspects of soft power, such as – openness, democracy, freedom of speech or media, independent civil society, or the ability to criticize. Therefore, it is advantageous for these types of states to host mega-events with a global reach that allows them to celebrate and promote global liberal values at the expense of their shortcomings in the abovementioned areas (Grix & Lee, 2013, pp. 526–527).

end of the Cold War (Nye, 2021, p. 5). In its essence, soft power can be described as attractiveness or admiration achieved and projected globally to the states and international audiences through the presentation of own culture, democratic and inclusive values, legitimate policies based on expertise, high quality of life, quality of education and scientific research or independent civil society. Specific examples include the protection of minorities, the presence of media, openness to criticism, and efforts emphasizing discussion and cooperation, both domestic and foreign (Ibid, pp. 6, 9, 11; Nye, 2008, pp. 94, 96, 106; Nye, 2022; Peterková, 2008, p. 6).

In contrast, hard power is about using force or threats through military or economic practices to achieve state's ends (Nye, 2008, p. 95). It is often associated with a country's territorial size, population, or natural resources. Among other differences, hard power, based on these areas, may appear more applicable to achieving the stated objectives. However, there is no certainty that applying hard power will lead to achieving the objectives. It will always depend on the ability to make the most of the factors¹³ mentioned above in practice. It would therefore be wrong to expect that a country with such capabilities will always be able to succeed. Moreover, the rapid development of the means of communication has led to a change in the perception of power, no longer only through the hard power concept (Nye, 2021, pp. 2–4).

Soft power is formed and reinforced through the ability to present information to a global audience, influencing it to achieve intended results. Therefore, attention should be directed to the subject's interests. However, there is no guarantee that such efforts will succeed when deliberately targeting states with different histories, values, and ways of life. On the other hand, if a country's image and policies are very attractive, other states, influenced by the country's reputation and image, may try to imitate these practices (Ibid, pp. 2, 6; Nye, 2008, pp. 94, 95, 99). The expected outcome should be the formation of a subject's perception that both will subsequently accept as a win-win scenario, but which will primarily benefit the country using soft power to achieve its objectives (Grix & Lee, 2013, p. 526).

Primarily enticing attractiveness should be used rather than a threat. In the case of persuasion efforts, pivotal is whether this form of communication also leaves the subject free to make their own voluntary decision based on credible information. Under such conditions, soft power can also be used as an offensive tool. If this is not the case and the subject has to

¹³ Nye refers to the massive increase in China's hard power capabilities and the vast investments in strengthening its soft power. However, the undemocratic nature of the regime and its attempt to control civil society and prevent openness in society undermines the state's attractiveness (Nye, 2017, pp. 2–3).

make decisions based on false information or deception, it is no longer soft power but hard power. Most often, however, soft power is associated not with persuasion but with the ability to influence based on state's attractiveness (Nye, 2008, p. 95; Nye, 2021, p. 6).

In addition to attractiveness and legitimacy, credibility is the next essential characteristic of soft power. Individual actors in the international system compete for the influential capacity of being visible, heard, and seen as credible in the international information environment and influencing others. However, when actual policies and actions contradict the presented values, the country's credibility is likely to be questioned. In such a scenario, public diplomacy cannot lead to increased attractiveness (Nye, 2008, pp. 100–101). When focusing on soft and hard power, it must be emphasized that both powers can complement each other. Nye points to China's Belt and Road Initiative¹⁴ as an example (Nye, 2021, p. 6). Therefore, the exclusive use of soft power at the expense of hard power or vice versa is not desirable. A combination of the two is known as smart power¹⁵. However, more emphasis should be placed on soft power, as the recent unsatisfactory experience of the Democratic People's Republic of China demonstrates (Grix & Lee, 2013, p. 526; Nye, 2022).

Moreover, it is precisely public diplomacy that helps accumulate attractiveness through mobilizing individual factors by national governments. It allows for clarifying own intentions better globally, given current communication possibilities. One of the concrete examples linked to presenting a country's cultural aspects and values is foreign student exchange. Its effectiveness is based mainly on the personal experience of face-to-face contact (Nye, 2004, pp. 258, 266, 267; Nye, 2008, p. 95).

It is, therefore, not only about image building but also about establishing relationships. For a successful example of attractiveness, Nye highlights the United States of America and the influence of international student exchanges, radio, television, and Hollywood movies on the country's image. However, the American foreign policy and definitely invasion of Iraq had precisely the opposite effect, causing a decline in the attractiveness of American soft power and businesses. Thus, the relationship between public diplomacy and soft power is

¹⁴ The Belt and Road Initiative is the project of the People's Democratic Republic of China that includes the economic and cultural aspects of power. It intends to accomplish a global rebranding of China as an attractive power willing to help other states. The intended result is an accumulation of influence that will enable China to influence the order of the international environment according to its preferences (Brinza, 2018).

¹⁵ Besides soft, hard, and smart power, sharp power is closely associated with propaganda and information warfare. It differs from soft power in that it is not focused on attractiveness but on disruption and meddling in the political and informational environment, especially in democratic states, through disseminating misleading and fake information not based on truth (Nye, 2021, pp. 7–8).

such that if the element of attractiveness is absent, the use of public diplomacy to enhance the state's soft power is doomed to failure (Nye, 2004, p. 256; Nye, 2008, pp. 95, 96, 98, 101).

The use of sports is increasingly popular to enhance soft power, especially by hosting sporting mega-events watched worldwide. In such cases, non-democratic regimes' attractiveness, credibility, and openness are, in most cases, exclusively linked to sporting events promoting shared global values. The aim is often to better its international reputation and divert attention in a direction other than domestic failure regarding freedom, human rights, or corruption. However, global attention can also bring greater scrutiny on the state and intensify international criticism and pressure (Grix & Lee, 2013, pp. 527–528).

To conclude this subchapter, states' willingness to cooperate with other international actors is an essential characteristic. It is crucial for dealing with current global issues such as climate change, or it can positively contribute to dealing with viral diseases that can have a global impact (Nye, 2004, p. 263). The actions of states should be credible. It is of essential importance, and it can lead to enhanced legitimacy. Although this chapter primarily focuses on soft power, it is not desirable for the state to depend solely on it. Hard power capability strengthens states' security in the international system. It is optimal to combine both powers. The analytical part of the thesis will continue to operate with the terms mentioned in this chapter, namely attractiveness and credibility. The rise of the importance of public diplomacy in the context of efforts to strengthen its soft power is closely linked to the historical development of communication technologies, which will be explained in more detail in the following chapter of the theoretical part of the thesis.

1.2. Information and Communication Technologies

Information and communication technologies¹⁶ influence the conduct of foreign policy. ICTs are used to communicate and present the state's values, ideas, and culture to domestic and foreign publics, which should make the country on the global scale more attractive and credible, thus strengthening its soft power. Their continuous improvement qualitatively influences the way public diplomacy is conducted. Historically, governments began to specifically realize the significant role of global communication for the first time in the first half of the 20th century¹⁷. During the administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt,

¹⁶ According to the United Nations, around five billion global citizens had access to the internet at the end of the year 2019 (Guardian, 2021).

¹⁷ However, the impact of communication technologies and their use had already been contemplated before the advent of the 20th century. Namely, Napoleon III. or Guglielmo Marconi highlighted the capabilities of rapid communication and their contribution to avoid misunderstandings using the telegraph (Rawnsley, 2021, p. 29).

individual institutions began dealing with issues of self-presentation, for example, through culture. Alongside the Second World War, the Cold War had a critical impact on the development of public diplomacy and the importance of the information and values presented to an international audience and the audience of one of the two enemy world powers (Nye, 2008, pp. 97–98).

Communication technologies have also served as an opportunity to discuss and resolve crises. The US President telephoned at the beginning of the Great Depression to discuss the coordination of measures with other national leaders. The ability to communicate immediately was used during the Cuban crisis. Therefore, technology has served as a tool for governments and is still utilized in this sense (Rawnsley, 2021, pp. 25, 29). State participation in the online environment can also reduce the distance between global citizens and the country (Manor, 2019, p. 19). The primary motivation for informing the global audience is to exert control over the explanations of its policies, motivations, and intentions. It should facilitate winning the hearts of members of the global audience, being perceived as credible, and shaping their preferences and thinking in the state's favour (Powers & Samuel-Azran, 2015, pp. 246, 248).

The logical outcome of the enormous amount of information present in the global environment is competition for the attention of a global audience, not only by states but also by various actors independent of governments (Elsherif, 2022, p. 23; Manor, 2019, p. 3). Furthermore, ICTs rapid development has massively disrupted the previously shared understanding of the capabilities of communication technologies. It has led to time compression, more transparent accessibility of information, and information traveling unlimited distances globally. Rather than a revolutionary transformation of communication technologies, however, it is appropriate to speak of improving their existing capabilities. The mode of communication has not been transformed (Lam, 2021, p. 4; Rawnsley, 2021, pp. 25–27).

The invention of radio broadcasting and television was pivotal for the subsequent development of public diplomacy. Both aimed at influencing the preferences of leaders and members of other states via the presentation of information. The invention of the television was especially significant because it combined audio and video content (Rawnsley, 2021, pp. 29, 31). The image certainly helps to gain and maintain attention. Although, behind the advent of communication technologies was the expectation of peacefully helping to solve contemporary global problems. Their origins and development are closely linked to military technological developments, whether intended for warfare or information and security services (Powers & Azran, 2015, pp. 245–246). Their development has also led to the targeted

global dissemination of disinformation, state-sponsored propaganda, censorship, and prevention of the flow of information by countries like China, Iran, Russia, Venezuela, and Egypt (Ibid, pp. 246, 250; Rawnsley, 2021, pp. 30, 33).

Today, doubts persist not only about the motivation of states to use public diplomacy but also about the use of social media networks, which made spreading information cheaper and faster, mainly via Facebook or Twitter. It also allowed instead of one-way communication via radio and television to discuss, criticize and exchange opinions via social media. The ability to listen is considered critical for public diplomacy's success. However, international representatives can also use social networks to promote their information without interactions, relationship-building, or exchange of opinions. In this scenario, the public is reduced to passive consumers (Elsherif, 2022, p. 21; Rawnsley, 2021, pp. 34, 36, 37).

Furthermore, state representatives can share videos and live streams to form opinions of the global public. Nonetheless, the main critique of social media relates to their inability to securely protect users' data or prevent the spread of misinformation and half-truths. On the other hand, in the past, social networks also had a positive contribution in helping organize and mobilize demonstrators in non-democratic countries, namely Egypt and Iran, for example (Manor, 2019, p. 4; Rawnsley, 2021, p. 37). Because of its greater intensity, reach, speed, and presence of new actors, public diplomacy is referred to as the new public diplomacy or public diplomacy 2.0 or even 3.0, mainly because of its digital form (CPD; Rawnsley, 2021, pp. 28, 35).

The advent of the internet and specific communications tools such as Facebook, Skype, and Zoom significantly changed the conduct of traditional diplomacy and foreign policy. It enabled engaging targeted members of the global public in real-time (Lam, 2021, p. 4; Rawnsley, 2021, pp. 28, 35). The change can be demonstrated by the urge of diplomats or political leaders, not only them, to share, update and report on the achievements related to foreign policy agreements. There is currently considerable focus on feedback, discussion, and interaction with a global audience. Moreover, online reports about the progress of negotiations can be used to put pressure on the opposing parties in the negotiations. Sharing achievements also allows one to control the narratives regarding the agreement reached, thus presenting the outcome of the negotiations in state's favour and limiting the space for critical commentary both domestically and internationally (Manor, 2019, pp. 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 16). However, the current digital environment also makes it difficult to keep information and agreements in front of a global audience behind closed doors (Lam, 2021, pp. 4–5).

Media broadcasting is also an important part of using ICTs. It allows states to be attractive and visible, determine issues in the international environment, and influence the actions of international actors (Zhang, 2021, p. 307). Qatar and its Al-Jazeera media network are an excellent example of a state's use of media and communication technologies in combination with media broadcasting to achieve its foreign policy objectives, enhancing its regional influence and international standing. Established in 1996, it has achieved dominance in the Arab media space and reached credibility in the West, which enabled it to highlight and shape an understanding of various regional issues. Al Jazeera has played, for example, a prominent role in drawing attention to the issue of Palestine and played an essential role during the Arab Spring (Powers & Azran, 2015, pp. 252, 253, 257).

Critical coverage, but not towards Qatar despite efforts to present itself independently, had led to the station gaining credibility, mainly after it employed the world's respected journalists. The public campaign to raise the station's profile internationally also helped. Thus, both reach and credibility play an essential role. Moreover, the current media environment allows for real-time global broadcasting. Combined with video footage and photos, it helps attract and get attention worldwide (Powers & Azran, 2015, pp. 253, 255, 259, 260). However, in the case of the use of media broadcasts, as in the case of radio broadcasts, the primary objective is to present one's information rather than to exchange opinions with global or regional addresses.

Thus, the greater the reach of the information presented, the larger the distance covered, and the higher the number of international political actors targeted combined with the more engaging real-time content, the higher the probability of shaping and influencing the thinking and preferences of the international public. It demonstrates how soft power and ICTs complement each other in the practice of current public diplomacy. Both are essential for projecting influence over the international audience. Soft power and ICTs are also important for the following chapters of the thesis, dealing with nation branding and competitive identity. Attractiveness, credibility, and legitimacy are achieved precisely through the ability of ICTs to enhance status and reputation in the international environment as a part of a nation's strategy. ICTs are used primarily because of their ability to reach the global public without any limitations regarding distance and time.

1.3. Public Diplomacy

Edmund Gullion, former Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in Medford, USA, and US diplomat, is closely associated with the term public diplomacy and referred as its author, who used it for the first time during the Cold War when both superpowers attempted to present their culture, values, and ideas positively and attractively on a global scale (Golan & Yang, 2015, p. 1; Peterková, 2006, p. 86). However, similarly to the history of soft power's application, attempts to influence and present oneself favourably to the outside world are nothing new in the world's history and politics. Whether in ancient Greece or Rome, emphasis has been placed on creating an attractive image in front of foreign entities. Nevertheless, the ability to print and share information shifted the existing capability of self-presentation and communication to another level. Although public diplomacy is often closely associated with Cold War, even at the end of the First World War, the USA, and the Russian regime, sought to present their values and ideas attractively at the ideological enemy's expense (Peterková, 2006, pp. 83–84). As mentioned earlier, the advent of ICTs and the Internet has qualitatively reduced the previous perception of time and space and influenced the performance of public diplomacy significantly.

The study of public diplomacy as an academic discipline comprises several areas, including security, international relations, diplomacy, and even media studies, and is the subject of great interest. However, there is no shared definition and consensus on what public diplomacy means and the differences between public relations and public diplomacy. Therefore, in some instances, academics combined public relations with public diplomacy. To them, public diplomacy was an integral part of public relations practice done by governments. Moreover, public relations were seen as a possible way of communicating between countries and international audiences. Originally built on the communicational activity between the organization and the public, its very significant aspect is the management of the relations that should be mutually enriching (Golan & Yang, 2015, pp. 1–2).

Together with public diplomacy, they possess several characteristics in common. Namely, they collect data about the environment in which they will operate, communication is perceived as a strategic aspect, and the priority is to build and maintain mutual relations through dialogue and discussion with various actors representing different or conflicting interests (Ki, 2015, p. 96). Public diplomacy is defined as: "*The management of communication among diplomatic actors, including nations and non-state actors, which have specific international or motivational objectives toward reaching the foreign publics through*

various channels of communication to promote national interest" (Golan & Yang, 2015, p. 2).

Hans Tuch understood the process of public diplomacy, for example, as: "*A government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies*" (Tuch, 1990, p. 3)¹⁸. Although Tuch referred to governments in his definition, he perceived public diplomacy not only as an exclusive field of nation-states but of individual and independent entities in the international environment, such as NGOs, civil society organizations, or even commercial companies (Manor, 2019, p. 13; Melissen, 2005, pp. 11–12). Both public relations and diplomacy, however, have different ideas regarding their objectives. Whereas in the case of public relations, a reciprocal relationship is needed for consumer gains. In the case of public diplomacy, the main focus is the entity's foreign policy and its legitimization through the support of the international public (Golan & Yang, 2015, p. 3). Thus, the conduct of public diplomacy should reflect the country's foreign policy objectives (Melissen, 2005, p. 15).

Despite the ability to communicate, which is part of every definition of public diplomacy, the current use of public diplomacy is primarily oriented toward building, strengthening, and maintaining relationships in which the ability to listen is crucial. Exchanging views through telecommunications channels is not sufficient for reciprocal relations that foster a sense of credibility and a favourable evaluation of the country by members of the international audience, not allowing the state to accumulate enough influence to put under pressure other countries in which it targeted their fellow compatriots and has succeeded in shaping their perception (Ki, 2015, pp. 93, 97, 100, 102, 103).

The current information and communication technologies enable mutual communication, which is increasingly demanded because it facilitates feedback. However, the most significant impact in relationship building has the face-to-face experience and embracement of a diverse environment that preaches the values and ideas of support, tolerance, discussion, and inclusivity of different cultural practices. That is a very attractive environment for migrants who work in a host country and possess the power to influence opinions about the reputation of a particular country in which they work and live based on the values mentioned above or in the chapter about soft power. The same is true for foreign tourists, who can influence a country's reputation and increase or decrease the arrival of their

¹⁸ Cited In J. Melissen (ed.) (2005), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (pp. 11–12).

compatriots based on sharing their own experience, positive or negative, in a particular country. Therefore, countries must also recognize the role foreigners play and try to offer them a unique and attractive experience that will benefit the country massively in the long term. However, countries that lack aspects of soft power associated with liberal and democratic order may face problems (Vibber & Kim, 2015, pp. 131, 133, 141, 142). The country's public diplomacy, to have a chance of being successful, must be seen as attractive, credible, and legitimate.

Members of the global public in a country that uses public diplomacy are no longer passive recipients of information but possess the ability to influence and share information. Sharing their experiences with their compatriots is referred to as megaphoning, the term initially associated with the business environment. Their experiences and ability to inform make them credible and authentic to other compatriots. ICTs elevate their role in the host country to the role of so-called micro-diplomats. They can be enemies or allies of the host state. Furthermore, the positive relationship of the host country with the country of origin of micro-diplomats is also crucial for the favourable image of the state and a higher number of incoming migrants or tourists. It has a more powerful effect than a marketing campaign (Ibid, pp. 134, 135, 139, 141, 142).

Given this reality, public diplomacy is now referred to as "The New Public Diplomacy," based on the presence of actors other than those associated with national governments, more cooperative horizontal form of relations between different public diplomacy actors, the ability to communicate and be informed globally and immediately through information and communication technologies, mainly social media, and the use of the state's attractive soft power in an effort not only to influence but to create long-lasting relationships and positively enhance the global reputation of the state and achieve its strategic foreign policy goals (Peterková, 2013).

Public diplomacy that focuses specifically on the relational aspect is achieved best through exchange visits, which allow, firstly, a better understanding of the culture of the inviting country. It also reinforces the development of a relationship with the inviting country. If it is a positive experience, the country's soft power, global attractiveness, and reputation are enhanced (Golan & Yang, 2015, pp. 2, 4). In addition, humanitarian aid is also relational-focused and helps to create a partnership among international actors. Both are built on public relations assumptions and are a form of long-term investment (Al-Sawafi, 2021).

Educational exchanges between students strengthen mutual bonds and benefit both parties by facilitating cross-cultural understanding. It may help to disrupt deeply held

prejudices about a country's image or reinforce it in the worst-case scenario. Globalization, the presence of various actors, and ICTs provide an ideal environment for two-way interaction. Especially face-to-face interaction leads to mutually strong relationships perceived as credible and legitimate. Students abroad thus become like tourists or migrant workers, diplomats of their countries via exchange programs in foreign countries. Despite their positive potential, educational exchanges have been criticized, mainly because of how states think about their contribution, namely betterment in the eyes of the international public and reinforcement of the current international distribution of power (Bettie, 2021, pp. 42, 45, 48, 49, 50, 52).

Exchange visits tend to be attended by more educated individuals from wealthier families who gain additional experiences that open up the imaginary scissors of inequality. Moreover, student exchanges are also encouraged because they can contribute to the education of foreign citizens, which can, in the long term, benefit the host country geopolitically. Therefore, education is a vital component of a country's capabilities and relationship building, which can strengthen its attractiveness or even reinforce its hard power (Ibid, pp. 51, 53).

In addition to exchange visits, there is also an emphasis on the presentation of own cultural values, primarily through museums, which should improve the image, and reputation and bring financial prosperity in the long term (Amiri & Sevin, 2020, p. 6). One of the examples is Abu Dhabi, which is trying to present its own culture through various museums and to attract tourists from all over the world. This strategy is part of an effort to change global opinion through a new cultural identity, but also to positively influence own citizens. Furthermore, it aims to attract global audiences and investors to visit Abu Dhabi through The Louvre Abu Dhabi, a museum that opened in late 2017. The objective was to present Abu Dhabi to the outside world as a city welcoming¹⁹ a global audience without any exceptions. Such an environment is attractive and helps states accumulate soft power that attracts other actors to visit or invest in it. The strategy is also to make cities an international brand. However, mutual interactions must complement cultural understanding. Only this type of

¹⁹ Responsibility for the actual inauguration of the museum was borne by French President Emmanuel Macron, who was under immense criticism from human rights experts and requested not to be indifferent to the adverse human rights record in the United Arab Emirates. Instead of promoting tolerance and diversity, there have been massive human rights violations against migrant workers during the ten-year construction of the museum. Despite partial improvements, the implementation of various reforms has not led to a qualitative improvement of the situation. In addition to the human rights issues associated with migrant workers, the values presented by the museum were also undermined by the monarchy's efforts to prevent and thwart critical reporting by journalists or by its participation in military operations in Yemen (Jeannerod, 2017).

relationship can be beneficial. More than just visiting museums is required (Grincheva, 2020, pp. 119, 120, 122, 130).

A great example of introducing culture through face-to-face interaction is the Expo²⁰²¹²²²³ held in Dubai in 2021. Economically, it was important because it was intended to enhance the city and country's brand and international status and attract interested tourists. The role of prominent cultural, sporting, or political figures served the event through their presence and enhanced its credibility in the eyes of an international audience (Gillett, 2022). The attractiveness is accumulated primarily through communication and interaction with an international audience²⁴ in areas such as sport, sustainability, the role of women, technology, or culture that helps to create a positive image by offering engaging experiences (Nasir, 2022).

Thus, cities are gaining more importance in the international system. Since the 1970s, together with other actors, they have been significantly disrupting the Westphalian system based on states as the only recognized units of the international system. Their presence is crucial because they attempt to solve global problems despite the passivity of nation-states. Their role is strengthened through urbanization²⁵, the use of modern communication channels, and the world's interconnectedness. Very often, internationally important centres are very closely associated with international trade²⁶ or digital development (Sánchez & Pérez, 2021, pp. 57, 58, 59, 60).

Conduct of city public diplomacy is then intended to create and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships, accumulate influence to affect the actions or inactions of international states and other entities, and attract and enhance their interests in the security, economic, cultural, representative or partnership areas. The importance of cities is further strengthened by their ability to offer inclusive, deliberative, and participatory activities to domestic and global citizens, unlike the states (Ibid, pp. 64, 65, 68; Amiri & Grandi, 2021, p. 153). The

²⁰ Expos are international exhibitions where nations, groups of states, and non-state actors participate and present innovative ideas for tackling global problems in the technological, economic, and social spheres. The first-ever exhibition was held in London in 1851. Currently, global issues are introduced through entertaining activities and interactions that facilitate an easier learning process for visitors. World Expos are held every five years and last about six months. Hosting an Expo serves the purpose of gaining attention and attracting an international audience to visit a country, which has a positive economic impact but can also lead to a strengthened international position within the international system (Bureau International des Expositions).

²¹ Dubai's Expo 2020 was also under immense criticism because of the country's human rights violations record.

²² Dubai's Expo was the first-ever Expo staged, organized, and situated in the MENA region (Ghali, 2022).

²³ In the case of this type of cultural mega-events, the majority of tourists come from the region where the cultural exhibition takes place. It may lead to a specific focus on the interests of the regional visitors and thus make targeting much easier (Corona, 2022).

²⁴ Not only during the event but also parts of the Expo are opened to the public after the event ends (Nasir, 2022).

²⁵ Almost 60 percent of the world's population lives in cities (Sánchez & Pérez, 2021, p. 61).

²⁶ Globally, cities are responsible for producing 70% of the world's GDP, around 60% of global energy consumption, and approximately 70% of environmental pollution (Ibid).

term smart city is currently associated with future-oriented, creative, or innovative cities dealing with sustainability and environmental friendliness in areas such as housing or transport (Burksiene, Dvorak & Burbulyte-Tsiskarishvili, 2020, pp. 308, 323). Global warming is not only global but also a local issue, and governments in cities must deal with it through specifically targeted policies (Sánchez & Pérez, 2021, p. 63).

Furthermore, sporting events with a global reach are gaining popularity both within countries and cities. The organization of these mega-events is always closely associated with the cities in which they are held and have a positive economic impact on the state and primarily the area in which they are held if organized successfully (Ibid, p. 66). Staging sporting events is part of public diplomacy, where politics and sports are closely intertwined. Sports diplomacy is linked to cultural diplomacy because it can attract worldwide through the emphasis on universal values²⁷ and ideas, which can strengthen a country's, regional, or city's soft power, improving its reputation, accumulating influence, and profiting economically, thus accomplishing strategic foreign policy objectives. The primary focus and global spotlight should be directed toward sports, not the politics of the state (IRIS, 2021, pp. 5–7; Zákřavský, 2016, p. 18).

Thus, unlike traditional diplomacy, contemporary public diplomacy does not exclusively involve negotiations, meetings, government-to-government, and state-to-state relations but also more interactions and intense competition of actors independent of national governments. Moreover, the position of actors working in diplomacy and foreign affairs is weakened by the ability of other actors to communicate, comment, and discuss independently. Because of that, diplomats are forced to adapt to the digitalized form of current diplomacy in terms of online interactions and sharing diplomatic information on social media, namely Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram (Lam, 2021, p. 5; Manor, 2019, pp. 12, 16; Peterková, 2006, p. 87). The presence of non-official actors in the field of diplomacy has led to a significant change in its conduct (Melissen, 2005, p. 5).

The other aspect of public diplomacy is closely connected to the field of media and its use to accumulate influence by which the actor can frame the narrative²⁸ in its favour and shape the preferences of the international public more effectively. The origin of this perspective lies in the use of modern communication with a particular focus on politics and public opinion. Specifically, global media broadcasting plays a massive role. It can help to

²⁷ Non-democratic regimes often lack them domestically and therefore promote global universal values.

²⁸ An example is the Qatari Al-Jazeera Network (see the previous section of the thesis dealing with the impact and influence of information and communication technologies).

gain the trust of actors as well as to disseminate preferred views and opinions. Solely media public diplomacy is considered a short-term strategy (Golan & Yang, 2015, pp. 4, 6).

A positive perception of the country is also strengthened by its willingness to cooperate in a non-hierarchical environment. Governments alone are not capable of solving current issues. The more actors, the higher the ability to influence or solve global problems. Nevertheless, the cooperation of a diverse range of actors is required. Therefore, cordial, and credible mutual relations between the various actors in the international system are considered an integral part of multilateral cooperation and successful public diplomacy. Credible, reputable, and transparent states can possess much more significant influence in international affairs than their hard power suggest because of their attractive and credible soft power. However, the world's interconnectedness also makes it difficult to separate content for the domestic public from content for the global public. More precisely, media public diplomacy can often draw attention to individual problems, both international and local (Hocking, 2005, pp. 30, 37, 38; Manor, 2019, p. 8; Melissen, 2005, pp. 5, 10; Peterková, 2006, pp. 92–93).

However, public diplomacy's conduct is not only associated with soft power. It helps to increase trade, foreign investment agreements, and incoming tourists or strengthen existing security alliances and prevent conflicts. Thus, contributing to the reinforcement of the nation's hard power²⁹ through economic gains. Nevertheless, as presented in most of this chapter, the aim is in the first place the attractive presentation of the country to the international public (Hocking, 2005, p. 31; Melissen, 2005, p. 14). There is, nonetheless, no one-size-fits-all way of conducting public diplomacy present. Success depends on a country's level of soft power and ability to present its policies or culture attractively (Golan & Yang, 2015, p. 4). It is necessary to reflect various variables such as the type of state (democratic or non-democratic), customs, values, or way of life when trying to impress a country or its people. Apart from public diplomacy, the next option for the state is to focus on building its brand.

1.4. Nation Branding

Another way for countries to become attractive and attract tourists, potential customers, or investors is through nation branding. It is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate state's uniqueness, attractiveness, credibility, legitimacy, and ability to innovate and to promote all

²⁹ Already Edward H. Carr pointed out that an attractive image of a country combined with the ability to influence benefits also the military and economic aspects of power (Melissen, 2005, p. 4). NATO, for example, is also aware of the critical role of public diplomacy and public communication and perceives both as part of transatlantic strategic communication (Divišová, 2022).

of these attributes to better position itself for its future, which is essential for national development (Zeineddine, 2017, pp. 590–591). Nation branding is primarily a marketing strategy that was first used to promote commercial products with the aim of selling them. It also aims at highlighting the uniqueness of products, in the case of tourism promoting specific destinations (Eggeling, 2020, pp. 2–3). This chapter focuses specifically on the states and their cities in combination with their branding.

Branding strategy is currently being pursued in a globalized and media interconnected world by a diverse range of international actors, part of which are countries with different types of historical developments, values, institutions, and norms of life (Aronczyk, 2013, p. 16; Browning & Oliveira, 2017, p. 11). Nonetheless, until recently, the process of nation branding has been associated only with consumer products. The brand itself is often compared to an image with which a particular customer ought to identify. It is non-negotiable that the form of presentation of the brand must be authentic, unique, and trustworthy³⁰. It should indeed be attractive at the expense of other international actors and evoke emotions that strengthen the mutual relationship between the customer and promoted object or product, which is associated with a particular brand. Sometimes a brand can even encourage consumers to become part of its community through its products, which could relate, for example, to luxurious products or destinations (Ermann & Hermanik, 2017, pp. 1, 3, 4; Hung, 2015, p. 223).

Therefore, brand-building is often an effort to build an exceptional brand out of an ordinary product and present it uniquely³¹, focusing and emphasizing particular aspects that should make it stand out and enhance its attractiveness. For example, it may be an attempt to mitigate the environmental impact or enhance human health through a specific product. These activities demonstrate an emphasis on the state's exceptional attributes and should reassure customers and underline that the brand strives for the highest quality possible. Another essential condition is the guaranteed stability and safety of the product (Ermann & Hermanik, 2017, pp. 3–5).

Cultural³², sporting, educational activities, or even international cooperation enhance the brand and image positively because they contribute to the global competitive image that

³⁰ It reflects Joseph Nye's warning or advice to China that the regime's undemocratic nature undermines its soft power and the attractiveness of its public diplomacy and international brand (Hung, 2015, p. 223).

³¹ An excellent example of creating a unique product brand that is not unique at all is the Red Bull brand, which through its association with sports and sporting events, had first and foremost global attention and also a worldwide reputation, from which the organization greatly economically benefits (Ermann & Hermanik, 2017, p. 5).

³² Expo Dubai (see the previous chapter on public diplomacy and the presentation of own culture)

differentiates a city or state from other actors, which certainly boosts the extent of economic revenue. In particular, it is a great opportunity for smaller, lesser-known, and emerging countries to enhance their global visibility. The states often attempt to attractively present universal democratic values that proclaim inclusiveness through the cultural, sports³³, or educational sphere. The impact of creating such a brand can also strengthen and increase the export agreements of its goods, which can further strengthen the country's reputation if attractive and trustworthy. In addition, it is certainly good practice to promote diversity. It can easily win over the public, whose sympathies can positively influence other members of the international audience (Eggeling, 2020, p. 1; Hung, 2015, pp. 211, 212, 223; Zeineddine & Luminita, 2013, p. 169; Zeineddine, 2017, p. 589).

By doing that, states and cities follow a similar approach to product marketing campaigns. The emphasis is on their cultural and historical identity and heritage to facilitate the identification and strengthening of global awareness of the state or city through its attractive brand (Zeineddine, 2017, p. 589). However, in the case of states whose history is not attractive in terms of national failures in the form of bloody domestic conflicts or responsibility for violence and incitement of animosity, instead of promoting their history and historical heritage, it is better to focus and begin to orient the future on areas that are highly beneficial to the functioning of the state and its international reputation and will improve its international and, for example, regional perception and thus differentiate it from its neighbouring states (Eggeling, 2020, p. 7). Thus, global branding pressure and competition can lead the states to strive for the same differentiating branding strategy among all the other actors, reducing their unique and authentic identity (Browning & Oliveira, 2017, pp. 6–7). However, it is not only the media image that is important, but also personal experience and passing on reviews of positive or negative experiences to others. Failing of the state is, of course, during the process of nation branding all the time placed in the background (Ermann & Hermanik, 2017, pp. 7, 8; Hung, 2015, p. 211).

Simon Anholt identifies six important areas for strengthening the credibility and reputation of a country's brand. A positive international image, whether based on an exciting tourist experience, satisfaction with the products the country exports, the approval and satisfaction with the country's politicians' current achievements domestically and

³³ Qatar's hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, which is both part of and the culmination of its long-term nation-branding strategy, is the state's goal also because of the enormous global media attention surrounding the football mega-event, which both enables and facilitates greater reach for the country's attractive presentation (Eggeling, 2020, pp. 20, 21, 22).

internationally, the hospitality and treatment of foreign visitors by the citizens, the historical monuments and cultural exposition that commemorates the country's most important milestones, which all should contribute to the significant ability to attract investors, skilled university graduates and a high-quality workforce (Aronczyk, 2013, p. 16; Zeineddine, 2017, p. 589). If this is ensured, if the producer can maintain a trustworthy image and loyalty of customers and the international public in terms of their mutual relationship in the long term, over time, due to the brand's positive perception, it may boost an interest, which could transform itself in the economic gains for the state entity (Ermann & Hermanik, 2017, p. 4).

The very reason for reducing a particular place or country to a mere brand or short slogan is the global public's behaviour, for whom it is easier to imagine and identify with a particular place, city, or country with attractive logos (Zeineddine, 2017, pp. 589–590). The ability to convince is critical. It wins new customers. The brand thus has a much greater potential to capture the customer's attention and maintain their favour by simplifying the complexity of the product. It should facilitate an increase in interest in a particular destination and therefore an expectable increase in tourism and foreign investment. Based on their positive experiences within the country, the reciprocal relationship and brand reputation should be strengthened and enhanced if the experience is positive, attractive, and engaging (Ermann & Hermanik, 2017, pp. 5–7).

People's thinking and perception often associate individual products with their place of origin³⁴. It can lead to a reciprocal positive perception of the country and further contribute to a positive perception of the product. The geographical location differentiates it from other items and products, and if it is of good quality, attractive and credible product, it only spurs interest in it (Eggeling, 2020, p. 4). Moreover, the media space and publicly known persons who support, use, and are closely associated with a particular brand of a product, place, or country serve to strengthen and extend the brand through sharing kind words and positive experiences (Ermann & Hermanik, 2017, pp. 5, 7). The media certainly play its role because they enable to increase the visibility of a particular brand in a media space full of actors attempting to do the same through global reach, and therefore contribute to the intended objective of presenting a unique brand externally (Aronczyk, 2013, p. 17).

Favourable international image can also be very useful in a time of unfair media criticism of the state. Therefore, nation-branding, as in the case of public diplomacy, is not

³⁴ Examples include the South Korean tech company Samsung; Germany's Mercedes-Benz; Japanese Toyota, an automobile manufacturer; Sweden's IKEA furniture stores; Finland's Nokia; and Austria's Red Bull (The Street, 2018).

just about acquiring hard-power assets but also about favourable public opinion, which can help increase tourism in a country (Hung, 2015, p. 211). In addition, the brand can help a country gain international recognition or a more significant influence in international affairs and enhance its status in the international system. Nation branding, therefore, leads to enhanced credibility and international reputation. It thus provides the ability to control and improve the country's public image. Achieving an attractive, credible, and legitimate brand may also lead to a positive perception of citizens towards the nation and strengthen their loyalty and trust vis-a-vis the state (Aronczyk, 2013, p. 16; Browning & Oliveira, 2017, p. 10).

Although the process of building a brand can be perceived as intentional, it does not always have to be so. Most of the time, it can be a regular person rather than a marketing team responsible for creating a brand. A slogan or phrase can be so attractive and catchy that it starts to spread among the people and be seen as trustworthy, which can help people to identify with it and associate it with an actual city or state (Ermann & Hermanik, 2017, pp. 8–9). However, Anholt sees nation branding as a deliberate process in which all actors in the domestic political scene participate and work together to achieve and maintain an attractive brand (Zeineddine, 2017, p. 589). His view is followed by another possible perspective that explains the behaviour of states by focusing on the process of market globalization, which forces states to compete more and more to strengthen their position through nation branding. If successful in terms of nation branding, this helps states to prosper economically. States thus have to try to be more attractive than others (Eggeling, 2020, p. 7).

In Anholt's perspective, the behaviour of states can thus be likened to a marketing effort to promote their product and sell it. The condition where a state, through successful, attractive nation branding, achieves a competitive presentation, which Anholt refers to as a competitive identity, is crucial for the ability to differentiate itself from others based on the state's self-represented capabilities and characteristics (Zeineddine & Luminita, 2013, pp. 170–171). States' long-term thinking forces them to place the most significant emphasis on the country's economic health and development, which is perceived as crucial for the state and its citizens. Therefore, like public diplomacy, nation branding can be both locally and globally focused, seeking to showcase its positive skills and qualities in both areas (Aronczyk, 2013, pp. 16, 22; Browning & Oliveira, 2017, p. 5). A state must accumulate a sufficient level of credibility and reputation globally to ensure its strategy of applying nation branding is successful (Hung, 2015, p. 224).

Based on the previous two chapters on the practice of public diplomacy and nation branding, it is necessary to distinguish public diplomacy as a process whose primary goal is to communicate its policy and create a mutually positive relationship with a global audience through mutually engaging interactions. The focus is predominantly on soft power. In the case of nation branding, the process is seen as a marketing strategy that promotes the state or city, its culture and identity as a product and is intended to contribute to the long-term development of the state and its citizens, in economic or diplomatic terms (Browning & Oliveira, 2017, p. 10; Kiroyan, 2022; Palgrave Macmillan).

Although the chapter describing public diplomacy also mentions potential impact in the form of increased economic revenues, these are outcomes for which both public diplomacy and nation branding are responsible. Public diplomacy helps make a country's image credible and attractive, which impacts nation branding. Such an image of the country facilitates the process and helps to achieve its goals. Thus, while these are two interconnected and complementary strategies, they are not identical. An example is cultural diplomacy, which is part of public diplomacy and serves to present country's culture to a global audience to gain their sympathy and support. It can also make a state or city brand more attractive, like the museum Abu Dhabi Louvre or Expo Dubai. Cities can serve as an example. Through their policies, they can attract the attention of a global audience and thus strengthen the city's brand, namely the well-known cities Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Doha.

1.5. Competitive Identity

The name of Simon Anholt was already mentioned in the previous chapter on nation branding. However, he is also very closely associated with the term competitive identity. In the nation branding terminology, the term competitive or competitiveness was previously used to describe the marketing and branding competition to create a distinct brand successfully. It was used in a different sense and meaning than the competitive identity, as the latter is more complex than just describing the process of marketing competition.

The concept itself is often incorrectly confused with the process of nation branding. Anholt's primary issue with nation branding is the existing marketing approach of creating a brand of a country or a city as a product, which is much easier to establish because of the current technological and communication capacities. It is particularly problematic if states present their image as attractive, legitimate, and credible, and the reality is different. The reality should be specific and tangible policy and activity, which is essential rather than mere

statements by heads of state in the media. Therefore, the crucial is not the resulting media image of the brand but, most importantly, the quality of the product offered. Only transparent and quality policy leads to a strengthening of the country's credibility (Anholt, 2015, pp. 189–190).

It does not mean, however, that states cannot focus on attractive, ambitious, and innovative projects and policies which will contribute in the long term to the country's development and also to gaining global attractiveness and, thus, the betterment of global image (Anholt, 2008, p. 23). However, projects whose value is only commercial should include only a small part of states' policies (Anholt, 2015, p. 205). Moreover, a mere marketing project is insufficient to ensure long-term comprehensive development, innovation, and ambition in areas such as tourism, foreign investment, attracting quality and educated workforce, comprehensible foreign policy, a policy aimed at dealing with environmental change, and a focus on the economic prosperity of the country (Anholt, 2007, p. 16).

Anholt recognizes that even when trying to create a competitive identity, it is necessary to use marketing tools, especially now that social networks and technological advances allow for easier outreach and targeting. Nevertheless, despite the marketing, the primary criterion remains product quality. Current marketing-oriented comprehension of the concept of nation branding leads Anholt to come up with his term competitive identity, which resembles the nation branding process where the priority is not marketing. What matters the most for the competitive identity is whether a particular policy is implemented and not just shared in the media. It should be much easier and more cost-effective to focus on specific policies that will make the country attractive, credible, and unique than to invest enormous amounts of money in media campaigns to promote the state. If states seek to change their image, they must strive for more than a marketing project (Ibid, p. 21; Anholt, 2015, pp. 190, 191, 192, 195).

Noteworthy is the focus on the link between international perceptions of a particular country and the popularity of a government. A good brand can protect a country in the long run if its government cannot act. However, if the government is in the long term under international scrutiny for its incompetency, then the attractiveness of the brand may be weakened. In addition, there is a need for supply to reflect demand. Self-presentation and policy should reflect the criticism and demands of a global audience. Feedback has a very significant role (Anholt, 2015, pp. 196–197).

Establishing a competitive identity requires the cooperation of all actors within the state to improve the long-term image to bring about a competitive advantage at the expense

of other states (Ibid, p. 198). Coordination, interconnectedness, and long-term vision should be ensured mainly between all three components - public diplomacy, nation branding, and competitive identity. The responsibility lies with the state's leaders (Anholt, 2007, p. 14). However, the government and political leaders are not the only actors responsible. Individuals within society, as well as organizations and groups of people who are independent of the government, are essential and can also influence and help to create a competitive image of the country (Anholt, 2015, p. 198).

Therefore, a country's competitive identity is the content of public diplomacy. In the case of successful, attractive, credible, unique, and ambitious policies, it can help to present the achievements through public diplomacy. However, specific, tangible policy alone is not enough. It needs to be appropriately visible. If it is not visible, it will hardly change the opinion and perceptions of the global audience. Communication, therefore, plays a significant role. It can change public opinion about a particular country, make it more attractive, and enhance its competitive status, which can increase tourist interest, foreign investment, or the inflow of educated individuals (Ibid, pp. 198, 202, 203, 204; Anholt, 2007, p. 21).

Long-term strategical thinking is vital. It can make the investment much more efficient and immediately economically boost the state and also lead to a stronger competitive image of the country, which enables the faster and elaborated and mainly intended development of the state (Anholt, 2008, p. 23). Therefore, the main focus of the thesis and the following analytical part is to assess and compare the long-term health strategy of both countries as well as their specific health policies and, of course, state communication³⁵ to see if the health sector plays an as important role as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates claim or if it only serves to create a global image and brand without any specific policies.

³⁵ Public diplomacy

2. Health and Health Sector as Part of the Competitive Identity of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates

The second part of the thesis, analytical-descriptive, based on the presented theoretical part of the thesis, aims to provide an analysis of what role and significance the aspect of health and the health sector holds in two selected cases, the states of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates and how it serves to reinforce their competitiveness. The specific focus is on how both' states strategically view the role of the health and health sector domestically, regionally, and globally. The thesis seeks to identify countries' strategic health considerations, plans, and visions. Then it strives to connect the states' strategic objectives and visions with specific health policies in both countries. The focus is also on both countries' domestic, regional, and global communication and how health-related policies and their communication serve the process of attractive and credible city and nation branding. The overall aim is to identify and compare strategic thinking, health-related policies, communication, and branding process and to assess whether the health and the health sector affect and serve to strengthen the competitive identity of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates regionally or globally.

2.1. Health and Health Sector as Part of the Competitive Identity of Qatar

The pivotal Qatari government document, Qatar National Vision 2030, highlights the importance of the health sector for the future development and competitiveness of the state. It is precisely the first pillar of the Qatar National Vision 2030, which focuses on human development³⁶ and includes the significance of health aspects next to education. It demonstrates the country's awareness of its reliance on financial oil and gas revenues. There is a strong incentive for the state to remain competitive even in the future without reliance on gas and oil. For this reason, it focuses explicitly on its population, which, because of the income from the resources mentioned above, has its quality of life rapidly improved in terms of living conditions and opportunities, which is also the cause of its health problems (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008, p. 13; Oxford Business Group, 2022).

To improve health and transform the environment, Qatar seeks to establish a modern, inclusive, and, above all, preventive health system, which is immensely important for the country's future. Specifically, the section "A Healthy Population: Physically and Mentally" aims to provide the state-of-the-art system with the latest research and data-driven

³⁶ Overall, the first pillar combines the importance of education, health, and a quality workforce (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008, p. 15).

technologies that provide accessible, efficient, high-quality, and inclusive care with a strong emphasis on the prevention of both physical and mental health for all members of society in public or private healthcare sector. Therefore, the ambition is to create an environment where people can access health care without difficulty and live healthy lives (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008, pp. 14, 17, 22).

Another document that takes a strategic view of the impact of the health and health sector for the benefit of the state of Qatar is the National Health Strategy for the years 2018–2022, which is part of the broader National Development Agenda 2018–2022. It highlights the state’s ambition to strive for the highest standard possible in the health sector and specifically to tackle the occurrence of diseases connected to the modern and often stressful lifestyle. Among the most significant threats and risks are cardiovascular diseases³⁷, cancer, and diabetes³⁸, resulting from the fact that almost three-quarters of the population is overweight, or that almost half of the population does not get enough physical activity. It creates a vast systemic burden on the country’s health system and affects not only the effectivity and capacities of the health system but the effectivity, prosperity, productivity, and development of the whole nation, which can be felt the most in the financial cost of its health services (Ministry of Public Health, 2018a, pp. 7, 16; Ministry of Public Health, 2018b, p. 5).

In general, the strategy seeks an inclusive approach to provide accessible, affordable, and sustainable health care, health environment, and better quality of life for selected priority groups, which include youth and children³⁹, women⁴⁰, people with health problems^{41,42} or

³⁷ Almost half of the population showed at least three signs of cardiovascular disease (Ministry of Public Health, 2018b, p. 10).

³⁸ Around 17% of the population was diagnosed and had diabetes at the start of the five-year health strategy (Ibid).

³⁹ One of the shortcomings related to children’s health and development is insufficient breastfeeding, which falls short of the World Health Organisation target. Other deficiencies and problems include obesity, lack of physical activity, smoking experience, and the need for dental interventions (Ministry of Public Health, 2018a, p. 24).

⁴⁰ The main risks for women include being overweight and obese or consuming inadequate amounts of vegetables and fruits, and having no physical activity (Ibid, p. 26).

⁴¹ The strategy recognizes a vast room for improving the current care and education, normalizing mental problems to create a safe environment for open debate. The current level of care is not sufficient compared to other countries. However, it is gradually evolving, as manifested by the Mental Health Strategy 2013-18. In the Ministry of Public Health survey, more than half of the respondents claimed that the public is unaware of the impact and outcomes of mental health on everyday life (Ibid, p. 30).

⁴² The lifestyle and the aging of the population cause an increase in the presence of diseases such as heart problems, cancer, or diabetes, among the most common causes of death. Therefore, there is a need to invest in health education and communication and utilize data to improve the population’s overall health through self-awareness and responsibility, which should reduce the probability of diseases and financial expenditure for health care. The aim should be prevention through providing the best environment possible to prevent, treat or mitigate the impact of the diseases (Ibid, pp. 32–33).

disabilities⁴³, expatriates and the elderly under the motto: better health⁴⁴, better care, better value. Better health stands for ensuring that the population lives not only longer but also healthier and quality, both physically and mentally, life. It is necessary to provide an environment in which it will be much easier to educate, in the best-case scenario, from a young age, explain the importance of health, create the right conditions to eat and drink healthy and be physically active indoors or outdoors in a sustainable, environmentally friendly, and safe environment in terms of clean water and air and to prevent diseases, and, if needed, provide health care for the population. In such an environment, people are responsible for acting reasonably to live healthily (Ministry of Public Health, 2018a, pp. 7, 18, 19, 46; Ministry of Public Health, 2018b, pp. 5, 13, 69).

The second pillar of the motto is a service that puts patients first and strives to provide the best care through modern technology in a way that is personal, as fast, safe, transparent, coordinated, efficient, and accessible as possible. For it, an attractive environment for personal growth and education is required for the health personnel both to retain and attract quality health force and offer the highest-quality service. The last part, better value, points out that the first two pillars should be implemented to ensure the most efficient investment management to produce the intended results. Such a system set-up should also allow for continuous innovation and improvement of the system, which again will be very positive for the health of citizens and the productivity and competitiveness of the country in total (Ministry of Public Health, 2018a, pp. 17–18; Ministry of Public Health, 2018b, p. 76).

The current strategy is, therefore, a very patient-oriented policy⁴⁵ with the aim to provide sufficient quality personal attention and service. The ambition is demonstrated through the effort to transform existing operations from addressing health problems caused by poor lifestyles to preventing them. Demographic predictions of upcoming reduced population growth should be an opportunity to focus primarily on ensuring quality health care for all in the country. It certainly requires the most up-to-date access to data-driven information in combination with safety and quality of care, use of digital technologies, and

⁴³ The first steps include providing equal access to medical care, education, and employment opportunities. The provision of an equal environment and support should also include individuals who assist people with disabilities (Ministry of Public Health, 2018a, pp. 34–35).

⁴⁴ Qatar's previous initiatives, programs, and strategies, such as building new state-of-the-art facilities, preventing, and treating cancer or mental health issues, particularly the previous five-year National Health Strategy and its digitalization, data analysis, and prevention agenda, which the 2018–2022 strategy builds on, are all contributing to the accomplishment of the state's ambitious goals and vision (Ministry of Public Health, 2018b, pp. 12–14).

⁴⁵ For more information about the important role of the public see the document Public Strategy Health 2017–2022.

support of science and research to improve and make healthcare in the country innovative and capable of acting immediately and detect the health problems early (Ministry of Public Health, 2018a, pp. 11, 16, 19, 22, 46, 55; Ministry of Public Health, 2018b, p. 73).

Patients are not seen as passive health sector recipients, but they play a vital role in forming the country's future. Achieving an informed public and reasonable interaction with it, quality healthcare, and transformation from disease treatment to prevention requires also extensive cooperation of other actors such as NGOs, media, educational institutions, business organizations, and government entities. A healthy lifestyle and healthy life are a collective goal, for all individuals in the state, without any differences. Therefore, it is crucial to reflect on socioeconomic differences that affect opportunities for healthy living. Awareness of the diversity of different social groups should enable more precise addressing of their specific health issues and risks, contributing to disease prevention and less pressure on the Qatari health care system, especially regarding states' financial expenditure (Ministry of Public Health, 2018a, pp. 17, 22, 55; Ministry of Public Health, 2018b, p. 18).

The primary responsibility for making decisions and monitoring the timely implementation of the strategic plans stands with the Ministry of Public Health⁴⁶. Altogether, health is essential for the future of the State of Qatar and is closely interconnected with the state's social, economic, and environmental policies and outcomes (Ministry of Public Health, 2018a, pp. 48, 52). Thus, in terms of competitive identity, Qatar identifies problematic areas or insufficiently functioning specific sectors of the health system and presents an effort to address them to improve the health and quality of life of the country's population in the long term and contribute to the country's productivity and thus reduce health expenditure.

Furthermore, the release of the strategies highlights the critical role of the Qatari population. The people of Qatar are not perceived as passive recipients of health recommendations but based on educational initiatives and the creation of a healthy, safe, sustainable, and sports environment, as individuals responsible for their health, whose healthy and responsible behaviour can contribute to a better quality of life in the country and greater productivity and prosperity, both theirs and that of the state. However, the state's public

⁴⁶ The Ministry of Health is responsible for the country's health sector, its functioning, effectiveness, and coordination of its public and private services and number of health initiatives. The health sector in Qatar is primarily public, but private health facilities are also present. The number of private health facilities and their capacity within the country is increasing, reflecting the government's efforts to increase private sector participation in health care provision within the country and thus reduce pressure on public facilities. They offer faster, more detailed but more expensive service. However, an absolute majority of the health care in the country is provided by two public healthcare organizations, The Primary Health Care Corporation and The Hamad Medical Corporation, which include public hospitals, clinics, ambulance services, and specialized medical facilities (Ibrahim & Bizimungu, 2023; Oxford Business Group, 2020a; Oxford Business Group, 2022).

diplomacy is oriented not only toward its people but also outwards to communicate its ambitious plans and efforts to improve health care and the health of the population globally.

The vision and strategies thus demonstrate Qatar's ambition to create a healthy, safe, and sustainable environment for the people in the country and the most modern healthcare system. However, it is not necessarily a unique characteristic of the state, especially for innovative and developed states. That is why Qatar's modernization and data-driven approach is principally oriented regionally. The state strives to make Qatar's health sector the best regionally and thus be a regional leader in the health sector in terms of uniqueness, attractiveness, and competitiveness, improving its global image and reinforcing the states and states' health sector brand (Ministry of Public Health, 2018b, p. 80). It can strengthen its soft power and attractiveness within the region and internationally and enhance the credibility of residents, tourists, and entrepreneurs in the state's ability to provide a healthy, safe, and sustainable environment for its residents and visitors.

Regarding the state's policy, many policy initiatives and projects have been executed toward the identified priority areas to increase in total the population's health literacy and to create healthy, safe, and sustainable conditions that motivate and enable the people to lead active and healthy lives. It includes a specific initiative targeting the priority area of children. The "Back to School" campaign included educational activities promoting health and environmental literacy for everyday life and ways to address and improve the environment for a better quality of life (Gulf Times, 2022b). The issues of childhood obesity and lack of physical activity have also led to the launch of the "Biggest Winner" program that aimed to educate and motivate one hundred selected overweight elementary school students to exercise more and adopt healthier habits (Salari, 2022).

Furthermore, the country's younger generation was targeted through lectures conducted by The Human Nutrition Department at the College of Health Sciences, which is part of Qatar University. It aimed at increasing the health literacy of preschool children by presenting information about the importance of fruit and vegetable consumption and the quality of drinking. It included lectures and an interactive and entertaining teaching method, tasting healthy ingredients. Fruit, vegetables, and drinking are crucial for the diet⁴⁷ in childhood and adolescence for health, quality of life, and prevention of diseases. Currently, children's diets are insufficient, which can negatively affect their future health and their

⁴⁷ Another unique way of presenting the importance of diet was realized at Doha Academy Schools during Ramadan, explaining the necessity of meal planning and drinking. The lecture also included information about the mental and physical benefits of fasting (The Peninsula, 2022).

ability to learn and develop. The percentual figures of obese or overweight children eloquently demonstrate the lack of quality diets and healthy lifestyles within this social group (Gulf Times, 2022a).

Consumption of sugary drinks is another major problem, which impacts oral health and weight or increases the probability of diseases such as diabetes or heart problems. The critical part of the campaign aimed not only at explaining what to eat and drink but also improving the ability to analyse ingredients and be aware of healthier, sugar-free drinking options (Ibid). The necessity of presenting healthy lifestyle information in educational institutions was emphasized by the 2020 research report A World Innovation Summit for Health, which perceives schools as crucial actors responsible for increasing the health literacy of children and adolescent students through education and entertaining activities. The report is written specifically in relation to the impact of lockdowns due to pandemic and their consequences on children's mental and physical health (Gulf Times, 2020a).

For the priority group of women and future or current mothers and their children, the MOPH, in collaboration with local and internationally recognized health experts and entities, issued nutritionally beneficial recommendations for health enhancement. It followed the previous document⁴⁸ highlighting the importance of healthy nutrition, physical activity, sugar and salt consumption reduction, and sugar-free drinking habits. The new document is part of the National Action Plan for Nutrition and Physical Activity, and it should enable the priority group to be educated about various topics such as healthy nutrition, the need for physical activity, the significance of breastfeeding, and the critical role of sleep during pregnancy and their kid's childhood. The document's final form should be influenced by the comments of Qatari mothers and their opinions about the recommendations (Gulf Times, 2022g).

The public and private health facilities that specialize in providing care for women are of the highest standard. Among the highest-quality healthcare providers is the Women's Wellness and Research Centre in Doha, which specializes in obstetric care. Another facility, for example, is Sidra Hospital. In addition to lectures and efforts to educate the very young, Qatar has many specialized medical facilities dedicated to providing services for children (Buswell, 2022). For the elderly, home care should be available through public health providers (Qatar Development Bank, 2021, p. 19).

The state is also active in the area of mental health. Education, combined with the creation of a safe and open environment for debate on this issue through the Ma'ak National

⁴⁸ 2015 Qatari dietary guidelines

Mental Health and Wellbeing initiative, is being led by The Mental Health Programme Team in the MOPH in partnership with HMC and PHCC. Based on materials prepared or lectures given by experts online or offline, children of all ages, their parents, and school staff are taught the importance of mental health for daily life and overall health and, if needed, how to seek professional help. Mental health will continue to be a topic that will be part of education within schools and society to continually improve current care and access for society and greater awareness of the impact of mental health problems (Gulf Times, 2022f). Gradually, the quality of care provided is improving in terms of the environment, which includes more specialized facilities or opportunities for consultation (Buswell, 2022).

Hosting the World Cup in the end of the year 2022 has not only allowed Qatar to gain global attention⁴⁹ but has led to a required rapid process of transformation in the country, one area of which is the health sector⁵⁰. Since 2010⁵¹, there has been a quantitative and qualitative improvement in the country's public and private health care provision through the opening of ten new modern public hospitals and several other medical facilities for basic or even more specialized care and treatment (Gulf Times, 2022h). Just before the Qatar World Cup, Doha was still undergoing a beautification process to create a safe, green, and healthy environment for cycling, running, or walking through road and path construction that would connect parts of the city and reduce car traffic and air pollution. The environment also reflects the needs of the elderly or people with disabilities. The beautification process also includes the expansion of greenery in the parks (Alingal, 2022). On top of that, the World Cup and its organization in the country can also help motivate the population to lead healthier lives and therefore serve as an inspiration.

In terms of digital healthcare development, the MyHealth patient portal has been operational since 2018. It is accessible in a coordinated collaboration of Hamad Medical Corporation and Primary Health Care Corporation by their patients. The portal allows them to access their health information or recommendation, communicate with healthcare facilities, and be better informed about their health status (Gulf Times, 2020b). The health appointment

⁴⁹ The total global reach of the Qatar World Cup is estimated to be up to five billion viewers. In addition, approximately one and a half billion viewers watched the final match between Argentina and France alone. The enormous number of interactions through social media networks cannot be omitted either (FIFA, 2023).

⁵⁰ The management of healthcare delivery during the World Cup was also helped by Qatari experience with previous healthcare provision in sporting events such as the 2019 FIFA Club World Cup, the 2019 IAAF World Athletics Championships, and the FIFA Arab Cup 2021 (WHO, 2022).

⁵¹ The year when it was decided that the next FIFA World Cup would be held for the first time in the MENA region in Qatar (Al Jazeera, 2022).

platform Meddy also helps to facilitate online communication and to get the best health care from medical personnel (Oxford Business Group, 2020a).

Another Qatari initiative attempting to make a healthy lifestyle more attractive, particularly physical activity, and to attract more people to participate in daily sports is the organization of national sports days⁵², where the participants have numerous opportunities to try out up to 130 sports physical activities across the country. In the context of the National Vision 2030 and its focus on human development, it is one of the tools to treat the country's population and improve their physical and mental health, thus preventing diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart problems. The motto of this year's national day, "The Choice is Yours," is telling and appropriately reflects the aforementioned Qatari documents focusing on promoting the health of its population. The Choice is Yours thus symbolizes the choice for a healthier, better, and more joyful life within the community through physical activity. As part of raising awareness of the need to exercise for the betterment of own health, Qatar also, for example, organizes sports activities the whole year through the Qatar Sports for All Federation and seeks the inclusion and, thus, participation of diverse segments of society, women for example, in state-owned sports facilities (Gulf Times, 2023c).

Among the unique facilities dedicated to healthy and sports life that differentiate Qatar from other countries is the new running track that is part of Umm Al Seneem Park. Given Qatar's high temperatures, an air conditioning installation that cools air at 26 degrees Celsius creates an ideal sports environment. The air-conditioning covers 1,143 meters of the running track, making it the longest track of its kind in an outdoor environment, according to the Guinness Book of World Records. Solar panels generate more than half of the energy responsible for air conditioning. The link between health, sport, and the quality environment can also be highlighted by the number of green spaces in the park, which cover approximately 68% of the park's total size (Kilani, 2022a).

Overall, the park is part of Qatar's efforts to create a healthy and sustainable environment for its population, residents, and tourists, offering opportunities for a variety of physical sports and leisure family activities, including running, cycling, exercise, and a playful environment for children with or without disabilities. Such a healthy and sustainable environment around the parks is present throughout the country, but not always with the possibility of air conditioning. Qatar's action in providing people with a healthy and safe environment is demonstrated through an increase in the number of parks in the country. While

⁵² The National Sports Day has been held in Qatar since 2012 following the decision of the Emir of Qatar. It is held every year on Tuesday in the second week of February (Gulf Times, 2023d).

in 2010, there were only 56 parks in Qatar, by 2022, there will be almost 150 parks. Similar progress has been seen since 2010 in terms of doubling the recreational area of parks or having more green spaces in the country (Ibid).

The newly opened cultural facility, 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic Sports Museum, attempts to raise awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and motivate its visitors to live healthily. It provides information about the history and impact of the Olympic Games and the history of sports in Qatar. Moreover, it offers education on the importance of physical activity and entertaining interactive sports activities in the Activation Zone section. The complex also includes a public library that provides education on topics such as the Olympics, healthy lifestyles, healthy eating, and how to be physically active (Aguilar, 2022).

Based on the implemented and executed initiatives, lectures, plans, and constructions presented, it can be said that Qatar is taking action, especially in the first two priority areas - children and women. At the same time, it is evident that the state is investing in the future of its citizens through the creation of a healthy, safe, sustainable, and sporting environment that should motivate them to engage in sports and physical activities and healthy eating and thus serve to prevent diseases and reduce the present diseases within the population that burden the state both economically and in limitation of the provision of health care without any delays.

Furthermore, the aim is not only to present information but to promote health literacy among the people of the country so that they can take responsibility for their health and thus help prevent and reduce the presence of diseases through a healthy lifestyle. An interactive and entertaining form of education reflects the theoretical part of the thesis and public diplomacy's efforts to reinforce the two-way relationship and strengthen it through various types of interaction and engagement with the targeted population. In the case of Qatar, it includes sports days, sports museums, entertaining interactive lectures, or feedback from the targeted social groups through discussion. In terms of improving health and providing healthy environment, Qatar is thus communicating with its population, but its ambitious visions are also part of Qatari public diplomacy and branding aimed internationally. However, the information presented needs to be assessed very critically. As the Qatar Development Bank's evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the Qatari health sector argued, particularly in the timely application of entire strategic plans and initiatives, Qatar had room for improvement (Qatar Development Bank, 2021, p. 21).

The importance of the health sector and the quality of health care provision is demonstrated through relatively high rankings in the international evaluation of health care

and health-related variables. In 2021, Qatar improved its overall healthcare ranking to 39th out of 167 countries, moving to second place within the region (Oxford Business Group, 2022). In 2018, Legatum Institute's index⁵³ even ranked Qatar fifth globally and first within the region for 2018, which of course, the state used in its favour to communicate the high ranking and to praise the healthcare sector and its quality care provided (Gulf Times, 2019). Moreover, Qatar's emphasis on health and rapid improvement of living conditions is supported by its current state of life expectancy⁵⁴, namely regionally higher average life expectancy and the highest lifespan among the member states of Gulf Cooperation Council⁵⁵. In addition, Qatar has also achieved a high vaccination rate, especially among its children, and the state has massively reduced infant mortality (Oxford Business Group, 2020a; Oxford Business Group, 2022).

In another healthcare ranking, the Numbeo Healthcare Index, Qatar reached the twentieth international position for 2021. Given the strong emphasis on providing quality healthcare in a modern environment within its national plans and strategies, it is interesting to observe that state-of-the-art tools and quality clinic facilities were evaluated highest in this index. Conversely, dissatisfaction was mainly associated with the lengthy administrative process and long waiting time for examinations and results (Bukhari, 2021).

This aspect is further criticized by Qataris, who could not financially afford care at private medical facilities and therefore had to make appointments at public HMC and PHCC facilities. However, they had to wait for a very long period, around six months or more, for health care and examination after the first information appointment, which can be fatal in the case of acute diseases. In the case of a dentist appointment, people can wait up to a year. One of the reasons is the shortage of doctors⁵⁶ in public hospitals and their colossal workload. It is one of the reasons why some of them leave for private medical institutions, increasing the strain on the remaining medical staff in public hospitals (Ibrahim & Bizimungu, 2023).

Therefore, one of the objectives within the health sector and five-year national health strategy is to reduce the burden on public facilities, which should be helped by the newly

⁵³ The healthcare assessment included the quality of primary health services and facilities, the importance of disease prevention capacity, and physical and mental health (Gulf Times, 2019).

⁵⁴ 2019 World Bank data claimed that Qataris, on average, lived slightly over the age of 80 years (Oxford Business Group, 2022).

⁵⁵ It is a regional cooperative political-security and economic institution of the states Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates that was formed in 1981 following the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, which served as the abovementioned countries' major motivation for the GCC's establishment to cooperate in the regional security matters (Al Jazeera, 2017).

⁵⁶ In particular, the healthcare sector lacks doctors of Qatari origin. Almost all nurses and more than two-thirds of all doctors within the health sector are people of foreign origin (Oxford Business Group, 2020a).

introduced, not yet active, health insurance law targeting all non-Qatari individuals in Qatar. It aims to increase interest in the healthcare provided by private health clinics. In addition, some health centres are already reserved for Qatari citizens only. Criticism for this reform is connected not only to the uncertainty of whether the private health sector is capacity ready and whether, for example, expatriates will also still possess access to health care, which, by the way, are one of the priority areas presented in the National Health Strategy, where the strategic plan claims to strive for the provision of a healthy environment essential for the expatriates' mental and physical wellbeing (Ibid; Ministry of Public Health, 2018a, pp. 28, 51).

Qatari commitment to continuous improvement of high-quality healthcare is also demonstrated by the award of national accreditation status by the US Public Health Accreditation Board⁵⁷ for Qatar's public healthcare in 2022 for five years based on positive evaluation of coordination, efficiency, use of modern technology, prevention capability, and crisis management. Awarding the accreditation for its public health service provision quality makes Qatar the first foreign country with such certification (Gulf Times, 2022d). Apart from the PHAB accreditation, Qatar also succeeded in the UK consultancy Brand Finance's ranking. Five Qatari hospitals were ranked in the international top 250 according to the quality of academic-healthcare facilities based on healthcare quality, personal approach, research, and education. Thus, Qatar has regionally the highest number of medical facilities included in the index. Four of the five Qatari academic-health facilities are part of Hamad Medical Corporation. The fifth facility is the private Sidra Medicine (Ibrahim & Bizimungu, 2023; Qarjouli, 2023).

HMC also boasts Joint Commission International's 2016 accreditation for all its health centres, making it a unique healthcare provider as it is the only entity in the world to have all the health facilities it operates under such accreditation. It also has an accreditation awarded by the Accreditation Council of Graduate Medical Education - International, which evaluates the quality of education of medical graduates and their preparation for health service. It is the only medical entity in the MENA region with such accreditation. Whereas Sidra Medicine was, for example, awarded the Gold Seal of Accreditation in 2020 by Joint Commission

⁵⁷ The Public Health Accreditation Board, established in 2007, is the only public health entity responsible for granting national accreditation exclusively to public health facilities in the United States based on quality-of-care performance and accountability. PHAB is also responsible for driving innovation and development within the country's public health service (PHAB).

International for its high-quality standard of care (Gulf Times, 2020b; Qarjouli, 2023; Sidra Medicine).

On top of all the previous accreditation and rankings, one of the most recent achievements in accreditation and recognition of providing a quality healthy living environment for its residents is the awarding of healthy cities certification by WHO for all cities in Qatar. It differentiates Qatar from its neighbours in the Eastern Mediterranean region based on its healthy city status and the quality of safe, healthy, sustainable environment for its population. Qatari cities are characterized by a combination of green, sustainable, and environmentally friendly policies, which aim to provide a healthy environment with a preference for more environmentally friendly transport services. Transport diversification through the possibility of cycling, walking, or jogging routes enables and motivates active and healthy living. Sports facilities and parks also provide suitable conditions for physical activity. In addition, cities also seek to educate their citizens, starting with children, and thus make them responsible for their health and the prosperity and productivity of the community. Inclusiveness is emphasized to create an accessible, healthy, and safe environment for people with disabilities (Gulf Times, 2022c).

Thus, based not only on healthy cities certification but also on the previous arguments, it is possible to demonstrate the interconnection of health, a healthy and educated society, the benefits of a quality environment, and, in such an environment, the financial savings of the state. The ability to provide quality and modern care is demonstrated by the accreditations awarded and by international high-ranking assessing individual variables related to the provision of modern and safe healthcare by medical facilities. Regarding uniqueness, mainly Qatar's PHAB accreditation serves the country as another regional or global differentiation from other states and emphasizes the provision of high-quality modern health care (PHAB, 2022).

Accreditation and rankings recognizing quality healthcare are presented and communicated internationally by the representatives of the state of Qatar to present the country attractively as modern, innovative, trustworthy, and responsible (Gulf Times, 2022e). Also, the hosting of a sporting mega-event, the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, in collaboration with FIFA and WHO, was branded as the Healthy 2022 World Cup⁵⁸ to manifest the emphasis

⁵⁸ Before the beginning of the Qatar World Cup, FIFA promoted a mental health app, Calm, which was free to individual members of the national football teams, FIFA employees, and those involved in the organization of the Qatar World Cup and other FIFA competitions planned for 2023. Ordinary fans could purchase it at half price during the Qatar World Cup and other future FIFA tournaments. Similar to the national strategy, the app, and FIFA aimed to educate and create a more open environment to discuss mental health issues. The link between

on promoting physical and mental health, safety, and well-being of all football fans. It was also intended to serve as an example and inspiration for the future organization of football World Cups. The Minister of Health even spared no superlatives, calling Qatar's hosting the safest and healthiest tournament ever (Gulf times, 2023a; WHO).

The staging of the mega-event had an immense impact on the country's infrastructure development preceding the tournament regarding football infrastructure, public transportation, expansion of the existing airport, and new construction projects within the capital. Therefore, the World Cup was the culmination of the state's strategic vision of diversifying its income through a positive, appealing global image expected to attract tourists or investors based on the presented and communicated innovative, hospitable, and favourable entrepreneurial, and touristic brand of the state. Qatari World Cup was intended to reinforce the state's global soft power and international visibility, but mainly to strengthen its security in the volatile region (Kabbani, 2022).

Thus, the health sector was also an essential part of Qatar's public diplomacy and nation branding as an advanced modern country in terms of interactions, relationship building, and the public and private healthcare services provided during the FIFA World Cup. Indeed, the health sector played a critical role in providing vastly extensive and easily accessible healthcare for football fans⁵⁹⁶⁰⁶¹, which could have contributed to the favourable country's perception as modern and trustworthy because of its modern and vast health capacities (Gulf Times, 2023b). However, the health sector is only a small part and not the most relevant part, which contributes to the attractiveness of the global image of the Qatari state. Nonetheless, it still enables it to improve the country's positive perception, primarily through communicating the achievements of the country's healthcare sector. Furthermore, positive personal experiences in the country and face-to-face interaction with healthcare workers and modern technology can also influence the visitor to communicate and share their positive experience on social media or with their friends, therefore elevating them into the role of micro-diplomats, reinforcing the state's attractive regional or global image and attracting more tourists or even investors.

mental health and improved quality of life is evidenced by the Calm app users' feedback of having less stress and better sleep, thus feeling better (Kilani, 2022b).

⁵⁹ Approximately 1.4 million football fans and tourists visited the state during the world football tournament (Middle East Monitor, 2022).

⁶⁰ According to the available information, more than 50,000 football fans received healthcare during the football tournament (The Peninsula, 2023).

⁶¹ To ensure that visitors are comprehensibly informed during the World Cup, the Ministry of Health created a website that explained what to do in the event of a healthcare emergency (Ibrahim, 2022).

Branding the country as a high-quality, accountable, and trustworthy provider of modern public health care, particularly regionally, is a target of the National Public Health document for 2017–2022 (Ministry of Public Health, 2018b, p. 80). As far as national health documents are concerned, domestic public diplomacy is directed toward the Qatari population to educate and create a healthy, safe, sustainable, and sports environment to reduce the prevalence of diseases resulting from unhealthy lifestyles and thus reduce the financial expenditure of the state on the healthcare sector and therefore increase the prosperity of the state and the productivity of the population.

However, despite all the successes presented, the Qatari health sector has room for substantial quality improvement in strategic sectoral areas connected to accessibility, inclusivity, and equality, which are part of its strategic health documents. Moreover, the declared patient-oriented health system is, in the case of public health facilities, poorly coordinated, and people wait an extremely long time for the examination, which can also affect the health of women, one of the priority areas of the National Health Strategy (Ibrahim & Bizimungu, 2023). National Health Strategy also claims to create a safe and healthy environment that will enable expatriates, another priority area, to improve their mental and physical health (Ministry of Public Health, 2018a, p. 28).

Given the information that the global media shared since 2010, when Qatar was announced as the location of the football World Cup 2022, about the environment in which expatriates workers lived, human rights abuses, long working hours, underpaid, delayed or no salaries at all, their absolute dependence on employer's final say about the possible job change or traveling out of the country combined with the potential impact of an insurance reform on them, it is necessary to evaluate the information presented in the documents critically and carefully. At first, Qatar responded to international criticisms. It introduced expatriate workers-related reforms intended to legally protect them from undignified treatment and unsafe and inhuman working environments and terminated their dependence on employers (Amnesty International).

However, the reforms are still insufficiently enforced. As a result, employers continue to have power over expatriate workers life's and can even prevent them from changing jobs or terminating their stay in the country. In addition, migrant workers continue to be subject to delayed, underpaid, or unpaid wages and still work in an inadequately safe environment. They are not adequately legally protected. As a result, perpetrators of human rights violations escape justice and often go unpunished. Victims and their families are not financially compensated, nor are the causes of their deaths investigated. For the systematic abuse in the

country, Amnesty International also blames FIFA, which selected Qatar without any requirements regarding the expatriate's human rights situation. Because of that, Amnesty International demands that FIFA compensate workers for the abuses in the Qatari environment at least 440 million dollars, which is the figure the World Cup-qualified teams are paid for participating in the tournament (Ibid).

2.2. Health and Health Sector as Part of the Competitive Identity of the UAE

In its long-term strategical plan up until 2031, ‘We the UAE 2031’ vision⁶², the United Arab Emirates also recognizes the importance of healthcare as an essential part of enhancing its attractiveness as an ideal innovative and ambitious⁶³ place where to invest and trade. The state aims to be among the global world leaders in high-quality healthcare provision. Overall, the strategic vision includes social and economic ambitions while building on the previous strategic plan, ‘UAE Vision 2021,’ which specifically focused on the role of healthcare, education, and the environment or the importance of community for the development of the state (The United Arab Emirates’ Government portal, 2022c; Vision 2021).

The national goals within the health sector included increasing the number of medical personnel⁶⁴, achieving international accreditation for medical centres, both public and private, based on internationally recognized high-quality healthcare provision standards, and focusing on reducing and even preventing the overall high rates of obesity⁶⁵, diabetes⁶⁶, cardiovascular health problems⁶⁷, and cancer⁶⁸ within the UAE population (Anwar, 2021; U.S.-U.A.E. Business Council, 2021, p. 10). The population’s health literacy, especially of younger people⁶⁹, should be strengthened through educational initiatives that raise awareness of the

⁶² The strategic plan consists of four parts focusing on creating the right environment for the education and health of the population and thus enhancing its productivity, reducing dependence on oil through finding new sustainable solutions, increasing international visibility, or creating the ideal environment for entrepreneurship to thrive in the country (Narayanan, 2022).

⁶³ The ambition of the state is further demonstrated through its long-term future vision for the next 100 years, which includes areas such as space, sustainability, and the use of artificial intelligence to achieve and ensure economic growth, prosperity, and productivity of the state and, thus, reinforcing its global competitiveness (The United Arab Emirates’ Government portal).

⁶⁴ Demographic indicators predict an increase in the UAE’s population to over eleven million by 2030. During the same period, the number of seniors older than 65 is predicted to quadruple, which will require greater capacity within the healthcare sector because of the higher probability of disease and health problems within the population (U.S.-U.A.E. Business Council, 2021, p. 7).

⁶⁵ Within the adult population, more than two-thirds were overweight, and almost one-third of the population met the criteria for obesity (Ibid).

⁶⁶ Almost one-fifth of the population is diagnosed with diabetes, which is globally one of the highest percentage proportions (Webster, 2022a).

⁶⁷ It is the country’s most common cause of death, accounting for more than 65% of all deaths. It also includes heart problems and cardiac arrests, the state’s third leading cause of death (U.S.-U.A.E. Business Council, 2021, p. 7).

⁶⁸ Over one million adults smoke daily. Cancer is, therefore, also a prevalent disease and widespread cause of death in the population (Ibid).

⁶⁹ Obesity among young people pose a massive problem within the region. Among younger individuals studying at universities in the country, the percentage rate of obesity is around thirty percent. One of the causes is the lack of physical activity among more than eighty percent of young people. Combined with an unhealthy diet and smoking experience, it leads to an increase in the rate of obesity within the population, which is also a prediction for the future when the current generation of young people will work and have even less time for a healthy lifestyle. Obesity resulting from a lack of exercise and a healthy diet is a significant cause of other diseases such as diabetes, cancer, and heart problems. Therefore, people with such health problems are a financial burden not only to the health sector but also to the efficiency, productivity, and, ultimately, the competitive future of the country (Ibid, p. 8; Bardsley, 2022b).

impact of poor health habits on individual health, daily life, and its long-term consequences. The educative programs should highlight the significance of prevention through a healthy and active lifestyle (Ministry of Health and Prevention, 2023; The United Arab Emirates' Government portal, 2023b).

The state is aware of the critical role played by its population. It, therefore, focuses on ensuring that it provides the right conditions for a happy life that can also benefit the country. Thus, a healthy, sustainable, and safe environment, as well as educating citizens so that they can also take responsibility for their physical and mental health, should lead to higher productivity, greater satisfaction, and better social relations, which in turn should contribute to the country's efficiency and prosperity. Overall, the National Wellbeing Strategy 2031 aims to provide a quality environment for citizens, residents, tourists, and investors that will enhance the country's attractive brand (National Program for Happiness & Wellbeing, pp. 2–6).

The Ministry of Health and Prevention⁷⁰⁷¹ also seeks to modernize medical facilities and promote and apply medical research in healthcare facilities combined with new technologies to treat and prevent diseases. Based on the Prevention Innovation Strategy, great emphasis was placed on creating an environment that promotes and motivates active and healthy lifestyles and therefore aims at disease prevention primarily through education and greater public awareness, especially diabetes, and obesity. Furthermore, it aims to create a healthcare system that fosters relationships through positive experiences and satisfaction with the service and attempts to cooperate with actors independent of government in providing a high-quality, modern, innovative, and sustainable environment and service as part of the state's Innovation Health Strategy (Ministry of Health and Prevention, 2022b).

Strategic thinking also includes two well-known worldwide cities of the United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai. In the emirate of Abu Dhabi, the priority health areas are the provision of high-quality healthcare, the digitalization process of the health sector, patient satisfaction, recruiting and retaining highly skilled medical staff, greater private sector involvement, and the ability to act in times of crisis (The United Arab Emirates' Government

⁷⁰ The Ministry of Health and Prevention is a decision-maker and responsible actor for healthcare provision in the country on the national level. It aims to provide transparent, innovative, preventive, data-driven, and inclusive service that is efficient, sustainable, patient, and population-oriented. In the case of healthcare on the emirates level, for instance, in Dubai, the Dubai Health Authority is accountable for the provision of high-quality, innovative, educative, constantly improving, and attractive healthcare-related services (Ministry of Health and Prevention, 2022a; Oxford Business Group, 2020d).

⁷¹ Originally the Ministry of Health, renamed in 2016 to highlight the importance of a healthy lifestyle to prevent diseases and health problems (Oxford Business Group, 2020c).

portal, 2022a). Within Dubai, the focus is on creating an environment that enables and motivates healthy and active⁷² living and, if necessary, provides effective and innovative healthcare not only in the case of emergency but also for the regular preventive examinations (The United Arab Emirates' Government portal, 2022b; U.S.-U.A.E. Business Council, 2021, p. 10). Moreover, Dubai's healthcare-focused strategic plan aims to make Dubai a global, world-class healthcare hub that delivers services to its citizens and attracts globally and mainly regionally through its credibility and quality of healthcare services provided to international patients⁷³ (Dubai Health Authority, pp. 10, 11, 12, 16; U.S.-U.A.E. Business Council, 2021, p. 7).

The government is very aware of the widespread diseases and health problems within the population and is attempting to address them. The reduction of prevalent obesity in society is the aim of the Sehhi project in Abu Dhabi, which attempts to highlight healthier food in restaurants and supermarkets based on the amount of fat, sugar, salt, or calories. It also encourages the purchase of fruit, vegetables, and overall healthy food in supermarkets. The initiative aims to spread awareness and health literacy through education. It aims at the promotion of a healthy and active lifestyle, especially among children, which should establish a solid foundation and contribute to the prevention and reduction of lifestyle-related diseases present within the population in the long term (The National, 2022b).

The state has also prevented the purchase of nutritionally deficient or unhealthy food and meals in schools. Moreover, the government increased the price of sweetened beverages nationally to reduce consumption and prevent their negative health impact, particularly on children and young people (Oxford Business Group, 2020d). On top of that, the country's new ambitious, comprehensive plan, The National Nutrition Strategy, for 2022 to 2030, is focused specifically on reducing the consumption of fats, salt, and sugar. It aims to promote healthy eating and reduce health problems among future mothers and especially diabetes and diseases associated with being overweight among children. The strategy strives to provide an accessible, safe, tolerant, and healthy environment to educate and improve health literacy within the population. It is intended to contribute to healthier eating habits and thus reduce or even prevent prevalent diseases (Webster, 2022b).

⁷² More than two-thirds of Abu Dhabi inhabitants were not regularly and sufficiently physically active. In Dubai, the figure was almost eighty percent of its total population (Al Nowais, 2022).

⁷³ The emirate started thinking strategically about the provision of healthcare for medical tourists in 2014 in the official document Dubai Health Tourism Strategy (Oxford Business Group, 2020b).

Cancer is also one of the most prevalent health diseases in the UAE's population. It is one of the reasons why the organization Pink Caravan launched an initiative that provided the population with free breast cancer screening in a limited number of health facilities across the country in the emirates of Sharjah, Dubai, Ajman, Ras Al Khaimah, Umm Al Quwain, and Fujairah. The aim was to educate the community, both men and women, to improve their ability to check and detect health issues early by themselves. The initiative targeted the whole population and attempted to improve its health literacy regarding the disease (Al Amir, 2023).

Evident awareness of the very high prevalence of diabetes⁷⁴ within the UAE's population and the region is illustrated by the organization of The International Society for Paediatric and Adolescent Diabetes conference in Abu Dhabi, focused primarily on diabetes. The event was intended to serve as an expert exchange of knowledge and to cover also other health issues-related topics, such as the impact of pandemic on children's obesity and mental health (The National, 2022c).

The state is also attempting to initiate national programs and events that encourage its resident to engage in physical, sports, or recreational activity in a healthy, safe, and sustainable sports environment. The National Sports Day, held since 2015, is a yearly organized national public event to motivate the community to be physically active and improve overall mental and physical health. Participants can engage in a wide variety of sports, ranging from the easier and less demanding to the marathon. There are also activities designated exclusively for women, such as workouts and yoga. Moreover, National Sports Day enables the state to communicate and promote the values of inclusivity, multiculturalism, brotherhood, and national unity (Alfaham & Ibrahim, 2022; Al Wasmi, 2015).

Besides the National Sports Day, the biggest sporting initiative regionally in its extent and the number of sports offered, called 'Abu Dhabi Summer Sports,' took place in Abu Dhabi throughout the summer to encourage the population to be physically active and lead a healthy lifestyle in a high-quality air-conditioned indoor sports environment (Khaleej Times, 2022; Skirka, 2022). Indeed, indoor sports facilities make it bearable for residents to be active and engage in sports activities even during hot weather in the summer period. Outdoors in Abu Dhabi, bike tracks, and parks were created to provide healthy, safe, and sports environments that will make the population more active and physically active (Al Nowais, 2022).

⁷⁴ According to Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi data analysis, the number of people with diabetes is expected to double within the UAE population by the end of 2040 (The National, 2022c).

Apart from the two most famous cities, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the local health facility initiated a healthy competition in Ras Al Khaimah. It highlighted the severe impact of obesity and its implications for a higher probability of developing diabetes. The aim was to motivate at-health risk citizens to be physically active and live healthier through an entertaining form that included educative lectures or expert advice and health monitoring. It attempted to raise community awareness of the significance of a healthy lifestyle for physical and mental health (Webster, 2022a). In addition, Al Qara'in Park in Sharjah is one of the latest extensive green spaces newly opened to promote health and physical activity, offering its residents facilities to participate in sports and recreational activities and offering children a safe environment to play, including those with disabilities (Ali, 2023).

The health authorities in the Emirates are also focused on the older population and their physical activity. The Forever Fit initiative within Abu Dhabi attempted to motivate older residents to be more physically active daily for at least fifteen minutes (Bardsley, 2022a). However, physical activity is not the panacea for better mental health. Therefore, the public health facilities in Abu Dhabi newly ask about the patient's mental health problems at their first medical appointment. The aim is to prevent and address the problems early to treat them in time and provide the necessary environment and care (Al Nowais, 2023).

Quality of life, safety, or the ability to act in times of crisis, demonstrated during the pandemic, are the characteristics that attract the international public and also global and regional patients and contribute to the attractive and credible global and regional image of the country, but also of its well-known cities. The attractive image is instrumental in accomplishing the state's ambitious strategy to be globally and regionally perceived as the country that provides high-quality, safe, credible, modern, and innovative healthcare for its patients. The vision of Dubai as a tourist and quality healthcare hub is slowly starting to be realized. In 2019, around 350,000 patients⁷⁵ travelled to Dubai for medical services (Anwar, 2021; Oxford Business Group, 2020b).

However, their current number and financial contribution are still considered insignificant. Among the specific services, medical visitors⁷⁶ demanded the most belonged dentistry, orthopaedics care, and dermatologic service. To enhance the attractiveness and uniqueness of the specialized healthcare provided, CosmeSurge built new healthcare facilities

⁷⁵ The most significant number of patients traveling to Dubai for healthcare came from other emirates around the city (Oxford Business Group, 2020e).

⁷⁶ More than one-third of tourists traveling to the Emirates for healthcare came from Asia, nearly one-third came from the region, and European medical tourists accounted for approximately 17% of all medical visitors (Anwar, 2021).

in the city that provides cosmetic and aesthetic procedures in response to the demand expressed. The city also strives to create a welcoming environment for foreign medical tourists. The DXH website and app have been developed to provide valuable information about traveling and living in the country and its legal conditions and thus improve their visiting experience (Oxford Business Group, 2020b).

High expectations were associated with staging a cultural mega-event, Expo 2020, which was intended to strengthen the global soft power, image, and brand of the United Arab Emirates and to, boost Dubai's global city brand, and benefit the country economically in the long term and reinforcing its global competitiveness through tourism. Innovative, modern, technological exhibitions aimed to enhance the attractiveness and credibility of the country and the city in the eyes of the global public⁷⁷⁷⁸. Moreover, the state and the city invested enormous finances into the infrastructure projects related to transportation, tourism, hospitality sector and entrepreneurship to satisfy the needs and wishes of the visitors. Thus, the Expo reinforced the already attractive image of the country as a tourist and business-friendly destination and contributed to the diversification of economic income in the long-term (Abdulmalik, 2021; Kane, 2021).

The FIFA World Cup in Qatar was also a massive economic opportunity for the UAE, especially for the tourism and hospitality sector. Because of its location, Dubai, in particular, served as a perfect destination where football fans spent their leisure time outside of football tournaments. The international reputation of the UAE and Dubai as trusted, safe, and attractive tourist destinations could have also contributed to the interest of global football fans (Latifi, 2022). Indeed, the UAE's territorial location is also a strategic advantage for the country regarding medical tourism. For the period 2020 to 2021, The Medical Tourism Index ranked Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the second half of the top ten global healthcare hubs, regionally the most attractive medical destinations (Anwar, 2021).

The attractiveness of the cities is further strengthened because of their emphasis on innovations and modernization. Dubai's innovative drive directly impacts its healthcare services, where modern digital technologies are increasingly prevalent. Examples include several health apps and webs, namely Altibbi and Zest, which are used to educate, provide

⁷⁷ The total number of visitor entries almost met the expectation set at twenty-five million entries (Halligan, 2022).

⁷⁸ During the Expo, visitors could exclusively visit the representative pavilions of 192 countries or attend a concert by Coldplay or see historically arguably one of the best football players in the world, Cristiano Ronaldo, or Formula 1 racing legend Lewis Hamilton (Ibid).

health services and information, and improve the mental health of their users. Moreover, patients can book their medical appointment online (Oxford Business Group, 2020d).

On the national level, the UAE launched the Actiste app in early 2019, which allows people with diabetes to care for themselves through the information provided without the need to visit health facilities. It is one of many similar projects that leverages current technology to enable online health communication about non-acute health issues. Through its emphasis on digitalization and modernization of health administration, the state expects greater efficiency and better coordination within the health system (Oxford Business group, 2020c).

For its future development, the Abu Dhabi emirate also expects artificial intelligence and digitalization to boost the quality and effectiveness of its healthcare services while reducing and preventing prevalent health problems. An example is the digital initiative Malaffi, which allows health reports to be shared and coordinated between healthcare facilities and thus improve their performance and efficiency. It is a project that should strengthen the performance of public and private facilities and their mutual collaboration (Oxford Business Group, 2020d). Abu Dhabi even sought to encourage innovation in the health sector and innovative health research towards widespread diseases such as heart problems, cancer, and Alzheimer's through the grant program (The National, 2022e).

Furthermore, the emphasis on constant innovation within the UAE's healthcare sector is demonstrated by the organization of the Arab Health 2022 conference in Dubai, which primarily focused on and provided information about the latest technologies helpful in dealing with present and future health challenges (The National, 2022a). Among the other health-related events organized in the country in the past to strengthen the attractiveness of the country's healthcare sector and communicate and highlight the emphasis on quality healthcare with the global public was the World Medical Tourism & Global Healthcare Congress in 2019 in Abu Dhabi (U.S.-U.A.E. Business Council, 2021, p. 8).

The country's global soft power and attractiveness are further strengthened through collaboration with internationally respected public figures such as Bill Gates. Like Gates, the UAE aims to contribute to eradicating polio and prevent its harmful and paralyzing impact on children in the world's poorest countries⁷⁹. The country's attractiveness and credibility are reinforced through Bill Gates' laudatory comments praising UAE President Sheikh Mohamed's contribution to nearly eradicating polio globally and thus preventing it from affecting children (The National, 2022d).

⁷⁹ The UAE healthcare campaign and medical aid primarily targeted the area of Pakistan in an effort to eliminate the impact of polio on children in the country (The United Arab Emirates' Government portal, 2023a).

Regarding the health infrastructure, over the last decade, there has been an almost ten percent yearly increase in healthcare-providing facilities in the emirate of Abu Dhabi. As of 2020, Abu Dhabi⁸⁰ had more than 60 hospitals, nearly 750 health centres, and 760 clinics operating healthcare facilities across the emirate (Oxford Business Group, 2020d). In total, there are three healthcare service-providing specialized city complexes in the United Arab Emirates referred to as healthcare cities, Dubai⁸², Abu Dhabi, and Sharjah⁸³ (The United Arab Emirates' Government portal, 2023c).

Within Abu Dhabi, there are two city healthcare complexes. Sheikh Shakhbout Medical City, operating since 2019, is part of the emirates' efforts to improve and modernize its healthcare services to become an attractive and credible global medical destination. Among the several accreditations confirming quality and accountable healthcare service is the Joint Commission International Gold Seal of Approval (Sheikh Shakhbout Medical City, Award and Accreditations, Who We Are). Sheikh Khalifa Medical City is also located in Abu Dhabi. It was the first healthcare centre in the country to specialize in transplantations. The healthcare city complex is also the only facility within the emirate to focus on and provide paediatric transplantations. In addition, it was the first healthcare centre regionally and outside the United States of America to be accredited for its specialized service in chest pain health issues (Sheikh Khalifa Medical City).

In terms of medical personnel, the state is attempting to create an environment that will attract foreign-quality health workers, particularly by granting visas to enable them to live in the UAE for ten years. The presence of internationally recognized high-quality healthcare facilities such as the Mayo or Cleveland Clinic only reinforces the attractiveness and credibility vis-a-vis foreign doctors, nurses, and medical tourists (Anwar, 2021). The size of medical personnel must be increased to cope with demographic growth, the aging population, and the cumulative impact of unhealthy lifestyles on the population's health. In this respect, the situation is critical regarding the nurses, and the medical staff size is even more complicated because foreign health workers view the UAE as only a temporary workplace. Therefore, the UAE seeks to educate its future local doctors and thus improve

⁸⁰ In Abu Dhabi, private healthcare providers are responsible for more than three-quarters of healthcare services provided (Oxford Business Group, 2020d).

⁸¹ The healthcare entity that provides all public healthcare in hospitals and clinics in the emirate is the Abu Dhabi Health Services Company (Ibid).

⁸² The healthcare city mega-complex provides high-quality and modern healthcare across its eight hospitals and almost 170 specialized medical facilities, employing more than four thousand healthcare workers (Dubai Healthcare City).

⁸³ The city healthcare providing complex was created in 2012 and is situated in the country's third-largest emirate by the area covered (Sharjah Healthcare City).

their quality and healthcare service provision readiness through agreements between healthcare facilities and local universities (Gulf News, 2023; U.S.-U.A.E. Business Council, 2021, pp. 8–9).

Health spending in the UAE has also steadily increased, and its health sector is considered the most expensive regionally. It is the reason why respected foreign healthcare actors such as King’s College Hospital or Barraquer started to invest in the country and open their private healthcare facilities. However, an economically attractive environment can also lead to a non-reflection of healthcare service demand (Oxford Business Group, 2020d; U.S.-U.A.E. Business Council, 2021, p. 9). Also, not all the financial resources were spent on prevention and improving the quality of healthcare, thus contributing to the future reduction of the strain on the health system. The shortcomings were inefficient, unsystematic, and non-coordinated decision-making and healthcare provision, often executed to benefit doctors financially. The national health organizations and the healthcare sector authorities on the emirate level made steps to make healthcare provision more financially efficient (U.S.-U.A.E. Business Council, 2021, p. 9).

To conclude, the United Arab Emirates, particularly Dubai and Abu Dhabi, based on their already established city brands as business, innovation, and tourism hubs, are seeking to strengthen their global image, soft power, brand, and competitiveness. Both cities play an essential role in the state’s strategic thinking, where the healthcare sector’s quality, credibility, innovativeness, and achievements are communicated beyond its border and within the country. The improvement in living conditions, current quality of life, and the quality of healthcare provided can be demonstrated through the life expectancy rate, which was prolonged by sixteen years since 1971 to 78 years of lifespan (Anwar, 2021).

Furthermore, the UAE’s healthcare sector quality is manifested through its ranking. It achieved internationally 42nd position, an improvement from the previous 2021 year⁸⁴. Regionally the UAE was placed second based on Legatum Institution’s Prosperity Index. Its healthcare accessibility and the environment in which healthcare is provided for its residents were considered the best regionally based on BMI healthcare research analysis. Overall, the UAE, within the international medical community, is recognized based on the evaluation of its high-quality healthcare services through international healthcare accreditations as one of the most credible healthcare providers globally (U.S.-U.A.E. Business Council, 2021, p. 8).

⁸⁴ In 2018, the United Arab Emirates reached tenth place internationally in the same index based on the analysis of the quality and attractiveness of healthcare services provided (Oxford Business Group, 2020e).

Domestically, the United Arab Emirates healthcare sector is crucial in addressing and preventing the health problems within its aging population through education, awareness, and provision of a healthy and safe environment to ensure mutually beneficial relationships between the state and its residents. A healthier population, which the state strives for through healthy and educative initiatives and programs, is intended to benefit the country financially. However, the UAE also sees healthcare as a strategic sector that, based on its current attractiveness, can reinforce its attractive, credible, and competitive image and brand, and thus economically benefit the country in the long term.

Staging of the cultural mega-event Expo was an attempt to present and communicate the image of the country to the global public as transparent, tolerant, modern, advanced, innovative, competitive, inclusive, and promoting diversity. It aimed to accomplish its foreign policy objective, enhance the country's international visibility, status, soft power, image, brand, and competitiveness, and attract tourists, entrepreneurs, medical personnel, and potential patients from the targeted global audience. The attractive presentation and communication of the image of the country and the positive experience of the visitor within the country, including reliance on high-quality, modern, and credible healthcare service, should benefit the state.

Based on public diplomacy's assumption of mutual relationship, the state should benefit mainly from its attractive global image reinforced by the positive experience of micro-diplomats in the form of tourists and entrepreneurs. In terms of nation branding, the health sector communicates its achievements and mainly its high-quality healthcare service to strengthen the country's, particularly Dubai's and Abu Dhabi's competitive brand, as two medical tourist destinations that will benefit the state, both through economic gains from medical tourists, but also through the expected influx of foreign doctors that the state desperately needs to be able to provide healthcare for its aging population, but also to provide a health service for international medical customers.

3. Comparison of the Role of Health and Health Sector as Part of the Competitive Identity of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates

When comparing both states, the similarities can be found immediately in their presented national visions outlining their future ambitions in various areas. Regarding the role of health, both states are aware of the immense importance their population plays in their future development, prosperity, productivity, and competitiveness. Both focus on the well-being of the population, which can be divided into the aspects such as quality and safe healthcare, provision of a sustainable and safe environment, or access to health-related information. All the aspects mentioned are part of their strategic plans and initiatives to ensure that their population is healthy. It requires health literacy to make a reasonable decision regarding physical activity, mental health, healthy diet, and drinking. A safe environment is necessary for the population to be physically active and, thus, healthy.

It is the ambition of both Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to create a healthy, safe, and sport environment that will motivate its inhabitants and residents to engage in physical activities to improve their current health. It should contribute to the prevention of health problems, risks, and prevalence of diseases caused by modern, sedentary, non-active lifestyle and unhealthy diets. The prevention of diseases is thus one of the major objectives of Qatar and the UAE to reduce the burden on their health sectors and, thus, its financial burden for the state. The significance of health is demonstrated by the fact that many health diseases are still prevalent within the population. No Arab state was ranked in 2019 in the Bloomberg Global Health Index among the first thirty-five healthiest countries globally (Bardsley, 2022b).

Both states thus attempt to target the prevalent health issues within the population via their strategic documents, which present the problematic health areas and attempt to offer solutions. Firstly, both states similarly focus on providing high-quality, safe, modern healthcare capable of treating current health problems. Their priority areas are primarily children and young people, who already and will for the healthcare sectors of both states possess enormous health challenges because of their current health status and the high prevalence of health issues such as obesity or diabetes.

Because of that, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates focus on providing information and educating their population, starting with the children to improve their health literacy to reduce the future burden on the health system, which would also impact the productivity, prosperity, and competitiveness of the states. Furthermore, there is a real governmental effort

to make a healthy lifestyle more attractive. There are competitions targeting health issues such as obesity. New parks, stadiums, running tracks, cycling paths, and gyms were constructed to provide a healthy, accessible, and sport environment. Moreover, in both states, national sports day is organized to motivate the population to engage in physical activities, establish sport and physical activity as a part of the ordinary life of inhabitants and residents of Qatar and the UAE, and highlight the significance of sports for mental health. The Qatari and the UAE people are thus not only passive recipients of the government's health strategies and plans, but they are also responsible for the betterment of the health situation within their country. Overall, there is apparent effort and strategy to tackle the prevalent health problems and to enable their treatment, in the best scenario to prevent them.

The health sector is, however, not only thought to serve the inhabitants and residents. Its development, innovation, digitalisation, modernization, and resulting provision of high-quality health services are intended to reinforce Qatari and the UAE's global and primarily regional attractive and credible soft power and attract medical tourists, mainly from the region. Therefore, Qatari and the UAE health sector's role is to attract and influence medical tourists to pay for their treatment and visit the state, which would economically benefit the country in other sectors and strengthen its regional image.

It should also attract medical personnel, which both countries are in need of, especially since they lack their local healthcare talents and workers and thus have to rely excessively on foreign health workers. Both countries try to improve their attractive and credible global image by boasting about their quality hospitals, environment, modern and digital technologies, and accreditations awarded by globally recognized healthcare guarantors evaluating their health service. Moreover, the international rankings of healthcare and health facilities are also presented globally and regionally to make the health brand of Doha, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi more visible, attractive, and credible for medical tourists and workers.

Public diplomacy of both states is therefore focused on the domestic, regional, and global audience. Domestically Qatar and the United Arab Emirates attempt to highlight the importance of health and a healthy lifestyle for the quality of life. They also provide the necessary environment and education for a healthy lifestyle and improved health literacy mentioned above. Regionally and globally, they use their health sector and its quality to communicate with a regional and global audience to establish the cities of Doha, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi as high-quality, attractive, credible, and safe healthcare-providing regional hubs and to attract and influence medical tourists to select Qatari and UAE hospitals and healthcare-providing facilities as their place of treatment. Indeed, the staging of sports and

cultural mega-events, the Qatari World Cup, and Expo Dubai had an immense impact and importance for the Qatari and the UAE public diplomacy and nation and city branding strategy. Moreover, Qatari World Cup benefited the United Arab Emirates and Dubai mainly because of its location and proximity.

Both mega-events were intended to make the countries and cities more visible and strengthen their international position, status, reputation, attractiveness, and credibility, thus, soft power and brand, vis-à-vis global audience through the successful organization of the events without any difficulties. Although the primary focus was on the role of sport and culture, thus sports and cultural diplomacy, apart from the hospitality and tourism sector, the health sector played not so visible but essential role in providing the necessary healthcare during the events and in need provided the required healthcare, thus reinforcing the positive experience of foreign visitors and the overall credibility and attractiveness of the country. Credible and quality healthcare and a mainly positive visiting experience should attract foreign visitors, tourists, and investors and enable the country to be seen as a modern, credible, attractive destination, reinforcing the competitive identity of the state and the cities.

There is certainly a difference between the perception of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, between Qatari Doha and both Dubai and Abu Dhabi, with the United Arab Emirates and mainly Dubai being seen as a modern business and innovation hub and thus already attractive and credible, which was also manifested during the World Cup when tourists opted for a stay in the emirate of Dubai, close to Qatar, to spend their leisure time and then to visit the World Cup. In total, however, both countries indeed manifested that their claims of the importance of health and the health sector are not only a marketing tool to strengthen their soft power and attractiveness.

Health strategies, policies, initiatives, and programs highlight the significance of the health and health sector for the country's prosperity, productivity, city and nation branding, and competitive identity to compete⁸⁵ and differentiate itself mainly from the other regional

⁸⁵ On June 5th, 2017, the joint announcement of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt was released about the cut-off of diplomatic relations with Qatar. It was the beginning of the land, sea, and air blockade of the state. The presented reasons were ties with terrorist groups and their funding, close relationship with Iran, and meddling of Qatar in the domestic political affairs of the neighbouring regional states or Al Jazeera's critical broadcasting of political situation in the neighbouring states (Chughtai, 2020). The blockade lasted for more than three years. It was lifted at the beginning of January 2023, with Saudi Arabia seeking to end the diplomatic stalemate with the UAE opposing the final decision. Besides the necessity of Qatar to adapt to the regional crisis, it led to the awareness of the strategic importance of reliance and dependence and, therefore, to the strengthening of its self-reliance. Moreover, the embargo strengthened its relations with Turkey and Iran and decreased its dependence on its regional neighbours. In relation to the health sector, the high reliance on the import of drugs and even medical tools and devices is still considered problematic (Al Jazeera, 2021; Qatar Development Bank, 2021, p. 21). Apart from the blockade, the regional rivalry between the United

countries, that applies to both Qatar and the United Arab Emirates and their perception of each other, and their effort through attractive, credible, competitive image and identity of the country and cities to attract and influence medical tourists, visitors, and investors to provide the necessary environment for the future development of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

Altogether, the thesis aimed to focus on how the health aspect and the role of the health sector are vital to Qatar and the United Arab Emirates and whether its claimed significance is credible or is just a marketing strategy. The aim was to attempt to outline the intended strategic visions, plans, initiatives, and policies, not to investigate whether all the health strategies are executed. The topic of the role of health and healthcare, in particular, raises the question of how to ensure the self-sufficiency and self-reliance of the state in the strategic area of health in a globalized world, where the states are excessively dependent on the import of drugs or medical devices. The state's capability to provide adequate quality healthcare and health-related service is essential for the country's short- and long-term competitiveness.

The national visions highlight the mutual link between the areas of sport, education, environment, and health. Apart from the theses and academic articles focusing on sports diplomacy, particularly in Qatar, future research could focus on the presentation of the comprehensive analysis of how these areas mutually affect each other and together contribute to the overall health of the population. Regarding the sports diplomacy and organization of sporting events in the region, it would be especially interesting to focus on the potential contribution of staging sports events in the countries, be it football, athletics, tennis, or moto-sports, and consider how much it inspires and influences the future generation to engage in physical activity.

The last suggestion for the research topic is the highly contested theme of regional expatriate workers and their well-being. There are numerous reports by non-governmental organizations, namely Amnesty International or Human Right Watch, describing the human rights situation of expatriate workers and their families in the countries. The regional states implemented the required reforms. However, their implementation has many deficiencies and shortcomings, with expats living and working conditions still being highly unsatisfactory. The research could thus attempt to highlight the effort of the regional countries to provide

Arab Emirates and Qatar was also exposed by the New York Times and their findings about how the UAE attempted to criticize Qatar in the media and to accuse it of terrorism to portray its ties to Muslim Brotherhood negatively and by that to prevent it from organizing the World Cup on its own and to achieve the World Cup to be co-organized by other regional states because of the negatively affected soft power, global image and reputation of the Qatari state. It was the continuation of the UAE efforts since 2017, when Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Bahrain broke their diplomatic relations and communication with Qatar (Middle East Monitor, 2019).

expatriate workers with adequate and satisfactory healthcare and how the state's policy is considering and prioritizing their well-being in their policy, initiatives, and programs in relation to their health.

Conclusion

This thesis focused on the role of the health and health sector and its importance for the state's long-term soft power strategic consideration and its regional and global competitiveness within two regionally visible and active in their foreign policy but smaller states, in terms of their size and population, located in the MENA region. The theoretical part of the thesis aimed to explain and present the relevant terms and processes and their importance for the thesis research, namely soft power, the significant role of ICTs, public diplomacy, nation branding, and competitive identity. The concept of competitive identity by Simon Anholt was essential for the theoretical part and the thesis objective. It combines public diplomacy and nation branding and attempts to highlight their strategic contribution to the intended reinforcement of the competitive image of the health sector and its service, strengthening the overall competitive identity of Qatar and the UAE regionally and globally. Thus, Simon Anholt's competitive identity concept affected the structure of the analytical-descriptive part of the thesis, which is divided into three parts, namely states strategical thinking about the importance of health and health sector for their long-term productivity, prosperity, and competitiveness, communication of their policies and branding or marketing of their health-related policies and efforts.

For the assessment of the competitiveness of the health and health sector and its impact on the overall state's competitive global image, the thesis used the content of national visions, health-related strategies, initiatives, programs, plans, and efforts, Qatari and the UAE news presenting the communication of the states healthcare experts, authorities and political representatives and their branding intention. Moreover, the thesis focused specifically on the period when both states staged sport or cultural mega-event, an effort to make the countries and organizing cities more attractive, credible, competitive, and visible. The significant contribution of the health sector was explained in the context of its impact on the relational aspect vis-à-vis tourist during the mega-events.

The aim and the objective of the thesis were to focus on the role of the health and healthcare sector within Qatar and the UAE, and based on Simon Anholt's concept of competitive identity to identify, and compare the health policies, communication of policies, and the importance of health for states and their marketing and branding efforts to be able to answer the research question: *How is the combination of specific health policy, its communication, and marketing or branding practiced by Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in their domestic and foreign policy?*

Hypotheses H3 and H6 were corroborated.

- H3: Given the desire to create an attractive and credible country image in the global system, Qatar focuses on employing public diplomacy and nation branding in combination with specific and tangible health policies that serve to strengthen its global competitive identity and achieve its long-term strategic goals.
- H6: Given the desire to create an attractive and credible country image in the global system, the United Arab Emirates focuses on employing public diplomacy and nation branding in combination with specific and tangible health policies that serve to strengthen its global competitive identity and achieve its long-term strategic goals.

All three essential aspects of Anholt's competitive identity in relation to health, namely policy, communication, and marketing or branding, are present within Qatari and the UAE's long-term health-related strategic consideration. The thesis aimed to expand the existing research regarding the competitive identity and mainly to cover the importance of health in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, whose significance, role, and contribution has not yet been addressed and combined with Anholt's competitive identity and put into perspective with the state's public diplomacy and nation branding strategy. Although there is plenty of research on public diplomacy and nation branding of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, specifically aimed at analysing their sport or cultural diplomacy, the particular focus on the health sector and its contribution to the overall state's domestic, regional, and global attractiveness, credibility, public diplomacy, and nation branding strategy is absent.

The absence of research on a similar theme led to the reliance on the Qatari and the UAE web news and pages, most of the time uncritical towards the country and political representatives of their origin. However, because the aim of the thesis is not to investigate but identify and assess the role of the health and health sector, the web news and pages should suffice enough to present states' health policies complemented by their strategic health documents. The big unknown remains the states' genuine interest in the well-being of their expatriate population, not only in relation to their health situation but overall, to their still unsatisfactory current human rights situation and quality of life in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

The final finding of the thesis is that Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, when compared, both are aware of the immense importance health and quality healthcare have for

their future prosperity, productivity, attractiveness, credibility, development, and competitiveness. Because of that, they specifically focus on children and youth who are already greatly affected by prevalent diseases and health issues. Without the capacity to treat and prevent them, the health problems would significantly financially impact the expenditures of the state and its future development. Quality, modern, credible healthcare facilities, a healthy and sport environment or education, and access to health-related information are crucial for a healthy and productive population, thus, a competitive state in the long term.

Furthermore, the healthcare sector also serves both states to attract and influence medical tourists, mainly from the region, to invest financially in healthcare services and the hospitality sector in the countries. The ambition of Qatar and the UAE is to provide the best healthcare service possible to their inhabitants, residents, medical tourists, visitors, and investors. They openly communicate their achievements, whether healthcare provision rankings or health service-related accreditation, to attract them. Regionally, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates compete to establish their state and city brand, in the case of Doha, Dubai, or Abu Dhabi, as attractive, credible, safe, modern, and quality healthcare service-providing hubs.

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Abstrakt

Diplomová práce usiluje o přispění do odborné diskuse zabývající se kompetitivní identitou států. S konceptem je úzce spojen Simon Anholt, který ho chápe jako nezbytnou charakteristiku dnešních států ve snaze dosažení jednak atraktivního a unikátního globálního obrazu země, ale i obrazu důvěryhodného založeného nejen na strategickém uvažování, ale i konkrétních politikách, které usilují o naplnění národních vizí a cílů. Téma zdraví a zdravotnického sektoru a jeho důležitosti a přínosu pro kompetitivní identitu nebylo doposud zpracováno. Proto tato práce usiluje právě o zaměření se na tuto dílčí oblast, jež zajisté není nejdůležitějším prvkem veřejné diplomacie, nation branding, a tudíž kompetitivní identity Kataru a Spojených Arabských Emirátů, ale i přesto zastává důležitou roli v krátkodobém i dlouhodobém strategickém uvažování pro důvěryhodnou prezentaci země a vytváření a udržování důvěryhodných vztahů s místními obyvateli, residenty, ale i zahraničními turisty nebo investory. Práce si tak klade za cíl zaměřit se na roli zdraví a zdravotnického sektoru v obou zemích a porovnat jeho důležitost a přínos pro obě země na základě aplikace konceptu kompetitivní identity.

Abstract

The diploma thesis aims to contribute to the academic debate about the competitive identity of states. Very closely associated with the concept is Simon Anholt, who understands it as a necessary characteristic of today's states in the pursuit of both an attractive and unique global country image, but also a credible image based not only on strategic thinking but also on specific, tangible policies that seek to accomplish ambitious national visions and objectives. The topic of health and the health sector and its importance and contribution to a state's competitive identity has yet to be covered. Therefore, this diploma thesis seeks to focus on this particular area, which is certainly not the most significant part of public diplomacy, nation branding, and the competitive identity of Qatar and the UAE but still holds an important role in short and long-term strategic thinking for the credible presentation of the country and the creation and maintenance of trustworthy relationships with local inhabitants, residents, and foreign tourists or investors. Thus, the thesis aims to focus on the role of the health and healthcare sector in both countries and compare their importance and contribution to both countries by applying the concept of competitive identity.