

Article

Promotion of Polish Cinema Abroad as an Element of Nation Branding. Case Study of “Cold War” (2018) by Pawel Pawlikowski

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Abstract: The subject of this article is nation branding in the culture market, namely the role cinematography plays in creating a nation brand. Sustainability and sustainable development in the film industry is conditioned by variety in cultural promotion channels. The aim of the authors is to prove that appropriately organised cinematography promotion abroad can positively influence the image of a given country. The first section deals with the relationship between media and sustainable development, as well as with theoretical definitions of branding and the nation brand. Subsequently, cinematography in the context of branding is discussed. The core of this work is a case study of film promotion abroad from the institutional perspective of the Polish Film Institute. The promotional strategy for “Cold War” (2018) directed by Paweł Pawlikowski has been analysed, as this motion picture is considered one of the biggest successes of post-1989 Polish cinematography. Factors positively influencing its popularity were analysed alongside their influence on the general perception of Polish cinema abroad. Based on the results of empirical studies, the authors present their discussion of the functional state and the role of Polish cinematography on the global circuit, as well as attempt to verify its importance in relation to sustainability.

Keywords: branding; nation brand; cultural sustainability; media; national cinematography; cinema promotion

1. Introduction

Of all the creative arts, film is arguably one of the most immediate and effective mediums for communicating ideas with viewers—even those of different cultural backgrounds. This stems mostly from its technological conditions; its ease of transportation and transmission. On the one hand, because of cinematography’s reach, governments are interested in state sponsorship of the medium through financial support for film production and promotion, promoting film culture, and protecting cultural heritage in relation to cinema [1]. On the other hand, cinema can be used by the state as another tool for exerting power and control over public opinion. This is why it is important to observe the way the media are being used to create a country’s image through promoting a particular type(s) of cinematic production.

Sustainable development is understood as development that “meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” [2]. National brand creation, when encompassing sustainability principles, should be a process uniting all possible sectors that can influence it: from international corporations, through politics, to culture. The authors of this paper believe that the film “Cold War” directed by Paweł Pawlikowski is a prime example of well-executed national cinema promotion and the efficient use of media channels in creating

sustainable development. This paper aims to verify whether there exists a comprehensive policy introduced by the Polish state to create an optimal market for film and cinematography, resulting in the projection of a particular national branding by Polish cinematography abroad.

2. Materials and Methods

Culture, as a core social life value, is considered to be one of the four pillars of sustainability [3]. Various theories attempt to explain the relationship between culture and sustainability [4,5], demanding that particular cultural dimensions and production activities are utilised as tools in sustainable development. On the other hand, activities relating to the prosocial idea of the state's cultural mission, aiding education and shaping society's tastes and preferences, can strengthen society's empowerment and decision-making power. In this way, sustainable culture management can be characterised from the perspective of implementing particular policies that aim to achieve cultural goals and maintain growing and vibrant culture(s). Sustainability as a concept offers a new model of cultural policy and revises culture management methods. Organisations innovating according to sustainability principles need to continuously improve their management systems, processes and tools, and skillfully control relationships between market players. This leads to the prioritisation of values which combine economic and social aspects [6]. This role is fulfilled in the Polish audiovisual industry by the Polish Film Institute.

Sustainability in film production can mean increased focus on social responsibility and the consideration of environmental and economic issues when planning all stages of a production. It refers to a complex set of activities with environmental wellbeing in mind [7], and from a socioeconomic perspective, focuses on limiting a production's impact on the local community, as well as its inclusion in the production process. Creating a sustainable and independent film industry is one of the main objectives of European audiovisual markets. The sustainable development model included in policy documentation assumes that increased participation in the box office would allow the producers to invest the surplus in subsequent productions [8]. In this sense, sustainable development of the audiovisual market is in fact a supervision of state sponsorship, the effects of regional European funds, the introduction of tax rebates, and political regulations.

International EU programmes, of which Creative Europe is considered to be the foremost, deal with the coordination of these processes across Europe. On a national level, this falls on state-controlled national film institutes, although their competences differ.

2.1. Concepts of Nation Brand and Culture Branding

Marketing is a strategic process, and the research and understanding of consumer needs is its starting point [9]. A branding criterion relates to commercial products as well as organisations, regions, cities, and finally, countries. Simon Anholt, a prominent researcher and creator of the Good Country Index, states that "national brand strategy determines the most realistic, most competitive and most compelling strategic vision for the country, and ensures that this vision is supported, reinforced and enriched by every act of communication between the country and the rest of the world" [10]. It is rooted in national identity and the concept of homeland, combined with public relations and diplomacy [11,12]. Wally Olins compares building a nation brand to commercial branding, because both aim to create clear-cut propositions, often based on emotional factors, which in turn lead to creating recognisable symbols widely understood by the target audience [13]. Furthermore, nation branding is viewed as an effect of the social consequences of building national identity converging with economic consequences, related mostly to the country-of-origin effect and its impact on the consumer.

Answering the need for a synergic nation brand, researchers call for a more eclectic approach to research, encompassing a wider range of factors, such as sustainability and market competitiveness [14]. Thus, the aim of nation branding is, on one hand, to attract investors and tourists, and, on the other, to create a particular image of a given country, region, or community [12,15]. The creation of a nation brand that is consistent with a given culture, history, and politics should be an activity which

allows regions and countries to swiftly adjust to the ever-changing market conditions and utilise new opportunities [16].

Culture aids national identity creation in a significant way. Communication stimulated by very culturally significant artistic products is not put under as much pressure as communication generated in classic marketing [17], which allows for greater freedom of expression and less external influence on creators. The meaning of art is separate from the market, and its products are not made to fulfill consumer needs, which makes them a unique marketing challenge [18]. Culture branding simultaneously leads to the subjugation of art and the promotion of products with low artistic value, which can nonetheless be commercially successful. Anholt [10] claims that promoting low-quality productions is also important, as it promotes international relations, elevates the quality of dialogue, and, in consequence, increases knowledge across all communication agents. This is because audiovisual media affords the instant international exchange of thoughts and ideas, allowing diverse artistic ideals and methods to interact, which in turn leads to an increased output of higher-quality artistic expression [10]. Cinema, as a creative industry, takes inspiration from the dynamics of (a specific) reality and as such is a mimetic art [19]. Cinematography differs from other cultural industries in its budget, which restructures its internal organisation. Film production is often contingent on huge financial investment [20]. Having a mass audience appeal, however, makes it unparalleled in its potential to influence compared to other fine arts [21].

2.2. Development and Transformation of the Polish Film Industry

The Polish film industry is distinctive because it was shaped under certain unfavourable conditions of socialism. Communism, combined with censorship, was detrimental to creative freedoms. Under the Polish People's Republic (PRL, Polish state before 1989), Polish cinema was promoted abroad to a limited extent. The regime allowed festival presence under strict rules. Cultural policy was restrictive. Films presented abroad were meant to represent socialist values and promote Soviet ideals in the West, depicting life in Eastern Bloc countries in the most favourable of lights [22]. After 1989, a year which saw political and systemic transformation in Poland, the newly elected democratic government focused mostly on socio-economic reforms, rather than defining cultural policy. Cultural activities were brought down to the status held by any other productive activity. Public funding for cinematography was drastically cut, which led to the closure of around 70 cinemas across the nation in the early 1990s. The market was privatised and fragmented, and regional distribution institutions (such as Helios, Silesia Film, Max-Film, Apollo Film) were tasked with film distribution and storage. However, they were not equipped to handle this task appropriately (see: Stowarzyszenie Filmowców Polskich). The modern economics of culture took almost twenty years to be defined. Up until 2005, when the Polish Film Institute (PISF)—an institution responsible for film funding distribution, the promotion of film culture, film education, cinematography digitalisation and modernisation, and promotional activities abroad—was created, Polish cinema was practically non-existent on the international festival circuit. According to Anna Wróblewska [22], who has been researching the transformation and operational mechanisms of the Polish film market for years, the creation of the PISF heralded a new beginning for Polish cinematography. As a cultural patron, the Polish Film Institute's activities reinvigorated the Polish film industry [23]. It also carries the burden of responsibility for the artistic value of the films it funds. As such, the criteria they employ when selecting projects to fund shape the Polish cinema brand.

2.3. Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) Analysis of Polish Cinematography's Sustainable Development and Promotion Abroad

Research conducted by Polish cinema researcher and PISF expert Anna Wróblewska [22] served as a basis for analysing the condition of Polish cinematography and its promotion abroad. Secondary analysis of data on the Polish audiovisual market presented by Wróblewska was performed, and its results are presented below (Table 1).

Table 1. SWOT analysis of Polish cinema’s promotion abroad, based on Wróblewska’s research [22].

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Gradual increase in awareness of the current state of Polish cinematography; Diversity of promotional activities; Inclusion of Polish films and Polish jurors in international festivals and reviews; Activities performed by independent cultural ambassadors, who have a positive influence on building the Polish film brand; Rich history of Polish cinematography, evoking many positive associations which can serve as a basis for conscious branding—prestige associated with Polish camera operators and score composers is especially important here; Well-renowned film schools with professional equipment educating filmmakers, who, thanks to participation in international student festivals, create a positive image of their home country.	Limited funds allocated to promotion and marketing; Significant international competition; Lack of a universal marketing strategy that could be employed at any given situation; Relatively rare appearances in A-class festivals; Limited stock of domestic productions which fit with the global canon and can satisfy a foreign viewer (e.g., because of hermetic, national subject matter).
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Digitalisation of culture, allowing for a quicker dispersion of domestic content abroad; Extending reach and use, especially in the technical aspect, allowing for easier access; Attaining new viewers from new markets, who need to be convinced that Polish cinema is a consistent brand; monetary profits; Acquiring new partners, allies, sponsors, and participation in programmes, such as Eurimages and Creative Europe, which are able to increase the appeal of Polish cinema; Creating partnerships with prestigious foreign film schools so they can educate Polish film students; Foreign direct investment, locating films in Poland, more coproductions, inviting Polish film creators to work with others; Bigger exposure of Polish cinematography in international, prestigious press and information bulletins—it is an opportunity, because in spite of Poland currently not having appropriate infrastructure or legal solutions to fully utilise it, its existence can guide conscious cultural policy; Using other European countries’ experiences in film marketing to its advantage; International audiovisual policy as a solution for underfunding.	External limitations (especially legal and political ones), which can derail effective promotion of quality Polish productions; insufficient funds; Inability to adjust domestic cinematography to “global tastes”—different preferences of Polish and foreign viewers, lack of sufficient funding and skills to satisfy everyone; Stronger and more distinct film markets across Europe, in comparison with which Poland looks bleak; Cultural imperialism of Hollywood.

The results of the conducted analyses suggest that strengths and opportunities clearly outnumber weaknesses and threats. This encourages organised investment in promotion, which, if managed skillfully, can have real branding power and generate real (monetary), rather than just image-related, profits.

At the same time, one cannot ignore the arguments presented on the right-hand side of the table. They refer to financial and geographical limitations of a country, which are often independent from internal (domestic) politics and policy making. The sustainable development of Polish cinematography requires, on one hand, increased European integration and legal regulations facilitating foreign investment in order to stand strong against the monopolistic U.S. market and to protect local film producers, and on the other, increased spending on domestic productions of high artistic quality that can satisfy foreign tastes.

In order to trace the model of sustainable development of the Polish audiovisual industry and strategies employed for the promotion of Polish cinematography abroad, the authors opted for a particular case study of a Polish production which achieved particular success on an international arena in the last five years. “Cold War”, directed by Paweł Pawlikowski, a Polish–French–British production which officially premiered in Cannes in 2018, was selected. It is worth adding that the foundation for the success was made by “Ida” (2014), which was the first Polish film to win an Academy

Award (in the Best Foreign Film Category). The international press started being interested in Polish cinematography, and reviewers of opinion-forming magazines in Western countries immediately called “Ida” “modern cinema classic” or a “masterpiece” [24,25]. However, “Ida” was heavily criticized by the Polish right-wing side for reopening a painful chapter in the country’s recent history. It did not stop further exploitation of the film: the Oscar won by “Ida” was also displayed in the city of Lodz’s Cinematography Museum, along with other artefacts from the film set that year, which might also be an effective way to attract international tourists. The success of “Cold War” seems to be even bigger. Its number of foreign awards, countries of distribution, presence on the festival circuit and international press (number of reviews and publications), and results of the U.S. box office were used as selection criteria. At the time of research (April 2019), the film was screened in over 60 countries and received over 20 awards from international festivals and reviews, including an Academy Award nomination for Best International Feature Film, five European Film Awards, four BAFTA nominations, and a FIPRESCI Award at the Stockholm International Film Festival.

The research employed methodological triangulation. Firstly, statistical analysis of secondary data (box office, international film rankings) was performed. Secondly, content analysis of foreign press-published reviews of “Cold War” was also performed. Thirdly, the authors conducted an expert interview (expert opinion survey) with Robert Baliński, head of the international cooperation department for the Polish Film Institute (the talk was conducted by Joanna Najbor on 4 June 2019). The Department “takes care of foreign promotion of Polish cinematography and international cooperation. Its tasks include: submitting Polish films at festivals, cooperation with diplomatic institutions, publication of promotional materials, presenting Poland at international festivals, and supporting international film events with the participation of Polish and foreign filmmakers. Activities of the International Cooperation Department are carried out through the Promotion of Polish Film Abroad Operational Programme” [26]. This paper will include the analysis of an individualised interview which allowed for conclusions relating to the promotion of Polish cinema abroad, the desired aims of the strategy, and its final assessment. This interview allowed for obtaining information not available in secondary sources.

The interview was open and the interviewee knew the objective and subject of the research. It was conducted in accordance with a pre-prepared questionnaire, yet it was informal and moderate in nature. Subject matter was divided into four sections:

- Film as a brand—includes general and introductory questions relating to branding culture in general, as well as the reception of Polish cinema and its brand;
- Film as policy—includes questions about deliberate nation brand creation in film through institutions, about the criteria the PISF employs when choosing which production to fund, and about utilising particular film productions for certain goals (e.g., political ones);
- Film as a promotional tool—includes questions about particular promotional activities undertaken by the PISF;
- Film as art—includes questions about Pawlikowski’s “Cold War” in relation to the promotion of Polish cinema abroad and predictions for the development of the Polish cinematography industry.

2.4. Limitations of the Study

Due to the specificity of the topic, the authors did not have Polish-language literature on the subject, which was serious limitation of the study. The promotion of Polish cinema, both inside and outside national borders, is not the center of interest of Polish film experts, especially when it comes to nation branding. The latest research film industry comes from 2016. Abroad, the literature is already more extensive: as Mazierska and Goddard writes, Polish cinema, like many other Eastern European cinemas, has been virtually excluded from new research in transnational cinema (for example, there was no chapter about Polish cinema in the prestigious publication *Transnational Cinema* by Terry Rowden and Elizabeth Ezra) [27]. Mazierska and Goddard present a new look at Polish cinema, discussing its international reception, performance, and co-productions, and look at emigre authors

from a transnational perspective; in Poland, a similar approach is represented only by M. Podsiadło and S. Jagielski [28]. The process of reformulating nationhood, especially in post-communist countries, implies recognizing that the nation has become part of the global market, which means becoming a new, potentially attractive market [29]. It was a focus of the research of Nadia Kaneva [30]. It is assumed that 2012 was such a symbolic turning point for Polish cinema, when “In Darkness” by Agnieszka Holland was nominated for an Oscar. From that moment, Polish movies started being visible to international viewers and the PISF was sufficiently strong to help local producers [31]. However, this did not affect the number of scientific analyses.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. *Film as a Brand*

Robert Baliński admitted that cinematic branding exists and can have a significant influence on the perception of a given country abroad. According to the expert, it can be shaped in a very limited way. Branding is more about the financial and intellectual support of the most talented of creators, and less so about controlling the way they depict their country in their vision. At the same time, the brand remains something to be continuously cultivated and nurtured, as any negligence at any stage can have negative impacts on the domestic market in later stages. The PISF’s role is mainly to support artistic and challenging cinema, namely projects that could not flourish nor reach a wider audience without appropriate subsidies. Commercial productions enjoy less frequent and less enthusiastic financial support, depending on their storylines, including historical and value-based aspects that could aid the international popularisation of knowledge of Polish culture and history. Promoting historical knowledge is one of the chief missions of the Institute. Decision-makers wanted Polish cinema to be associated with high-quality productions set in the past, which promote domestic customs and culture alongside entertainment and profit generation. The PISF’s expert highlighted the importance of the people factor in cinema brand creation and mostly identified it with names of particular creators. They and their development are what the society should be investing in.

3.2. *Film as Policy*

When subsidising productions set for foreign distribution that might present a negative image of the country, there may be attempts to control the outcome of production. Our expert, however, using the Polish director Małgorzata Szumowska, who is well-respected abroad yet controversial, as an example, maintains that the PISF should promote motion pictures that carry high artistic value, treating a country’s image as a secondary concern. “Mug” (2018) by Małgorzata Szumowska, awarded Grand Prix Jury at Berlinale 2018, was described by the then-vice PM of Poland, Piotr Gliński, as a “classic productionette with the simplistic thesis that Polish society is just a gang of primitive, xenophobic cretins” [32].

The national cinema brand and its positive exposure should come from the personal brand of a well-renowned creator. This is why state institutions should create conditions conducive to the artistic development of such creators. Moreover, in the last five years, the government has introduced various tax rebates aimed at encouraging foreign (especially U.S.) investors to locate their productions (including blockbusters) in Poland more often. Baliński highlighted that actions aimed at depicting Poland as film production-friendly are also a part of branding (despite having a miniscule positive impact on the state budget). This is because the image is created through local audiovisual market infrastructure, which can be attractive for foreign producers because of its technical capabilities or competitive costs. He also highlighted advantages coming from a well-developed international distribution network, one which the PISF would like to exert greater control over. Their current goal is to support numerous but small and financially unstable distribution companies. The expert admitted that US-based Amazon Films’ promotional efforts had a significant impact on the popularity of “Cold War” across the pond. Other initiatives, initiated and co-financed by the PISF, such as personal

promotional activities performed by the creators before the Academy Awards Ceremony, were also of importance.

3.3. *Film as a Promotional Tool*

Analysing expertise given in the interview, especially in relation to particular film productions, indicates several desirable features of films that can serve to promote Poland abroad. “Cold War”, which according to the Head of the International Cooperation Department is characterised by all of these desirable features, was named by him as the biggest success for Polish cinema in recent years.

Baliński highlighted the importance of the story being presented: in his opinion, it is the historical background and appropriate storylines that are key “national” factors, not the country of origin of its creators. This is the type of film that the PISF supports most willingly abroad. Promoting “Cold War” fell within this model exactly.

Pawlikowski’s previous film, “Ida”, which was awarded an Academy Award for Best International Feature Film in 2014, created fertile ground for his next production. The initial success afforded Pawlikowski greater artistic and financial freedom. His activity across France and the United Kingdom, where he was recognisable and positively viewed by the foreign critics, was also of importance, as it increased his chances of securing robust and well-funded distribution companies. According to brand theories, directors have the same branding function as movie stars. Just as “big name” actors affect reception, recognisable creators can attract a personality-based audience [33].

Thus, the desired (but not essential) features are the recognisability of the auteur (strong personal brand) and an appropriate budget. The higher the budget, the bigger the chance that the film will be distributed on a large scale and thus will have a higher chance of commercial success. It needs to be understood, however, that budget size does not guarantee success or failure. There are many instances when a film that was not made for profit ended up commercially successful. Film productions that have the potential to become an element of nation branding ought to be supported at all stages: from the development stage (through subsidies or facilitating expert consultations on screenplay versions), through production, and up to festival and distribution strategies.

In its day-to-day work, the PISF deals with three main promotional activities abroad: submitting productions for reviews and competitions; subsidising festivals abroad; and facilitating the presence of Polish creators at international screenings. They also maintain cooperation with appropriate institutions dealing with promoting Polish cinematography abroad. Their work is continuous in nature, rather than incidental and based on particular industry events.

The international appeal of the film is very important, although PISF prioritises domestic viewers over global tastes. Engaging film creators in promoting their production immediately following its premiere is crucial: they should take part in fan meetings, interviews, and events.

Independent Polish productions are most likely to be noticed at international festivals. Participation in such events increases the probability that a film will be noticed by a distributor from another country who might offer distribution abroad in order to generate profits for themselves. In order to be able to independently select motion pictures that, according to producers and film financing institutions, are worthy of a wider audience, the PISF has been gradually increasing its budget for foreign distribution.

According to Robert Baliński, another important aspect is the subject matter, preferably historical in nature. It is worth presenting a ranking of the most commercially successful Polish films abroad before 2014 (Table 2). Seven of them were set in the past and presented either selected elements of Polish history or depicted stories of national heroes. Thus, Baliński is proved right, with past events being the most popular subject matter for the most successful films abroad. The important condition here is the unconventional depiction of the subject matter, with the personal brand of the creator and appropriate distribution channel playing additional roles.

Table 2. Polish films produced in the years 1994–2014 which gained the biggest popularity abroad.

Title	# of Countries	# of Viewers
Ida	35	14,800,000
Sponsoring	33	322,000
W ciemności (In Darkness)	18	254,000
Młyn i krzyż (The Mill and the Cross)	18	200,000
Janosik—Historia prawdziwa (Janosik—A True Story)	2	251,000
Katyń	19	215,000
Quo Vadis	6	114,000
Sztuczki (Tricks)	18	83,000
Historie miłosne (Love Tricks)	3	78,000
Waleśa. Człowiek z nadziei (Waleśa: Man of Hope)	17	78,000

Source: authors, based on Lewicki's research [34].

3.4. Film as Art

According to Robert Bagiński, Pawlikowski's vision for artistic cinema should not be copied by domestic creators, but rather serve as an inspiration for their own artistic expression. He highlighted the diversity of modern Polish cinema and believes that this is the feature that should be nurtured and supported by dedicated promotional tools. The PISF's mission is not to control or supervise artistic discourse, but to stimulate its development and to support the most talented creators; to promote their diversity and encourage the pursuit of individual style. From this perspective, one could characterise the modern Polish brand as "unity in diversity", with a well-told, interesting story embedded in its historical context at its heart.

When submitting films for a festival, the Institute aims to select those with the greatest potential to be an appealing global product. This appeal spans various dimensions: aesthetic, subject matter, and commercial potential. At the development stage of a new film, the so-called "festival potential" (is already taken into consideration. There exists a concept of a "festival film" within the film industry: a motion picture that fulfils specific criteria for a given place/style that will satisfy the jury's preferences. Oftentimes, a production created specifically for a given audience guarantees recognition in a competition. However, it is equally (if not more) important for a film to satisfy the tastes of the domestic audience. Creating a product that satisfies both foreign and domestic preferences is clearly a best-case scenario. Plans to increase funding for promotional activities in the future are already at the development stage. It needs to be highlighted that the recognisability and prestige of Polish film have risen significantly in recent years, with the Institute receiving more queries from foreign investors. This rise in popularity is evident from the PISF's interviews with producers, critics, creators, and film institute representatives across Europe during international events, often dubbed Polish Days. The Polish Film Institute's main goal in the coming years will be to strengthen the Polish nation brand, painting Poland as a partner for creating high-budget superproductions.

3.5. Future Directions of the Research

This article is a fragment of a larger research project, including the study of the reception of Polish cinema in the foreign press; due to the formal restrictions of the publication, it was necessary to describe only one area of research. The authors are aware of the fact that the perspective they take in the article is not sufficient to comprehensively assess the reception of a given nation's cinema abroad in the future. The authors want to deepen the analysis by conducting interviews with representatives of the audiovisual community in Poland, as well as to analyse the latest content on Polish cinema published in foreign magazines. That would help to identify the weaknesses of the cinematographic market. Comparative analysis with other countries could serve to improve current mechanisms. The presence of Polish cinema in foreign scientific circulation and research on distribution are subjects reluctantly raised by Polish researchers. Therefore, this work is also an indication of those research fields that

demand deeper exploitation, including looking at critical texts dealing with Polish cinema (reviews, essays, rankings) from a native perspective focused on nation branding.

4. Conclusions

Simon Anholt distinguished between six channels of nation brand communication (the so-called nation-branding hexagon): people, tourism, investment and immigration, the private sector, the government, and culture and education [10]. In times of mediatisation, the final component seems to be a very effective, yet less obvious, tool in creating the nation brand. Cinematography, which allows the mass-scale distribution of a country's unique, commendable, or attractive features, is one of the foremost modes of contemporary popular culture. A feature story can capture the so-called "national spirit" and present it to foreign audiences. It often happens subconsciously, as a result of a certain inner identity, which only amplifies the feeling of a film being a "brand" product, not a knock-off or an imitation.

European film institutes, which have recognised the importance of cultural narratives to develop a stronger common understanding of creating stronger European integration [28], ensure the sustainable development of audiovisual industries. They are often under state control (in Poland—the PISF), which is tasked (in cooperation with private producers applying for subsidies) with selecting the most promising of screenplays, creating dedicated marketing strategies, and assessing the effectiveness of previous strategies. Poland and its post-1989 film industry transformation serve as a prime example of how the lack of such institutions is detrimental to sustainable development. According to the research, the Polish Film Institute is aware of the importance of a conscious nation branding, but is still learning how to shape it properly; the success of "Cold War" was not only an effect of the sustainable development of the Polish audiovisual market, but also the result of well-targeted promotional activities, the budget of local distributors (most of all Amazon in the USA), previous Pawlikowski films (especially "Ida"), who spent most of his life living and creating abroad, and the growing interest of EU countries in new audiovisual markets of post-Soviet countries. However, the impact and influence of the state should be underlined: without the financial and promotional support of the state, the range of "Cold War" would be smaller. The market still automatically favours commercial productions, which means that films that are less commercial in nature (and often have more artistic value) have considerably lower chances of being made and thus potentially achieving success.

Films can be part of a nation's cultural legacy: various countries use their scenic spots not only in promotional materials, but also in feature movies, where they also can—in an indirect way—project a positive image of a country in order to raise tourism and country awareness. Nation branding is a timely topic for Japan, which is strongly connected with the recent organisation of the Olympics [35]. It also plays an important role in Singapore, whose award-winning cinematography played an important role in creating a strong national brand [36]. The case of Romania is interesting, in which the original Romanian New Wave genre, created in 2004, has gained wide recognition at international festivals. An empirical analysis of Romania-related news broadcasts by the BBC and Euronews in 2013 showed that about 1/3 of the news was urban and positive and included cultural successes, especially cinematographic ones [37].

Taking a comparative perspective, Polish image policy is not that self-conscious; New Zealand might work as an example of effective nation branding in terms of national image and tourism, which has influenced other countries' branding strategies [38]. As a result of the campaign 100% Pure New Zealand and the action taken by the New Zealand Story Group, cooperating on the image of the country with the state, the image of New Zealand has changed, leading to the development of tourism and the creation of images associated primarily with such films as *Lord of the Rings* (clean and green lifestyle, breathtaking scenery, and open spaces). Research conducted by the authors shows that currently the most important goals of the Polish Film Institute, which is aiming to bring American big-budget feature productions to Poland, are closer to the Australian model, where most of films usually have substantial foreign investment [39].

Jean Claude Carrière, in an interview for *Gazeta Wyborcza* [40], stated that “only films which come from somewhere can be for everyone”. This should be the motto when conceptualising production and promotional strategies for national cinematography. Maintaining a balance between artistic vision and the control exerted by funding institutions (including the state) is crucial, as imbalance can lead to either censorship and the limitation of artistic freedoms, or film productions made “for no one”. According to Mark Hendrykowski, a Polish history and film culture researcher, a recipe for success is to shoot one’s natural surroundings, the grey day-to-day, but frame this quotidian as something undiscovered, unique, and new [41]. This close relationship between film and the reality of a given place and time needs to express a specific group experience in order to become an attribute for a given social group. This approach resonates with that of Baliński, the PISF’s head of international cooperation. He maintains that the only thing the state can do when an unquestionable talent arises is to nurture that individual and create the best possible conditions for their artistic development; to guarantee them space for their artistic experiments and absolute freedom of expression.

Taking into consideration the number of viewers (in millions), especially in the U.S., record number of distribution countries, and significant number of reviews and online user ratings, it can be ascertained that the PISF’s decision to finance “Cold War” by Pawlikowski, and subsequently subsidise its promotion at the Cannes film festival, was an excellent marketing—and nation branding—move, which visibly increased Polish creators’ recognisability around the world.

However, major artificial attempts to imitate the style of a currently popular creator (such as Pawlikowski) can be counterproductive. This is because originality intersects with a desirable feature in nation branding—authenticity—especially when increasingly popular transnational coproductions problematise the definition of the “original” source of the motion picture. Hendrykowski [41] believes that it is better to assume the film will be a surprise rather than attempt to exert artificial control over its creative process.

A solid nation brand stems from the high quality of production that results from artistic freedom, and this was the official stance of the Polish government. Subject matter is secondary, although Baliński confirms that an original depiction of the country’s history and culture is keenly subsidised. However, it is worth noting that Polish cinema will not become an international phenomenon overnight. The market is hugely asymmetric, with the U.S. and its mercantile production organisation monopolising the audiovisual industry. The EU’s reach is thus limited, and non-EU cinematography is almost entirely marginalised. Polish cinema was never international in nature, with a few certain periods of increased popularity abroad. The current positive trend could turn out to be robust and sustainable long-term, with more accolades for talented creators supported by the PISF.

The presented research showed that the PISF’s activities in supporting the development and recognisability of Polish cinematography are continuously expanding, albeit with significant gaps and inconsistencies in previous promotion abroad. Polish cinema will not gain prominence without the support from opinion leaders in the countries considered “centres” of cinematography, i.e., the UK, France, Germany, and especially the U.S., which dominate the global film industry [42–44]. Awards and accolades awarded to Polish films and the number and quality of reviews in the foreign press are factors that can lend Polish cinema greater visibility, which in turn increases its global popularity (Lewicki, 2016). At the same time, cooperation with international critique is mentioned as a promotional tool extremely rarely in Polish academic writing on the subject. Those responsible for the development and promotion of selected cultural properties should ensure accessibility, not only outside of the country’s borders, but also within them. This could be done by, e.g., organising studio visits for international critics, or inviting them to domestic film festivals. Most foreign reviewers and critics are familiar with Polish cinema to the extent that they are able to name a few famous creators [34].

Highlighting the accomplishments of one single creator will not ensure a strong and stable brand for Polish cinema. A strong culture brand means, in part, a strong nation brand. The aim of nation branding is to generate the value added, which will materialise in the form of profits across other industries (tourism, foreign direct investment, etc.).

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