

# Public Diplomacy and Its Related Concept to Soft Power: Ecuadorian Commitment

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*This article addresses the Ecuadorian public diplomacy to the European audience. Public diplomacy is focused on soft power. Socialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century background is mentioned in this paper with the aim of the construction of a country image to accelerate the local socio-economic development in the international arena. The conceptual framework of this research was designed to address this correlation between governance, and socio-economic development to contribute to our current understanding of the role of locality in public management and to describe the theory and practice of urban marketing as a greater engagement with Ecuadorian public diplomacy. Urban marketing is a fundamental support for these. Citizens, businesses, governments and employees are a policy priority due to the fact that cities are a key factor for the new industrial scenario to converge all segments of society. In addition, the paper briefly presents the highlight of the former president Rafael Correa Delgado as best national representative of soft power use in an Ecuadorian single country case study from a sociological spectrum. The methodology applied is both primary and secondary sources including various books in Spanish language, the Constitution of Ecuador, journal articles, Ecuadorian government reports and implementation plans.*

**Keywords:** *public diplomacy, soft power, urban marketing, governance, public management*

## Introduction

This article expects to share the Ecuadorian panorama of public diplomacy to enable the Hungarian and European reader to develop a perspective of the context of Socialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Ecuador and the South American region.

First, the concept of Nye, must be emphasised, which is often referenced by scholars. Soft power in public diplomacy is the ability in which the state can communicate and the understanding that public policies can change with the administration or leader; but culture and values tend to be longer in duration. Hence, it is clear that smart power strategy combines hard and soft power in separate ways, according to Joseph Nye.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr.: The Decline of America's Soft Power. *Foreign Affairs*, 83, no. 3 (2004). 16–19.

This work deals with diplomatic success referring to the management and projection of the image or country branding of Ecuador, specifically, what is recognised as public diplomacy. In this sense, it will include the dimension of urban marketing as an instrument of international projection that has had, paradoxically, difficulty in being used by most of the actors in the governmental system. Explanations about the slow spread and adoption of public diplomacy are not easy to propose or generalise, nor are they the main object of this paper; but it is important to record how its study has been developed and how it is possible to include urban marketing in the fundamental aspect of Ecuador's foreign policy.

## Public diplomacy

Diplomacy bestowing to Joseph S. Nye, Jr. (2008) in *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power* is understood as the art of negotiating amongst States using practices and methods that seek to directly communicate and/or exert influence, between one and the other. The term 'public diplomacy' was first used in 1965 with the establishment of the Edward R. Murrow Center for Public Diplomacy at Tufts University in Boston.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, public diplomacy as an international term dates from the mid-1960s at a specific moment in the evolution of foreign policy in the United States around the Cold War.<sup>4</sup>

The contemporary practice of public diplomacy is frequently justified by referring to the concept of soft power developed by Joseph S. Nye, Jr. at the end of the Cold War, which emphasises the usefulness it gives to an international actor being admired for their values or culture.

In fact, in its purest beginnings, the term propaganda was coined during the Counter Reformation by Ignacio de Loyola as part of his conceptualisation of the scope of the Catholic church.

In practice, most of the academic literature in this field has positioned Latin America only as a target for public diplomacy, and for propaganda for others. A good example is the American Dream.<sup>5</sup>

Public diplomacy is defined as the conduct of international relations by governments, private individuals, and groups through public media communications, trying to positively influence the perception of a country's image abroad. The technological progress and globalisation have heralded the improvement of communication strategies among states and its more representative example is e-government.

Public diplomacy seeks to exceed exclusively governmental communications. Therefore, it is possible to understand the propagandistic nature of public diplomacy, since, using various means, the State or private persons (stakeholders) seek to influence

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<sup>3</sup> Alfonso Nieto – María Peña: La diplomacia pública: los medios informativos como instrumento de política exterior. *Estudios Políticos*, 9, nos. 13, 14, 15 (2008). 149–163.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas J. Cull: *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency. American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008. 258–260.

<sup>5</sup> The American Dream has been conveyed to Central America, the Caribbean and South American countries through Hollywood films for decades, and this is still the case today.

attitudes and the decision-making process directly or indirectly in politics locally and internationally.<sup>6</sup>

In this way, States have introduced specific means to promote a favourable international presence and image, using the media and broadcasting, as well as carrying out the promotion of cultural and sports events, in addition to encouraging the organisation of academic exchanges with the central objective of promoting the construction of a relationship between States and citizens of other countries, beyond government relations.<sup>7</sup> This set of actions is what some authors call “public diplomacy”.

The soft power function of public diplomacy is reflected in its ability to promote national interest and influence foreign audiences through interaction based on understanding and mutual understanding. Specifically, public diplomacy is generally underpinned by values, ideals, and policies that shape a country’s image, making public diplomacy and soft power complementary to each other. As the leading exponent of soft power and renowned internationalist, Joseph S. Nye, Jr. points out, this type of power attenuates the military and economic and focuses on a less coercive aspect of power, such as influence in the international system. Besides, agreeing with Nicholas J. Cull’s definition, it is “an actor’s attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign audience”.<sup>8</sup> Unlike traditional diplomacy, which has as its main objective governments and organisations (that is, conventional subjects of international law), public diplomacy is directed at civil society.

### ***Marca país or nation branding***

Returning to the line of conceptual analysis of the Socialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: there is no image without identity. Building the image is to communicate the identity by all possible means and resources. In the context of the period 2007–2017, its greatest exponent was former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa Delgado, considered the greatest communication asset of the Government of Socialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; a leader who made it clear that overexposure did not bother him and concentrated all the channels for sending out messages to his constituents by using social media: Facebook and Twitter. He was a scholar, cyclist, revolutionary, charismatic leader with great aptitude. He was the cornerstone of any strategy, a character who exploited the media rhythms to control the agenda or to attract it when the coverage no longer referred to his government. He began to experience this way of occupying the communicative dimension of the public and political aspects of Ecuador when he was a candidate and ended up consolidating it in power. With the incorporation of the publicist Vinicio Alvarado, owner of the Creacional agency, and

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<sup>6</sup> Eytan Gilboa: Diplomacy in the Media Age: Three Models of Uses and Effects. *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 12, no. 2 (2001). 1–28.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr.: Public Diplomacy and Soft Power. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616, no. 1 (2008). 94–109.

<sup>8</sup> Cull (2008): op. cit. 251.

the Mexican firm Cuarto de Guerra S.C., owned by José Adolfo Ibinarriaga, an executed proposal with significant creative potential was developed.<sup>9</sup>

As Ávila maintains, an electoral communication strategy was established that combined tradition with modernity, in a sort of hybrid format that is very typical of Latin American political culture. They were atypical and challenging television spots, which appealed to the values of popular culture, which managed to insert a discourse of change and passion for the country through the so-called “revolución ciudadana”.<sup>10</sup> As president elect, his target was his constant and careful communication strategy, which has not presented problems in adapting over the course of recent years to the new platforms of court interaction digital technology, hand in hand with the accelerated entry into the Ecuadorian market of mobile devices and smartphones. At times he was accused of extremely polarising opinions, directly confronting the media or exacerbating national myths, appropriating transversal signifiers of the population, and what was evident was that since the Government had come into power, political communication had a permanent stamp on the official apparatus. In fact, the communication structure was not established spontaneously, but as a media amplifying engine of government actions.

Television had been of great importance for the former president Rafael Correa, especially in the first period of his presidency, when the digitalisation of communications was not yet consolidated on a massive level or did not translate into the intensive use of cell phones or social media. Since 2006, there had been permanent and expeditious interaction at the time of establishing popular contact like his former partner, President of Venezuela Hugo Chavez, through his program “Alo President”. An interesting aspect of his audiovisual and radio proposal called “Enlace Ciudadano” or “Citizen Outreach” TV program he hosted was the activation of popular networks of his government, which had prepared the issues, solutions and messages with the communities themselves very well arranged in advance.<sup>11</sup>

The power of his speech was displayed in a language that went through different states of mind from the great narratives of salvation, thus sacralising his politics and the government project: “They are secularized theological concepts put to work to create a profound mystical-salvific bond between the ruler and the ruled.”<sup>12</sup>

After a decade and with economic indicators that appealed to the growth of the country and greater access to connectivity, the Government had more points of contact available with citizens, so it was political strategic communication that had to evolve and become more professional, assuming the political contexts and the promulgation, in 2013, of the Organic Law of Communication, which was resisted in the private media industry.

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<sup>9</sup> Caroline Ávila: *La patria, Eloy Alfaro y la revolución ciudadana*. In Mario Riorda – Omar Rincón (eds.): *Comunicación gubernamental en acción. Narrativas presidenciales y mitos de Gobierno*. Buenos Aires, Biblos, 2016. 187–206.

<sup>10</sup> Ávila (2016): op. cit. 189.

<sup>11</sup> Claudio Elórtegui: *Populismo y comunicación. La política del malestar en el contexto latinoamericano*. Barcelona, UOC Press, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Pilar Pérez: *El presidente Rafael Correa y su política de redención*. *Ecuador Debate*, no. 80 (2010). 77–94.

## Frame setting

Political agendas and the establishment of frames are part of a symbolic and power dispute in which the local news and its coverage transcend national borders and try to impact foreign media. For this reason, Entman<sup>13</sup> refers to the concept of mediated public diplomacy, as “the organized attempts by a president and his foreign policy team to exercise as much control as possible over the framework of the politics of a country in foreign media”. One of its relevant functions of mediated public diplomacy is the dissemination of frames, defined as the act of selecting and highlighting some aspect of a certain situation or topic, with the purpose of promoting a particular interpretation. Entman<sup>14</sup> points out that the interpretation is given, generally, by a discourse that includes a definition of the problem that generates a defined policy, the analysis of its causes, a moral evaluation of the actors involved and a possible solution.

## Method

To better develop this topic, the methodology considered the review of 116 items, corresponding to the tweets published by the Twitter account of Rafael Correa (@Mashi Rafael)<sup>15</sup> – Twitter, in 2016. The data obtained in the sample were systematised and coded through an analysis sheet that considered four variables, two quantitative and two qualitative, divided into categories such as: repercussion impact on Twitter, topic of the item, strategic objectives, geographical focus, personalisation, communication resources and interpretations.

Subsequently, the results were analysed with the statistical computer program SPSS,<sup>16</sup> which facilitates the understanding and interpretation of the results. The methodology used in the analysis of Correa’s tweets was the analysis of contingency tables, “a technique aimed at studying the relationship between two or more qualitative or categorical variables measured at the nominal and ordinal level”.<sup>17</sup>

## Research findings

The main aspects shown were the following: Rafael Correa Delgado’s account was actively used and ranges from receiving congratulations for his mandate: *the most clever and handsome president of the history of Ecuador*, to hatred and accusations or

<sup>13</sup> Robert Entman: Theorizing Mediated Public Diplomacy: The U.S. Case. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 13, no. 2 (2008). 87–102.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Entman: *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Chicago–London, The University of Chicago Press, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> «Mashi» in kichwa o Quichua language means Amigo (Spanish) – Friend.

<sup>16</sup> Bienvenido Visauta Vinacua: *Análisis estadístico con SPSS para Windows*. Madrid, McGraw Hill, 1997.

<sup>17</sup> Pedro López-Roldán – Sandra Fachelli: Análisis de tablas de contingencia. In Pedro López-Roldán – Sandra Fachelli (eds.): *Metodología de la investigación social cuantitativa*. Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès), Dipòsit Digital de Documents, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2015. 61.

complaints by citizens. Their messages (replying 116 tweets) were written logically but with a revolutionary spectrum. Undeniably, their messages connect easily with the civil society of Ecuador, with interests of the South American region and with foreign groups that feel closer to the Latin American socialist project.

Indeed, having consolidated Citizen Power model linked to the former president and the sense of national purpose in the Ecuadorian population. In the same context of the Socialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, several public diplomacy projects were carried out, among the most relevant:

*The national return plan in Ecuador “Bienvenido a casa” “Welcome home”*

The Ecuadorian Government through its diplomatic missions worldwide executed the Return Plan, through the Embassies abroad and the National Migrant Secretariat providing the necessary assistance to Ecuadorian professionals who would benefit from the Return Plan to work as teachers in their home country. The initiative offered them the opportunity to return to Ecuador with a temporary work contract until they passed the merit-based competition that, once approved, would lead to obtaining a permanent position within the teaching profession or the highest authority of the Ministry of Education.

The National Return Plan had been presented in the cities of Barcelona, Madrid and Murcia, where the largest number of Ecuadorian migrants resided. This was intended to provide a solution to the difficulties of professional and non-professional Ecuadorians in Spain, as well as to strengthen the educational system of Ecuador with skilled professionals.

*Project Yasuni-ITT (CGY)*

The failed Ecuadorian Project Yasuni initiative wanted to avoid the emission of 407 million metric tons of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) by forgoing extraction and burning of fossil fuels in the extensions of the Amazonian region of Ecuador.

Initial approaches of soft power went around the world. Countries targeted included France, where, through the General Council of Meurthe et Moselle of France, Yasuni-ITT Guarantee Certificate (CGY) received the contribution of 53,763 US dollars to the Trust Fund of the Yasuni-ITT initiative. The Council also promoted the creation of the French association “Viva Yasuni”, from November 2010 until its constitution in September 2012.

The environmental project proposed by the former government of President Rafael Correa, had as its purpose to protect life in the Yasuni National Park, the most biodiverse place on the planet, and to respect a minimum living space for people in voluntary isolation. In this context, Ecuador in 2008 became the first country in the world to recognise nature as a legal entity and enshrined the right of people to live in a healthy environment in its constitution as quoted below:

Chapter Seven: Rights of Nature

Article 71. Nature, or Pacha Mama, where life is reproduced and occurs, has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes. All persons, communities, peoples, and nations can call upon public authorities to enforce the rights of nature. To enforce and interpret these rights, the principles set forth in the Constitution shall be observed, as appropriate. The State shall give incentives to natural persons and legal entities and to communities to protect nature and to promote respect for all the elements comprising an ecosystem.

Article 72. Nature has the right to be restored. This restoration shall be apart from the obligation of the State and natural persons or legal entities to compensate individuals and communities that depend on affected natural systems. In those cases of severe or permanent environmental impact, including those caused by the exploitation of nonrenewable natural resources, the State shall establish the most effective mechanisms to achieve the restoration and shall adopt adequate measures to eliminate or mitigate harmful environmental consequences.

Article 73. The State shall apply preventive and restrictive measures on activities that might lead to the extinction of species, the destruction of ecosystems and the permanent alteration of natural cycles. The introduction of organisms and organic and inorganic material that might definitively alter the nation's genetic assets is forbidden.

Article 74. Persons, communities, peoples, and nations shall have the right to benefit from the environment and the natural wealth enabling them to enjoy the good way of living. Environmental services shall not be subject to appropriation; their production, delivery, use and development shall be regulated by the State.

Consequently, invariably, public diplomacy is related to the power over time and, particularly, to the “soft power” of a State, according to Nye.<sup>18</sup> However, it is not exclusively the concern of the State that can conduct actions in terms of public diplomacy. The participation of civil society and private organisations plays an important role in seeking support from foreign audiences.

### ***The presence of Ecuador***

The term in office of the current president of Ecuador, Guillermo Lasso 2021–2025, is characterised by a non-binding and ill-thought-out policy. In practice, there is no real monitoring or supervision of Ecuador's image abroad and reporting on the results, which would help shape Ecuador's strategy for communication abroad.

After Socialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century an overview of how Ecuador was perceived abroad in the recent years is time off. However, there is a report focusing on perceptions of Ecuador among the public abroad based on the results of the 2021 Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index (NBI), and it reveals where Ecuador's strengths and weaknesses lie in terms of its image abroad and how it fares in international comparison. Besides, the report examines the correlation between Ecuador's good overall image and the appraisal of the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Ecuador made the position 53 of the dimension concerned with export products and innovation, governance, people, and immigration and investment, as well as tourism.

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<sup>18</sup> Nye (2008): op. cit. 95.

## Urban marketing

Urban marketing gives the very first impression and delivers a Message about their value. Since nations or states today need to re-engage popular support, they should use the power of branding.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, soft power in practice is the ability of a government to promise a better world and it strives to deliver one and its constituents eagerly look forward to embarking on the road to development, peace, welfare and social stability. In addition, it is considered that the application of urban marketing depends to a great extent on the construction, communication and management of the image of the city. Besides, it frames the available resources and achievements of a country or other political entity in order to seem favourable and attractive in the eyes of possible allies and supporters.

There are two processes: image building and nation branding,<sup>20</sup> which are experiencing greater growth in place marketing for development of cities and countries. Consequently, in the case of local projects an evaluation is taking place in intangible assets when new processes of political and social participation are unfolding.<sup>21</sup> In fact, place marketing is an asset for image construction to ensure the development of its entire concept, from the strengthening of the city image to that mainstream integrated quality in the country leading to good governance practices.

Brand is a product or service, and branding is the process of planning and designing to build or manage reputation. Nations, regions and cities do have brand images: they are usually branded.<sup>22</sup> In that sense, identity logo, image reputation, purpose, shared values and external promises are shared, in addition to a persuasion of equity or good will. Indeed, for branding it is important to emphasise that trademark is not owned only by one brand because the image may reside in the mind of the consumer in a remote location.

The main target groups in place marketing are tourists, citizens, students and employees. The tourist board promotes the country to holidaymakers and business travellers.<sup>23</sup> Agencies, Fairs and international scenarios promote the country to foreign companies and investors. In cultural perspective the cultural institute builds cultural relations with other countries and promotes the country's cultural and educational products and services.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the Ministries present their policies to overseas publics in the best possible light, and sometimes attempt to manage the national reputation. There are other bodies and special interest groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and companies all promoting their version of the country, too. The most important thing to emphasise is

<sup>19</sup> Gregory Ashworth – Stephen J. Page: Urban Tourism Research: Recent Progress and Current Paradoxes. *Tourism Management*, 32, no. 1 (2011). 1–15.

<sup>20</sup> Gregory Ashworth – Henk Voogd: *Selling the City: Marketing Approaches in Public Sector Urban Planning*. Belhaven Press, 1990.

<sup>21</sup> Gregory Ashworth – Mihalis Kavaratzis: Beyond the Logo: Brand Management for Cities. *Journal of Brand Management*, 16, no. 8 (2007). 520–531.

<sup>22</sup> Tamás Kaiser – Gábor Bozsó: The Chief Aspects of the Concept and Measurability of State-Centric Governance. In Tamás Kaiser (ed.): *Measurability of Good State and Governance II*. Budapest, Dialóg Campus, 2016. 11–37.

<sup>23</sup> Giliberto Capano et al.: Bringing Governments Back in: Governance and Governing in Comparative Policy Analysis. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, 17, no. 4 (2015). 311–321.

<sup>24</sup> Margaret Levi: The Study of the Study of the State. In Ira Katznelson – Helen V. Milner (eds.): *Political Science. State of the Discipline*. New York, Norton, 2003. 33–55.



that they are working in isolation. However, working collectively would be desirable for knowledge acquisition and development skills.<sup>25</sup>

Besides, it is considered that the application of urban marketing depends to a great extent on the construction, communication and management of the image.<sup>26</sup> With this, in turn, as mentioned by Vásquez, it should be possible to “identify and recognize the different needs of the locality and its translations in a city-brand, the result of a collective agreement and commitment, which must not only seek to position the city abroad through its image, but also guarantee the strengthening of local identity”.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, the participation of local governments is at the level of the “city brand”, which in turn can also have impacts at a higher level in relation to the country brand.<sup>28</sup> For local governments of developing countries, a positive association with the governments of other countries, new markets and international organisations may be seen as a milestone of projection and reputation. In this sense, by ensuring its economic position, Ecuador, as other South American countries, seeks to increase the influence of Foreign Direct Investment in its development. This search occurs not only by attracting large amounts of money, but also benefiting from it in areas such as technology, employment, skilled migrants, exports, qualification and, in general, competitiveness.<sup>29</sup>

From the legal framework perspective, Ecuador has the Executive Decree of Law No. 793, which includes regulatory amendments related to tax matters for the application of the Organic Law of Incentives for Public-Private Associations and Foreign Investment (2015). The purpose of this is to establish incentives for the execution of projects, and, in general terms, to promote productive financing, national investment and foreign investment in Ecuador. In addition to this, Ecuador also has a specific law: Organic Act for the promotion of production, attraction of investments, generation of employment, and fiscal stability and balance (2018). According to Keeble,<sup>30</sup> this law is presented as a great attraction, an incentive for foreign investment in the country. The Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador and the corresponding legal framework establish that the management of international cooperation is the responsibility of subnational governments. In this context, the latter have already had experience working with international cooperation agencies, through which contributions have been made to local development processes. For example, work carried out with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and its investment promotion agencies.

<sup>25</sup> Laurance E. Lynn, Jr: The Many Faces of Governance. Adaptation? Transformation? Both? Neither? In David Levi-Faur (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Governance*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012. 49–64.

<sup>26</sup> Mihalis Kavaratzis et al. (eds.): *Rethinking Place Branding. Comprehensive Brand Development for Cities and Regions*. Cham, Springer, 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Sandra Ornés Vásquez: La gestión urbana sostenible: conceptos, rol del gobierno local y vinculación con el marketing urbano. *Provincia*, no. 31 (2014). 161.

<sup>28</sup> Simon Anholt: *Competitive Identity. The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*. London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Simon Anholt: *Brand New Justice. How Branding Places and Products Can Help the Developing World*. Oxford, Butterworth–Heinemann, 2005.

<sup>30</sup> James Eduard Keeble – Diego Ramírez Mesec: Promoting Investment and Developing Production in Ecuador. *Revista Internacional Jurídica y Empresarial*, no. 2 (2019). 151–156.

Investment promotion agencies are the institutions responsible for promoting foreign investment in a specific area. These types of institutions can be government non-profit organisations, or even private entities run by boards of directors that can include government officials and business managers. Therefore, one of the main activities of an investment promotion agency is the positioning of the country in the international market, a task that implies the construction of a favourable image, and with this, the creation of a “Country Branding”. It is important to note that the United Nations offers support for the promotion of investment for the sustainable development of cities, and that local governments are essential entities to ensure the 2030 SDGs.

In real terms, in most developing countries, such as Ecuador, the government is the one who directs these dynamics, which is why governance and good governance depend to a great extent on it. In a broader sense, who provides governance is the key concern. This is so if we consider the case of developing countries, especially in Latin America, where the States provides public service, the latter being where governance should materialise.

In this way, governance in local instances connotes a sense of direction in the capacity and integrated quality of government action. However, it is difficult to assign a single definition to governance, as this term changed from being descriptive to being analytical. “Governance is itself the object of a theoretical debate in which the diversity of traditions and currents in the social sciences is reflected.”<sup>31</sup>

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador of 2008, namely, its article on the Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization (COOTAD), the model of administration, decentralization and development of the Decentralized Autonomous Governments is determined in the field of planning, in addition to other State regulations at the national level:

Article 1. Scope. This Code establishes the political-administrative organization of the Ecuadorian State in the territory: the regime of the different levels of decentralized autonomous governments and the special regimes, in order to guarantee their political, administrative and financial autonomy. In addition, it develops a model of compulsory and progressive decentralization through the national system of competences, including the institutions responsible for its administration, the sources of financing and the definition of policies and mechanisms to compensate for imbalances in territorial development.

Decentralized Autonomous Governments are legal entities of public law with political, administrative and financial autonomy. Local governments then have the capacity to formulate and execute public decisions and, above all, they can generate strategic links with other public or private actors. In March 2019, 5,675 authorities were elected for the levels of provincial government (23 provinces), cantonal (221 cantons), parochial (823 parishes) and the special regime of Galapagos (CNE 2019). These local government authorities are the ones that carry out public policies in the territory. Central government administers management strategies, but the local government, in its scope of action, adjusts political decisions in a more operational and technical way to realise them with the citizens. This is

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<sup>31</sup> Guillaume Fontaine: *Petropolítica: Una teoría de la gobernanza energética*. Flacso-Sede Ecuador, 2010. 106.

a governance process where dialogue and negotiation occur with private actors, in addition to the different groups that have a direct relationship with local governments due to their interest in investing.

## Preliminary balance

The Ecuadorian commitment has understood that every country wants to sell its unique identity and secure its place on a map. Indeed, the leading actor in this process is undoubtedly the government. Through its public diplomacy, as well as its global persuasion efforts, it will be able to build an image that is consequently reflected in opinions, ideas and ultimately investment decisions. Country branding thus offers business opportunities to promote business activities with a positive balance for Ecuador and should be assumed by the central government and local governments. The political sphere is fully aware that the government at all levels is the only entity that can sell this nation branding.

A brief challenging socio-economic context such as the one present in a developing country like Ecuador, in relation to public diplomacy and urban marketing, allows us to point out, in the first instance, that the national government and local governments, whether provincial or municipal, face multiple and independent changes at the time to manage their services and resources.

## Conclusion

A country's legal and regulatory framework is promoted internationally, so it generates proposals for international agreements and once the investment is received, it provides services to ensure the investors stay in the country. Governments seek to execute public projects with private participation as consideration for their investment. Governments are considered key actors for international expansion, since they may or may not incorporate the experience of a private entity to create, acquire and operate a public infrastructure and offer a service. Undeniably, a determining factor is competitiveness as well as the ability to significantly improve its branding to anchor itself in the international arena.

The countries<sup>32</sup> have sought to align themselves with the world trend and this is how it consolidates a process of creation and dissemination of its brand with the sole purpose of strengthening the imaginary that it communicates.

In this sense, the objective of this work was to make visible the importance of public diplomacy and the reputation of countries in the framework of place branding and governance, applied to the Ecuadorian internationalisation, as a proposal to set clear goals for the country's economy and the strategy of inclusion in world trade. For urban marketing, the construction of a paradigm of "equitable socioeconomic reputation" has allowed the birth of new paradigms that can be placed inside a normative frame of a constitutional State

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<sup>32</sup> According to the annual report on the most valuable and strongest nation brand with a Brand Strength Index (BSI).

governed. This way, regarded as “meta-governance”, it emphasises the important position of government in governance. This positioning among equals should be established for a developed market, mature civil society and perfect political structure of countries. The lack of these necessary conditions is bound to affect the effective implementation of place marketing in governmental institutions.

In this context, the importance of public diplomacy and a country’s reputation was presented to better understand confidence in the stability and standing of a country that has a huge impact on the way it is perceived and impacts worldwide on decisions such as investing or not in a place. In fact, the present study will be helpful for introducing urban marketing in the national agenda with the prospect of public diplomacy in favour of both tourism and exports.

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