

Founding Day: A Closer Look at Nation Branding by the Saudi Arabian Government Through X (Twitter)

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Abstract. this study uses textual analysis to examine several tweets from Saudi Arabia's Founding Day account to determine the main driving force behind the celebration's establishment and the methods used by the government to inform its citizens. In addition to highlighting the nation's cultural and historical background, the tweets covered the celebrations and events that the government had scheduled for this day, February 22, and included texts, posters, booklets, movies, and images. According to the findings, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is fostering a new national brand that honors the nation's rich cultural legacy and civilizational roots by reminding people of the previous leadership, the era of Imam Muhammad bin Saud, and the founding of the state in 1727 AD. This period brought safety, security, and unity to the nation after years of chaos, disarray, and instability, igniting a greater sense of national pride.

Keywords: Public diplomacy, Nation branding, Founding Day, National Day, X (Twitter)

Introduction

National holidays are days of celebration and remembrance in many nations. The holidays honor national heroes, landmark achievements, and other noteworthy occurrences. Some nations observe Independence Day, Liberation Day, or other historical holidays. Many of these holidays honor significant events in the history of the nation, such as its founding, independence, or constitutional amendments.

Different countries have different ways of celebrating and reasons for creating new holidays. In the United States, national holidays are created through an act of Congress after a proclamation is issued by the president. It is worth noting that creating new holidays is not easy as it first requires garnering popular support for the holiday. Only four additional holidays have been added to the American calendar in the last 100 years (Kaplan, 2014). In the meantime, new holidays in Saudi Arabia are established by royal decree of the reigning monarch. One example of this is the September 23rd National Day, which honors King Abdulaziz's 1932 unification of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In many nations, national holidays commemorate important occasions. Holidays accomplish a variety of goals, including allowing people to pause and consider significant, life-altering moments in the history of their country, honoring outstanding individuals, and commemorating those who gave their lives to protect future generations. The script is the same in Saudi Arabia; like many other states, Saudi Arabia has instituted a new national holiday, Saudi Founding Day, on February 22, to honor the history of the kingdom. The decree issued on January 27, 2022, by King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, emphasized the fact that the holiday was created “out of pride in the deep-rooted heritage of this blessed nation and the close connection between its citizens and its leaders since the era of Imam Muhammad bin Saud three centuries ago.” The royal decree states that the day will commemorate Saudi Founding Day's hallmark—the union of the state—as well as the founding fathers and the amazing journey that Saudi Arabia has undergone.

Establishing new holidays is a tool used by governments for a variety of reasons, such as celebrating an event or emphasizing a particular aspect of heritage (Straus, 2014). The creation of new national holidays plays an important part in the nation's branding (Klyukanov et al., 2008). Nation branding is used to create an image or communicate a message about the state (Fan, 2006) to different

audiences, external or internal (L'Etang, 2009); this is what the Saudi government did when it established the Founding Day.

Statement of the Problem:

To emphasize Saudi Arabia's historical heritage, this study examined the country branding idea as a public relations tactic that the kingdom employed to establish Founding Day as a new holiday. This paper investigates the recent phenomenon of Founding Day and examines the ways in which the government has communicated with the public to remind them that the nation's origins reach back three centuries. Through X (Twitter), the most popular media platform in Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom's history should be taught, honored, and acknowledged for its contribution to the nation's achievements today. This will help to strengthen national identity and cultural heritage among its citizens.

Literature Review:

Governments are among the numerous sectors that benefit from public relations (PR) (Omondi, 2012). There are several reasons why public relations is a significant and pertinent discipline. Matthee's (2011) views are in line with the idea that public relations is necessary to manage communications and relationships with the public as a third party.

Political public relations (PR) relies on the notion that the government seeks to interact and collaborate with the public to forge favorable relationships and build a positive image for the government in order to further its objectives (Strömbäck & Kioussis, 2011b). Taylor and Kent (2006) demonstrated that the government needs to communicate with its target audience in the same language and dialect to put together messages that are convincing. Cockerall (1984) asserts that the "careful" use of public relations by governments is increasingly intended to impact their citizens by disseminating information that furthers governmental objectives. Hence, before making significant decisions that have an impact on the entire nation, the government should gather basic information from public relations, including soliciting opinions from the general public. The current case study reveals how public relations is used by the Saudi government as a communication strategy to educate the public about Founding Day.

Public Diplomacy:

Public diplomacy is an extension of traditional diplomacy, albeit one that targets non-governmental organizations in a way that the latter did not. In international relations, public diplomacy is crucial because it creates a discourse with the world community with the aim of inspiring or enlightening it (Abdulilah & Khan, 2019). Convincing foreign audiences to endorse government policy is one of the objectives of public diplomacy.

According to Nye (2008), "soft power" is the capacity to persuade people to cooperate with a government to accomplish its goals without resorting to force. Nye (2008) argues that a nation can use its culture, values, internal and external policies, and ideologies to influence public opinion and interact with other nations to attain soft power.

The ability of a nation to draw in foreigners through its culture is another facet of "soft power." According to Rugg (2017), public diplomacy is deliberate communication that uses soft power by providing information that is viewed favorably by an audience in another country. The production, export, and display of soft power is known as public diplomacy. Governments use cultural soft power, like movies that portray their society's culture, to draw in the public on a global scale (Nye, 2008).

L'Etang (2009) states that public diplomacy encompasses not only government efforts aimed at foreign or external audiences, but also efforts made toward local or domestic citizens. This type of work may also be known as "internal PR" or "diplomacy directed at intermestic publics." To

strengthen citizen loyalty to the state, countries can use soft power and public diplomacy strategies such as sports, events, tourism (such as by introducing new holidays), and other avenues to target their communication programs at the local audience (L'Etang, 2009). Countries are hesitant to participate in so-called nation branding as compared to other forms of diplomacy (Dinnie, 2015).

Nation Branding:

Dinnie (2015) defined national branding as “the unique, multidimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences” (p. 15). Communicating a distinct, uncomplicated, and emotionally charged idea that can be expressed both orally and visually and comprehended by diverse audiences in a range of situations is the primary goal of national branding. According to Fan's (2005) definition, nation branding is a tactic a nation can employ to choose a strategic vision that is appropriate for creating rich communication with the rest of the world (Anholt, 1998). According to Szondi (2008), nation branding is an art form in which a public or private organization uses persuasion to alter the perception of a nation. Szondi (2008) went on to say that nation branding is a deliberate process of a nation strategically marketing itself to establish a reputation in the political, economic, and social spheres and consequently enhance its image both domestically and globally.

The socioeconomic or cultural endeavors that a nation is well known for are the foundation of its identity branding. Fan (2005) states that a country's image can be improved by branding a variety of elements, including geographic, ethnic, historical, cultural, and even a well-known individual. Therefore, a nation's branding strategy might incorporate all these components, but the context in which they are employed will serve as the final directive. For instance, using a nation's name to endorse a domestic brand is obviously intended to increase exports, draw in visitors, talent, and investors.

Before the term "nation branding" was coined, state authorities and their allies had long exploited the concept of branding to identify and create national brands. Many of the people who promoted the idea of creating national brands, according to Viktorin et al. (2018), did so without considering relevant studies; instead, they were preoccupied with the financial potential that branding provided internally. Cull (2013) claims that Margaret Thatcher's public diplomacy and the introduction of neoliberal policies in the UK gave rise to new forms of competitiveness and modern nation branding. During this time, policymakers in the UK collaborated with marketing experts to rebrand and improve the UK's image globally. Further, Viktorin et al. (2018) note that these early attempts by Britain to project a “cool Britannia” image paved the way for the British public as well as international audiences to pay close attention to the concept of nation branding.

Case studies from Finland, Scotland, Russia, and other countries demonstrate how a country becomes more engaged and plays a larger role in the world when its brand is recognized internationally. Finland's success story is built on its strategic use of public relations, communications, marketing, and advocacy to construct its national brand (Dinnie, 2015). According to Halme (2010), effective nation-image initiatives support the success of individuals working to build global ties in a variety of political, economic, and cultural situations. Numerous nations are attempting to highlight and strengthen their unique national advantages. An organization in Scotland tried to promote Scottish history, tradition, values, and traits in 1994 to increase awareness and boost tourism (Dinnie, 2015). Russia's reputation and image worldwide were deteriorating prior to Putin becoming president. Everyone had to work together to change and enhance the nation's image, including decision-makers, government representatives, company owners, the media, organizations, and society at large. By

focusing on internal reforms, the nation's economy, and the media, Putin attempted to improve his reputation as the face of the state and improved Russia's standing (Dinnie, 2015).

During the administration of former President Bush Jr., the US government used yet another traditional example of country branding to improve its reputation both within and outside. The administration appointed an undersecretary for public diplomacy, as Fullerton and Kendrick (2006) pointed out, with the primary goal of reestablishing America's standing as a safe and powerful country in the wake of 9/11. Gaining support from both domestic and foreign sources was the plan of action. According to Kühschelm (2019), country branding originated in Austria and Switzerland in the 20th century; both countries have a wealth of expertise with internal national marketing campaigns and tourism promotion. Academics point out that Switzerland developed a reputation for neutrality and a dedication to safe humanitarian standards long after the country launched its nation-branding campaigns. Kühschelm (2019) suggests, in closing, that the necessity to convert internal national efforts from the 1920s into international campaigns aimed at promoting superior national brands in the 1960s was the driving force behind Austria's and Switzerland's shift in approach.

A personality or identity that seeks to positively shape this personality and identity in the eyes of others is known as national branding (Simons, 2011). Public diplomacy communication is government communication intended to influence political change, either by explaining domestic political decisions to audiences both inside and outside the country or by contributing to international decision-making. In contrast, nation branding aims to establish a positive public perception of the state, cultivate a reputation, and advance economic, social, and cultural interests. Although public diplomacy aims to enhance the country's reputation for political goals, branding the nation aspires to more than that (Szondi, 2008). According to Stone (1995), the brand operates as “a proxy for reputation. In other words, PR” (p. 72).

Governments address citizens via national branding initiatives. Therefore, they are not required to exhibit it globally, in contrast to Saudi Arabia's efforts to celebrate its history by instituting the Founding Day. Locals and stakeholders who are unaware of how their country is portrayed internationally are "not required to live the brand" (Dinnie, 2015, p. 70). Typically, countries strive to enhance their image to boost, favorability, loyalty, and nationalism (Jeffrey, 2013). Hence, the success of a state's national branding depends on the support and involvement of its people (Kotler, 2002).

Brief History of Saudi Arabia:

The modern-day Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is regarded as the offspring and heir of the Al Saud, who historically held multiple reigns over Najd and sizable portions of the Arabian Peninsula. Initially established by Muhammad bin Saud in 1744, the Emirate of Diriyah endured for 94 years until Ibrahim Pasha's troops, acting on behalf of the Ottoman Empire, took control of it in 1818 AD. It is known as the "first Saudi state" during that time. Turki bin Abdullah bin Muhammad quickly formed a new emirate for the House of Saud in Najd in 1824 AD, with Riyadh serving as its capital, following the collapse of the first state. This lasted for 69 years until the rulers of the Emirate of Hail seized the Emirate of Riyadh from the House of Saud in 1891, and this period is referred to as “the second Saudi state” (Ochsenwald et al., 2022).

Abdul Aziz Al Saud took back the Emirate of Riyadh from Al Rashid in 1902, and in 1921 he extended his rule over the whole of Najd, which was ruled by the Sultanate of Najd until Abdul Aziz was able to overthrow the Hashemites and take control of the Kingdom of Hejaz. In January 1926 he was crowned king of the Hejaz. A year later, he renounced his title as Sultan of Najd and became King of Najd. The territories under his rule were dubbed the Kingdom of Hejaz, which included Najd

and its annexations. AbdulAziz kept this name until he unified all his territories into one. On September 23, 1932, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was declared to be its new name. (Ochsenwald et al., 2022).

Visit Saudi Arabia (2022), a travel site, boasts that the kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a bastion of rich historical, and religious heritage. Monuments like the medieval Diriyah and the culturally diverse souqs of Jeddah and Al Ahsa have come to represent the historical and cultural identity of the kingdom.

Founding Day:

According to Nugali and Gornall (2022), Founding Day has not taken the place of National Day. National Day honors the day that King Abdulaziz Al Saud united the country in 1932. In reality, the foundational journey started in 1446 AD when Mani' Al-Muraydi founded the historical Diriyah, In 1720, Saud Bin Muhammad assumed power in the Arabian Peninsula, bringing stability and security to the region after years of internal strife and the spread of diseases. After him, the kingdom was administered by his sons. The Saudi state bears his name as a result.

The history of Saudi Arabia is rich. Nevertheless, a false impression of the First State of Saudi Arabia is created by gaps in the literature. Nugali and Gornall (2022) claim that the reason the year 1744 endured is that it was influenced by two important occasions: Imam Muhammad bin Saud gave sanctuary to Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, a religious reformer, when he arrived in Diriyah City. Despite its importance, it was thought that this event did not mark the establishment of Saudi Arabia's first state. The deeper origins of the First State of Saudi Arabia were obscured by the event, which symbolized the union of state and faith. After conducting a thorough investigation to find the truth, researchers arrived at the year 1727, when Imam Mohammed ibn Saud assumed authority with the intention of establishing the Saudi capital and turning the city-state into a major centre of peace and stability in the region (Nugali & Gornall, 2022).

Nation Branding of Saudi Arabia via Social Media:

According to Abdulilah and Khan (2019), for the past thirty years, the Kingdom has realized how crucial it is to use soft power, cultural diplomacy, and public diplomacy as the most effective means of achieving progress on a local and international level. The nation's image and culture have been greatly enhanced abroad thanks in large part to social media. Part of this has been made easier by the growth of intricate communication networks. Armstrong (2022) asserts that social media and, by extension, most contemporary communication platforms, can cross national boundaries and enable both direct and indirect global participation for the empowerment of people and groups. An important factor in a nation's foreign relations is its image. According to Alobaidy (2021), nation branding entails managing soft power, cultivating an image, and promoting it. The government of Saudi Arabia has actively encouraged the interchange of ideas, arts, sports, education, languages, and other cultural aspects to foster mutual understanding with nations around the globe and to enhance the country's international image.

Promoting national programs requires strong branding. Alsedrah (2021) defines branding as a process by which nations use tactics based on their investments, communications, and behavior to enhance their reputation and achieve desired outcomes. Saudi Arabia positioned itself in this environment and through persuasive communication by creating a campaign that gave significance to the newly established Founding Day celebration. Alsaaidi (2020) examined how social media plays a part in brand building and reported on Twitter's influence on nation branding, as well as how it aided Saudi Arabia in promoting political, economic, social, and other pro-government initiatives. Alshaikh

(2019) investigated how the government used Twitter to spread the ideas and objectives of Vision 2030 and how it functioned as a medium for handling criticisms and dissent.

While Alshaikh's study focuses on the ability of people on social media, particularly Twitter, to challenge and be more courageous in criticizing the state's viewpoints, traditional media are less able to question the efficacy of the new Vision 2030 strategy approved by the Saudi state. The existence of social media has made communication easier, and as globalization and technology progress, so too will the usage of social media to break down communication boundaries. In a study similar to Alshaikh's, Alkarni (2018) evaluated how Saudi Arabians saw Vision 2030 and utilized Twitter as the analytical tool. The results showed that Twitter is viewed as a social media platform that reflects some views on changes in Saudi society.

Social media has made it possible for citizens to actively engage in political discourse (Bjola & Jiang, 2015) and enabled governments to interact directly with its citizens and with those of other nations to foster a sense of national identity (Bjola, 2015). The use of social media to sway audiences is referred to by Collins et al. (2019) as "digital diplomacy,". In 2007, during the Obama presidency, the U.S. State Department was the first to use Twitter to conduct diplomatic communication (Collins et al., 2019). India, on the other hand, used Twitter in 2010 as a strategy to improve public diplomacy through soft power (Hall, 2012). According to Burson-Marsteller's 2017 study, the so called "Twiplomacy" has allowed the social media platform to become a go-to place for high profile users like world leaders and politicians to communicate with the public, since Twitter has been embraced by the public and is considered a first-choice destination for the latest news and information (Collins et al., 2019).

Further studies analyzing Tweets show that governments are increasingly using the social media platform for communication purposes. Research on the use of Twitter by the Saudi government conducted by Alasem (2015) shows that social media is a convenient tool to increase openness and transparency and to gain greater understanding of public opinion while also giving citizens a voice. Al-Aama (2015) stated that Twitter is the most widely used means by public institutions to communicate with the masses. In fact, Saudi Arabia, which incidentally has the highest per-capita use of Twitter globally, uses Twitter as an effective tool to communicate with its citizens. This effectiveness can be explored by analyzing tweeting types, content, patterns, followers' retweets, and other data (Al-Aama, 2015). Albahlal (2019) contended that, due to its increasing popularity, governments should use the social media platform Twitter to communicate with the public since it is an effective communication tool.

Research Question:

This study will examine how social media is being used to create new holidays. More focus will be on how the Saudi Arabian government created a new holiday that appeals to the younger generation.

Q: How does the Saudi government communicate the meaning of this new holiday to its citizens through the Founding Day's Twitter account?

Method:

The present paper explores how the Saudi government uses public diplomacy to reinforce its cultural heritage and contribute to national branding by creating a new festive day. Using textual analysis, this research attempts to deeper comprehend the reasoning behind the creation of this holiday and analyses the messages that the government wants its citizens to perceive using the social media platform Twitter. The research also investigates the ways in which the Founding Day Twitter Account uses information to impact its followers and the ways in which the government evokes sentiments of

loyalty and belonging by examining state history and the struggles that were faced in the process of bringing the nation together.

According to Fürsich (2009), textual analysis is qualitative content analysis that deconstructs written material and extracts the underlying meanings, assumptions, and patterns implicit in the content; it could also be called “thematic analysis, critical discourse analysis, ideological analysis, or more specific types such as genre analysis or cultural analysis” (p. 241). Any media text, including webpages, is the primary focus of the researcher in textual analysis. The job of media scholars is to use textual analysis to evaluate and elucidate the readings that the media present since the media play a significant role in how people find meaning in their lives. Hence, textual analysis can be understood as a cultural practice that uses analysis and interpretation to try and determine what texts include or exclude.

This research uses textual analysis of images, videos, text, and posters that were posted on @SAFoundingDay, an official Twitter account that has been verified by the Saudi government, to better understand Saudi Arabia's use of digital diplomacy in promoting Founding Day as an internal public relations initiative and branding the country. From February 2022, when the account administrators began publishing tweets, until March 2022, the Twitter posts related to the first state of Saudi Arabia were manually gathered, totaling (N=131) tweets, the total number of tweets in the account at the time of the study.

In this paper, the researcher adopted Marwick's (2014) method of textually analyzing original tweets and retweets on Twitter. Marwick's approach of text analysis involves looking at the language and content of tweets to identify themes, patterns and cultural meanings that are being communicated. It also considers the words that are used and the context in which they were written. The researcher conducted a thorough analysis of tweets, and paid careful attention to symbols, hashtags, words, phrases, and sentences to ensure identifying recurrent patterns and themes. The study found that the frequently occurring patterns can be divided into two main themes. The first topic is Glorifying the Past, which includes six codes: Dates and History (N=14), Stories (N =14), Values (N=8), Logo (N=6), Fashion (N=18), and Traditional Dishes (N=4). The second topic is Celebrating the Past, which includes two codes, namely, Events Announcements and Coverage (N =45) and Markets (N=8). A ninth code, titled “Other” (N=13), which did not belong to the previous ones was added. To try to identify trends and connections among the subjects, the researcher examined and analyzed the data until it reached saturation.

Results:

The first Founding Day tweet defined the account's mission glorifying the country's past and history since its founding in 1727, as well promoting the slogans chosen for the day. The second tweet was a retweet from @SPAgov (the Royal News Account), in which the king announced that February 22 is designated as “the founding of the Saudi state.”, an official holiday to be celebrated every year. Further tweets ensued including the hashtag #يوم التأسيس (i.e., Founding Day) or #يوم بدينا (i.e., the Day we started).

Topic One: Glorifying the Past

The tweets are diverse and cover a wide range of subjects, such as the historical splendor of Saudi Arabia during the first Saudi state, the rationale behind the celebration of Founding Day, the distinction between it and National Day, the identity of the day (logo symbols), women's and men's fashion, well-known traditional cuisine, Imam Muhammad bin Saud, the state's founder, the close bond between Arabs and horses, and, lastly, the values that are held dear in the nation: pride and interdependence, authenticity, and generosity. Below is a detailed discussion of these subjects. One

of the flyers that was shared on the account emphasized the primary reason for commemorating Founding Day:

A reminder of the Saudi state's three-century history of expansion, highlighting its historical and civilizational depth, celebrating its diverse cultural heritage, and honoring those who have made valuable contributions to the nation's service, including imams, kings, and citizens.

Dates and History:

Because "the reign of Imam Muhammad bin Saud began with his assumption of power in Diriyah on February 22, 1727, AD," February 22 was selected. As a result, that day was chosen to mark the founding of the Saudi state. What day is it? "A national occasion on which people united and prospered, culture and science spread, and a new political entity was established that secured unity and stability." According to other tweets, people should share the ideals and significance of this historic national occasion so that they can be proud of this nation's and its citizens' rich cultural and social heritage.

A pamphlet titled "Founding Day History Pamphlet." covers in detail the nation's founding story, the founder's accomplishments, the logo's symbols, the origins of the founding, the city of founding (Diriyah), historical society and culture, and the remarks made by the crown prince and the subsequent kings of the third Saudi state about the establishment of the nation.

Founding Day vs. National Day:

Another post addresses the following question: "What is the difference between the Founding Day and the National Day?" The former celebrates the establishment of the first Saudi state by Imam Muhammad bin Saud, whereas the latter commemorates the unification of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia by King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al-Faisal Al Saud.

Identity of Founding Day (Logos and Symbols):

The tweet states that the Arabian horses symbolizes equestrianism and the state's championship of princes and brave warriors, the palm or dates stand for growth, life, and generosity, the falcon represents one of the most popular sports and pastimes in the Arabian Peninsula community, the Saudi flag represents the unification and solidarity of the Saudi Arabian people, and the market symbolizes economic mobility, diversity, and openness.

Fashion:

The fashion-related posts featured images of women's attire from around the kingdom.

It highlighted the fact that: "Women's fashion changed at the time when the first Saudi state was created, so each region had its fashion standards!" Other posts displayed pictures of men's headgear, headbands, and cloaks.

Food:

A booklet with recipes for some of the most well-known delicacies from each region was among the material shared in the tweets.

Imam Muhammad bin Saud (Stories and the Love for Horses):

In addition to the numerous tales about the state's founder, Imam Muhammad bin Saud, and his generosity, hospitality, and support for the generous, this "narrative highlights the qualities that set the Saudis apart and what they inherited from their Arab ancestors, the most important values of which are generosity and hospitality, Generosity is not reserved for the wealthy; rather, it embraces all people in accordance with their various capacities. These moral precepts are unwavering and do not alter for every visitor."

Another tweet underscored the close bond between the horse and the Arab man at the time of the first Saudi state:

Imam Saud bin Abdulaziz was well known for his love of horses. It was told that he owned one thousand four hundred horses, which he rode and got comfortable with. One of the most famous and closest to his heart was a mare named “Kuraiya.”

Values:

Several tweets displayed posters and texts repeating similar phrases:

Three centuries from the day we started, and we raised the flag, carrying all our stories, glories, and values! It is a story we are proud of, and we will tell everyone.

Three centuries of glory and pride, from the day we started, we drew the features of our pride. Let's live it for the rest of our lives!

Three centuries of authenticity and heritage, from the day we started, we realized our place in history, and our originality that we inherited from our ancestors!

Three centuries of bonding and brotherhood. from the day we started, We are compassionate, tolerant, and one hand in unison!

Three centuries of culture and knowledge, from the day we started, we embraced knowledge, adhered to our culture, and were proud of it!

Topic Two: Celebrating the Past

The data also revealed a second item that listed the activities scheduled for February 22 across the Kingdom. Some tweets discussed such activities, for example:

A Day for the Great Homeland, in which we express our joy! [These events] reflect the history of the Saudi state by celebrating the Founding Day anniversary on February 22. [and] Wherever you go, throughout the Kingdom, you will find various events around you! Live in it for the most wonderful moments of joy and pride and learn about the journey of the launching of the Saudi state.

"Najnaj," a theatrical performance that mimics the bustle and flow of people in the ancient markets, was one of the events. The description read as follows: "We are transported to the authenticity of the past by the popular markets' atmosphere, the beauty of traditional Saudi fashion, and the variety of programs housed in one location." An additional tweet announced the #LightShow event: "The capital's sky will be illuminated by ten paintings! It will provide us with information about the Founding Day championships. An artistic epic featuring words and melodies prepared to commemorate #FoundatingDay was also unveiled. We shall experience it to the fullest with the #Operetta_Foundation. The same tweet featured a billboard featuring well-known Saudi singers. A video advertisement for the biggest live review of its kind in Saudi Arabia was featured in another tweet: "Enthusiastically ready for #the march of the beginning! A historical event... and an enormous production, including 10 creative paintings drawn by 3500 performers and actors, in which we perform with the kingdom's biggest stars."

February 22 Events Coverage:

Twitter was used to report on the events on February 22. Video footages were utilized to showcase the Founding Day celebrations, beginning with the largest march in the Kingdom known as the "march of the beginning." According to the tweets, this march "tells the story of the Founding Day" through "panels of distinguished performances." A tweet was shared that featured a video clip of the panel painting titled "Ladies of Glory," which highlighted "the great role of Saudi women in building and establishing the state!" In a dramatic intergenerational dialogue, the "Present and Past" panel "reinforces the concept of deep-rooted cultural principles and the eternal identity of the three Saudi countries!" There was a panel titled "A Saudi Biography" as well. In this painting, "we witnessed the strength of cohesion and unity among the sons of this great nation! and their connection to leadership and land."

Several unique and historical musical sequences that transported the audience to the heart of the narrative were also showcased during the operetta event, For instance, a remarkable performance featuring endearing tunes and lyrics regarding:

the beginning of the vision of Imam Muhammad bin Saud and his stabilization of the state, and the establishment of the foundations for security and economic and social prosperity! . . . Where he re-established and built the state and chose Riyadh as its capital... to begin the reconstruction phase with his people.

In one of the operetta scenes, the role of women was also sung:

We are proud of the role of Saudi women over the last three centuries since the establishment of Saudi Arabia. We appreciate their contribution and effort; we have accomplished the impossible! The scene also showcases the celebration of women and their empowerment in modern-day Saudi Arabia.

Another scene included the following:

Determination and giving, within the operetta scenes, stories of glory and achievement. The hero is our King Salman bin Abdulaziz, may God protect him. . . . The “future” icon in Foundation Day takes us to aspiration, hope, and ambition! We are inspired by the icon of the future, His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, may God protect him. . . [and] Our ancient symbol that traveled the world. The icon of influence that reached all the international partners who dealt with the Saudi state.

The light shows were also photographed and recorded:

Drones flew in the sky of Riyadh, and fireworks were set off using modern and advanced technologies, telling stories of the past through the eyes of the future. . . . The story of the land of foundation and the nation of glory, the paths of glory told by the world and illuminated in the sky of Riyadh. [and] Passion leads to the future, and passion leads to ambition.

Finally, several tweets displayed many photos highlighting “the elegance of the attendees in brilliantly distinctive traditional costumes, waiting for the start of the activities to form a panel of glory and history.” The last tweet stated, “With knowledge, pride, generosity, authenticity, and connectedness! Stories of light, joy, and glow... told by the joyful traits of 30 million people on this earth.”

Discussion:

The Founding Day account shared a tweet that King Salman bin Abdulaziz issued from his personal account on February 22, the day of the founding ceremony.

We cherish the anniversary of the founding of this blessed state in the year 1139 AH (1727 AD), and since that date until today, it has laid the foundations for peace, stability, and justice. Celebrating this anniversary is the commemoration of the history of a country, the cohesion of a people, steadfastness in the face of all challenges, and an aspiration for the future. And thank God for all the blessings.

The study's findings demonstrate that the intention behind the creation of this day was to inform the people about Saudi glory, what transpired after it, and the line of dynasties that ruled over it. Put another way, the purpose of the holiday was to inspire feelings of loyalty, pride, and appreciation for their history while introducing the country's origins and three centuries of history. It also suggested attitudes that a Saudi citizen should have toward the state's past and accomplishments.

Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) asserts that nations strive to influence how their people perceive the past. The head of the organization or senior management team must create a new notion of the organization's identity, articulate its vision, and then communicate it to the workforce and other stakeholders through new symbols that make sense to them (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). In this case, the government shaped the narrative about Saudi ancestry that it was eager to publish. The

government promoted the continuation of following its example by disseminating materials that discussed the history of Saudi Arabia, its three eras, its rulers and heroes, and the principles that set Arabs apart in the past.

Nation branding, according to Fan (2006), is a strategy to develop an image or message about a nation for a variety of audiences. L'Etang (2009) elaborates on this idea by pointing out that public diplomacy efforts are not just focused on external audiences but also on domestic audiences or internal citizens, and they can be seen as an internal form of public relations or diplomacy that simultaneously addresses a local and global audience. As per Bednar et al. (2020), individuals who are part of an organization or not can have an impact on its image and identity based on their own self-perception and relationship with the organization, which in turn shapes the organization's image and brand. As a result, the identity hosts either fulfil what they have started or alter the members' identity representations in response to feedback on the crucial work undertaken by the organization. In this instance, the state aimed at inspiring citizens to appreciate their legacy, values, and rituals by introducing them to their history in a unique manner while creating a connection between them and their heritage.

The Saudi government's endeavors to bolster the nationalism and allegiance of its citizens while exalting history are an attempt to construct the state's national identity through reinforcing the significance of cultural heritage and historical context and instilling them in the citizens, who are reflections of what the state has to offer. Because of this, if the state presents a positive image of itself and shapes its identity, its people will reflect this positive image and propagate it in their own ways. When people are proud of Saudi Arabia's national unity, they will share it with others and propagate the state's strong traditions and customs as well as its established cohesion, security, and stability.

By enabling people to identify the positive aspects of the past that have a beneficial influence on the present, communicative and memorable activities improve identification in the present (Bednar et al., 2020). An array of customs that reference the contributions of heroes to the development of this identity and draw from history and legacy—such as political speeches, national anthems, and yearly celebrations—highlight national identity. Signs that link history with national identity include clothes, medals, language, household objects, galleries, museums, and a variety of other symbols (Olick & Robbins, 1998).

In honor of the anniversary, the Saudi government proclaimed Founding Day a national holiday and planned regional activities that showcased history in a fresh and creative way. A drone light show and a portrayal of the grandeur of the past were among the events that exhibited the nation's pride in the heroes—both male and female—who were instrumental in shaping the nation into what it is now. The government used all the events and celebrations as a means of explaining to the people the significance and intent behind the establishment of Founding Day; noteworthy among these was the use of text, images, and videos in tweets to describe the past and bring back historical details that strengthened the public's sense of community and loyalty to the identity of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The study aligns with the opinions of Matthee (2011) and Strömbäck and Kioussis (2011b), who highlight the importance of public relations for the government in managing interactions and information with the public to build goodwill and a positive reputation that will aid in the government's goal-achieving. The study also considers the views expressed by Nye (2008) and Abdulilah and Khan (2019) regarding the value of public diplomacy in international relations and the application of soft power—achieved through a nation's culture, values, policies, and ideologies—to shape public opinion and interact with allies abroad.

Theoretical Implications:

This study provides an example of how a national brand can be developed by a government through public diplomacy. Now that the entire globe is becoming a small village, working on the national brand is essential. To carve out a place for themselves, nations, organizations, and alliances should cultivate a positive public image and brand, enhance their reputations based on their histories, cultures, archaeological sites, or other ideas; adopt and support globally beneficial social initiatives; forge connections; win over other countries; and welcome foreign clients, visitors, and potential investors. According to Kotler and Gertner (2002), nations with well-developed brand identities have a competitive edge over those with weaker ones.

Njeru (2009) asserts that effective branding strategies and approaches can produce a powerful competitive instrument that can effect change both inside and outside of a nation's boundaries. However, to convince fellow citizens of the nation to support the agenda and be proud of their nation, public diplomacy and branding techniques are not just for foreign nationals. Furthermore, public diplomacy encompasses all forms of communication between two parties, including unions and international organizations, which aim to enhance their reputations to garner greater attention and support for their causes. It is not just restricted to government-sponsored programs or communication. By demonstrating how states utilize occasions like Foundation Day to advance a certain narrative and build their worldwide image, this research significantly adds to the body of knowledge in the field of public relations. This research presents a case study of digital public relations practice in a non-Western context, which is often underrepresented in public relations literature, bridging the gap between theoretical models of public relations and their practical application in diverse cultural and political environments. Additionally, the study emphasizes how national branding initiatives can be strengthened by incorporating historical and cultural themes into PR tactics. The research also highlights the importance of digital communication in contemporary public diplomacy and emphasizes its effectiveness as a tool for influencing local and global public opinion, particularly in our rapidly evolving digital age. This raises the question of whether organizations should prioritize traditional means of communication or shift to more modern and effective strategies, like digital communication, to reach their audiences more effectively.

Limitations and Future Research:

Studying the first year of this holiday presented some challenges for the researcher, since there is no prior data to compare and there's a chance that the messages' content or intent will change next year, making it impossible to compare earlier or subsequent messages. Moreover, if there are more than 131 tweets, the outcome can vary. This comparison could be used in future studies to examine any changes in meaning over time or in citizen-government communication. One might also draw a connection between Twitter and other platforms. Even with a modest number of followers, it can also be taken into consideration whether the audience is impacted by the content of the Twitter account.

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يوم التأسيس: نظرة فاحصة على العلامة القومية للمملكة العربية السعودية عبر X (تويتر)

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مستخلص. تحلل هذه الدراسة نصيًا عددًا من التغريدات من حساب يوم التأسيس على تويتر لفهم الدافع الأساسي من إطلاق هذا اليوم وكيف تواصلت الحكومة بشأنه مع المواطنين. تضمنت التغريدات نصوص وملصقات وكتيبات ومقاطع فيديو وصور تناقش الخلفية الثقافية والتاريخية للبلاد وكذلك تغطيات الاحتفالات والمناسبات التي أقامتها الحكومة للمواطنين في تاريخ ٢٢ فبراير. وأظهرت النتائج قيام المملكة السعودية بالترويج لعلامة قومية جديدة تمجد التراث الثقافي والجذور الحضارية والتاريخية للدولة من خلال تذكير المواطنين بالقيادة السابقة، عهد الإمام محمد بن سعود، وإقامة الدولة عام ١٧٢٧ م، والتي جلبت الوحدة والأمان والاستقرار بعد سنوات من التشردم والضياع لتشجيع المزيد من الولاء والاعتزاز بالبلاد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الدبلوماسية العامة، العلامة القومية، يوم التأسيس، اليوم الوطني، X (تويتر)