

Analysis of Media Coverage of the Czech Republic and its Potential Impact on Perception of Czech Republic

Markéta Lhotáková, Petr Král, Yana Shamina, Maria Tisovski

Abstract: *This paper will analyze theoretical concept of country of origin as a brand and its influence on brand image of products originating from the country. It will deeper review the role of media in establishing the perception of country of origin in general and its potential use as a tool contributing to achievement of targeted image of a country. Primary research concentrated on monitoring of influential international media with the aim to identify events that have potential to influence perception of Czech Republic by foreign public. Within the scope of monitored media, we found out, that the most common topics in all of them related to Czech Republic covered sports followed by topics concerning politics and international affairs. Media audit showed, that to positive impression about Czech republic contributed mostly articles covering success of Czech sportsmen and meeting of US and Russian presidents in Prague, while to negative mostly articles covering corruption and fraud scandals, some sports topics and visa and immigration policies. From these results arises, that PR coverage of Czech Republic in monitored media is not contributing to achievement of the targets defined within the scope of “Export strategy of Czech Republic for the period of 2006-2010” in section of “Building of a quality brand ČR in the world”, specifically “increase in positive awareness of Czech Republic and improvement of image of Czech Republic abroad (MPO, 2006)”.*

Key Words: Media Monitoring · Media Audit · Czech Republic · Country of Origin · Country Image

JEL Classification: M31

1 Introduction

Economic development of Czech Republic is largely dependent on export opportunities of Czech producers. Czech Republic belongs to one of the most opened economies in European Union with around 80% share of exports on GDP (Czech statistical office, 2009; Eurostat, 2009). Czech producers are therefore very dependent on the demand for their products, what has proved recently in connection with financial crises. But it is not only development of demand on international markets what influences Czech exports. Important role play also so called soft factors of competitiveness, influenced through marketing activity of a company. These factors may create a specific image of the product with added value to the consumer, such as special product features, brand, reputation and others. These are often decisive factors of purchasing decision, as objective factors and qualities in increasing competitive offer hard to compare.

Small and medium - sized companies find it difficult to compete with big international companies in these soft factors in international markets. It is vital for their success to differentiate their products and services from those of their competitors, to create unique values for their customers and to take a unique position in the minds of their consumer's minds.

Ing. Markéta Lhotáková Ph.D, Ing. Petr Král, Ph.D, Ing. Yana Shamina, Ing. Maria Tisovski

Vysoká škola ekonomická Praha, Fakulta mezinárodních vztahů, Katedra mezinárodního obchodu, Nám. W. Churchilla 4, 13067 Praha 3, e-mail: marketa.lhotakova@vse.cz, petr.kral@vse.cz, marija.tisovski @vse.cz, qshay51@vse.cz.

The main tool to create a unique perception of the company and its products is the brand and its positioning. The problem for small and medium-sized companies is that the brand building and positioning building are extremely costly and require a lot of time. One of the possible solutions of this problem could be to connect the company's brand with another already well-known brand, for example with the "brand" of the country that the company originates from.

From this point of view, country of origin represents an important symbol or brand. Strength of the country's brand and its image depends on different factors. Some researchers have defined so-called national image hexagon, which describes 6 most important factors influencing countries' brand image. Most of these factors are directly or indirectly connected to personal experience with the country. In case of small countries such as Czech Republic is the personal experience with country relatively small, which of course influences countries brand equity, not only by relatively weak and unclear image, but also through low brand (country) awareness (knowledge). Therefore we believe, that important role in establishing the perception of Czech Republic as a country of origin play in relatively large extend international media as they show picture of the country through selected topics, which they address.

So far there has not been any research conducted in Czech Republic analyzing international media as a potential major influencer of Czech Republic as a country of origin. Due to our findings in theoretical field (presented in the first part of this paper) we have decided to conduct a research of international media and its potential impact on Czech Republics' perception. Our team from Department of International Trade of University of Economic in Prague (VŠE) has started a long term research project as a part of IGA (internal grant agency) of VŠE concentrating on international on-line media monitoring and auditing, results of which we would like to present.

In the second part of the paper we will concentrate on results of our primary research, presenting monitoring and audit of articles in international media concerning Czech Republic throughout the first 9 month of the year 2010. Into the first stage of our research we have directed our focus on on-line media with large reach of target audience as BBC from UK and American CNN as well as media from country which is historically important trade partners of Czech Republic and importer of Czech products major Russian on-line media. Results of the research show, what affairs and events generate attention of media at all and have potential to increase awareness of Czech Republic and influence its image. We have deeper analyzed the articles base on their content and their positive, neutral or negative attitude towards Czech republic, as this importantly influences image of the Czech Republic. We also looked into topics and their potential differentiation between the countries which may impact and differentiate perception of Czech Republic.

2 Literature overview

Brands play important role in consumer purchase decisions. But branded are not only products or services. Many authors state that "country or geographic area can be a strong symbol, as it has close connection to products, materials and capabilities (Aaker and Joachimstaler, 2000). Based on this perception of a country," consumers can pick and choose brands originating in different countries based on their believes about a quality of certain types of products from certain countries (Keller, 1998)." Countries as brands represent the same brand equity concept as product or service brand, with its all important elements (brand awareness, brand image, perceive quality, brand loyalty, brand heritage). Countries as brands can be (and in majority of case are) managed by governments with strategies (sometimes global) similar to marketing brand strategies of large corporations (Aaker, 1991). The aim is to create a unique position of the country brand in minds of people from all around the world. If country as a brand achieves image of a specialist in certain industry, product or features, it is beneficial for country's exporters as well as tourism.

As a result of that country's image and perception (countries brand equity) also influences perception of products produced in these countries and vice versa, products produced in a country and exported in other countries influence the image and perception (brand equity) of the country as shows figure 1 (Přikrylová and Čech, 2004).

Manufacturers therefore may use the opportunity to build their brand around the country's, image and perception, especially if their products come from industries associated positively with the country of origin. Especially strong country brands can be very effectively used as a differentiating base for product or service brands. On the other hand the brand power of "country of origin" is linked to certain areas of associations and therefore has its limitations (selected industries such as Czech beer).

Another issue related to the country of origin is that the biases concerning the countries and therefore influencing the perception of the country and its products are relatively stable in time and change just very slowly. The biases do not originate just from consumer's personal experience with the country and the products but also from the word- of- mouth of the opinion leaders and from the articles in the popular press (Verlegh, Steenkamp and Meulenberg, 2005). This means, that image of a country (and a source of reputation of its product) can be influenced similarly to other brands by marketing communication.

Also some countries brand equity may differ in different parts of globe as there can be sharp difference between countries with respect to people's perceptions such as countries' awareness, strong associations etc.. Impact of a country can vary depending upon context, for example some nations are more sensitive to country of origin than others, and upon person experience with the country (Aaker, 1991). Brands connected to the country brand will be influenced through this effect.

In spite of these issues, country of origin as a brand can be and in many cases is a strong differentiating point for products and brands originating here. It may significantly help exporters to create brand position (or at least recognition or differentiation) based on "country of origin" argument. And because "positioning is a battle for perception and not choosing one leaves the construction of one's image to others, to the competition, by default (Kapferer, 2008)", it is extremely important on both levels – national as well as corporate use any opportunity to differentiate the brand.

Country brand image is area which has been in centre of interest for some time and during this period has been developed model of so call national image hexagon, which considers six major factors influencing countries image and perception by foreigners. These factors are: tourism, export, foreign and domestic politics, investment and immigration, culture and cultural heritage and people (Euro, 2006).

This model has been taken up by researcher Simon Anholt, who's been for more than 10 years exploring and further developing field of national identities. He adjusted this model to a concept of national brand and place brand, which are very quickly expanding areas of interest especially with respect to tourism and national export strategies. Simon Anholt has developed in collaboration with GfK Roper Public Affairs & Media Roper an expanded Nation Brands Index, an analytical ranking of the world's nation brands. This model evaluates each countries brand based on people's perception of 6 (similar to original national image hexagon) areas which are decisive for countries image and compose national brand hexagon these areas are (GfK America, 2010):

- Exports – Determines the public's image of products and services from each country and the extent to which consumers proactively seek or avoid products from each country-of-origin.

- Governance – Measures public opinion regarding the level of national government competency and fairness and describes individuals' beliefs about each country's government, as well as its perceived commitment to global issues such as democracy, justice, poverty and the environment.
- Culture and Heritage – Reveals global perceptions of each nation's heritage and appreciation for its contemporary culture, including film, music, art, sport and literature.
- People – Measures the population's reputation for competence, education, openness and friendliness and other qualities, as well as perceived levels of potential hostility and discrimination.
- Tourism – Captures the level of interest in visiting a country and the draw of natural and man-made tourist attractions.
- Investment and Immigration – Determines the power to attract people to live, work or study in each country and reveals how people perceive a country's economic and social situation.

Based on 2008 Anholt-GfK Roper national Index Czech republic placed itself only on 31st place from 50 researched., comparing for example to its neighbouring country Austria (19th) and Germany (1st) Interestingly Czech Republic scored better on governance (25th place), Culture (29th place) and people (29th place) than its overall placement, while the only significantly worse on tourism dimension (35th place (Jíra, 2009)). From the following table we can see (table 1), that image of Czech Republic is influence by lower personal experience with our country as well as our products compare to Germany (top scoring country) and Austria (15th place), which causes, the fare larger influence on foreign knowledge and awareness is given to media.

Table 1 Personal experience with Czech Republic and its neighbours

Personal experience with country	Czech Rep.	Germany	Austria
Percentage of people who visited country on business or as tourists	13 %	32 %	19%
Percentage of people who visited country on business	3 %	10 %	3%
Percentage of people who have in country friends	13 %	44 %	16%
Percentage of people whose friends visited the country	24 %	52 %	32 %
Percentage of people whose friends studied or worked in the country	4 %	21 %	6%
Percentage of people who bought products or services produced in the country	26 %	67 %	32 %

Source: Jíra (2009)

We believe that lower personal experience with the country, its people and products plays important role in country brand perception. Less personal experience causes that mass media play a crucial role in influencing and changing the perception of the country because they combine many factors that make the message credible and trustful for the consumers. They combine the local expertise with the long- lasting relationship with their audience which is typical for opinion leaders. Press and generally media play the role of intermediary in the flow of information. Readers (watchers) receive just that information that is published in the mass media. So it is up to the media to decide which topics are relevant and interesting for their audience but they can even interpret the information for the audience suggesting positive or negative attitude to the topic. Those topics, attractive for the international/foreign media are than the major influencers of the common perception of the Czech Republic in given country.

That is why it is highly important for marketers to analyse and observe or monitor not only the appearance of their brand in mass media but also the appearance of the country which influences the perception of products originating from the country.

Therefore we research the coverage of internationally important media in large countries and analyse its content with respect to content of the message and its positive, neutral or negative impact on countries (Czech Republic) image.

3 Methodology

The aim of this primary research is to monitor and analyze media coverage of Czech Republic in selected foreign electronic media, because as described in previous sections of this paper, indirect experience transformed by opinion leaders and media, plays more important role in creation of the public opinion about Czech Republic, while personal experience with the country is low.

Publicity achieved through published articles in foreign media increases brand awareness among target group and help to create associations with the brand (Czech Republic). In case of this research is monitored brand Czech Republic and target group general public in selected foreign countries. For the analyses were used standard methods, which are routinely used in companies and other organization for evaluation of PR effectiveness – methods of media monitoring and media audit. Selection of this methodology is based on marketing concept in which “country of origin” is considered as a brand, and therefore tools analyzing its presentation in media are the same.

Media monitoring represents systematic tracking of information concerning certain topic in relevant media. As a result of media monitoring we can evaluate attractiveness of given topics.

As the number of international media is very broad, we had to focus only on selected media. To assure high information quality, we have focused on media with broad international presence that have potential to increase awareness of Czech Republic among target audience, which is likely to get in contact with Czech business environment and products. Therefore we have selected BBC and CNN, two reputable and intensively visited servers with multimedia background (high reach of target audience and reliability of information) as well as a group of Russian web pages (no major media such as BBC present in Russia) as Russia is historically strong business partner and importer of Czech goods. All these media have high reach of target audience and deliver reliable and respectable information.

Electronic version of BBC belongs to most visited news servers in the world “reaching 26 million of captivated unique users every month,” from whom 52.9 % consider BBC web page as credible source of information². Web page of BBC publishes on top of articles primarily created for internet also transcription of all radio and TV broadcasting of BBC, including soundtracks and video recordings. This fact enables to include all these media in our analyses. TV, radio and internet press service of BBC has also broad quotations of other international media, therefore can be considered as one of the most influential media.

CNN - Cable News Network (CNN) operates one of the top 24-hours news channels reaching more than 92 million US homes. CNN.com features the latest multimedia technologies, from live video streaming to audio packages to searchable archives of news features and background information. The site is updated continuously throughout the day. It delivers the latest breaking news and information on the latest top stories, weather, business, entertainment, politics, and more. Its international division keeps viewers informed in more than 200 other countries through its 31 bureaus.

² www.bbcreachingmillions.com, ibid

Global monthly traffic there are 18.7 million to 21.8 million people that use this server with 198 million to 212 million visits (per month)³

As Russia does not have one strong web media source as CNN in the USA or BBC in UK, we have selected, whole group of 19 web pages for our research⁴. These are news portals, top sport web pages, web pages of top TV channels, news part of the biggest research portals; analytical reviews pages, online additions of newspapers and magazines, radio etc. This selection was based on Alexa the Web Information Company "Top Sites in Russia" and the Russian web site www.rambler.ru which gives inside information about most visited and influential web sites in Russia, both top web-sites and top news portals (Alexa, 2010). Based on the media monitoring we identified the main groups of topics, which were covered by selected media during the first 9 months of this year - 2010. The topics were classified in groups according to common topics. Based on this fact we can evaluate which topic were throughout the considered time period most attractive for selected media and mostly influenced media presentation of Czech Republic and implicitly perception of Czech Republic by foreign general public.

Media audit enables more precise analyses of the data collected through media monitoring (Bažčan, 2003). All published articles during the monitored period in all selected media were classified in 4 groups based on their attitude towards monitored topic (in this case Czech Republic), as articles with positive attitude, neutral, negative and ambivalent attitude. To determine the attitude is necessary to set a target, towards which the attitude will be evaluated. For purposes of our research we have adopted targets defined within the scope of "Export strategy of Czech Republic for the period of 2006-2010" in section of "Building of a quality brand ČR in the world", specifically "increase in positive awareness of Czech Republic and improvement of image of Czech Republic abroad (MPO, 2006)". The message, that should be communicated to foreign general public is following" Czech Republic is developed central European country, member of EU, offering unique combination of rich cultural and industrial tradition, good reputation, human resources based on knowledge and innovative potential, with well function legal system. Czech Republic is reliable trade partner with considerable business potential, suitable territory for quality investment, offering well developed infrastructure and qualified manpower⁵."

Media audit helps to analyze topics covered in the selected international media and consider their influence on Czech Republic's image and perception of general public abroad with respect to assessment of their positive, neutral or negative attitude.

Media monitoring and consequential media audit, which was source of primary data for this research, ran on going bases throughout this year (from January till September) and will continue further on. In this paper we will concentrate only on data from January till end of September (first 9 month of the year). Monitored were all articles in selected media which had direct link to the Czech Republic, Czech products, Czech society, Czech companies or Czech personalities. In monitoring were not considered as relevant articles, which did have distant or indirect connection to Czech Republic. This procedure allows objective analyses of the article, its topic and attitude with respect to capability to influence image and perception of Czech Republic among target group.

Data are organized on monthly bases, per medium monitored and according to the topic allocated to one of the topics. In framework of media audit were all articles analyzed according to their

³ Available on www.quantcast.com.

⁴ For example these radio stations: www.rbc.ru, www.lenta.ru, www.sportbox.ru, www.kp.ru, www.chamioionat.ru, www.inforx.ru, www.gazeta.ru, www.news.ru, www.gzt.ru, www.vesti.ru, www.ltv.ru, www.inosmi.ru, www.izvestia.ru, www.pravda.ru, www.sport-express.ru, www.vedomosti.ru.

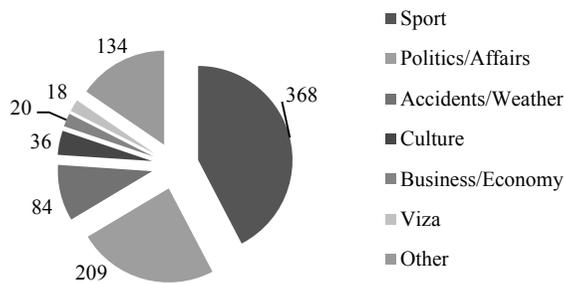
⁵ Ibid

attitude and with cross analyses compared according to different criteria. We have compared frequency of main topics according to different media, which shall show, if major media in different foreign countries are interested in similar topics. We have compared attitude of the different topics within one media / country to see, which topics have potential to improve Czech Republic’s image and perception and which might have tendency to worsen it in given country. And finally we have compared attitude of these topics between the media/countries to see if there is general tendency across all of the monitored media to report on certain topics with prevailingly same attitude. We believe that topics with commonly prevailing positive attitude should be considered as an opportunity for Czech Republic on the field of international PR activity and could bring potential for future improvement of countries image and perception abroad, and therefore could help to achieve countries goal “building of a quality brand ČR in the world (MPO, 2006)”.

4 Results and discussion

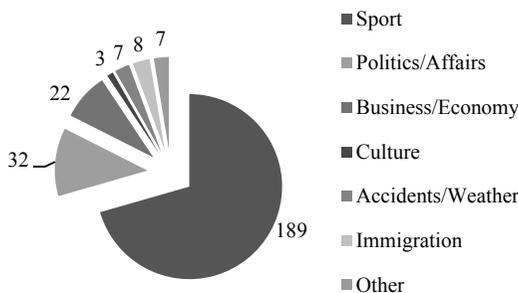
During the period January to September 2010 overall 1239 articles related to the Czech Republic were published in selected Russian media 1232, CNN and BBC. Media monitoring showed that the largest number of articles from all monitored media referred to sports - BBC 189 articles (70.3 %), CNN 66 (65.3 %) and Russian media – 356 articles (40.9 %), followed by politics and international affairs, BBC323, CNN 23 and Russian media 209. Monitoring also proved that most articles dedicated to the Czech Republic were published in Russian media followed by BCC (British) and CNN with quite big differences among them.

Figure 1 Media monitoring, distribution of articles according to topic – Russia

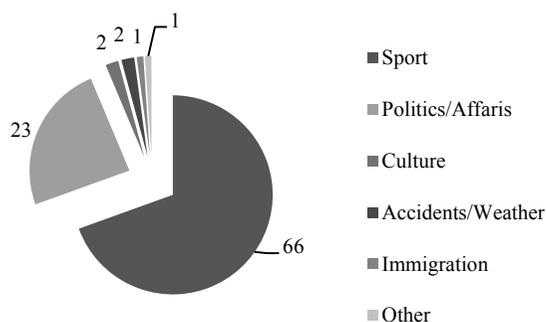


Source: own research

Figure 2 Media monitoring, distribution of articles according to topic – BBC



Source: own research

Figure 3 Media monitoring, distribution of articles according to topic – CNN

Source: own research

Topics that were covered by all sources in sports section included: tennis, hockey, football, Olympic Games. In CNN and BBC the biggest topic related to sports was tennis followed by football and motorsports. Whereas, in Russian media the most covered topics were hockey, followed by Olympic Games, tennis and football. Other sports topics regularly covered by both CNN and BBC were golf, rowing and cycling while the Russian media mentioned such topics as performance of the Czech sportsmen in Russian teams together with the 2010 FIBA World Championship for Women.

The second most important group of topics in all media was related to politics and international affairs. Events covered in all monitored media were Obama's and Medvedev's visit in Prague (70 articles in Russian media, CNN 10 and BBC 7 articles), Parliament elections in Czech Republic (31 in Russian media, 2 by BBC and 1 by CNN), Radar (20 articles – Russian media, 7 articles – International media), Prague protest over wage cuts (18 articles – Russian media, 3 articles – International media), dispute with Google about the privacy of information and restrictions over street view (13 articles – Russian media, 1 article – BBC only) and legalization of prostitution (4 articles – Russian media, 2 articles – BBC). BAE systems dispute (4 articles - Russian media, 5 articles – BBC). Only Russian media covered Czech spy scandal with Russia with 14 articles and USTR disclose Czech intelligence agents' names – 7 articles. Whereas, only CNN reported about Czech activists realised from Israel with 2 articles and only BBC followed Czech attitude toward Lisbon Treaty also with 2 articles by BBC.

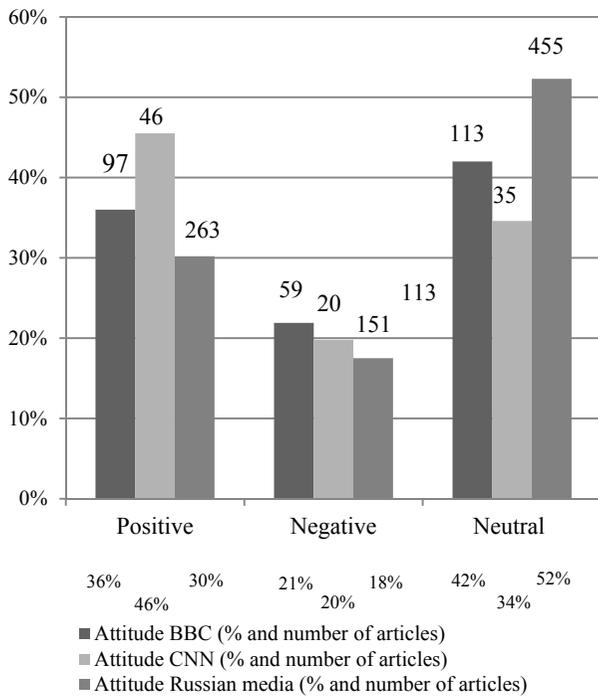
Other subjects and topic were cover with different intensity by different media. Business and economy section was the third most important topic in BBC with 22 articles, for Russian media this topic was less attractive, only 20 articles (2.3 %) and CNN did not cover on business related topics at all. Most common event in business section was TPCA recall of cars made with Toyota (5 articles – Russian media, 4 articles – BBC)

Another quite interesting topic for all media was related to accidents and weather conditions in Czech Republic – 84 articles in Russian media and 7 by BBC and 7 by CNN. Most common event mentioned in the articles was problems with floods (40 articles – Russian media, 3 articles – BBC and 2 by CNN).

The second part of the research concentrated on media audit. Results of media audit, analyzing the attitude of monitored articles toward Czech Republic showed that the prevailing tone of the articles in the selected media was mainly neutral and positive. Russian sources commented with positive attitude on 30.2 % of news and with negative on 17.5 % of publisher news. BBC reported 36% articles with positive attitude, negative 21.9 %, and neutral 42 %. CNN coverage gives the

following attitude distribution: positive 45.5 %, negative 19.8 %, and neutral 34.6 %. The following Figure demonstrates the split in positive and negative attitudes per media.

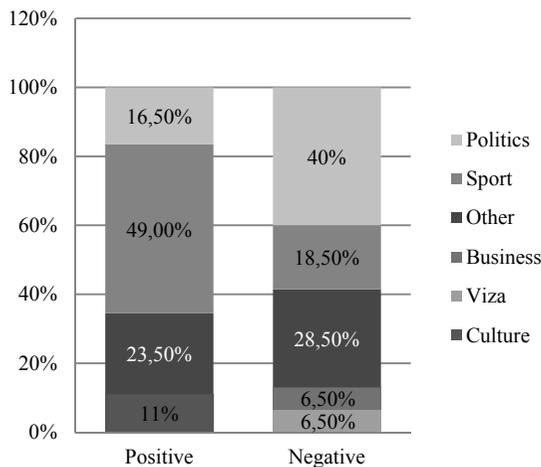
Figure 7 Distribution according to attitude BBC, CNN and Russian media



Source: own research

In further research we looked into analyses of attitudes per tonic, that mean which topic were most likely to be source of articles we positive, neutral or negative attitude.

Figure 4 Distribution of positive and negative attitude articles by topic - Russia:



Source: own research

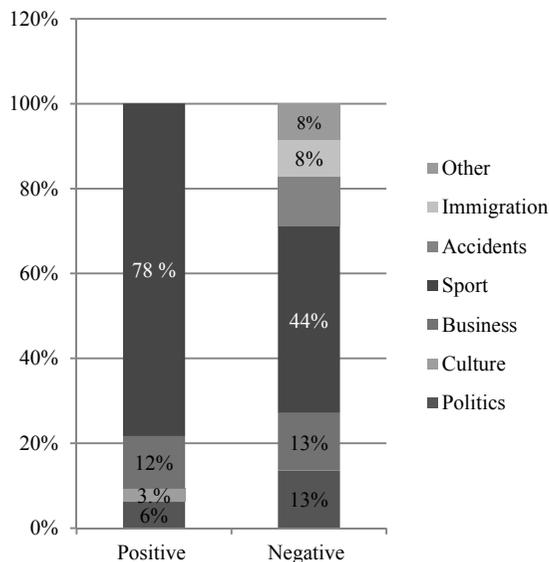
Positive articles were mainly covering sport in Russian media. Mainly the news informed about the Czech national teams performing during Olympic Games 2010 and various world competitions such as the World Hockey Championship 2010, IIHF World Championship 2010 and various tennis competitions. The biggest part was covering the excellent performance of the Czech players within Russian football and hockey teams.

Politics section was also influential, although the majority of articles covering politics had a negative attitude. These topics include wage cuts by government and such topics that have particular interest for Russian media were Radar related topics and scandal regarding Russian spies in the Czech Republic. On the other hand, there were topics in politics section that had a positive attitude: dispute with Google and restrictions for Google street view and positive image of Prague as a political centre for meeting of two presidents Obama and Medvedev.

Cultural topics in Russian media had only positive character and were high lightening the Karlovy Vary Film festival 2010 and Vaclav Havel's prize, upcoming movie and establishment of the library. Visa issues and business related topics had mainly negative or neutral attitudes.

BBC and CNN showed many similarities in attitudes according to the topic. In both countries the fare most positive (prevaingly) but as well as negative news were about sports. The distribution according to the topic and attitude in BBC and CCN show the following Figures:

Figure 5 Distribution of positive and negative attitude articles by topic - BBC:



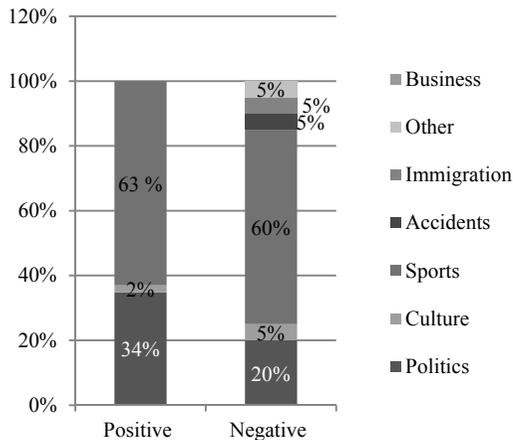
Source: own research

Positive articles in both BBC and CNN were mainly covering Sport, Politics and Culture topics where the negative attitude articles were informing about Immigration and Accidents.

In both media (BBC and CNN) the largest number of positively evaluated topic is sport (covering mostly similarly to Russian media success of Czech sportsmen on different international sports occasion including Olympic Games). Sports also accounts for most common topic with negative attitude, which is given to the large number of articles on sports compare to other topics and lower number of negative articles than positive)

The weight of political topics in BBC is lower and more negative than in CNN. This is due to the structure to the topics within the political area. While CNN was more interested in meeting of presidents Obama and Medvedev in Prague, which had mostly positive reviews, BBC oriented on larger scale of topic including corruption and frauds which increased number of negative articles. Negative attitude had also BBC news on Roma treatment and immigration frauds by Czech citizens.

Figure 6 Distribution of positive and negative attitude articles by topic - CNN



Source: own research

Further attitude audit showed that the main difference was between BBC and CNN in business section, which wasn't covered by CNN in the researched period at all. Positive articles from business commented on investment or interest of companies to move production sites to Czech Republic such as Lego or UK sausage manufacturers. Negative ones commented on profit losses or activities of TPCA in handling Toyota breaks system discrepancy.

Looking at attitudes in all three media, apart from sport related news, which accounted for the highest share of positively tuned articles, presidential meeting of Mr Obama and Mr Medvedev which run smoothly in Prague gained high and positively commented reviews in all audited media. Other topics such as culture, and business/economy topics with positive attitude were relatively minor and media and region related.

The largest percentage of articles with negative attitude in all three media (countries) was concerning sports. These articles were mostly concerning unsuccesses or misbehaviour of Czech sportsmen. But in relation to the number of positively tuned articles concerning sports these are minor and outweighed by the positive once. More important are topics, which had solely negative manner across all media and those most commonly concentrated on politics and on immigration and accidents. Although not equally covered by BBC, CNN and Russian media Business/Economy related attitudes still played significant part. That news were more of negative attitude in all researched media showing the actions taken by TPCA for Toyota vehicles and BEA systems corruption and frauds dispute with Czech parties.

The biggest difference coming from the research takes into the account 2 big topics with negative attitude orientation. News that was regularly in press included Visa for Russian media and Immigration in the UK media in particular. Whereas Russian media was mainly covering news with regards to visa policies for Russian citizens that want to go to or stay in Czech Republic and dispute

over visa for particular students, BBC mainly reported on frauds and documents forging and false marriages of Czech citizens that wanted to stay in the UK.

The media audit and monitoring shows that coverage of Czech Republic in international media varies according to the country/ region in which are the media based. This fact is according to our expectations. The highest interest on Czech Republic is in Russia followed by Britain and the USA, which is connected to the historical and geographical ties and closeness. What is from our view more important are the topics covered in this media and their attitude.

As we showed in table 1, personal experience with Czech Republic and its products is very low for Czech Republic, which causes that mass media play a crucial role in influencing and changing the perception of the country (Czech Republic) as a major source of information for large part of foreigners.

Accordance with the theory of hexagon of country image, there are 6 major areas of influence onto countries image - export, governance, culture and heritage, people, tourism and investment and immigration. Lower personal experience influences all of these factors, but more severely tourism, export, but also people and cultural heritage. Some of these downsides could potentially be balanced by media coverage about Czech Republic. As our research show, it is currently not the case of Czech Republic. Media coverage about Czech Republic is relatively low, especially in media based in geographically and historically distant areas as the US. European media (BBC and especially Russian media) cover topics associated with Czech republic more often, but the topic structure and its tone and manner will not help to created image and perception of Czech public as mentioned in Export strategy of Czech Republic for the period of 2006-2010” and which we have taken as a benchmark for our research.

While the governmental strategy targets to image of Czech Republic as a “developed central European country, member of EU, offering unique combination of rich cultural and industrial tradition, good reputation, human resources based on knowledge and innovative potential, with well function legal system. Czech Republic is reliable trade partner with considerable business potential, suitable territory for quality investment, offering well developed infrastructure and qualified manpower”⁶, majority of the articles published in all media concentrated on sports. Topics concerning business are relative scarce (in CNN no one was found) and many of them concentrated on negative topics such as frauds. The most positive non sport related topic was meeting of Russian and US president in Prague, which received broad and positive coverage in all media.

We can oppose, that the research has been running for relatively short time and is oriented on media with general interest rather than business, but it still shows weaknesses in Czech strategy in PR activities outside the country, if the target is to achieve image of industrially developed country. In this respect our recommendation is to impose marketing like strategy for Czech Republic oriented on PR activity with the target to create interest in Czech business and research environment and achievement.

5 Conclusion

In this paper team of researchers of University of Economics in Prague deals with media monitoring and audit of selected international on line media in respect to its potential influence on perception of Czech Republic as a brand and as a “country of origin” source of reference for Czech exporters. In scope of our 9 month monitoring and media research of Russian on line media, BBC and CNN we can state, that all three media source report on Czech Republic with different intensity – Russian

⁶ *ibid.*

most intensively and CNN the least. Prevailing attitude of articles in all media neutral or positive, with around 1/5 of negatively tuned article (21.5 % BBC, CNN 19.8% and 17.5% in Russian media). Fare the largest number of articles is in all media concerning sports, with lower but still strong topics in politics (especially with broad international context such as meeting of Russian and US presidents in Prague). Articles concerning business/economy topics were scarce and with mixed attitudes. From this we can conclude, that current international media coverage is not helping to improve Czech Republic's image and perception according to "Export strategy of Czech Republic for the period of 2006-2010" as a "developed central European country, member of EU, offering unique combination of rich cultural and industrial tradition, good reputation, human resources based on knowledge and innovative potential, with well function legal system. Czech Republic is reliable trade partner with considerable business potential, suitable territory for quality investment, offering well developed infrastructure and qualified manpower"⁷.

On top of that, the number of total articles (mainly in BBC and CNN) was during the monitored period relatively low and the influence on awareness of Czech Republic and its image as a country of origin was probably low (especially compare to targeted media campaign). We can also conclude, that higher coverage and interest as well as percentage of articles with positive attitude were given to Czech Republic by Russian media. This could lead to two conclusions, country with higher knowledge of Czech Republic gives more space to information about Czech republic which in exchange leads to improvement of the brand (country name) awareness and image. But this conclusion needs to be proved in further research.

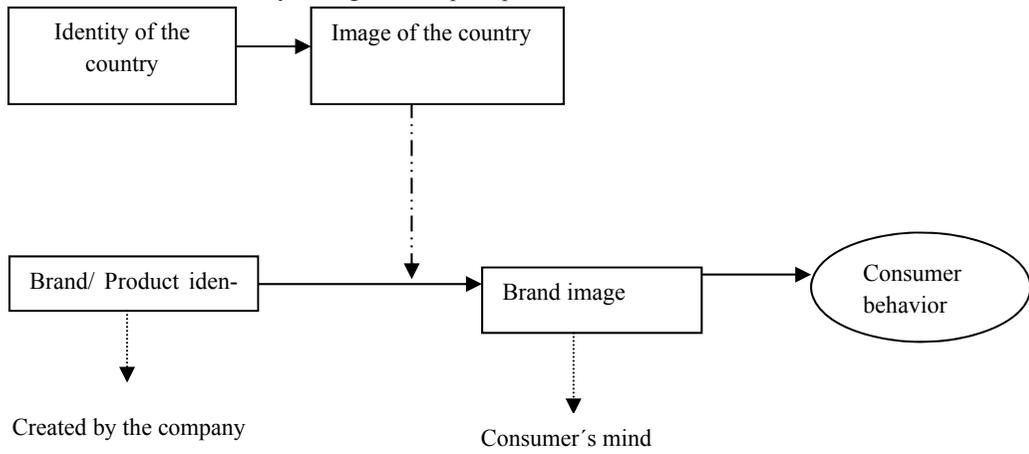
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⁷ ibid.

APPENDIX**Figure 8** Influence of the country of origin on the perception of the brand

Source: Přikrylová and Čech (2004)