

‘Poland Cannot Into Space’ – Images of Nations in the Context of Polandball Cartoons

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Place branding is a process that allows effective management of the image of countries, regions and cities, which is still growing in importance. The result of this process is the use of modern communication techniques, including Internet channels, to efficiently build the reputation of a given place, create place brand, and correct unfavourable associations and stereotypes. However, the Internet allows users to create content on their own, and their bottom-up, authentic creations are often more popular than well-prepared marketing campaigns. The examples of such artworks are Polandball cartoons. They present a stereotypical image of countries, their history and international relations, often also referring to current political and social events, by using a specific form of personalising nations and states in the form of balls in the colours of appropriate flags.

So far, Polandball cartoons have been subject to scientific sociological and linguistic analysis. The following article focuses on issues related to the branding and image of the presented nations and states. The article aims to scientifically analyse the representation of selected countries in Polandball cartoons and their influence on the image of given countries in the context of officially built state brands and current events. The analysis was based on data from the r/Polandball community on Reddit, which is the main place of publication of this type cartoons, as well as on publications in Internet news portals and social media.

Polandball cartoons present the image of nations in a satirical way, first of all exaggerating their stereotypical features. They often use a politically incorrect narrative, but at the same time use it in a humorous, creative and accurate way to sum up the image of a given country or its activity during current or historical events. As a result, they are gaining wide popularity in social media and even in news portals on the occasion of important international events. What is more, it creates an opportunity to use these cartoons to build a state brand with the help of viral marketing activities.

Keywords: place branding, nation branding, country image, Polandball, Countryball