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ORIGINAL ARTICLE | [Published: 11 February 2023](#)

The interplay between country image and regional ethnocentrism to motivate students considering neighbouring countries

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Place Branding and Public Diplomacy **19**, 426–441 (2023)

118 Accesses | **1** Citations | **2** Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

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The interplay between country image and regional ethnocentrism to motivate students considering neighbouring countries

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Revised: 18 January 2023 / Accepted: 19 January 2023
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Abstract

Numerous studies of international student decision-making have confirmed the importance of host country and institution images, but these studies tend to run in parallel with country-of-origin research. In the context of regional student mobility, regional ethnocentrism may also play some role. Nevertheless, the interaction between country image and regional ethnocentrism remains untapped. This study aims to examine the relationship between country image and regional ethnocentrism in students interested in studying within a region. The samples of Indonesian middle- and upper-class high school students were selected using the purposive sampling technique. The 431 valid responses were analysed using PLS-SEM to answer the research questions. This study confirmed the interrelationship between the elements of country image. However, only the country's cognitive image and personality positively affected the institution image, which determined student intention to study in a neighbouring country. Regional ethnocentrism has partially moderated the relationship between the elements of the country brand and institution image. This research gives practical insights to the host country's government and institutions to effectively design their marketing strategies to target students from neighbouring countries.

Keywords BIAS map · Country image · Institution image · Regional ethnocentrism · Regional student mobility · Social identity theory

Introduction

The importance of a country brand in attracting international students has been proven (Basha et al. 2015; Zhang et al. 2021), including in the context of regional student mobility (Cheung et al. 2019; Wen and Hu, 2019). Nevertheless, research tends to overlook the dimensionality of the

country image. Most studies are used to highly emphasize the cognitive over the affective image (Wang et al. 2012; Zeugner-Roth and Zabkar 2015) or fail in operationalizing the affective country image (Micevski et al. 2021; Roth and Diamantopoulos 2009). Later, country personality is introduced as the third element of the country image (d'Astous and Boujbel 2007; Hosany et al. 2006). The behaviour of intergroup affect and stereotype (BIAS) map shows the importance of all elements of the host country image brand in shaping behaviour, but their interrelationships and simultaneous effects are rarely examined (Zeugner-Roth and Zabkar 2015; Magnusson et al. 2019), particularly for intangible products such as international education (Micevski et al. 2021).

While the country-of-origin effect is well documented (Chattalas et al. 2008, 2019), there is not much research looking at this effect from sociocultural group relations perspective (Motsi 2016). Some students also decide to study within their region due to geographical and cultural proximity (Bodycott and Lai 2012; Cheung et al. 2019; Jon et al. 2014), which indicates the role of an individual's cultural identity. One of the cultural identities related to the

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