

***Country Revitalization: Japan's Nation Branding Post 3/11 Disaster
Performed in the Tokyo Olympics 2020***

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Abstract

In 2011, Japan was hit by a series of major disasters, from an earthquake and tsunami that struck the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) reactor. Its incident caused Japan to suffer various damage from the economic, health, and environmental sectors, including the emergence of negative stereotypes at the global level. Therefore, Japan was chosen as the host country of the Tokyo Olympics 2020 sports event, and being used to restore Japan's image in the international area. This study aims to analyze the forms of Japanese national branding after the 3/11 disaster through the Tokyo Olympics 2020. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. This study uses the concept of soft power and nation branding according to Keith Dinnie, related to the stages of nation branding in the form of nation-brand identity, communicators of nation-brand identity, and nation-brand image. The results show that Fukushima as a territory promoted in the Tokyo Olympics through several reconstructed facilities to its natural products and culture. Although Fukushima is starting to show a positive image in the international community, Japan's national branding still requires several challenges.

Keywords: Fukushima nuclear disaster, Japan's revitalization, nation branding, Tokyo Olympics 2020

Abstrak

Pada tahun 2011, Jepang dilanda serangkaian bencana besar, dari gempa bumi sampai tsunami yang menghantam reaktor Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Nuklir (PLTN) Fukushima Daiichi. Peristiwa tersebut menyebabkan Jepang mengalami berbagai kerugian mulai dari sektor perekonomian, kesehatan, lingkungan, hingga munculnya stereotip negatif di tingkat global. Oleh sebab itu terpilihnya Jepang sebagai negara penyelenggara Olimpiade Tokyo 2020, sekaligus dimanfaatkan untuk memulihkan kembali citra Jepang di kancah internasional. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis upaya nation branding Jepang pasca-bencana Fukushima dalam Olimpiade Tokyo 2020. Dalam penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Penelitian ini menggunakan konsep soft power dan nation branding menurut Keith Dinnie terkait tahapan nation branding, berupa nation-brand identity, communicators of nation-brand identity, serta nation-brand image. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Fukushima sebagai wilayah yang dipromosikan melalui Olimpiade Tokyo 2020 memiliki sejumlah fasilitas yang telah direkonstruksi dan hasil produksi kekayaan alam dan budaya. Meski Fukushima mulai menunjukkan citra positif di masyarakat internasional, nation branding Jepang masih perlu menghadapi sejumlah tantangan lainnya.

Kata kunci: bencana nuklir Fukushima, revitalisasi Jepang, nation branding, Olimpiade Tokyo 2020

INTRODUCTION

The Olympic Games are an international sporting event organized by The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and held every four years on a biennial schedule for either Summer or Winter Olympics. The Olympics is a tool of international branding for superpower countries hosting the event (Kobierecki & Strozek, 2017), including Japan which is the first Asian country to host the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo (Guajardo, 2020), then again in Sapporo (1972), Nagano (1998), and Tokyo (2020).

The Olympics have become central for political, economic, and social purposes (Rookwood & Adeosun, 2021). Despite the exorbitant cost, hosting the Olympics has been subject to competition of many countries. Japan's Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, was relentless in convincing the IOC to let Japan host the Olympics for the fourth time in 2020 after a sequence of disasters that struck Japan in 2011, emphasizing Japan's preparedness in security and reconstruction (Longman & Fackler, 2013). Ultimately, Tokyo was the selected host for the 2020' Summer Olympics, eliminating Istanbul and Madrid (Gibson, 2013), and hereinafter will be referred to as Tokyo Olympics.

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak made the Summer Olympics rescheduled to the following year on July 23 - August 8, 2021, to which the Government of Japan agreed amidst of the global crisis triggered by the Covid-19. This decision evoked national and global mixed responses in fear of virus transmission. A survey by a Japanese newspaper revealed that while 43% agreed that the Olympics should be canceled, 40% opted for postpone, and 14% preferred to carry on (Inoue, 2021).

However, considering the high costs associated, Japan decided to remain hosting the Olympics in 2021 which, according to an Oxford University analysis, would be the most expensive summer games ever hosted accounting for approximately USD 15.4 billion (Hornyak, 2021).

Finances was not the sole motivation for the Government of Japan's decision. The primary intent was to restore Japan's image in the worldwide community after the 3/11 disaster (11 March, 2011) when an earthquake severely damaged Fukushima *Daiichi* Nuclear Power Plant (NPP), releasing a significant amount of radioactive material into the environment (Anzai, Ban, Ozawa, & Tokonami, 2012). The implications ranged from losing country's export targets and trusts of the international community to acquiring negative perceptions.

Fast forward a decade, hosting the Olympics in 2021 would coincide with the 10th anniversary of the disaster, which was the perfect time to showcase Fukushima's progress (Boulton, 2020) and recover Japan's economy and international branding. Tokyo 2020 Olympics featured the cultural representation of Fukushima and other previously damaged place, such as Fukushima's J-Village, local food products, recovery monuments, and a variety of flower bouquets like sunflowers from Miyagi Prefecture, *Eustoma* and *Solomon seal* flowers from Fukushima, gentian flowers from Iwate Prefecture, and aspidistra flowers representing Tokyo as the city hosting the Olympics. This representation was intended to establish Japan's confidence and image in the global arena, particularly in the Fukushima region, and

attract foreign tourist visits in the future (Osada, Ojima, Kurachi, Miura, & Kawamoto, 2020).

Many have studied Japan's national branding in the Tokyo Olympics. Some focused on how relevant groups perceived the Tokyo Olympics amidst the Covid-19 outbreak. The international athletic events organized in the pandemic-driven economic slowdown has attracted critiques which perceived the event as of secondary priority (Rookwood & Adeosun, 2021). Another research focused on the ambition of the Government of Japan to reconstruct Japan's image through the Tokyo Olympics by emphasizing human resource factors such as women's roles and education (Guajardo, 2020). The other research focuses on Japan's developing robot technology as part of the new Robot Strategy policy, and national branding in readiness for the Olympics, and as stated by Praladyana (2020) to resolve demographic issues relating to the aging population.

This present study addresses the gap in Japan's national branding, particularly the representation of places previously impacted by the Fukushima nuclear disaster featured in the Tokyo Olympics (officially held in 2021). The features included the regional areas, products of natural resources, infrastructure, flower bouquets, and pictures. From this representation, this research attempts to illustrate Japan's nation branding after the 3/11 disaster in the Tokyo Olympics to rebuild Japan's image as a safe country after the 2011 Fukushima incident.

Conceptual Framework

In order to analyze the objectives of this study, we engaged different theories. The

first is Soft Power. Power is the fundamental premise in international relations, and it refers to the ability of one actor to persuade another actor to perform according to the first actor's goals (Barnett & Duvall, 2005), or the ability to influence other parties to attain the desired results (Nye, 2008). In the country context, power is supported by the state to push political interests. While power is more closely associated with realists who utilize violence (hard power), physical power has started to diminish, and soft power is harnessed to dominate other countries.

Soft power is mainly concerned with the employment of a country's potentially attractive resources or power. To influence other countries, a country prioritizes intangible resources along with its culture, philosophy, and political institutions (Nye, 1990). The world community tends to be more easily influenced by the culture or ideology of countries they respect. Therefore, soft power need to be communicated effectively in order to attract foreign public (Sevin, 2021) and accomplish the desired foreign policy (Saeed & Askari, 2021). Similarly, Joseph Nye (2008) mentioned that that coercing other parties may not necessarily be accomplished through military or economic traits but through values, morals, accomplishments, affluence, and openness. In other words, soft power is mainly concerned with the measures to shape the preferences of other actors by using the state's capabilities or potentials even the statutory and regulatory requirements.

The second theory is nation branding, which is a contemporary phrase in international relations to define a country's reputation (image) in the

international community's perception. Despite being a relatively new concept, nation branding has been harnessed by many countries to promote their national goals in the increasingly competitive global rivalry. Accordingly, nation branding is a tool to convey the soft power of a nation (Kahraman, 2017) through cultural assets, political principles, and established policies.

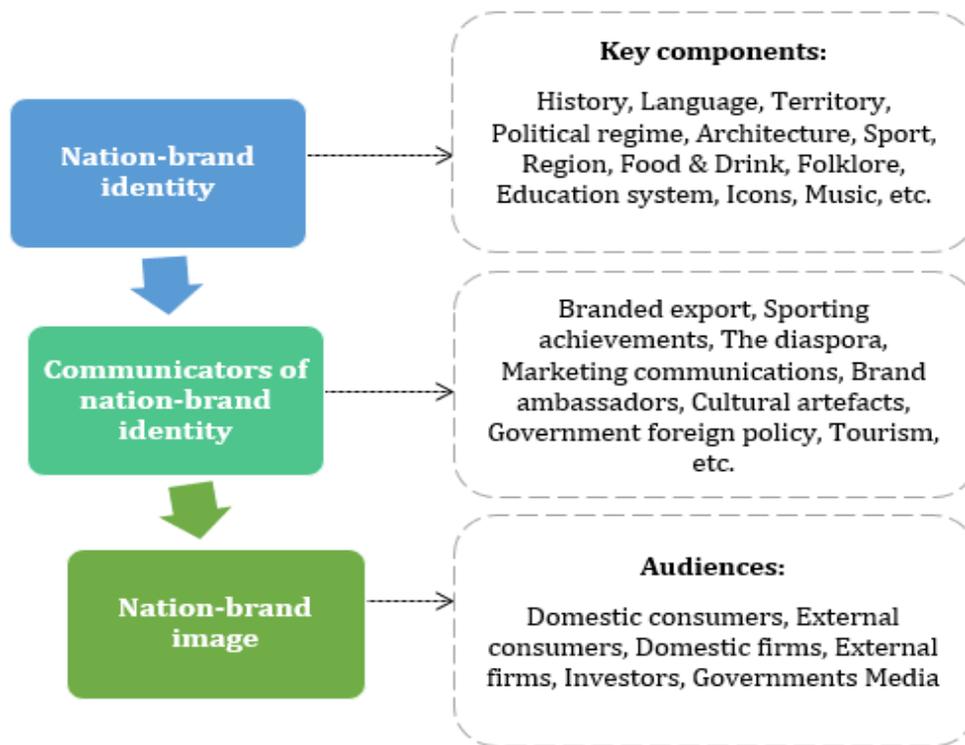
Pioneering the nation branding concept in 1996, Simon Anholt believes that similar to brand image of a firm, a state must develop a positive reputation for its success and prosperity (Dinnie, 2010). Countries in the world are competing to create nation brand to boost their bargaining position at the global level and strengthen their economy, particularly in international business to increase investment, export activities, and tourism (Bolin & Miazhevich, 2018).

Meanwhile, Keith Dinnie believes that while few theories regard nation branding as an interesting phenomenon with a significant role, nation branding is complex because it extends a wide range of disciplines, and is controversial due to its primarily political concerns and powerful influence to people's opinions on contradictory issues (Dinnie, 2010).

Therefore, nation branding is a recognized powerful tool for countries to recognize their global perspectives, particularly negative stereotypes that could impede the country's economic development and global influence.

Nation branding can be achieved by developing three significant components: brand identity, brand image, and brand positioning. Since brand identity and brand image influence each other, a state must strategically develop national identity to create powerful country's image and achieve its national goals. The measures may include but not limited to mega sport events, political events, achievements of national sports teams, influence to the perceptions of organizations and groups of government of the state, quality national products and brands, exceptional food (Dinnie, 2010).

Keith Dinnie discussed multiples stages of nation-branding concept, namely nation-brand identity, communicators of nation-brand identity, and nation-brand image. The three stages are linked, in which the communicators plays a key role in developing nation brand identity to attain nation brand image of a country (Dinnie, 2010). The details of each stage are described as follow.



Source: Dinnie, 2010.

Figure 1.
Keith Dinnie's Nation Branding Conceptual Model

The first level, nation-brand identity, is an identity or attribute associated with a country, such as history, culture, folklore, icons, national language, geography, political system, sports, authentic food, music, and other significant components. Countries use their uniqueness as the major representative component of identity to a wide domestic and international audience. This has driven inter-countries competition to promote its national identity.

In the second stage, communicators of nation-brand identity facilitates or connects the nation-brand identity with the nation-brand image. The communicators are a decisive factor for a country to achieve the identity of being

prosperous, thus critical in achieving the desired positive image of a country. Nation-brand identity can be communicated by both state and non-state actors through brand ambassadors, cultural products, international events, diaspora, export commodities, marketing communications, tourism services, sports successes, foreign policy, and so on.

In the third stage, nation-brand image is the ultimate aim because it is a gained reputation after a state conducts brand identity development and promotion through the communicators to raise awareness of the audience. In turn, domestic and international audience communicate their feedback on a country's image through general public,

customers, businesses, investors, governments, and the media.

Keith Dinnie added that nation branding is useful to explain how Japan is harnessing a big athletic event, the Tokyo Olympics 2020, to restore its national brand as a safe and reconstructed country after Fukushima tragedy in 2011.

Referring to Keith Dinnie's concept, this study focuses on three stages of nation branding: nation-brand identity, communicators of nation-brand identity, and nation-brand image. In this context, nation-brand identity refers to the territory of Fukushima. The communicators of nation-brand identity are the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. The means to transmit the identity include cultural artefacts such as flower bouquets, Fukushima's peach, and recovery monuments. The nation-brand image is related to the response of domestic and international audience to the Olympics.

Research Methods

This study engaged a descriptive method with a qualitative approach to explain the forms of Japanese nation branding related to Tokyo Olympics after the Fukushima nuclear disaster. While descriptive method characterizes a phenomenon in order to bring explanation (Silalahi, 2009). documentary research, is a qualitative approach strategy to analyze historical data sources that are more accurate and consistent with the text. Therefore, this study attempted to make meaning of the collected information while examining social and historical context of the documents. Also, it is critical to understand the author(s) of the documents and, to the degree that this is

known, their intended purposes to tie the text to its context (McCulloch, 2004)

This study applied document research to collect data from internet-based research, namely the official websites of the International Olympic Committee and the Government of Japan. Additionally, credible journals and relevant news items were included (Fadli, 2021).

The scope of this research paper focused on the forms of Japanese nation branding in Tokyo Olympics after the Fukushima tragedy using Keith Dinnie's notion of nation branding to address three stages of nation branding explained in the previous section. The research was limited to the date of Fukushima tragedy in March 2011, and the official commencement of Tokyo Olympics in August 2021.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Disaster 2011

The Great East Japan Earthquake, also known as the 2011 *Tōhoku* earthquake, struck Japan on at around 2PM local time on March 11, 2011 at 9.0-Richter Scale (RS). The powerful tremor lasted for at least 6 minutes and triggered a tsunami wave up to 10 meters high to sweep the entire coastal mainland particularly Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima prefectures. Striking roughly 130 kilometers northeast of Sendai City, the earthquake is regarded as the most powerful tragedy in Japanese history, and one of the most powerful around the globe since the one in the 1900s (Kingston, 2012).

The more serious implication was the damage inflicted to TEPCO-operated Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) reactor (Tokyo Electric and Power

Company) (Rafferty & Pletcher, 2021). During the disaster, only three of six nuclear reactors in Fukushima nuclear power were operated which were then shut down automatically. Then, an emergency generator was activated to keep the reactor core cold but the tsunami made the emergency generator fail. The saltwater in the nuclear power plant region interacts with the fuel, creating hydrogen gas that triggered explosion and malfunction which melted the reactor core and disintegrated radioactive debris to disintegrate, thus contaminating the environment around the nuclear power plant. The explosion injured at least 37 people and burnt two others (Widyaningrum, 2019). As a result, the Fukushima reactor accident is ranked second to the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster in Ukraine (Robertua, 2017). At least 18 thousand residents were killed or whose whereabouts were unknown after this 3/11 disaster (K. Hasegawa, 2012).

The Impact of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Disaster in 2011

The multitude implications of the calamitous disasters had severed Japan's health, environment, and economy. Concerns were raised over nuclear radiation exposure to residents in and around Fukushima. In response, the Government of Japan enforced a "Restricted Access Zone" 20 kilometers away, requiring the exodus of 150,000 local inhabitants and invoking some residents outside the radius to abandon their houses (K. Hasegawa, 2012). Another health issue concerns with radioactive iodine exposure, which raises the risk of thyroid cancer particularly in children. Despite some scientific publications of low risk of this particular

thyroid cancer, the Japan's government examined all children in Fukushima to address widespread anxiety (A. Hasegawa et al., 2015).

The radioactive exposure also affects the psychology of the residents in Fukushima. According to the findings of The Chernobyl Forum's research, mental health issues observed after the 3/11 catastrophe were post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), unstable emotional problems, hyperactivity, and other anxiety disorders. In addition, the exodus residents of Fukushima must face negative stigma from other people, which leads them to hide their identity as Fukushima residents for fear of public rejection or persecution (A. Hasegawa et al., 2015).

Regarding environment, the implications of 3/11 disaster include pollution to soil layers, agricultural and livestock products, and fisheries which may endanger the sustainability of all living things. Fukushima residents were particularly concerned about the Cesium-137 radiation which could contaminate the soil surface. It was later discovered that Cesium-137 radiation poisoned 8% of all land in Japan, and contaminated 40% of agricultural land in 8 prefectures. The contamination was carried over to livestock and agricultural products including mushrooms, wild plants, meat and seafood, and even preserved foods like dried persimmons. Nearly half of the cattle products were suspect of radioactive contamination, causing prices to fall especially those from Fukushima, Iwate, and Miyagi prefectures (Bachev, 2021; A. Hasegawa et al., 2015).

In marine sector, the contamination has sparked global concerns, potentially disrupting export-import activities.

Japan's marine resources contributed 28% to trade value or 1.7 billion USD per year up until 2010 from fishery and seafood. After the disaster, Japan's exports dropped by 40% in 2013. China, South Korea, Taiwan, India, Russia, Australia, the Philippines, Singapore, and other countries opted to impose import restrictions on fisheries and agriculture from Japan (Vardon, Sassi, Zheng, & Birur, 2019). This move was considered provocative because it affected Japan's global reputation and economy, especially Fukushima which heavily relies on economic income from agricultural, plantation, and livestock industries.

Furthermore, another stigma to Japan after 3/11 disaster is sparked by Japan's decision to dispose of nuclear waste on high seas. The Japan's government planned to dump 1.25 million tons of cleaned radioactive waste into the Pacific Ocean in April 2021. Despite the government's claims that the wastewater meets safety standards, some stakeholders including environmental activists, fisheries organizations, marine experts, and countries like China, Taiwan, South Korea, and Pacific countries, believe that this action is dangerous and irresponsible (Normile, 2021, Wilson, 2022). Even the Japanese people were opposed to this plan as it would impede the efforts to revive the fishing sector. Meanwhile, TEPCO claimed that the radioactive waste has been purified before release into the sea. The multi-phase release would not endanger human health or the environment (Kanamori, 2021). However, the Greenpeace investigation found that the waste still contained harmful compounds

that must be reprocessed (McCurry, 2022).

The Promotion of Fukushima to Revive the Reputation in Tokyo Olympics 2020

Japan utilized Tokyo Olympics to demonstrate the recovery of Fukushima from the 3/11 disaster. Japan showcased the reconstructed Fukushima area, the facilities in J-Village training center, local Fukushima food products like peaches, and the recovery monuments in their victory bouquet.

To facilitate the Olympics, the Japan's government reconstructed public facilities in Fukushima, including J-Village. J-Village was formally launched in 1997 as Japan's first National Soccer Training Center. However, after the 3/11 disaster, the location was turned into an operational location for nuclear power plant task groups, then reconstructed as a symbol of recovery. In 2018, J-Village was reopened for business. Various sports facilities, from stadiums to fields for indoor and outdoor training, hotels, fitness centers, restaurants, meeting rooms, and other facilities, were developed on an area of approximately 49 hectares to facilitate the Olympics. In the Tokyo Olympics, J-Village served as the starting place for the torch relay, demonstrating that the majority of the Fukushima area was safe. It also served as an arena for softball and baseball games at Fukushima Azuma Stadium. Another damaged area, Miyagi Prefecture hosted the Olympics' soccer matches (Akira, 2020, J-Village, 2021). All these efforts aimed to rehabilitate the image of Fukushima as a safe region despite the nuclear disaster.

Another promotion is the region's natural resources. Fukushima Prefecture

has a wealthy biodiversity specific to each region and climatic condition. Fukushima-derived food products (rice, vegetable, fruit, beef, fish) are preferable in Japan. In fact, Fukushima is dubbed the "Fruit Kingdom" for its famous peaches (Fukushima Prefectural Government, 2014; The Government of Japan, 2022). A range of these food products featured in the Olympics was expected to minimize the concerns over contamination in Fukushima (Hee & Inuma, 2021).

The flower bouquets promote the beauty of the Fukushima accident area (Figure 2). The wreaths presented to the champions of the Tokyo Olympics are essential because they most devastated prefectures: Fukushima, Miyagi, and Iwate. The bouquet combines sunflowers from Miyagi, *Eustoma* and Solomon seal flowers from Fukushima, *gentian* flowers from Iwate, and *aspidistra* flowers from Tokyo (BBC, 2021).



Source: International Olympic Committee, 2019.

Figure 2.

Flower bouquets for Tokyo Olympic's Winner

These flowers, especially *Eustoma* blooms and sunflowers are not without meaning. After 3/11 disaster diminished agricultural commodity production in Fukushima, a non-profit organization was formed to cultivate flowers as an alternative to agricultural products to encourage the prefecture's recovery. Meanwhile, sunflowers from Miyagi Prefecture represent the memories of the disaster's victims, particularly parents who lost their children. Many individuals return to the areas where they lost family members to plant these flowers. The hill is now topped with sunflowers annually

(International Olympic Committee, 2021b).

Another sort of promotion is the Recovery Monument exhibited near the Olympic Stadium. The concept of the monument was "Recovery and Reconstruction Games" whose design was chosen directly by students from Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima. Two of the three memorials are diamond-shaped, symbolizing the prefectures of Iwate and Miyagi, and the monument in the middle with a hole represents Fukushima prefecture (Figure 3). The three Recovery Monuments symbolize the students'

gratitude for the assistance and support provided by the Olympics athletes to areas damaged by the 3/11 disaster. More importantly, these two-meter monuments were built of recycled aluminum from a temporary housing unit

constructed after the 2011 disaster, representing the spirit of recovery, sustainability, and optimism (International Olympic Committee, 2021a).



Source: International Olympic Committee, 2021a.

Figure 3.
Tokyo 2020's Recovery Monuments

Japan's Nation Branding Post Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Disaster in Tokyo Olympics 2020

After the 3/11 nuclear disaster which attracted vast media and international political attention, especially the hazardous effects of the nuclear accidents, Japan's government has made various reconstruction efforts to the industrial sector and socio-economy (Schreurs, 2021). Nation branding through the 2020's Summer Olympics in Tokyo would restore public perception of Japan, particularly Fukushima.

Tokyo 2020 Olympics is the potential catalyst to reposition nation identity and restore international recognition, showing confidence in the world community that Japan is safe for visit. According to the IOC, a significant risk of radioactive exposure would

eliminate a country from hosting the 2020 Summer Olympics (Duignan, 2021). Fan defines several components that are part of a national brand, such as people, culture, history, language, food, fashion, famous figures, places, and so on (Dubinsky, 2022). In this case, as Dinnie stated the component of nation-brand identity that Japan's rebuild is territory, particularly the Fukushima territory which has recovered from the disaster.

To strengthen the global perception of Fukushima through the Tokyo Olympics, the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe highlighted the theme "Recovery Olympics". Abe stated that the Olympics would showcase the disaster-affected areas (Boykoff & Gaffney, 2020) by routing the Olympics torch relay through the most affected area of Fukushima. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the relay started at the J-

Village National Training Center and ended in the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo on 23 July 2021. It conveyed the message of recovery and sustainability energy development projects in the region (Schreurs, 2021).

Furthermore, Japan's government communicates the nation-brand identity. Dinnie (2010) stated that the communicators of nation-brand identity play a key role to accomplish nation-branding, including through international event. In particular, mega-sport events could spark emotional resonance of sports through delegates, and support to athletes can expand a larger audience and restore the international perception (Richelieu, 2018). Tokyo 2020 Olympics serves as the communicators of nation-brand identity through the use of cultural objects representing Fukushima, such as the J-Village, cuisine, victory flower bouquet, and restoration monuments around the Olympic Stadium.

J-Village, as the symbol of recovery, hosted a variety of sports and the start of torch relay in the Tokyo Olympics. Yoshiro Mori, the organizing committee mentioned the importance of showcasing Fukushima Prefecture reconstruction to Japanese people and the global community (Kyodo News, 2019). J-Village attracted nearly 500 visitors during the 2019 Rugby World Cup, and hosted the training camp for Argentine National Team (Akira, 2020) and men's and women's soccer training camp (Burch, 2018). It demonstrated that the area has been recovered and restored, thus safe for people.

Regarding cuisine, Fukushima's signature peach was the highlighted food item in the Olympics. The concerns of nuclear cross-radiation to agricultural

products led to diminished Japanese food products over the last five years (Bachev, 2021; Takebayashi, Murakami, Nomura, Oikawa, & Tsubokura, 2020), severing the economy of several devastated areas which relied primarily economic sources. To recover this, Japan's government has conducted various food feasibility tests to restore the reputation damage to several food products, including strict inspection measures and GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) certification. However, despite the recovered demand and prices for Fukushima agricultural products, consumers remained concerns for their safety (Bachev, 2021). As the production and sale of Fukushima peaches improved until the end of 2018 (Bachev, 2021), serving this fruit to athletes and participants at the Tokyo Olympics is an opportunity for Japan to promote food safety.

The victory flower bouquet is closely related to Japanese *ikebana* (the art of flower arrangement). *Ikebana* is more than simply beauty; it symbolizes the harmony between humans, nature, and God. *Ikebana* is common for religious ceremonies as well as decorations, including at formal events (Yuana, 2019). The victory flower bouquet featured flowers derived from three most devastated area from the 3/11 disaster as explained in the previous sections. These flowers were planted as the alternative of food plants to help recover the economy and proved that the previously contaminated prefectures are now safe. Therefore, flowers are new commodities as the elements of nation branding.

The Recovery Monuments was erected as a remembrance of the implications of tsunami and earthquake which cost Japan thousands of death tolls and destroyed houses, agriculture,

industries, and public facilities, to name a few. After the 3/11 disaster, all elements of Japanese society including force defense, civilian groups, industries, community worked together to resolve and sort out recyclable waste (Schreurs, 2021). The use of recycled aluminum from temporary housing units in 3/11 disaster to build the Monument conveys the message of sustainability.

Personal experience of the Olympics participants when visiting Japan plays a role in determining the country's image. However, the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak has forced the global population to watch the sporting events through digital platforms. Although foreign tourists could not visit Japan, they remained enthusiastic for the Olympics. It is evidenced from the 74% increase of digital viewers compared to the Rio Olympics in 2016, a 139% increase of video views on digital platforms and a global audience of 3.5 billion viewers. In short, Tokyo Olympics becomes the most watched sporting event, attracting foreign audiences (Rookwood, 2019).

The last stage of nation branding, according to Dinnie, is the success of gaining audience. After the promotion of Fukushima in Tokyo Olympics, the nation-brand image of Japan as a safe country emerged among domestic and external consumers. Tokyo Olympics was a controversy due to mixed perspectives between the Japanese people and Japan government the start of Japan's appointment as the host for the sporting events. Most people in the devastated area believed that the "Recovery Olympics" would not bring any impacts, and that the government used Fukushima to gain sympathy from international community (Gagné, 2020). Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic raised other

issues in health which have become global main priority.

As Tokyo Olympics were postponed to 2021, approximately 80% of Japanese people were still against hosting the Olympics (Kato, 2021). They accused the government of prioritizing the Olympics over control of Covid-19 (Sato, Oshimi, Bizen, & Saito, 2022). Despite this dispute, when the Olympics was officially started on 23 July 2021, the perception was shifted. Many Japanese people turned into online supporters of the Olympics (Ichida & Thompson, 2021). At least more than 70 million Japanese people watched the opening ceremony. Despite stringent social distancing measures, many Japanese people were enthusiastic to celebrate and support their favorite sports match (Barco, 2021; Coster, 2021; Masuyama, Kawasaki, & Yoshizawa, 2021).

Surveys to the Japanese people and international community revealed that 65% of international community considered Tokyo Olympics a success (International Olympic Committee, 2022b). It was evident from the reactions of some athletes from participating countries who were pleased with the event, particularly Fukushima region. Tokyo Shimbun, a Japanese national newspaper highlighted the compliment from the coach of the United States softball team, Ken Eriksen on Fukushima peach:

"It's a pity that the media couldn't get out because of the measures against corona, and Fukushima wasn't able to tell the world that it was beautiful and safe. Peach was delicious" (Harada, 2021).

Laing Harrow, an Australian softball coach, also praised the fruit of the

plantations as well as the natural beauty of Fukushima:

"A very beautiful town, with very impressive mountains. And more than anything, the peaches were by far the best!" (The Sankei Simbun, 2021).

However, the perception of Japan hosting the Tokyo Olympics was not constantly positive. Various criticism of Japan rose from domestic and international communities. In nation branding through international events, multiple preparations are required. Even insignificant things, such as bad weather, can influence the country's image (Knott, Fyall, & Jones, 2017). In Tokyo Olympics, some athletes complained for the extremely hot and humid weather, which impedes their performance. Even a broadcast media labeled Tokyo Olympics the worst one in history (Snow, 2022).

At the domestic level, after the Olympics ended in August 2021, public support for the Japan's government declined once again. The government was deemed as stagnant to address health crisis due to the rise of Covid-19 cases (Ichida & Thompson, 2021). Since there is no guarantee that a positive image will emerge, Japan needed appropriate, long-term strategic action plans involving various stakeholders to establish effective nation branding (Knott et al., 2017; Panagiotopoulou, 2012). Unlike the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, which had a long-term goal such as establishing good relations between South Korea and North Korea (Orttung, 2018), Tokyo Olympics aims to restore Japan's image after 3/11 were challenged with the Covid-19 pandemic and Japan's plan of disposing the nuclear wastewater into the Pacific Ocean in 2023 (Lim & Yamaguchi, 2022).

The aims of nation branding can be accomplished by involving various stakeholders, including government, organizations, as well as local society (Richelieu, 2018). The involvement of domestic community is both challenge and key elements that can influence nation branding through international events, as Dinnie mentions as "bottom-up" approach (Knott, Fyall, & Jones, 2015). Similarly, Simon Anholt's hexagonal nation brand concept highlights people as one of the elements to influence the success of nation branding (Iriqat, 2019). In Tokyo Olympics context, the contradictions among Japanese people are a challenge in achieving the goal of nation branding, namely to restore Japan's image after the 3/11 disaster.

Suppose the success of nation branding is measured from the increased investment, export activities, and tourism, it was not the case during the Covid-19 pandemic which was responsible for the lack of incoming visitors to Japan (Bolin & Miazhevich, 2018). Despite these challenges, Tokyo Olympics still contributed to the reconstruction of Fukushima and its openness to the international community. The positive response from a number of international audiences indicates that Japan's image, particularly Fukushima, has begun to recover (Kirby, 2022). Positive images from organizing the Olympics are also perceived as a step toward attracting foreign tourists, mainly when the pandemic is over, to promote Japanese export products once again (Duignan & Pappalepore, 2021).

CONCLUSION

International sporting events are not simply games and matches; they have

specific goals to achieve national interests. Hosting Tokyo Olympics, Japan used this opportunity to start rebuilding Japan's image following the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011. Referring to Keith Dinnie's concept, Tokyo Olympics includes the cultural goods as the communicators of nation-brand identity, and nation-brand image emerged in domestic and external consumers. The mixed perceptions between Japan's government and the Japanese people over Covid-19 pandemic have posed challenges for Japan national branding

through the Tokyo Olympics. In fact, national branding through international events requires a long-term strategic plan and the involvement of various stakeholders. Compared to the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics, Tokyo Olympics should consider long-term goals. However, the Tokyo Olympics still determines an impact on Fukushima's reconstruction. Finally, what determine and maintains a country's image are country's social, economic, and political conditions.

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