

# **(De)constructing national identity in nation branding efforts**

the relation of *Thainess* in *Amazing Thailand* tourism campaigns for Thai diaspora

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Master's Thesis  
June 2018

## (DE)CONSTRUCTING NATIONAL IDENTITY IN NATION BRANDING EFFORTS

### **Abstract**

Nation branding efforts increasingly become important tools for officials in promoting the nation to externals. Considering the effort's aim to present good images and unique aspects of the nation, tourism industry makes use of the project extensively. However, criticisms of the nation branding projects suggest that they impose a single image of the nation and a fixed national identity for its members. They are seen as tools for soft nationalism where the representations of its members are made homogenous. Based on this argument, this study analyses the relation Thai diaspora in the Netherlands make with the constructed *Thainess* in *Amazing Thailand* tourism campaigns. Hence, the main research questions are *how do members of Thai diaspora in the Netherlands relate to the construction of the nation in Amazing Thailand tourism campaigns and how do they articulate their own national identity in this process?*

To answer the research questions, the study used Anderson (1991)'s definition of nation being an 'imagine community' as a theoretical framework. Furthermore, the research incorporated different theories such as nation branding, diaspora and transnationalism, as well as Thai nationalism. By applying qualitative methods of visual analysis on tourism campaigns and discourse analysis in interviews with 13 Thai diaspora, findings revealed that critical comments towards the representations of the nation in the campaigns are dominant. Although some consisting images of *Thainess* are found between the visual analysis and interviews, main findings suggest that Thai diaspora challenged the representations of the nation as well as portrayals of Thai people. In conclusion, the homogeneity that the notion of the nation is promising through nation branding effort is not found, thus, criticisms of the project overlooking members of the nation is proved.

**KEYWORDS:** Nation Branding, Nationalism, Diaspora, National Identity, Transnationalism

# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 <i>Amazing Thailand</i> tourism campaigns.....	6
1.2 Thai diaspora in the Netherlands .....	7
1.3 Research Question .....	8
1.4 Scientific and social relevance .....	9
<b>2. Theoretical Framework.....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 Nationalism and Nation .....	11
2.1.1 Nationalism .....	11
2.1.2 The socially constructed approach to nations .....	14
2.2 Nation Branding and Tourism Advertising.....	19
2.2.1 Tourism advertising and National Identity .....	19
2.2.2 Nation Branding and Nationalism.....	20
2.3 Nationalism and national identity in times of globalization and mobility .....	23
2.4 Thai Nationalism.....	27
<b>3. Method .....</b>	<b>29</b>
3.1 A Qualitative Approach .....	29
3.2 Research design .....	29
3.2.1 The visual analysis .....	30
3.2.2 Performing visual analysis .....	30
3.2.3 The in-depth interviews .....	32
3.2.4 The Interviewees – Sampling and Recruitment .....	32
3.2.5 The Interview Process .....	34
3.3 Analyzing the interviews – a discourse analysis approach .....	37
3.3.1 Performing Discourse Analysis .....	38
<b>4. Results .....</b>	<b>40</b>
4.1 Visual Analysis .....	40
4.1.1 The Thai Rural and Urban life .....	40
4.1.2 Thai Food .....	42
4.1.3 Thai Religion, Arts, and Festivals.....	43
4.1.4 Thai Happiness.....	45
4.1.5 Thai Wellness.....	46
4.2 Interview Analysis .....	47
4.2.1 The Thai Diasporic Conditions .....	48

4.2.2 Discussion of <i>Amazing Thailand</i> campaigns .....	57
4.3 The relationship between video analysis and discourse of interview analysis .....	64
<b>5. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Appendix A .....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Appendix B .....</b>	<b>82</b>

## List of Tables

Table 1: Smith's (1998) attributes of the nation.....	13
Table 2: Participant's overview.....	33

## List of Images

Image 1: The opening scenes highlighting natural resources in AT campaigns.....	42
Image 2: The experience of homestay living.....	42
Image 3: The modernization of city.....	43
Image 4: The process of cooking Thai food.....	44
Image 5: Buddhist ceremony and temples.....	44
Image 6: Muslim man in personal setting.....	45
Image 7: The Southern shadow play and the north-eastern dance.....	46
Image 8: The unique happiness and sharing cultures.....	47
Image 9: The traditional Thai massage using herbal medicines.....	47

# 1. Introduction

*“Amazing Thailand”* is one of the slogans that I have heard a lot when it comes to promoting Thai tourism. Through images and videos, the *Amazing Thailand* tourism campaigns portray Thai people smiling, Buddhist temples, serene beaches, beautiful mountains, Thai boxing, Thai massages, and Thai food. These selling images have been used over and over again in the campaigns. These portrayals are ‘constructed’ as essential elements of what count as being Thai, what Thailand is composed of, and what Thai ‘national identity’ entails (Jory, 1999).

As a Thai teenager spending half of my life abroad, I look at those campaigns and sometimes wonder why certain images are represented in such a way. On one hand, I understand the cultural values that are represented in the campaigns, but on the other, I see repetitive clichés where Thailand is always portrayed as sacred Buddhist nation with beautiful women. The ambiguous feeling got even stronger when I shared these views with my Thai friends here in the Netherlands and received different interpretations – some agreed with these representations and demanded that we, as a Thai citizen living abroad, should conform to them. Others were more critical and proposed that there should be some negotiations when it comes to national identity. These comments sparked my interest to see how people from the same nation could interpret media construction of national identity so intensely different.

## 1.1 *Amazing Thailand* tourism campaigns

The *Amazing Thailand* tourism campaigns are ongoing nation branding projects that have been developed by the Thailand Tourism Promotion department, a subdivision of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). The Tourism Authority of Thailand was established in 1960 by the Royal Thai Government to be responsible for tourism promotion. In an effort to fulfill tourism policies and promote the country, TAT use the word “amazing” to attract external audiences. Since the late 1990s, the campaign has been trying to sell the image of Thailand’s amazing beaches, temples, and people through festivals and short videos (“About Amazing Thailand”, n.d.). Although new themes of the campaign are introduced every year, *Amazing Thailand* is considered to be an official tagline for promoting the country. This has influenced many examples of the Thailand promotion such as the “*Amazing Thailand, Amazing Value*” (2009) and “*Amazing Thailand Always Amazes You*” (2012) campaigns. With its 58th year establishment in Bangkok and increasing numbers of offices overseas, “TAT has helped Thailand become a

preferred destination among international travelers, where visitor arrivals grew from 81,000 tourists in 1960 to 32.6 million in 2016” (“About TAT History”, n.d.).

Among these campaigns, the most successful ones are the 2013’s “*Amazing Thailand: It Begins with the People*” which emphasized on the hospitality of the people and claimed to draw in over 26.74 million visitors. The other one is the 2015’s *Amazing Thailand* campaign of “*Discover Thainess*”, where the concept of *Thainess* has been introduced as the nation’s asset and a unique brand for Thailand. TAT claimed the success of “*Discover Thainess*” and events in 2015 resulted in 29.88 million visitors. Based on their success on the *people* and *Thainess* theme, the research will focus on analyzing these two campaigns, questioning how Thai people living outside Thailand would read and make meanings of the images and national identity these campaigns are selling.

## **1.2 Thai diaspora in the Netherlands**

The long engaging relationship and the growing number of Thai migrants to the Netherlands are the reasons to study how these cross-cultural individuals make sense of their national identities. Since being diasporas mean they are people who experience and live in the international community, it is assumed that the way they perceive national identities are different than those living in Thailand. Diasporas are group of people who must negotiate certain features of their home culture to the ones from the host nation, thus, studying this group do not only give insights of the different ways they talk about national identity, but also the interpretations they make regarding the *Amazing Thailand* campaigns.

Based on previous literature, it has been shown that the first Thai migrant groups, mostly women, have resided to the Netherlands as *Siamese Brides* where they married Dutch prisoners in 1945 (Suksomboon, 2008). However, as technology become advanced, resulting in the Netherlands’s progress in job markets and education, various groups of Thai migrants, both males and females with different social and economic statuses were attracted to move to the country. Among them, two biggest groups of Thai diasporas are presence; marriage migrants and students. Buddhist community also exists within the Thai community in the Netherlands, however, people in this group are mostly marriage migrants and strict religion practitioners. Hence, it could be seen that the Thai communities are not categorized by ethnic or regions but based on the propose of the integration (Boonpiyapat, 2012).

### 1.3 Research Question

The aim of this research is to examine the relation Thai diaspora make with the constructed nation in nation branding efforts. As my personal experience suggest, nation branding effort has the ability to bring out different perceptions from its audiences. Despite seen as beneficial for promoting the ‘good image’ of the nation, nation branding efforts spark criticisms as well. One of the criticisms suggest that the projects impose a single image of the nation and a fixed national identity for its members (Kaneva, 2011). They are seen as tools for soft nationalism where the representations of its members are made homogenous. In other words, as their priority is to sell desired image to externals, nation branding projects overlook the presentations of its members. On this note, this study attempts to contribute to this argument by investigating how different visions of the nation could be made by the members of the nation.

Moreover, diaspora, a group of people who have moved out of their homeland to another nation (Shain & Barth, 2003), where they must integrate into new culture and maintain the connection with their own cultural values, are chosen to be the research sample. Being diaspora suggest that they will not interpret the sense of ‘national identity’ the same way as those living in the homeland. As Anderson (1991) proposes, the nation is an ‘imagined community’ where people are led to believe in sharing the same communion, even if they do not know each other personally. Studying diaspora members who travel outside their common community is assumed to make them become more critical towards their own nation image. Members of diaspora develop hybrid identities because they face two or more cultures while living in the host nation (Aydin, 2016). Media is claimed to have a huge influence on the development of national and diasporic identities (Bokhorst-Heng, 2002). Not only are they used to keep contact with people or news from country of origin, media are assumed to play a role in reproducing diaspora’s identity (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Similarly, media used in nation branding effort such as tourism campaigns could be recognized as a component of nation-building for diaspora.

Considering the importance of the multi-ethnic groups in Thailand as well as Thai diaspora communities in the Netherlands and how hybrid identity plays a role in their national identity building, a particular nation-branding effort, *Amazing Thailand’s* tourism campaigns have been chosen to trigger the discourses surrounding *Thainess*. Hence, the research questions this study propose are: *How do members of Thai diaspora in the Netherlands relate to the*



*construction of the nation in Amazing Thailand tourism campaigns and how do they articulate their own national identity in this process?*

#### **1.4 Scientific and social relevance**

Although diaspora studies have become a central topic for social sciences, sociology, and communication, Thai diaspora studies are very limited. Brubaker (2005) notes that most of diaspora studies between 1900 and 1910 were merely on Jewish diaspora, with the rise of other diasporas in 2002 (p.15). This is due to the original definition of diasporas being people who move out of their homeland because of political reasons or other coercion issues. As Thailand did not experience such mass dispersions, Thai diasporas were not as popular for scholars to study. However, as the term diaspora expands (Tölölyan, 1991), Thai diaspora could be taken more into consideration. This research hopes to contribute to diasporic studies, particularly filling the gap of limited Thai diasporas research.

While most studies on nation branding focus on how people who are actively involved in the production of the campaigns carry out the tasks and practices (Dzenovska, 2005), the motivations behind a national campaign (Barr, 2012) or the analysis of nation-branding as a commercial practice (Jansen, 2008), this research center its attention on how audiences interpret these national projects. The interpretation of audiences is going to be the focal point where their understanding of the campaigns will help reveal discourses and relationships between nation branding and national identity building.

The research is also furthering the traditional reception theory where it assumes that people from different nation backgrounds interpret media text differently (Hall, 1980). As mass media are considered to be nation-building tool where identity is created through media representation, studying the audience's meaning-making will help to explain the broader understanding of hidden ideologies and discourses surrounding national identity. In other words, I hope to use the media product to trigger the conversations of how those representations affect Thai diaspora's identity building. However, as these campaigns are targeted at foreigners who wish to spend money or holiday in Thailand, it is assumed that nationals living abroad do not know about these campaigns, or even if they do, their reading of the campaigns and representations of national identity might be very different than what it is expected from the producers of the campaigns. However, these campaigns are affecting the way foreigners perceive

Thailand and its people because they are the forefront of representing the nation. Since diasporas live abroad and share everyday experiences in international environments, the campaign is considered as nation-building component. Therefore, diaspora participants are considered relevant because they are assumed to negotiate identity building differently than those living in Thailand.

In terms of social relevance of the study, the research is beneficial for both the state and diaspora members. For the state, the study will help them understand how their long-distant and real-life experience citizens see these national-branding efforts, trigger some disagreements caused by these campaigns, and use this information to improve the future national campaigns. It is true that these campaigns are not created for Thai diasporas, but these people are, in a way, representatives of Thai people overseas. Their opinions are expected to be useful because they live and confront foreigners as well as international society the most, hence, they know what is happening abroad – whether these campaigns create stereotypes or expectations for them. As for diaspora members, the social relevance would be that it helps the diasporic community learn more about national branding context, where they will be more aware of the values the Thai state is imposing. Not only knowing these values will help them to understand the dominant ideologies of *Thainess* better, it will also inform them of their national identity building – how those representations affect their lives. Also, the research hope to explain why Thai nationalism is so strong for both Thai people within the country and diaspora as shown in the recent national phenomena of the King's Bhumibol Adulyadej's funeral in 2017, where tribute events have been held by Royal Thai Embassies around the world. This research tries to describe that national identity is not only produced and reproduced within the same territory, but it expands beyond it. In addition, although the research is specifically focused in Thailand, the study is also expected to reveal the process of national identity building in society. This means that the social relevance is beyond Thailand, as it helps society to understand in general of the way national identity could be negotiated or affected by nation branding efforts.

In the end, as a member of diaspora in the Netherlands myself, I hope this research will be useful for current and future Thai diaspora members. Despite the usual environment changes in the new country, national identity is also assumed to be unconsciously affected for diasporas. This research therefore serves to present more critical perspectives on the interpretation of *Thainess* as well as help Thai diaspora to be more conscious of their national identity building.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This chapter includes a review of nationalism and nation theories that are used in guiding this research. Other significant concepts which are relevant to the research question such as nation branding, diaspora and transnationalism are also examined.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section presents the main arguments within nationalism and nation theories, defining the concepts and emphasizing them as socially constructed ideologies. The second section demonstrates the role of nation branding project such as tourism advertising as a component of nation-building process, where the project is assumed to affect the identity of its national members. Different approaches to nation branding and criticisms of the effort are reviewed, suggesting the project as a political tool that constructs a unitarity image of the nation. In relation to the discourse of nationalism presented in nation branding project, the third section reviewed how this discourse is challenged as globalization and mobility come into play. It is argued in this section that national identity is a fluid concept which tends to change as people move to another territory with unfamiliar culture. As a result, this group of people, the diaspora, is assumed to construct different vision of the nation. Given the focus of this research on Thai tourism campaigns, the last section is dedicated to the literature on Thai nationalism.

### **2.1 Nationalism and Nation**

#### **2.1.1 Nationalism**

The concept of nationalism first appeared in Europe in the late 18th century. Ernest Gellner (1983) expresses that “nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent (...) It is a theory of political legitimacy” (p. 1). Smith (1991) views the concept as an ideological movement that attempts to maintain unity and identity of a nation. He later identifies the term in three different usages; “language and symbolism, a sociopolitical movement, and an ideology of the nation” (Smith, 2013, p.6). These definitions indicate that nationalism is an ideology that strives to construct people within a territory. It is done by building a particular national identity among people living in the same border. These articulated sets of ideas are considered ideologies as they construct certain “mental frameworks” (Hall, 1996, p.26) to people and society, turning some ideas into universal truth or

common-sense knowledge. Therefore, nationalism as an ideology is a powerful tool for government officials to use in order to pursue their goals, construct desired ideas, or influence people's perceptions of the society. As a result, nationalism as an ideology could inform how a nation is formed.

Among the various approaches of nationalism, two approaches are dominant; primordialists and modernists.

### ***Primordialists versus Modernists***

Primordialists believe that nations derive from a 'primordial' time, seeing nationalism as a natural phenomenon with roots in human civilization (Van Efferink, 2011). Primordialists claim that people's religion, language, or other collective practices are natural parts of the human experience or something they are born with. This implies that primordialists attach ethnic groups to the progress of nations, where the sense of belonging to people who share the same culture is created and felt naturally. Similarly, primordialists approach identity by believing that "ethnic groups and nations are formed on the basis of attachments to the 'cultural givens' of social existence" (Thananithichot, 2011, p.251). In this view, identity is "given rather than chosen, immutable rather than malleable, and it inevitably produces conflict" (ibid.). In other words, nationalism for primordialists has always been there within the community of common culture without the interference of institutions and social structures. They see identity as based on external characteristics – people belong to the same nation because of their appearances, as Smith (2009) summarizes, "nations, like races, were given in nature and therefore perennial and primordial" (p.3).

On the other hand, modernists argue that nationalism is a modern concept started in Europe during the arrival of industrialization in the 18th century (Gellner, 2008). Grounded in this belief, modernists dispel the primordialists' idea of natural ethnic and cultural roots by arguing that nationalism is rather an ideology of believing that the nation exists as an objective reality (Gellner, 2008; Anderson, 1991). Based on his modernist approach, Gellner (2008) claims that elites make use of the ideology of nationalism to create unity among disparate social groups through the homogenization of culture and education, constructing national identity as homogenous (Fernandez, 2017). Nationalism for Gellner could thus be seen as a "function of modernity and the process of modernization, where education, technologies of communication

and bureaucracy, the very structure of the modern state, are driven by rationalist, administrative imperatives rather than any manipulating caste” (Edensor, 2002, p.3). Modernists believe nationalism is popularized by power elites associated with the development of the industrial society, where modern societies come in the form of top-down control or centralized power, “the maintenance of order is the task of one agency or groups of agencies, and not dispersed throughout the society” (Gellner, 2006, p.85). This unequal distribution of wealth thus drives the ideology of nationalism to flourish because middle-class or the unbenefited groups feel the need to fight back. The centralized power forces them together, hence, the sense of belonging emerged.

For modernists, nations are the product of nationalism – nations are created rather than emerged naturally. Aronczyk (2013) supports this notion as she defines nationalism as “a strategy for nation building that can present itself as either ancient or invented to advance certain ends: systems of belief, political goals of self-determination or legitimacy, or economic incentives” (p.28). This implies that nationalism is an ideology which steers people into believing in social unity by covering the hidden meanings of the concept. The hidden meanings could mean the ideas and attitudes that political parties would want the public to believe. As Hall (1996) defines, ideologies are “mental framework” used by many social groups to set a certain way of thinking, especially to benefit their own groups.

Borrowing Smith’s (1998) table, the dichotomies of the two different views can be summarized as follows:

<b>Primordialism</b>	<b>Modernism</b>
Cultural community	Political community
Immemorial	Modern
Rooted	Created
Seamless	Divided
Popular	Elite-construct

Table 1: Smith’s (1998) attributes of the nation according to primordialists and modernists

This research stands on the modernist approach of nationalism, highlights that nationalism is a constructed ideology rather than a natural phenomenon. The research is focusing on the diaspora's meaning of nation in the form of tourism advertising, where the recognizable essence is created. The research, thus, focuses more on the ways in which this community constructs the nation. Therefore, Anderson's (1991) approach to the nation as 'imagined community' is applicable in guiding the research, where the study treats nationalism as an ideology that people constantly imagined.

### **2.1.2 The socially constructed approach to nations**

Within the ideology of nationalism, Smith (2001) defines the nation as a "named human community occupying a homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a common public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members" (p.13). To elaborate and emphasize on the psychological bond between members, Connor (1978) uses the term 'sense of belonging' to describe the "close link between the individual and the collective self, namely the nation" (Triandafyllidou, 1998, p.595). Consequently, the idea of a nation could exclude those other communities as well as people who were not "ethnically or linguistically qualified to be members" (Kellas, 1998, p.35). Although these scholars propose different meanings to the nation, one common thing they all agreed on is the importance of ethnic national identity.

Ethnic national identity has been defined as an "objective criteria such as language or descent as its basis for inclusion and exclusion. It does not allow individuals to choose to which nation they belong, but holds that membership is decided at birth." (Lecours, 2000, p.154). However, other scholars criticized that ethnicity is not 'natural' or 'objective', but rather socially constructed. This is where scholars gave importance to the 'civic' approach to national identity. The civic approach to national identity emphasizes more on the "free will of individuals" (Lecours, 2000, p. 153), where people living "within a country's border are part of a nation, regardless of their ethnic, racial, or religious origins" (Muller, 2008, p. 20). Ting (2008) explores the construction of a nation as "existing essentially in the symbolic realm, as a mental construct" (p.461). This corresponds to Gellner's statement where he states that "it is the nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round" (as cited in Ting, 2008, p.461). Similarly, Calhoun suggests that nations exist "only when their members understand themselves through

the discursive framework of national identity, and they are commonly forged in the struggle carried out by some members of the nation-in-the-making to get others to recognize its genuine nation-ness and grant it autonomy or other rights. The crucial thing to grasp here is that nations exist only within the context of nationalism” (ibid). Therefore, in this research, I argue that nation does not derive merely from the ethnics assigned at birth, but also the constructed traditions, symbols, myths, values, and historical memories– nationalisms construct nations.

### ***The Nation as Imagined Community***

In his prominent and influential work, Benedict Anderson (1991) took a modernist approach to nationalism where he argues that nations are not naturally created, but rather socially and culturally constructed communities since the arrival of modern society. It is considered an ‘imagined’ community because, as he claims, people in the nation do not personally know each other nor have an intimate relationship, however, “in the minds of each, lives the image of their communion” (p.2). Despite not knowing each other, people imagine themselves as being in a nation, thanks to sharing of the same vernacular. As a result, they start seeing nations as real things. He further claims that the nation as an imagined community is not entirely the result of cultural systems that have been rooted in the nation, such as the religious community and the hierarchical dynastic realm, but political ideologies also play role in differentiating nations (Anderson, 1991).

For Anderson, nationalism is defined as a social grouping which is “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (p.2). It is ‘limited’ because of the finite boundaries, and ‘sovereign’ as the Enlightenment and the Revolution undermined the divine order, replaced God power with the hierarchic dynastic realm – the power of human. Anderson also emphasizes the role of ‘print capitalism’ and ‘secularization’ to the development of nations. He claims that print capitalism was the main factor that enabled the development of new national cultures, which later created a specific formation to the nation and its people. Anderson believes that printing books in vernacular made people think of each other as members of one group – the nation. This circulation of ideas through printing books as well as vernacular language, whether from national newspapers or books, allowed members of the nation to receive information concerning their imagined nation. The printing press and the rise of print media are believed to be the cause of “technological means for the widespread dissemination of

the idea of the nation” (Edensor, 2002, p.7). In other words, print capitalism “allowed the nation and its members to become a conscious collective” (Fernandez, 2017). Anderson further suggests that the shared reading of daily newspapers creates its readers the feeling that they shared the same set of interests, hence, making them feel part of a national community. This set of interests could also be “national identity in unreflexive forms of ‘common sense’ (Edensor, 2002, p.7).

Additionally, Anderson’s views could be considered an influence of constructivist approach (Thananithichot, 2011). The approach proposes that national myths such as historical narrative, nations, ethnic groups, and national religions are all used to create imagined communities. It is imagined as people’s imaginations are being created when they read novels as well as when they travel. Travelling is seen as a form of imagination because it gives people the chance to learn who they are and who they are not when meeting people from various society. As they encounter more people, they can differentiate the community they belong, to those they do not. Therefore, nationalism for constructivists, which is in line with Anderson’s view, assumes that language and symbols are used to “create, shape, and reinforce imagination” (ibid, p.254). As a result, constructivists view “societal, political economic and historical processes and circumstances as determinants in ‘constructing’ nations and ethnic groups” (p.254).

Similar to Anderson, Gellner’s (2006) places his belief that a nation is indeed a result of the shift from traditional nation to modern nation. Consequently, it seems that Gellner’s theory proposes that people “passively accept knowledge and identities”, in which they “are effectively interpellated by all-powerful national cultural organisations” (p.4). This subsequently leads to debates on the inclusion of other minor cultures, where only the dominant group is selected to be represented as a nation. The argument can be connected to criticisms of nation branding effort in the next section.

For Anderson, the term ‘imagined’ is not equal to fake or artificial. Rather, instead of the community being fake, the term means “creation” (p.2). This is important to Anderson’s argument as “communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (p.2). It could, therefore, be implied that each nation does have different ways of imagining their countries, depending on their unique culture and history. However, I argue in this research that the community imagined by people from the same nation could also varied. Anderson’s concept of imagined community has been criticized as giving too much power to creative writers or those that are in charge of creating the narratives, while



ignoring “the lived experience and shared traditions of national communities” (Dinnie, 2008, p.117). The criticism suggests that Anderson’s view takes a “reductive view of culture” (Edensor, 2002, p.7), limited to literacy and print media. But as technologies progressed, other media can also help people to imagine their community and contribute to nation-building.

This research uses Anderson’s concept of imagined community. It approaches the idea of a Thai nation – at the heart of the tourism nation-branding campaign studied here – as socially constructed. In other words, the research approach the *Amazing Thailand* advertisements as a site where the nation is constructed.

### ***National Identity as a Performance***

Following concepts of nationalism and nations, it is evident how significant national identity comes into play. Smith (1991) suggests that we must treat nationalism as closely related to national identity and look at the sharing of cultural features such as myths, historical memories, values, and symbols as traits that form national identity. In other words, placing national identity as something emerging from the pre-modern antecedents, Smith describes the concept as a “collective cultural phenomenon” (ibid.) which based itself in ethnic identity and community.

On the other hand, Anderson (1991)’s argument on imagined national community suggests that people within the same nation ‘believe’ they share the same set of features because of the similar language and print media they consume. According to Anderson, these set of features “are not an inborn trait and it is essentially socially constructed” (p.133). For Gellner (2008), national identity is defined as a fluid concept that changes within the modernized society. He emphasizes how industrial society reinforced people to constantly change their identity, for example, through occupational change which requires different “skills to move between roles” (p.xxiv). Therefore, the two modernist theorists suggest that national identity is not naturally given, but rather emerged from the constructed modern nation.

In addition to be a socially constructed concept, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) suggest that national identity should be treated as a category of analysis rather than an objective reality. The scholars point out the problems of using the word ‘identity’ as being ambiguous and political related. Hence, the term should be used particularly “in the name of the conceptual clarity required for social analysis” (p.36) as opposed to grounded in the ethnic essence.

This idea of national identity as a category of analysis could then be linked to Gill (2005)'s argument of national identity being a 'performance'. Based on Goffman (1990)'s 'dramaturgical perspective' theory (social interaction in the form of theatre), Gill suggests people are assumed to perform according to the situation, social contexts, or people they are surrounded with. She is suggesting that identities are 'done' by people, and therefore, identities are "socially constructed, a complex set of behaviors, actions and labels which determine and are determined by our interactions with others" (Gill, 2005, p.85-86). In other words, national identity is something that is learnt and acquired through performances (Pfister & Hertel, 2008). Grounded in the constructivist perspective which argues that national identity is something people learn by socializing, Gill differentiates the "public (and social) identity and a private (and fixed) identity" (p.86). She argues that identity is not only depending on how society construct them to be, but also how people perceive themselves, as well as, how they represent (perform) their individuality to the public. Gill concludes her study that "boundaries of national identities are flexible, and as such are subject to negotiation" (p.100). Therefore, there are many versions of national identity performed by people within the same community.

Additionally, Edensor (2002) conforms to this notion of national identity as a performance. He argues that 'performance' is a useful metaphor because "it allows us to look at the ways in which identities are enacted and reproduced, informing and (re)constructing a sense of collectivity" (p.69). Positioning the nation as a 'stage' or 'theater' where people perform their plays (identity), performance foregrounds identity as dynamic because it is always (re)produced (p.69). Edensor highlights how people can perform their national identity in everyday lives through various spaces. Beside the common symbolic spaces such as national ceremonies, sport and rituals, tourism is also seen as the 'stage of the nation' where it "encourages the production of distinct kinds of stage and is an activity which sustains a host of competing performative norms" (p.84). Consequently, the tourism industry tends to use this strategy to compete other nations by advertising their unique and authentic charms through nation branding projects.

In this research, national identity is discussed as a performance. Grounded in Gill's analysis of people performing many identities based on situations, the concept allows the researcher to look at the way participants talk about national identities in the interviews. Also, Edensor's argument on tourism industry being the stage of the nation also pave the study to look

at how tourism advertisements are representing the members of the nation, as well as, how these national audiences perform their identities regarding the images portrayed in the campaigns.

## **2.2 Nation Branding and Tourism Advertising**

Following Anderson, media has become a crucial tool in forming the nation. Nations are nowadays built not only via print, but also via other media of communication and state institutions. Since this research focuses on the negotiation of national identity in the context of *Amazing Thailand* tourism advertisements, it is crucial to examine the literature on official top-down nation-branding efforts. This section argues that nation branding and tourism advertising are contemporary forms of nation-building tools that shape national identity of its national audiences.

### **2.2.1 Tourism advertising and National Identity**

Tourism advertising represents a vision of the nation and of national identity through a continuous process (Palmer, 1999; Light, 2001). For instance, symbols and signs in tourism brochures help to “construct and convey a sense of national identity” (Palmer, 1999, p.315), effectively contributing to the construction of Anderson’s imagined community through their representation of the “imagining nation story” (ibid. p.319). Indeed, ethnic and heritage tourism has become influential in recent years (Pitchford, 2008 p.2). Ethnic tourism is defined as tourism that emphasizes on cultural exoticism, local population, and authenticity, whereas heritage tourism put more focus on the historical elements such as culture and the nation’s history. Both involve “revised narratives of the nation, [...] recovered or invented culture and traditions, are key resourcing of constructing national consciousness and infusing that consciousness with pride, affection and loyalty” (ibid.). Tourism is seen as an “outwardly directed medium” (ibid, p.3), in which the message is assumed to be expanded to people both within the nation and those outside the nation. Therefore, tourism advertising is proved to have an impact on people’s identity of the nation, especially on the history and cultural aspects.

The tourism advertisements analyzed in this research will then be taken as part of the national representations, which, as Anderson’s print media suggests, help to create “a cohesive and shared image of the nation” (Fernandez, 2017, p.9). As an example of the production of an

imagined community, tourism advertising creates a sense of belonging and promotes a certain set of values associated with the nation.

### **2.2.2 Nation Branding and Nationalism**

The branding consultant Simon Anholt (2007) coined the term ‘nation branding’, where he applied the economic strategies of selling products to selling a nation. However, as many scholars have shown, the application of economic strategies of products into a nation is rather difficult and “more complicated than branding products for the marketplace” (Browning, 2015, para.2).

Kaneva (2011) defines the concept as “a compendium of discourses and practices aimed at reconstituting nationhood through marketing and branding paradigms” (p.118). The scholar distinguishes three approaches to the study of nation branding; *technical-economic*, *political*, and *cultural*. The former two are usually adopted by scholars and marketing experts to analyze the branding efforts of a certain nation and are supporters of nation branding (Fernandez, 2017). Scholars in this group only point out the benefits of the efforts and often neglected the social issues and costs that result from the project. On the other hand, cultural theorists are more critical in analyzing the limitations of the projects (Kaneva, 2011).

#### ***Technical-economic and political approaches***

While technical-economic studies take a “functionalist perspective that sees nation branding as a strategic tool for enhancing a nation’s competitive advantage in a global marketplace” (Kaneva, 2011, p.120), political studies focus on nation branding as public diplomacy. Connecting nation branding to the field of international relations, Browning argues that nation branding is seen as a tool used by the government to create collective actions through “soft power” (Nye, 2004).

Jordan’s (2014) study on Brand Estonia reveals that indeed, the practice of nation branding is considered a tool for soft nationalism, as the “branding campaign reflects the rhetoric of nationalist politicians” (p.301). Nation branding for him is like an attempt to express a certain narrative of the nation, as well as, to control the false or unintended perceptions of the state to international community. Moreover, the practice could be perceived as universal or globalized

nationalism (Sklair, 2001), where governments around the world are competing to integrate into the global economic system (Castells, 1994).

Based on technical-economic approach, Volcic and Andrejevic (2011) argue that nation branding sees a nation as an 'enterprise' and use market logic to manage and control the nation. This is a form of 'commercial nationalism', defined as "the deliberate use of nationalist appeals by commercial entities to differentiate their products in a competitive and increasingly interdependent global marketplace" (p.613). Nation branding practitioners such as Wally Olins (2003) also points out the importance of a brand's power to create strong emotions, that brands "have immense emotional content and inspire loyalty beyond reason" (p.19). For him, nation branding's power does not lie on the large budget or the branders, but it is the consumer that control the success of a brand. As a result, the line between brand managers or producers have been drawn to be separated from the consumers, hence, it is assumed that the created-images presented in these advertisements are more distant reality (Fernandez, 2017).

Therefore, it is assumed that members of the nation, although diaspora, might relate to nation branding efforts differently than its creators. In other words, the construction of the nation as proposed by the projects might not be the same as those from its afar nationals.

### ***Cultural approaches***

Cultural theorists, on the other hand, are skeptical of national branding efforts, pointing to their many problems such as increasing stereotypes, promoting cultural imperialism, and marginalizing minorities (Aronczyk 2013; Kaneva 2011; Fernandez, 2017). While scholars supporting nation branding only focus on advantages of the project, critical scholars look more on the negative side of the them. One of the criticisms is the process of "differentiation and normalization" (Fernandez, 2017), where the nation's desired and unique image automatically excludes the 'Other'. This means that the nation branding is reinforcing a homogenization culture, where only certain aspects of the culture get represented and branded, while other values are seen as unimportant. As Kaneva (2011) suggests, cultural approaches attempt to challenge the technical-economic and political approaches by "questioning the imputed equivalence of global marketization and democratization, by connecting the discourse of nation branding to constructivist ideas of nationhood, and by historicizing the texts and practices of nation branding and exposing their linkage to relations of social power" (p.128).

In addition, Kaneva and Popescu (2011) criticize the project as making national identity and culture “fixed, independent variables that contribute to ‘the essence’ of a national brand – a dependent variable – and are not discussed in historical or political terms” (p.192). In other words, national identity and culture are produced as homogenous regardless of the differences within the nation, hence, the project attempts to create a unitary vision of the nation.

Jansen (2008) criticizes nation branding as “an engine of neoliberalism that explicitly embraces a reductive logic, which privileges market relations (market fundamentalism) in articulations of national identity” (p.121). For Jansen, nation branding is narrowing down the diversity of identities within a nation, where only the privileged and those that could make values to the creators are benefited. He blames nation branding for creating “monologic, hierarchical, reductive form of communication that is intended to privilege one message, requires all voices of authority to speak in unison, and marginalize and silence dissenting voices” (p.134). Jansen is strongly against the effort as he thinks branding a nation the same way as a commodity is simply an anti-democratic practice. Additionally, Jansen questions the obscurity of the industry that they are not open enough to how they run the process, which is oppose to the “democratic decision makings” system (p.122), therefore, nation branding is seen as an effort to support the construction of elites.

Aronczyk (2007) views nation branding as a discourse. For her, the project is “a logical extension of a particular way that national ... identity has long been construed and communicated in time and space” (p. 107). She criticizes the legitimacy of a nation will create a positive image to the nation and produce a “sense of national pride and belonging” (Fernandez, 2017). This discourse can be connected to constructivist belief about nationhood such as the ‘imagine community’ – the project enhances members of the nation to think they belong to the same community. Aronczyk (2008) later examines the discourse of nation branding by studying brand consultants and their practice of the project. Her results reveal four steps involved in creating an ‘identification’ (the development of the brand identity); standardization, difference, rationality, and emotionality identification (p.52). This step is essentially “a reduction of the diversity in a population to some single criterion held to constitute its defining ‘essence’ and most crucial character” (p.18). The step is challenging because it brings ongoing debate within academics regarding the exclusion of minority groups (Kaneva, 2011), hence, nation branders need to be careful of who and what to choose in representing in the projects. These steps,

therefore, sparks debate on the politics of identity and how “nation branding promotes a particular organization of power, knowledge and exchange in the articulation of collective identity” (p. 46).

Ståhlberg and Bolin’s (2016) study of Ukraine’s nation branding efforts also reveals that nation branding has very little to do with the construction of identity or the collective community. They do not believe tourism advertisements help create the sense of belonging to the people in the nation. In addition, the scholars support Calhoun’s (2008) study that “cosmopolitanization is the mechanism through which nationhood is reimagined” (as cited in Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2016, p.286). This ideology of cosmopolitan imagination suggests that “nationhood is being drained from ideas of belonging to the benefit of a cosmopolitan appreciation of the nation as appearance” (p.288), which means that people might be commercially or esthetically related to the brand, however, they do not identify with it as a nation. Since most nation branding projects are centered around the cosmopolitan ideology, the project was criticized as giving more benefits to the commercial industries than the public. Again, official top-down nation branding projects are merely constructed ideologies that aim to boost up the country’s economy without considering the portrayals of its national members.

Reviewing these literatures on nation branding, the research is informed that the project is both a benefit and threat to the nation. While technical-economic and political theorists viewed the effort positively, cultural theorists are more skeptical towards the project and see it as a danger to the members of the nation. Since this research aims to find out the relation Thai diaspora make with the construction of the nation in nation branding project, the study relies more on cultural approaches and criticisms of the project. This is specifically useful in trying to examine how member of the nation perceives the image presented in tourism campaigns as well as reveal the way Thai diasporas create their own vision of the nation. How they talk about national identity regarding to the campaigns would also be found.

As diasporas are specific group this research emphasized, it is important to review the literature and debates about this group.

### **2.3 Nationalism and national identity in times of globalization and mobility**

The definition of diaspora has been widely expanded in academics. From its original reference of a particular group of people dispersing out of their homeland due to political

unstableness or other force resentment, the term has now shifted to “an ever-broadening set of cases: essentially to any and every nameable population category that is to some extent dispersed in space” (Brubaker, 2005, p.3). In particular, “the term that once described Jewish, Greek and Armenian dispersion now share meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guestworker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community” (Tölölyan, 1991, p. 4). This means that this ‘classical diaspora paradigm’ – the Jewish diaspora– has been replaced with a broader context (Phongsiri & Thongyou, 2012). To emphasize a more ethnic and religious element, Shain and Barth (2003) define diaspora as “people who reside, more or less on a permanent basis, outside their ethnic or religious homeland” (p. 452).

In order to be considered a diaspora, ones need to have seven main characteristics, briefly explain as people who (1) dispersed from an original to foreign regions; (2) preserve a ‘collective memory’ or ‘myth’ about their country of origin; (3) believe they are not part of the host societies and are separated; (4) yearn to return to their homeland; (5) maintain the ‘collective commitment’ to their place of origin; (6) although a ‘distinct and minority community’, they transmit/share original cultural and religious heritage to their host regions; and (7) “reflect their relationships on cultural, religious, economic and political aspects with the homeland in their communal institutions” (Phongsiri & Thongyou, 2012, p. 62; see also Safran, 2005; Cohen, 2008).

Although these characteristics suggest the desire of returning home and the feeling that one is not being fully accepted by the host nation, the emergence of globalization and technology has increased the mobility of ideas and media texts; diasporas can now bring and further their culture of origin along with them (Appadurai, 1996) while simultaneously engaging with the values and practices of the host nation. Consequently, once they reside in unfamiliar places, diaspora faces a different culture which affects their identity. This is when transnationalism, or the “multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states” plays a role in diaspora’s lives (Vertovec, 1999, p. 447). This means that diaspora must go through the process of negotiating their national identity, to assimilate into the host nation, as well as, maintain the connection to their home country.

Transnationalism, or the form of nationalism at distance is best explained through diaspora’s lives as they are the people who experience cross-borders/cultural ties in everyday



life. This cross-border experience could also be perceived the same way as globalization, however, with a narrower sense. This means that the mobility context is also present in diaspora lives, but not as wide as globalization. While globalization refers to modern processes that distant people with their nation, “obscured the lines between temporary locales and imaginary national attachments” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 10), transnationalism, on the other hand, does not make such huge impact and is limited to mobility context. It is limited because transnationalism is “anchored in and transcends one or more nation-states” (Kearney, 1995, p. 548).

As diaspora adapts to new environment and culture, their national identities become ‘hybrid’; they try to assimilate both their original identity and that of the host nation. This notion of ‘hybrid-identities’ is seen by Aydin (2016) as another meaning of transnationalism, where the scholar redefines the term as “hybrid-identities, bilingualism, biculturalism, and involvement into constant cross-communications as well as transnational social spaces” (p. 172). However, this gets more complicated as identities are not fixed, diasporic identity is “constantly produced and reproduced” (Brinkerhoff, 2009, p. 33). The sense of belonging is a strong indicator of the relation between co-nationals, where those belonging to the same nation “feel good around those like themselves” (Langman, 2006, p. 75). The sense of belonging is strengthened by various factors; feeling that you are living among people who do not ‘understand’ you or feeling that others are marginalizing you because of your values or practices. This implies that national identity only makes sense when there is a presence of ‘others’. National identity implicitly generates individuals to compare themselves with other people, to become aware of the differences of those that do not belong to the same community. This national consciousness thus “involves both self-awareness of the group but also awareness of others from whom the nation seeks to differentiate itself” (Triandafyllidou, 1998, p.599). Transnationalism, therefore, is responsible for constructing hybrid identities among diaspora. This results in most diaspora studies emphasizing greatly on the sociological concepts of ‘transnational livelihoods’, where they argue “globalization has caused people to have multi-livelihood places and links across the boundaries of cities, provinces, or countries (Phongsiri & Thongyou, 2012, p.60). This experience of living in multiple places is creating an unfixed diasporic identity.

As part of the globalization process, media are an important variable in the creation of hybrid identities (Appadurai, 1996). Communication technologies make it is easy for diaspora to

consume media from their homeland as a way to sustain connections with their origins (Knott & McLoughlin, 2010). Another context in which media are used to remind diaspora of their country is through tourism advertising (Piller, 2017). This type of nation branding efforts uses logos, slogans, and other symbols to “continually reinforces the message of national belonging” (para.9). Tourism adverts thus keep reminding diasporas of their country of origin despite residing in another nation. Members of diaspora must negotiate the two distinct identities, representing both the host of the advert as well as the audience/tourist of that same advert. In other words, diasporas’ lives are surrounding with this transnational experience in their everyday lives; performing hybrid identities regularly. Therefore, it is fair to say that the role of media for diaspora is crucial, particularly for transforming their national identities into hybrid identities (Appadurai, 1996, Vertovec, 2009; Aydin, 2016).

When it comes to Thai diaspora, a very limited number of academics could be found. Phongsiri and Thongyou (2011, 2012) studied the challenges faced by Thai diaspora returning to Thailand, where they aim to encourage the government and policymakers to become more aware of the rights of returned Thai diaspora. Others have looked at Thai migrants, focusing on health and working conditions in foreign countries (Griffin & Soskolne, 2003; Jirojwong & MacLennan, 2003), the economic framework of remittances (Suksoomboon, 2008; Lee, Sukrakarn, & Choi, 2011); the policy for Thai migrants in East and Southeast Asia (Chantavanich, 2001), and sex workers (Aoyama, 2009). Although researched from different field of study, every research defines Thai migrants in the traditional sense of leaving their country of origin for work and social/class mobility to another (assumedly) better nation. Despite leaving their nation for work, Suksoomboon (2008) argues that Thai migrants, particularly women, resided in the Netherlands for marriage reasons. For this research, I will use the working aspect of migration to define diaspora as people who initially reside in other nation as a mean of work and marriage. I assume that the (initial) reason for members of Thai diaspora to move out from Thailand is to find a job as well as better life qualities in foreign border.

As a result, diaspora and transnationalism are interrelated concepts which influence each other. Acknowledging that tourism campaigns are for external audiences, I rely upon Edensor (2002)’s staging the nation premise that nation branding efforts are contributing to the nation-building process of diasporas.

## 2.4 Thai Nationalism

Nationalism in Thailand emerged in the 19th century when the country was still called Siam. Prior to 19th century, Siam was politically organized as a “hierarchy of semi-independent principalities or states, each ruled by a lord who controlled taxation, corvée labour, and law” (Vandergest, 1993, p.136). Siam was organized and socially divided by serfs and lords, where they differed in “knowledge of the Buddhist and Brahman dharma” (p.136). In other words, religion drew the line of division in Siam during the pre-national phase.

The emergence of nationalism in Siam in the 19th century could be characterized as an “ideology of the formation of a modern imagined community” as well as “a response to European colonialism” (Winichakul, 2008, p.584). Nationalism was increasingly perceived as a positive force of unity between the ruling elites and its critics/opponents to protect their nation from outsiders (Copeland, 1993). Siam was not entirely colonized by European empires; yet it was still considered a “semi-colonial condition, with the inevitable Siamese collaboration with ruling elite” (Winichakul, 2008, p.584). This semi-colonial condition of Siam has led the nation into a different form of power from other colonies, where, instead of elite power being diminished by nationalism, the power of the ruling elite was unusually strengthened.

As Winichakul (2008) explicitly claims, “Siam was an imagined community neither of a people – whether politically or ethnically defined – nor of a ‘race’, but of a monarchy” (p.584). Similar to the pre-modern period in the Western nation, Siam held a strong belief in its dominant religion of Buddhism, where the King is perceived as “dharma” – a suitable figure with divine power to rule the nation (Vandergest, 1993). Ultimately, this created a huge class distinction among people in the nation as those who worked for the monarchy – the ruling officials/elites – held the most power, while the common people or peasants were exploited (Vandergest, 1993; Winichakul, 2008). In other words, the concept of *Thainess* was ultimately used in the “construction of the social and political structure desired by the political elite” (Sattayanurak, 2005, p.2). The ideology has been continually cultivated in Thai society that “it became a “system of truth” that is highly influential on the way Thais think, and constructed many important “truths” in Thai polity” (p.2).

In 1932, the monarchy was overthrown and Siam went through a huge modernization process. This includes the abolishment of old titles and ranks system which favored the elite groups, as well as the declaration that “all regional and ethnic groupings were to be called Thai

and renamed the nation Thailand” (Vandergeest, 1993, p.142). Buddhism was declared ‘national religion’ and redefined into new meanings, for example, the notion of morality was no longer depending on the titles or ranks one has, but the “social ethnics [...] honesty and hard work” (p.142) one attributes. Other characteristics of modernization such as the scientific idea of cause-and-effect also replaced the pre-national myth of dharma power.

Nevertheless, the role of the King, the royal family, and some political leaders still play a significant role in the Thai nation until today (Thananithichot, 2011). In his study on the construction of Thai nationalism and identity, the scholar concludes that it is “a process constructed by continually focusing on the importance of people’s emotions and memories” (p.251). This is especially relevant in King’s Bhumibol Adulyadej’s funeral in 2017 where millions of Thai people gathered to pay respect. The funeral has been nationally broadcasted for more than 24 hours. As a result, it could be interpreted that monarchy remains the core principle of nationalism in Thailand.

To sum up the theoretical frameworks reviewed in this chapter, scholarly arguments on the relationship between nationalism, nation branding, diasporic identity and Thai nationalism informed the research by two assumptions. First, I took the modernist approach to nation as socially constructed and the discourse of nationalism as an ‘imagined community. Here, I expected that nation branding projects construct its nation based on the discourse of nationalism, where they portray members of the nation as sharing same features. Second, I took national identity as a performance to reveal diaspora’s negotiation of national identity, especially within the transnationalism framework. What I expected to find here was that Thai diaspora should relate and perform their national identities more in the ethnic essence, as the Thai nationalism literature suggest. The Thai nationalism as emphasizing on ‘emotions and memories’ have also been used to synthesize the discourse analysis in the in-depth interviews later.

### 3. Method

To answer the research questions, “*How do members of Thai diaspora in the Netherlands relate to the construction of the nation in Amazing Thailand tourism campaign and how do they articulate their own national identity in this process?*”, a visual analysis of the campaigns, as well as 13 in-depth interviews with Thai members of diasporas living in the Netherlands were conducted. The visual analysis of images, narratives, sequences, and music in the campaigns have been analyzed first, then the interviews were transcribed and analyzed using discourse analysis. In this chapter, the choice of using qualitative research method is explained, followed by the role of in-depth interviews, the steps of sampling, recruiting, and interviewing the participants. At the end of the chapter, the theory of discourse analysis, as well as the processes involved in performing discourses analysis on interviews are described.

#### 3.1 A Qualitative Approach

Qualitative methods are theory-dependent ways of “describing, analyzing, and interpreting data” (Talja, 1999, p. 459). While quantitative research aims for more generalizing results, qualitative research focuses on individual and personalized experiences, issues that deal with complex details such as feelings, thoughts, or emotions of individuals (Jonker & Pennink, 2010). As the aim of this research is to explore diaspora opinions towards the construction of the nation and national identity in nation branding efforts, interviewing, and letting participants talk about their experiences would reflect best on how they build and negotiate national identity through the representations of *Thainess* in the campaigns. Qualitative methods give space for an in-depth and detailed study of selected issues (Bryman, 2012). In this research, national identity is considered a personal topic as each individual have a different way of talking, experiencing, or negotiating the concept.

#### 3.2 Research design

Two qualitative methods have been used to address the study’s research question: a visual analysis of the *Amazing Thailand* campaign and a discourse analysis of in-depth interviews with members of Thai diaspora in the Netherlands. In this study, the tourism advertisements are used as existing visual materials to draw out the elements that construct *Thainess* as proposed by the government, while showing the videos during the interviews are

used to generate further data. Showing the videos during the interviews, in other words, is meant to bring out the discussion of national identity, as well as participants' relation to the images presented with their everyday life. While many visual researchers exploring these two categories focus on "either the production of the image, explore the image itself, or focus on the 'site of audiencing'" (Fernandez, 2017, p.56; Rose, 2016), this research pays attention to the exploration of the video and a specific site of audience, in this case, the members of Thai diaspora in the Netherlands. The videos are treated as data itself and analyzed by close-reading of the elements in the advertisements that communicate *Thainess*. As for the reception of audience, instead of finding out how the advertisements are received by the intended audience, the research focus on how the advertisements are received by the (outside) members of the nation.

### **3.2.1 The visual analysis**

Visual analysis is necessary for this research as the images and narrations used in the videos are assumed to construct meanings to the social world (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Images are considered a visual communication that both shape and are shaped by society (ibid, p.10). The use of images and visual features in advertisements are essential to study in terms of discourse, as the representation of images play a role in the communication of power relations. Approaching visual data as texts, visual research is meant to study the implicit or indirect meaning where implicit information "are related to underlying beliefs, but are not openly, directly, completely or precisely asserted" (Van Dijk as cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012, p.30). Visual signs and symbols in visual communication are therefore significant to be analyzed to reveal its precise nature. As a result, I argue that the images and narrations in tourism advertisements contain implicit and indirect meanings of the construction of *Thainess*. By analyzing these representations, the underlying ideologies and meanings are revealed.

### **3.2.2 Performing visual analysis**

Considering the *Amazing Thailand* advertisements as example of nation branding project, the goal here is to analyze the narratives, images, sequences and music of the campaigns. As Liebenberg (2009) asserted, "images can serve as signifiers of culture, highlighting values and expectations of individuals as well as groups" (p.444). Analyzing images in the video can provide useful information on the elements of *Thainess* highlighted by the campaign. The images

in the campaigns are giving participants helpful way to explain their relation of the nation in the campaign to the process of national identity. It is therefore assumed that performing visual analysis on *Amazing Thailand* campaigns will bring out salient features of the construction of the Thai nation, as well as makes it easier for participants to explain the concept.

However, the method also has some drawbacks. Like any other qualitative research, visual analysis depends heavily on the researcher's ability to select and capture important aspects of data that are considered relevant to the research question. This means that the researcher's decision as well as interpretation are crucial, sometimes even affecting the quality and reflexivity of the analysis. Nonetheless, being a member of Thai diaspora in the Netherlands myself, meaning that I fit the criteria of the research sample, is already an advantage when analyzing the visual elements in the campaigns. This is because I could imagine being the participants myself and understand the values and culture that are behind the representations of the campaigns, hence, results in a rich visual analysis data.

The steps involved in performing visual analysis of the two campaigns; the 2013's *Amazing Thailand: it begins with the people*, and the 2015's *Amazing Thailand: Discover Thainess*, started as I drew a table and divided the videos into components: images, narration (texts), sequence and music. This was done in order to systematically capture the construction of the Thai nation through these components. Applying Machin and Mayr (2012) notion of images containing underlying meanings the same way as language, the three mentioned components of the production have been highlighted. By analyzing images that were used, how a story was created through the narrative and texts, the order of the images that have been emphasized, and which music is associated with the nation, the components allow to capture the elements of Thai nation. The next step was to re-watch the videos three times while noting the features of the campaigns as well as its aims. The first time of watching was to see the overall presentations of the campaigns, the second time was to pay more attention to the narratives and music in the video, and the last time was to look at the sequences of the images – what comes first and why. During the re-watching of videos, repeated images showed in the campaigns were also recorded. The last step was then to compare these notes with the literature of Thai nation, reflected whether they contrast or conform to the literature, which resulted in five different themes (Appendix A).

### **3.2.3 The in-depth interviews**

According to Holstein & Gubrium (2003), data from in-depth interviews allows the researcher to dwell deep into his interviewees' experiences. Among many types of interviews, the semi-structured interview where set of prepared questions based on identified themes created was chosen. This method allows the researcher to "reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible such as people's subjective experiences and attitudes" (Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2011, p. 529). In this research, national identity is considered to be a very subjective experience. Using interviews allows the researcher to probe deeper into topics that derive from conversations.

Since one of the aim of the research is to find out how Thai diasporas make sense of their national identity, it is important for the researcher to be present and respond to the conversation face-to-face, as well as probe whenever there are unclear statements. Here, the feeling of familiarity is an important aspect, because "the heart of our social and personal being lies in the immediate contact with other humans" (Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2011, p. 533). As national identities are (re)produced as performance (Edensor, 2002), the face-to-face, in-depth interview would help in giving more insight to the national identity negotiation, not only through the words they use, but also the reactions (performance) they have during the interviews. In other words, face-to-face interviews give an advantage on the use of social cues such as "voice, intonation, body language of the interviewee" where they "can give the interviewer a lot of extra information that can be added to the verbal answer" (Opdenakker, 2006, p.3).

### **3.2.4 The Interviewees – Sampling and Recruitment**

Thai members of diaspora in the Netherlands are chosen here because they represent a community that experiences two (or more) cultures: the culture from their country of origin and the culture from their country of residence. The long engaging relationship and the growing number of Thai migrants to the Netherlands are also reasons to study how these cross-cultural individuals make sense of their national identities.

Participants were found through the combination of purposive and snowball sampling, "when the researcher accesses informants through contact information that is provided by other informants" (Noy, 2008, p.330). Participants were required to have Thai nationality and had to have lived in the Netherlands for at least five years. This time span was considered sufficient for



the development of emotional and material ties to the country of residence, reflecting in a more complex negotiation of their own national identification (Brinkerhoff, 2009). To make a homogenous sample, Thai diaspora with similar socio-economic background such as education (university degree and higher) and age (24-47) were targeted. Lastly, to ensure diversity in terms of religion and ethnic groups, Thai people with different religions, Buddhism and Islam, and ethnic backgrounds such as from central, eastern, southern backgrounds, were purposefully recruited. Participants overview is shown in table 2.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Education level</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>City of residence</b>	<b>Years of diaspora</b>
Part. 1	Male	24 years	Bachelor's degree	Student	Southern Thai	Rotterdam	6 years
Part. 2	Female	42 years	Bachelor's degree	Thai traditional dancer	Central Thai	Amsterdam	13 years
Part. 3	Female	33 years	Master's degree	Architect	Central Thai	Rotterdam	5 years
Part. 4	Female	47 years	Bachelor's degree	Translator	Southern Thai	Utrecht	17 years
Part. 5	Female	33 years	Master's degree	Officer at Royal Thai Embassy	North-Eastern Thai	The Hague	14 years
Part. 6	Female	40 years	Bachelor's degree	Business woman	North-Eastern Thai	Rotterdam	12 years
Part. 7	Trans-woman	46 years	Diploma	Thai massage therapist	Central Thai	Amersfoort	15 years
Part. 8	Gay	47 years	Bachelor's degree	Thai chef	North-Eastern Thai	The Hague	11 years

Table 2: Participant's overview

Name	Gender	Age	Education level	Profession	Ethnicity	City of residence	Years of diaspora
Part. 9	Female	39 years	Master's degree	Business owner	Central Thai	Hilversum	15 years
Part. 10	Female	38 years	Master's degree	Treasury Assistant	Central Thai	Rotterdam	11 years
Part. 11	Female	28 years	Bachelor's degree	Engineer	Central Thai	Zwolle	11 years
Part. 12	Gay	45 years	Bachelor's degree	Artist	Southern Thai	Amersfoort	16 years
Part. 13	Female	42 years	Bachelor's degree	Hairdresser	Central Thai	Rotterdam	10 years

Table 2: Participant's overview

Social media platform such as Facebook group *TSAN: Thai Student Association in the Netherlands* was used as an initial step of finding potential interviewees. This Facebook group is created as a platform for exchanging useful information among Thai students in the Netherlands. Although the majority of members in this Facebook group are students, the page long-existence and wide connection helped me to find more diverse groups of Thai diasporas, including those who married with Dutch men or migrated for job opportunities. As a member and active user in this group myself, I started the recruitment by sending a message to one of the admins of the page and asked whether she knows any Thai people who have resided in the Netherlands for more than five years, and if possible, not just students. The admin of the group directed me to ten potential participants. Since the literature suggested most Thai people living in the Netherlands are mainly housewives and students (Suksoomboon, 2008), I sought diversity in terms of working backgrounds in my sample. Thus, I have only recruited two of the names initially provided – one working as a Thai-Dutch translator, the other as a Thai traditional dancer. The other interviewees were subsequently recruited through a snowball sampling technique.

### 3.2.5 The Interview Process

In total, 13 participants were interviewed in this project, with the average time of the interview lasting from 50 minutes to one hour and a half. All interviews were held in March-April 2018, in Thai, as both the researcher and participants are native Thai speakers. Conducting interviews in the mother tongue was also an advantage for performing the discourse analysis.

Also, as the language is one aspect of the nation, the sense of belonging and familiarity automatically emerges when people speak the same language (Triandafyllidou, 1998). All interviews were face-to-face, with most of them taking place at the respondents' houses. Only two of the interviews took place at a public place such as the library and cafe. An audio recorder was used to record the conversation, which participants were already informed at the beginning of the interview. The purpose of the study as well as participants' rights was notified to ensure the ethics of interview research (Qu & Dunmay, 2011). Although every respondent allowed to use their real name, no name is disclosed in this study. They were also informed that the recorded data would be used for transcribing and academic purpose only, hence, confidentiality is promised.

Considering that *Amazing Thailand* campaigns are mainly created for external audiences, it is assumed that Thai people are not always familiar with these campaigns. To tackle this problem, video clips from the campaigns were used as material probes during the interviews. After viewing the short clips, follow-up questions were asked to gain insight of national identity they perceived through these campaigns. Nonetheless, as identity is socially constructed, and community imagined (Anderson, 1991), this research aims to further the meaning-making process of Thai diaspora by assuming that they are the group of individuals who must live and experience the foreign culture in their everyday life (Edensor, 2002). Therefore, interviewing Thai diaspora would not only give rich data on how they see national identity in the campaigns, but also how they think those representations affect, conform, contradict to what they experience in real life.

Among the many *Amazing Thailand* tourism campaigns, the 2013's *Amazing Thailand: It Begins with the People* and 2015's *Discover Thainess* were chosen as media products to trigger national identity discourses. These two particular campaigns were chosen because of their themes which explicitly emphasize the notion of *Thainess*. To effectively draw out the construction of *Thainess* created by officials, a visual analysis of the selected tourism campaigns was performed. The elements from the visual analysis were used to create the interview guide, to see whether participants are aware about this construction of *Thainess*, as well as what they think about them.

The interview guide was informed by two concepts central to the research question: national identity and nation branding. The interview was thus divided into two topics, combined to create an interview guide with two sections (Appendix B). The two topics are;

1. *Self-national identification* informed by Anderson (1991)'s imagined community and Gill (2005)'s national identity as a performance. This section asked questions that prompted participants to recount their journey from Thailand to the Netherlands, reasons they made this journey, the challenges or struggles they faced, as well as how they overcame those difficulties. The aim was to let them talk about their past experiences and find out the negotiation of national identity. To investigate even more, participants were asked about their experience of being Thai in the Netherlands, how they experienced Dutch society, and if they seek relations with the Thai community. The imagining worlds the participants create – the feeling of being Thai and the treatment from the Dutch society could indicate if they feel welcomed or accepted by the host nation and if Thai nationalism still play a role in their lives.

2. *Material probes as examples of nation-branding – Amazing Thailand* tourism campaigns to specify representations in relation to national identity (Kaneva, 2011). The section starts by probing participants' knowledge of the nation branding campaign studied here. Then, we proceed by discussing the two selected videos from *Amazing Thailand* tourism advertisements. The videos are shown separately in order to let participants grasp clearer images of the (different) representations of *Thainess*.

Questions asked after showing the videos were about the reactions they have towards the videos, what kind of things or images they think are being represented, whether the elements of 'happiness', 'nature', 'religion' etc. were presented, and lastly, if they think the tourism advertisements are influencing the way foreigners/Dutch people think of Thais. The goal of watching and discussing the videos in this section were twofold;

- 1) to examine the reactions to videos that involves the discussion of national identity, and
- 2) to compare videos to participants' own experience of being part of Thailand.

After building the interview guide in Thai, I conducted an interview test with a member of the Thai diaspora who has been living in the Netherlands for six years. This allowed me to realize that the question regarding the meaning of *Thainess* was rather too abstract as interviewee had

difficulty answering it. When I showed the videos, the participant was able to engage with the notion of *Thainess* based on the advertisements.

Overall, all interviews went well. Being a member of Thai diaspora myself has proved to be beneficial in conducting the interviews; I could easily relate to the Thai values and customs referred by the respondents, in other words, I was included as part of the “us” frame. However, being Thai and identified as the same group as them also made participants reluctant to give deeper answers, since they assumed I must already know what they are implying. When this happened, I tended to use probing questions and steered them to elaborate more on what they were saying, sometimes even played the innocent role where I told them the answers were not clear. The reason for this was to find data saturation of each topic in the interview guide.

### **3.3 Analyzing the interviews – a discourse analysis approach**

National identities are “produced, reproduced, transformed and destructed” and they change in time “through the systems of education, schooling, mass communication, militarization, as well as through sports meetings” (De Cillia et al., 1999, p. 153). During the interviews, participants performed their own versions of national identities. Thus, the project relied upon discourse analysis to explore their negotiation of national identity. Discourse analysis “emphasizes the role of language in the construction of social reality” (Talja, 1999, p.2) and is thus a good way to analyze how individuals talk about their lives, as well as the things they see on tourism campaigns.

Lupton (1992) defines discourse as “a group of ideas or patterned way of thinking which can be both identified in textual and verbal communication and located in wider social structures” (p.145). In other words, discourses are connected to the social structure, where institutions such as the *Amazing Thailand*’s producer, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) play major roles in constructing individual’s social life.

Foucault’s (1972) argues that a discourse is based on statements that are “unspoken theories about the nature of things, and they are the necessary and implicit starting points behind a particular way of speaking about a topic” (Talja, 1999, p.9; Kress, 1985). This means that discourses are not reflection of reality, but they shape peoples’ ideas about reality. Discourses are assumed to produce knowledge about certain topics and create the regime of truth, or the dominant truth (Macdonlad, 2003, p.10). They “provide the language for talking about a topic,

for presenting knowledge and views, in a profound sense, they construct the lived reality” (Talja, 1999, p.10). It is assumed that the way people talk can tell a lot about their social actions and practices but are taken for granted due to it being an everyday order of things. This is particularly relevant to this research as the discourse of nationalism is necessary to be analyzed in order to constitute the concept of nation and national identity – something they know at heart but difficult to explain.

In terms of the credibility of qualitative research, the researcher’s abilities to analyze data are the main instruments (Golafshani, 2003). Since I am a member of the diaspora myself and since been engaged in negotiating my own national identity in this context, my personal experience has proved to be useful when interpreting the data. However, these experiences could also turn to be a limitation as my interpretations of the data might get influenced by my own “conception of the world (...) social and individual reality (...) values, belief and prejudices” (Widdowson, 1995, p. 165). Nonetheless, it is proved in this study that the fact that the researcher is Thai helped a lot with the understanding of *Thainess* in nation branding tourism advertisements, hence, performing the discourse analysis on the interview data were effective.

### **3.3.1 Performing Discourse Analysis**

To bring forth the relation between meaning-making and discourses, discourse analysis pays attention to both explicit as well as implicit statements provided by the interviewees. As discourse theorists, Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) suggest, “we focus on the specific expressions in their capacity as articulations: what meanings do they establish by positioning elements in particular relationships with one other, and what meaning potentials do they exclude?” (p. 29). Since discourse analysis focuses more on the way language in interviews data is used, the method allows the researcher to examine the underlying systems of meaning, posing questions such as how power and power struggles are constructed within the language. By analyzing the language used such as words, vocabularies, or sentences, the underlying fragments of a discourse that is not explicitly expressed would be found.

With this in mind, the interviews were analyzed by examining the interview transcripts and identified different elements such as:

- the choice of words or vocabularies in talking about national identity
- the arguments constructed in the discussion of the Thai advertisements

These aspects of the texts were interpreted by me, the researcher, in relation to the wider literature on Thai nationalism and in relation to the wider political context in Thailand.

The step of performing discourse analysis started by transcribing the interviews using the online platform [www.otranscribe.com](http://www.otranscribe.com). The analysis was done entirely in Thai, not only for convenience but also because researcher as a Thai interpreting the discourse would make the data richer. After selecting the appropriate quotes that are useful in supporting the findings, the quotes were then translated into English.

The second step after transcribing interviews includes the general process of qualitative research such as “systematically coding, grouping or summarizing the descriptions, and providing a coherent organizing framework that encapsulates and explains aspects of the social world that respondents portray” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p. 127). I applied these steps by first summarizing the main points of each interview to have a general view of the topics discussed with each interviewee. This was done by highlighting words, sentences, and paragraphs that connect to the research questions. I then reread those selected statements and grouped them together when same ideas appeared or separate them when they differed. Example of word types I paid most attention to are adjectives respondents used in describing the ‘Dutch’ / ‘Thai’ people and society, ‘The Netherlands’/ ‘Thailand’, ‘us’/ ‘them’, and ‘here’/ ‘there’. These words were chosen because they explicitly engaged with the idea of the nation. Also, silences and hesitations during interviews were recorded to see what is missing from the discussion, for example, the absence of the King and the royal family were not brought up by participants, whereas Thai nationalism literature highlights them as being the important element of *Thainess*. The goal of noting these absences is to compare why some elements are salience for Thai diasporas and why some are not.

The last step of analyzing data involves bringing together the results of the visual analysis with the results of the discourse analysis of interviews. The constructed images of the nation from the visual analysis is used as the starting point to see which elements have been discussed in the interviews. After comparing the similar elements, contrasting views mentioned by respondents regarding the construction of the nation were listed out.

## 4. Results

The results in this chapter are divided into three main sections. First, I present the findings of the video analysis of the tourism advertisings to bring out the construction of *Thainess* the government highlights. Second, I present the findings of the analysis of the interviews, where participants' negotiation of national identity is discussed. Then, I look at how they approached and performed national identity in relation to the representations in *Amazing Thailand* campaigns. In the last section, the relationship between the video analysis and the interviews is discussed.

### 4.1 Visual Analysis

The two selected *Amazing Thailand* campaigns are both produced by the Tourism Authority of Thailand with the aim of promoting Thailand's tourism industry. As a result, the construction of *Thainess* within these advertisings is the product of the government's declaration of what is considered to be the essence of Thai culture and what it means to be Thai. Although created in different years and themes, the 2013's "*Amazing Thailand: It Begins with the People*" and 2015's "*Amazing Thailand: Discover Thainess*" tourism campaigns construct *Thainess* along the same five themes explained next.

#### 4.1.1 The Thai Rural and Urban life

Both campaigns highlight the way Thai people live, attempting to present it as 'unique' to Thailand. The latter is described as an authentic attraction for foreigners where different landscapes, pleasant weather and natural resources are highlighted. The main natural resource that has been specially emphasized is 'water', as the narration in 2013' campaign suggest, "*Thai people are born in such a unique place. We have lots of water, so we keep a jar of water in front of our house to welcome guests. We float markets on it, we throw it for festive fun, and we use it to shower elephants*". Based on this narrative, water does not only represent the abundance of natural resources, but also the kind and generous characteristics of Thai. Other natural resources that have been emphasized include beautiful beaches, misty mountains, rice paddies and tropical islands. This is shown through the repetitive patterns of opening scene in the campaign with images of water and natural resources (image 1).





Image 1: The opening scenes highlighting natural resources in 2013's *Amazing Thailand: it begins with the people* campaign (left) and 2015's *Amazing Thailand: Discover Thainess* campaign (right)

In addition to the connection between the way Thai people live and natural resources the country offers, the campaigns also emphasize the unique experience of homestay living which allows tourists to enjoy the rural way of life, such as harvesting rice, showering elephants, or trying the local occupation. These representations of 'authentic experiences' serve to demonstrate the closer bonds between the locals and tourists, while, at the same time, represent Thai people as easy-going and friendly (image 2).



Image 2: The experience of homestay living as shown in 2015's *Amazing Thailand: Discover Thainess* campaign

One main different between the two campaigns is that, in the 2015's *Amazing Thailand: Discover Thainess* project pays more attention to the urban way of life. This campaign contrasts images of rural people with those of modern cities, e.g. hotels, restaurants, shopping malls and highways (image 3). As a result, the image could be an indication that the country is prosperous in both natural resources as well as in high-technology/modernity context. The campaigns, thus, highlight the diversity the nation has offer.



Image 3: The modernization of city as shown in 2015's *Amazing Thailand: Discover Thainess* campaign

#### **4.1.2 Thai Food**

The importance of Thai food is emphasized in both campaigns. Thai food is positioned as known and loved for its rich flavor, unique and artistic styles of cooking. Thai food is presented as ubiquitous as it could be found in almost every corner of the country; from local street stalls to high-class restaurants. The Thai cuisine also presents the authentic old methods of preserving foods, offering nutrition, and using ingredients from the nature in cooking. In other words, Thai food is not just about the taste of the food, but the essence of Thai culture. This essence of Thai culture is presented through images of ways of cooking, instead of merely putting the finished food images (image 4).



Image 4: The process of cooking Thai food as shown in 2013's *Amazing Thailand: it begins with the people* campaign (left) and 2015's *Amazing Thailand: Discover Thainess* campaign (right).

Again, to include the interaction of tourists with local culture, the depiction of foreigners trying to learn to cook in Thai style is always presence. The inclusion of foreigners can be implied that Thai culture is an open culture and easy to explore.

#### 4.1.3 Thai Religion, Arts, and Festivals

Thailand's long history of religion, folk wisdom, and traditions through oral teachings within families and temples are considered one element of *Thainess*. The national religion, Buddhism, is still presented as the dominant religion through images of monks, Buddha statues, Buddhist ceremonies and Buddhist temples (image 5).



Image 5: Buddhist ceremony and temples as shown in 2015's *Amazing Thailand: Discover Thainess* campaign

Although an image of Islam is included in the campaign, its short time appearance suggests it is not as important as Buddhism. Besides, images referring to Islam are shown only through the representations of Muslims cap as opposed to the mosque or religious practices (image 6). This short presentation could also be seen as a hidden symbol of Muslims, which means that tourists might not recognize and, hence, do not perceive it to be related to Islamic culture at all. Therefore, the construction of *Thainess* in the campaign is implying that to be Thai, you (should be) are Buddhist.



Image 6: Muslim man in personal setting shown in 2015's *Amazing Thailand: Discover Thainess* campaign

In addition to constructing Thai as being Buddhist, the campaigns also highlight the images of traditions and festivals from different regions of Thailand. This is shown through the rich cultural heritage in terms of arts and festivals of the nation. Particularly in 2015's campaign, Thai arts are shown through various images that took place in temples, Thai silk products made in traditional way, and the ancient art of Thai boxing and dance. Festivals are also shown as a reflection of local traditions and beliefs, with many of them related to religious events. These arts and festivals have been positioned as authentic, sophisticated, sacred, and high-art cultures. This is shown in the images that often placed the arts within temple settings (image 7). These images could be analyzed as presenting the diversity within Thai culture, however, being Thai still means that you must respect Buddhist temples and religious-related arts and dances.





Image 7: The Southern shadow play (left) and the north-eastern dance (right) as presented in *Amazing Thailand: Discover Thainess* campaign

#### 4.1.4 Thai Happiness

In order to extend its promotional nickname of “The Land of Smiles”, the *Amazing Thailand* campaigns magnifies the happiness of Thai people. This means that the representations of Thai people have always been in the extreme hospitality character, together with other unique characters such as fun, laughter, and easy-going attitude. Thai people have been highly focused in the 2013’s campaign, where the narration of the video assert, “*The way of Thai, our way of unique happiness and it begins with the people*”. This claim of ‘unique happiness’ is presented through images of sharing jokes and laughter both among themselves and tourists at the festivals, markets, islands, and hills. The other aspect of happiness is presented by emphasizing on the importance of family, where Thai people are depicted as collective community; always staying and helping each other (image 8). Here, again, the image of tourist is shown. It might be relevant to note that these good traits of Thais being kind are only shown towards foreigners – emphasizing the intended audience of nation branding projects.



Image 8: The unique happiness and sharing cultures shown in *Amazing Thailand* campaigns.

#### 4.1.5 Thai Wellness

The last element of *Thainess* that has been highlighted is Thai wellness. This refers to the Thai style of massages as well as Thai traditional medicine, which make use of local and herbal medicines in the process (image 9). Thai massages are acknowledged as unique feature to Thailand, where tourists are welcomed to experience ‘traditional’ healing techniques in ‘traditional’ Thai spas. In other words, Thai spas and massages are positioned as national branding of Thailand, where the campaign invests certain practices with Thai character and labelled them as ‘authentic’ attraction for foreigners. This could also imply that the campaigns make use of the ‘invented tradition’ by preserving set of practices that are rituals and symbolic nature (e.g. Thai traditional medicines) to construct the vision of Thailand – it connects Thai wellness with the historic past.



Image 9: The traditional Thai massage using herbal medicines as shown in 2015's *Amazing Thailand: Discover Thainess* campaign

In conclusion, these five elements of *Thainess* have been repeatedly highlighted in the Thai national tourism advertisements as being the essence of *Thainess*. However, when compare these constructed *Thainess* to the literature of Thai nationalism, the representation of the royal family (Winichakul, 2008) is missing. None of the campaigns have shown images of the King or indications of the royal family. One possible reason for this absence would be that the campaigns are specifically intended for external audiences, tourists, and foreigners, hence, the pictures of Thai King would not mean as much to them as to Thai locals.

Nonetheless, considering the traditional definition of Thai nationalism as “a process constructed by continually focusing on the importance of people’s emotions and memories” (Winichakul, 2011, p.251), these elements support the literature. Not only are traditional religions and traditions highlighted, the rural/urban life, happiness, and Thai wellness are also presented here as ‘authenticity’ stemming out of the ancient history and cultural heritage of the Thai nation. However, the emphasis on ‘emotions and memories’ has also been criticized by Sattayanurak (2005) that it is an “obstacle to prevent Thai people from adapting themselves to the rapid changes in their society” (p.2). The scholar argues “the ideology of “Thainess” is too narrow to create sufficient “social space” for Thai people to attain necessary personal rights, freedom, and equality, as well as access to essential resources and the right to live a dignified life” (ibid). Linking her criticism with the way officials constructed *Thainess* in these campaigns, the mentioned themes are relevant because the pattern of these official top-down nation branding projects confirms the argument. It is true that some diversity (indication of Islamic culture) has been included, but they are relatively limited as compared to the dominant ideology.

To conclude the visual analysis, the campaigns are constructing a particular vision of the nation, presenting Thailand as an ‘immemorial’ community where historical pasts are used to construct a nation as something that has always been there. Hence, *Amazing Thailand* campaigns construct Thailand as an ethnic nation.

## **4.2 Interview Analysis**

In this section, the discourse analysis performed in interviews transcripts is presented. The findings are presented in two sections; the Thai diasporic conditions and the discussion of *Amazing Thailand* campaigns.

#### 4.2.1 The Thai Diasporic Conditions

When talking about being Thai, two patterns appeared during the conversations. The first pattern was the constant discussion on the Thai way of life participants construct when living in the Netherlands. Here, participants argued the need to negotiate their Thai identity with the Dutch identity as a mean of survival. This is also where hybrid identities are performed. The second pattern was the repeated use of the ‘us versus them’ frame to indicate the similarities and differences not only between themselves and their Dutch fellows, but also between themselves and other Thai people living in the Netherlands. As a result, through the discussion of diasporic conditions, we found how participants construct their own version of the nation as well as their performances of national identity.

##### (1) The Thai Way of Life

Across the interviews, Thai diasporas in the Netherlands identified themselves through various ethnic elements such as language and nationality. They defined being Thai as being born within the borders of Thailand, capable of speaking Thai, eating Thai food, having Thai characteristics and being flexible. Belonging to this nation also means knowing Thai values, beliefs, and traditions. This could be linked to the discourse of nationalism, where respondents articulated the definition of *Thainess* similarly to the official Thai nationalism. As a result, four main features were discussed in relation to being Thai; being Thai was associated with *language*, *food*, *unique characters*, and *flexibility*. However, results also showed that within these features, participants did not view them consistently as there were instants the features were criticized. Religion was the one element participants challenged. Through these results, we can see that Thai diaspora in this study construct the nation differently, suggesting there are multidisciplinary performances of identity.

##### *Thai Language*

Thai language was mentioned by all 13 respondents as being the most important element of *Thainess*. Although respondents come from different parts of Thailand with different dialects, they did not make a distinction between them, but instead agreed Thai language is a crucial identifier of being Thai. They took language as an aspect of culture that connects them together, regardless of social classes or regions they are from. This was shown in participant nr. 4’s story



“I like teaching foreigners and especially half-Thai-half-Dutch kids about Thailand. I think it is important for these kids to know about their roots. I believe teaching them Thai language will also give them insights about its culture, which I am proud every time I teach”.

Here, participant nr. 4 used the word ‘roots’ to indicate the ethnic aspect of national identity, emphasizing that language is something we are born with and should preserve.

Another example is illustrated in participant nr. 5’s emphasis on Thai language being very important for her work: “I must speak Thai every day at work which I really like. I feel that the language connects all of us together, like it makes us closer. It really doesn’t matter which part of Thailand we come from or what dialects we speak, as long as you speak and understand Thai, you are Thai”. The participant is homogenizing differences within the Thai nation, and prefers to present it as a unity, in spite of the existence of dialects.

Another finding regarding language is that respondents believe the pronoun structure of Thai language influences how Thai people behave. One common problem derive from this pronoun structure is that it supports the inequality of Thai society. Three out of 13 respondents agreed that Thai language’s complex pronouns are the main cause of this problem. This is because its pronouns are so variety, for example, it could be used in very formal to very casual, the difference of elderlies, male and female usage, or the multiple meanings of pronouns made the language unfixed, and hence, the division between pronouns used with different group of people causes social gaps.

Interestingly, in spite of this pride in their language, respondents mixed Dutch or English words/phrases with Thai. Eleven out of 13 participants speak Dutch fluently, therefore, it was more convenient for them to express their concepts in Dutch. They would assume I must speak the language too, but as I told them I do not understand Dutch, they would either switch to Thai or English. This switching between Dutch-Thai or English-Thai languages could be analyzed as a reflection of their negotiating of identity, displaying through the hybrid languages used. This reveals the hybrid identities present in those being part of diaspora.

### ***Thai Food***

When asking respondents to identify what *Thainess* for them entails, all 13 respondents confirmed that Thai food is an important element of the nation. Thai food was seen as part of the

Thai nation because it binds people together, regardless of social classes. This is illustrated by the struggle they faced when resided in the host nation, as participant nr. 8 revealed, “For Thai people, food is essential. I would say food is my main struggle of living here. It’s true that I have been living here for 11 years now, but Dutch or Western food is still something I could never fully adapt to”.

In addition, food was also perceived as being a source of social gathering. The definition of parties, events, and religious ceremonies for Thai people means that a great deal of food must be made and shared. Participant nr. 1 explained his culture shock experience at Dutch’s party:

“I once went to my Dutch friend’s house for a party. As a Thai person, I was expecting that there would be a lot of food to eat and that we would sit and eat together... it turned out that the only thing to eat there was chips and load of boozes (...) that was when I realized the meaning of party between my Dutch and Western friends are different than Thai people”.

This cultural difference in social events made it harder for participant nr. 1 to integrate with the people from his host nation. Food in this context was also used to differentiate the ‘other’; comparing the Thai party to the Dutch.

However, using Thai food for social gathering was also seen as a negative trait. Three out of 13 respondents expressed they did not understand why Thai people need to eat every time they meet. For them, eating together also involves the act of gossiping or talking behind somebody’s back, hence, it often leads to conflicts within the Thai community. This is also one of the reasons participant nr. 2 found it harder to integrate with other Thai diasporas than the Dutch. Even more, participant nr. 6 shared her story of being at a Thai food party as distressing, “I feel like the whole point of Thai events is not for food, but more for gossiping. Of course I like to eat Thai food as much as other Thai people, but I don’t like the way food is used as an excuse to talk bad about others”. The statement was made as a result from her conflict with other Thai diaspora in the party, which made her stopped joining Thai parties. Hence, it is proved here that respondents have different visions on Thai food.

### ***The unique Thai characters***

Another common element of *Thainess* emerged from the discourse analysis performed is the similar characteristics of Thai people. Although they come from different regions,

respondents agreed that some of the Thai characteristics are very unique. Participant nr. 11 went further and suggested that “Thai people will always be Thai. You will realize somebody is Thai just by his behavior”. Consequently, respondents used numerous words and adjectives to define the characteristics of Thai people, for example, ‘kind’, ‘submissive’, ‘soft’, ‘generous’, ‘friendly’, ‘caring’, ‘dependent’, and ‘collective’. Despite using in different contexts, these words appeared interchangeably in the discussion of *Thainess*. Hence, for these 13 respondents, Thai people are considered the heart of *Thainess* which could be implied that Thai nationalism is not possible without its people.

However, in the working context, respondents mentioned the shocking experience did not only come from Dutch people and environment, but also within the Thai community itself. Although participant nr. 5 is happy working with Thai colleagues, she admitted it was hard to deal with the traditional Thai character of ‘respecting seniority’. ‘Seniority’ in this case refers to both older people and higher social classes rankings. Since she works in a complete Thai environment, participant nr. 5 had to negotiate her identity every day,

“I often call myself a chameleon, I have to balance my Thai identity to the Dutch identity I absorbed through these years every day. It’s like compromising all the time...I have to select the good things about Thai characters and then adapt it to the Dutch ones, and vice versa (...) for example, I would keep the kind and generous character of Thai people, but not the submissive character when I work. I would use the Dutch’s directness and equal treatment instead of the Thai’s treatment based on preferences or seniority”.

Finally, participants described Thai people are fun and friendly. For example, participant nr. 7 said Thai people in the Netherlands are “super friendly and party lovers. I think this is because we lack the feeling of belonging...we miss our country so much that whenever there is a Thai party we just want to have fun and be crazy”. The construction of ‘us versus them’ frame is applied again, displaying the shared ethnic similarities between Thai diaspora (Triandafyllidou, 2006). The ‘fun’ and ‘friendly’ characteristics of Thai people as described by participants also confirmed the Thai nationalism concept as based on ‘people’s emotions’ (Thananithichot, 2011).

Nonetheless, three out of 13 respondents argued that these characteristics are negative traits. Because Thai people tend to joke around a lot, or what participant nr. 12 described as ‘undecisive’, they are perceived as not taking things seriously. Participant nr. 12 gave his own example of being called ‘stupid’ by his ex-boyfriend, “My (Dutch) ex-boyfriend used to call me

‘stupid’ every time I could not make decision about something...that I’m undecisive. He thought I acted like I don’t have a brain of my own or that I don’t know what I want. This is what I learned from him that our Thai politeness and undecisive characters are problematic here”. As a result, the findings showed the respondents’ acknowledgement that some of the characteristics of their home country is inapplicable to the host nation. They must then learn to adapt the two distinct characteristics and (re)produce their hybrid national identities (Brinkerhoff, 2009).

### ***The Thai Flexibility***

Findings have showed that flexibility is also an important element for *Thainess* in diasporic community. Being flexible in changing the way of life and mentality was used as a tool to adapt into the host nation. Despite cultural differences, respondents claimed they can overcome those challenges easily because they have a flexible ability to adapt into new environments. Participant nr. 10 revealed that she did not experience any difficulties living in the Netherlands because she is Thai and flexible, “I think Thais are lucky already because we can adapt quickly to new environments”.

However, the flexible attitude could also come in the form of self-identification of respondents. When asked respondents to identify themselves, eleven out of 13 respondents firmly asserted they are ‘undoubtedly Thai’, whereas the other two; participant nr. 12 classified himself as being both ‘Thai and Dutch’, and participant nr. 9 claimed herself as being a ‘global citizen’. For participant nr. 12, he revealed the story of him choosing between Thai and Dutch nationality when he moved in with his husband. Back then the Dutch law did not allow him to have two nationalities if he was on a partnership visa, therefore, he must choose:

“It was a tough decision for me. On the one hand, the feeling of not having Thai identification card and Thai nationality frightened me, but on the other, I also knew being Thai doesn’t only mean holding the Thai passport, it’s what inside me that count as Thai. Even if I’m holding Dutch nationality, the *Thainess* is always in me”.

On the contrary, while participant nr. 12 saw *Thainess* as something ‘inside’ him, participant nr. 9 did not stick to this ethnic national identity. She reflected her flexible character by identifying herself as a ‘global citizen’. She argued that she is not over-proud of being Thai, that the notion of *Thainess* does not affect her life, “Okay, you could say I am Thai because I was born in Thailand and have Thai nationality, but since I am here, I don’t emphasize that point, I am not *that* proud of my nationality or of being Thai....I think I consider myself more as a global

citizen”. The fact that she called herself a global citizen could implied that she went through the negotiation of national identity, turning into a hybrid-identity.

### ***Religion: Buddhism as non-Thai indicator***

According to Thai nationalism literature, Buddhism – as a national religion – is considered one element of *Thainess* (Winichakul, 2008). However, when asked respondents to define the meaning of *Thainess*, religion did not appear as one strong indicator of being Thai. The most common reasons given to this argument was that Buddhism does not belong to Thailand only, but it is dispersed in many countries in Asia. Moreover, respondents agreed that Thailand has become more open to other religions now, making it even more difficult to narrow Thai national identity to being Buddhist.

Being the only Muslim in this research, participant nr. 1 referred himself as a Thai-Muslim. He argued that religion could not be an attribute of *Thainess* because he does not feel less Thai being a Muslim than his friends who are Thai-Buddhists,

“I don’t think religion is an effective element of *Thainess*. For me, religion cannot measure if somebody is Thai. Take myself as an example, I’m a Muslim born and raised in the southern part of Thailand, although I know we are only 5% of the Thai population, I don’t feel less of being Thai than Buddhists. I think *Thainess* is not based on religion”. Participant nr. 1’s opinion reflects Brubaker and Cooper’s (2000) notion of treating identity as a category of analysis, in this case, using religion as a criterion rather than as an ‘objective reality’. In other words, national identity for him was approached differently depending on the category of analysis.

To sum up The Thai Way of Life section, despite agreeing that language, food, kindness, and flexibility are defining features of being Thai, participants were also critical. In contrast to the literature on Thai nationalism, religion did not appear to be an element of *Thainess* for respondents. It is here where we notice the cacophony of voices when it comes to the construction of the nation. Some participants are challenging the unitarity vision of the nation and differentiating their performance of identity. In other words, there is not one single performance of identity, but they are many, depending on participants personal experiences. Therefore, we can see that while performing national identity, participants also construct their own version of the Thai nation.

## **(2) Us versus Them**

In addition, when it comes to the diasporic condition, one common feature is the use of 'us versus them' frame. This frame was used in many different contexts, ranging from talking about people to talking about institutions and practices. However, 'us' and 'them' do not always refer to the same group. There are different meanings of 'us' and 'them'; 'us' referring to a nation versus 'them' another nation or 'us' as the same socioeconomic class versus 'them' another socioeconomic class. When respondents differentiated themselves from certain groups of people, it means they are constructing their own negotiation of national identity (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Moreover, similarities and differences are essential features in identity formation (De Cillia et al., 1999).

Findings in this section have shown that there is, again, cacophony of voices, where performances of national identity are done only in some cases, while in other cases it is challenged. When respondents reported the struggles they faced during their first years of moving to the country (explained that some of the Thai's personalities are not suitable in the Netherlands), they are creating the division of 'civic' and 'ethnic' nationalism. This is when the approach to national identity is no longer depending solely on the ethnic origins, but rather on the civic approach.

### ***'Us' as homogenous (ethnic national identity)***

The most frequent 'us' used was to refer to participant's own selves and the researcher, while 'them' as an indication of Dutch people or Westerners:

"You know right, as a Thai we were raised to pay respect to our teachers and elderlies (...) But that isn't the same here, Dutch or other Western students raise their voices to the teacher all the time, I'm sure you have experienced many times in your lecture classes... I'm sure you know what I mean".

Here, phrases like 'you know right', 'I'm sure you have experienced' and 'I'm sure you know what I mean' appeared often as participant nr. 11 was aware that her interviewer was a Thai diaspora and student living and studying in the Netherlands. She made assumptions that I must have similar experiences and understood her explanations. In other words, she included me as part of the 'us' frame as opposed to the Dutch and Westerners. By including me as part of the

Thai diaspora group, respondents created familiarity feelings because they thought I was somebody they could relate to. This use of ‘us’ signals how respondents make sense of their nationality to create familiarity; but also, how they understand nationality as a group of people who share a set of ethnic similarities (Triandafyllidou, 2006).

In addition to this, five respondents resided in the Netherlands for studying purposes admitted that having Thai friends was a positive thing because they felt more related to people coming from the same cultural backgrounds. Participant nr. 1 expressed this notion of cultural similarities as he explained why he would rather make more Thai friends than international friends at university:

“Because I believe Thai culture is based on a ‘dependent’ culture, which means when we know one Thai person, we would keep in touch with him and stay collective forever...we always have to stay in group. And this is different from Westerners, because they are more independent and likely to stay on their own. That’s why I think Thai community is very strong in this sense (...) the same culture we shared, whether it’s the same language or same food make it easier for us to relate to each other”.

Again, the ‘us versus them’ frame and the ethnic similarities have been applied to differentiate the group he belongs to.

### ***‘Us’ as challenging the homogeneity of the nation (civic national identity)***

The ‘us versus them’ frame in this group was used in moments when participants challenge the homogeneity of *Thainess*. Instead of celebrating the one-single ‘nation’, they point to the fact that there are many divisions within the body of the nation.

The first challenge was the use of ‘us’ to refer to educated Thai and ‘them’ as uneducated Thai. The term ‘other’ was especially used to refer to Thai women living in the Netherlands whom belong to different social classes. Respondents negatively viewed this group of Thai women as the ‘bad’ Thai. When asked if they seek for Thai community, seven out of 13 respondents reveal that connecting to other Thai diasporas was ‘unnecessary’. Respondents in this group were mostly women that came to the Netherlands for marriages. They all argued knowing Thai people did not make their lives better or worse, it did not change anything. Some also said the more Thai people they know, the more stressed they become. Although respondents did not say it explicitly, they often referred to this ‘other’ group of Thai women as having low

level of education. This ‘other’ frame was used mostly by female respondents who are already married or in a relationship with Dutch men as they represent the group that got affected by this stereotype. This is shown in participant nr. 6’s story,

“Because we are Thai women coming to live here and since other Thai women have bad reputation, as you know, it’s... it’s rather difficult. The reputation is so bad that when I came here, I experienced weird stares from my neighbors, so I thought, I couldn’t just sit around at my house the whole day while my husband goes out to work, otherwise they would think I am like those women, so I had to find my own job”.

The starring experience she got from her Dutch neighbors made her differentiate herself from this ‘other’ Thai women. In other words, being Thai women living in the Netherlands means they must carry such stereotype, regardless of their background. Therefore, respondents felt obliged to prove themselves by finding a job. This reputation of ‘bad’ Thai women have been widely discussed as bringing the bad image to the country, placing false perceptions of Thai women to foreigners (Nuttavuthisit, 2007). This false perception, therefore, influenced participants to not use ethnic similarities to imagine their community when living in the host nation.

The term ‘other’ was also used to refer to Thai people living in Thailand. This construction of ‘us’ as Thai diaspora and ‘them’ as Thai people living within the border of Thailand emerged mostly in the discussion of the feeling of being Thai in the Netherlands. Four out of 13 respondents automatically switched to the comparison analysis, where they compared their own lives in Thailand and lives in the Netherlands. Most of them mentioned how ‘privileged’ they feel being Thai in the Netherlands than within the borders of Thailand. Mobility, hence, plays a role in respondent’s negotiation of national identity. Participant nr. 12 expressed this privilege through his 16 years’ experience of living abroad:

“Being Thai in Holland makes me feel a little more privileged than in Thailand. It’s like I have more opportunities in life...like the opportunity to see the world from another side. I didn’t mean privilege in the sense of being in higher class by the way, I mean we (Thai diaspora) have a better chance to enhance our vision”.

The ‘other’ was also used by respondents to differentiate themselves from different religions. This ethnic approach to national identity (Lecours, 2000) is repeatedly used among respondents when trying to discuss some of the challenges they face when living in the Netherlands. While Buddhism is a national religion and twelve out of 13 respondents identified



themselves as Buddhists, respondents drew a division line between two kinds of Buddhists; the 'good' and the 'bad' Buddhists. The 'good' Buddhists referred to those people practiced the religion strictly by attending Buddhist ceremonies at Thai temples, whereas the 'bad' Buddhists mean those that never go to the temple as well as have negative perception of Buddhism. As a result, religion was not only used to differentiate from different religion, but also within the same religion.

Lastly, being a diaspora also made them identify themselves as 'us' Thai-Dutch and 'them' the non-Dutch living in the Netherlands. For example, participant nr. 12 shared his problem of how being gay in the Netherlands made him feel uncomfortable in the eyes of non-Dutch and Muslims; "If Dutch society only composes of Dutch people, this would not be a problem, but because there are Moroccan and Turks living here as well, and since their Islamic religion are strict about this, that's where homosexual becomes a problem". Here, the host nation is recognized to be a medley of different groups in itself, thus, evidence of division is presence.

To sum up the findings regarding diasporic conditions, results have showed that there are moments when participants used the discourse of nationalism and there are moments when they do not use it. This could be linked to the performance of national identity where participants tend to perform national identity context when it suits them, however, when it doesn't suit them, they go for other types of identities. The discourse of nationalism is challenged in the Thai diasporic community.

#### **4.2.2 Discussion of *Amazing Thailand* campaigns**

The second part of the interview involved using material probes from the two selected *Amazing Thailand* campaigns to trigger discussions of national identity in the context of nation branding campaigns. Twelve out of 13 respondents acknowledged the existence of the campaigns and admitted they had watched or seen the videos created by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) at least once in their life. Consequently, respondents could easily point out the elements and patterns the TAT used in promoting the nation, as well as refer to other campaigns they have previously engaged with. Although most of them admitted they have seen the tourism videos long time ago (10 years or more), they believed the construction of *Thainess* created by TAT did not change much. This could mean that participants still attach to their ethnic identities, believing the sense of *Thainess* is unchangeable. However, acknowledging the

campaigns does not necessarily mean respondents perceive them as true or agreeing with the representations of Thailand and Thai people. On the contrary, findings have shown that there are paradox views regarding the representations of the campaigns.

In this section, the discussion of how in relating to the campaign, participants agreed with the certain images of *Thainess* presented by the campaigns and when they disagree with them are presented.

### **1. The paradox of *Thainess* in *Amazing Thailand* campaigns**

The two standpoints as taken by respondents regarding the construction of the Thai nation in tourism campaigns are: (1) those that agree with the construction of the nation and support the campaigns as accurate representations of *Thainess*, and (2) those that disagree with the construction of the nation and criticize the campaigns as official tool in promoting the country, hence, exaggerating the representations of *Thainess*. These two different viewpoints have been grouped based on respondents' real-life experience and their responses towards the images shown in *Amazing Thailand* videos.

#### ***Agreement with the construct of nation: 'Amazing Thailand' as accurate representations of Thainess***

Two out of 13 respondents argued that the campaigns showed precise depictions of Thailand and its people. When watching the campaigns, the two participants agreed with the images they saw. For example, participant nr. 4 mentioned the 'sharing of food' culture as very Thai, "(while watching the video) that is very Thai! Sharing food and eating is absolutely Thai... *Thainess* is that (pointed to the video), sharing food". Respondents in this group believed the highlighted elements of *Thainess* in the videos such as people's 'smiles', 'happiness', 'Buddhist ceremonies' as well as 'the Thai way of life' are real and what they define as *Thainess*. Participant nr. 7 supported this idea by claiming the honest images used in the campaigns are what made the campaign effective:

"One thing I like about *Amazing Thailand* campaigns is the fact that TAT used real-life images and events existed in real Thai society to promote the country. I like it. I don't feel they are fake. And I know foreigners will feel this sense of realness in the videos as I do too".

Imagining herself as both Thai and foreign audience of the campaign, participant nr. 7 assumed a similar interpretation between the two groups.

A similar response was given by participant nr. 4 where she defined *Thainess* through the representations of Thai way of life as being ‘simple’ and Thai people as being ‘kind’. Especially in the 2013’s *Amazing Thailand; it begins with the people* video, participant nr. 4 expressed that the representations are very authentic, “This is very Thai. It shows the real Thai way of life; from farming to Thai massages... the video really presents the simplicity of Thai life, it shows that we live with nature”. Consequently, the two participants in this group emphasized the realness of the images and events in the videos, reflecting the positive reaction of the nation branding effort.

The two respondents also argued that these advertisements reminded them of ‘home’. Participant nr. 7 even cried while watching the campaigns. When asked for the reason she was crying, participant nr.7 confessed, “I just miss home so much. Seeing this video reminds me *how proud I am of Thailand and being Thai*”. This nationalistic statement of being ‘proud’ of the nation confirms the imagined community Thai diaspora created –even when they are outside the country’s border, the yearning of home is still presence. The fact that the campaign was able to trigger participant’s emotions also proved that nation branding project do affect the building of national identity of its member. Arguing from Edensor’s (2002) concept of tourism being the ‘stage of the nation’ (p.84), tourism advertisements go beyond its aim of branding the nation and targeting external audiences. They play a bigger role in holding the sense of belonging among afar co-nationals together, as well as, invoke a sentimental national identity performance from its member of the nation.

Perhaps, one can even interpret the crying and the nationalistic statement respondents created by watching tourism campaigns as a source of pride. Since the campaigns only portray positive images of Thailand, the images provide people with a sense of self-esteem, especially when they are in diasporic conditions and are constantly prompted to reflect on their own differences. This source of pride and self-esteem might have emerged due to the constant use of ‘other’ as the bad-Thai-women (the stereotype Thai women carry), relating themselves and conforming to the representations of *Thainess* in the campaigns, thus, help them feel as if they are gaining more social statuses. This has proved to be more relevant when looking at participant nr. 4 and 7’s statuses as Thai wives to Dutch men.

***Disagreement with the construct of nation: ‘Amazing Thailand’ as official tool to promote (false) Thainess***

The dominant position of respondents in relating to the construction of a nation in the campaigns was performed through a more critical approach to nation and national identity. Eleven out of 13 participants had strong opinions towards the representations of *Thainess* as being the state’s tool to promote the tourism industry. They tended to criticize the way certain images of Thai people as well as Thai society has been portrayed. Yet, while they criticized the false representations of *Thainess*, respondents also accepted and acknowledged why the images are represented in such a way.

One pattern emerged from the discourse analysis performed in this group of respondents was that they constantly shifted their position as Thai audience to foreign audience when watching the videos. This means that they tried to imagine what foreigners would think about these campaigns as opposed to thinking in the eyes of Thai audience. The pattern therefore make use of the ‘us versus them’ frame, this time positioning themselves as representations of both groups. Participant nr. 12 made use of this pattern as he asked if he should give his opinions from a Thai’s perspectives or from the Dutch. He then argued that the campaigns could be interpreted differently by the two groups, which he felt he could relate to both:

“It depends on which role you want me to take. If you want me to put the glasses of foreigners on, then I would interpret these campaigns as beautiful and attractive...like they really make me want to visit the country. But if you ask from a Thai audience perspective, I would say the representations are unrealistic. The good things shown here only applied to foreigners...you would not be treated as nice as how the videos show if you are Thai”.

In addition to positioning themselves as both Dutch and Thai audiences, participants in this group showed a strong disagreement with the portrayals of Thai people. The words used in describing the images of Thai smiles’ and ‘happiness’ were mostly negatives, for example, ‘fake’, ‘overrepresenting’, ‘overacting’ and ‘exaggerating’. Participant nr. 5 emphasized this point by mentioning that the representations are too limited, and that Thai people seem to be ‘too kind’ and ‘too happy’ in the videos:

“I know tourism campaigns are meant for promoting the country, I get it.... but if you ask me, I also find the representations of Thai people being happy and smiling all the

time annoying (...) I feel like these representations have been here forever, it's so restricted".

Here, the words 'annoying' and 'restricted' could implied that she is challenging the positive images of Thai people being happy and smiley. Participant nr. 5 argued later that she never smiled that much nor seen any Thais, both in Thailand and in the Netherlands, showing that much happiness through a smile. It is here that the promises of discourse of nationalism claiming people from the same nation must share the same features, in this case, Thai happiness and smiling, are challenged.

Moreover, the smiles and happiness highlighted by the two campaigns also brought up the discussion of 'fake happiness'. Here, respondents were questioning the meaning of Thai's smiles the campaigns emphasized. For example, participant nr. 1 explained that, for Thai people, smiling doesn't necessarily mean happiness:

"I feel like after watching this video, foreigners would think Thai people are very happy people because we smile all the time. But you know that's not always the case, we smile not because we are happy, but because it's our nature".

Using the word 'nature' in this sense implies that participant nr. 1 approached national identity ethnically – something he is born with. By defining the 'smiles' as the 'nature of Thai people', participant nr. 1 unconsciously becomes more nationalistic, claiming something is there because of his ethnic origin. However, it's important to note that this notion of 'smiling as nature' emerged from participant nr. 1's experience as an exchange student in the U.S and as a Bachelor student in the Netherlands, the places he got asked frequently by foreigners about his smiles. He admitted he never thought about it when he was living in Thailand. Therefore, this could have implied that he becomes more critical when he lives outside his home country, that mobility is a factor in making him more critical.

Another aspect of fake representations revealed by respondents in this group is the way the campaigns portray 'fake hospitality' of Thai people. Respondents commented that the videos are exaggerating the image of Thai people as being too generous, when in reality, people are not that nice. Participant nr.12 argued these representations are fake because they are made only to 'please' foreigners and neglected Thai people. He supported this argument by sharing his story of being treated 'unfriendly' at a shopping mall in Thailand:

“So I was in a shoe shop with my Dutch friend back then, my friend was tall, blonde and all that Western look. When my friend asked the shop assistant for some help, she was smiling and super friendly, but when it was my turn to ask for help, she just looked annoyed and changed her voice immediately. That’s when I realized for *who* these representations were for, definitely not us as a Thai person”.

Participant nr. 12 further criticized how Thai people judged others by their physical look as opposed to the personal behavior of that person. He then compared to Dutch people, who he believed treat everyone equally, “My life here has taught me to look at people beyond their skin color or where they come from, this is what I do in my everyday life”. It is important to note here that the statement is evidently challenging the discourse of nationalism in a way that being part of the same nation does not mean they have to share similar features. Here, participant nr. 12 emphasized the fact that living abroad has given him opportunities to learn to judge others by their personal behaviors as opposed to their places of origin. This also means that he is performing a hybrid identity, where he compares the Thai’s treatment of people to the Dutch’s way of equally treating people. It is considered hybrid because he adapts to the Dutch’s identity and change his behavior accordingly.

Another aspect of fake representations in the campaigns are the ‘fake way of life’. Respondents in this group argued that the videos set up scenarios they ‘wish’ existed in real Thai society. They referred to images of Thai people placing water jar in front of their houses to ‘welcome guests’, as the narrative suggested, whereas in reality, no such thing could be seen. Participant nr. 9 shared her story of not being able to find those jars when she travelled in Thailand, even if she knows exactly the place the video was shot:

“I never saw any water jar welcoming me... these are just fake images of Thai way of life. They are images of what officials wanted foreigners to think about us, they are just representing the *ideal* image of how Thai people *supposed* to be”.

Words such as ‘ideal image’ and ‘supposed to be’ signifies that participant nr. 9 is aware of the representations being part of the nation branding project and approaches nationalism as an ideology rather than objective reality (Gellner, 2006; Anderson, 1991). In other words, the positive images presented in the tourism campaigns are not related to the member of the nation (Thai people). It could also have implied that she sees these images as a myth or stories the official created to impose perfect representations of the nation.

Furthermore, the representations of Thailand and its people have been criticized as showing the division between modern and traditional images. Respondents questioned the repeated representations of Thai villages, countryside, or somewhere with less civilization as being the main attraction for tourists. On the one hand, they accepted that these images show an ‘exotic’ experience for foreigners, on the other hand, they felt these representations might influence the ways external audiences think about Thailand. Participant nr. 6 commented on the short presentations of modernity in the campaigns as enhancing the ‘primitive’ and ‘traditional’ images of the country:

“I mean if someone who has never been to Thailand watch these videos, they are going to look at Thailand differently. It’s like, before my husband goes to Thailand, he also had certain expectations about the country, but when he actually went there he realized Thailand wasn’t *that* low-technology. We have sky train, we have great metro systems. So I think it’s about time our tourism advertisements begin to sell new angle such as the new modern Thai way of life to foreigners”.

Here, participant nr. 6 repeated use of the word ‘new’ suggested that the tourism campaigns are unconsciously making Thailand fall behind other nations. In a way, participant nr. 6 is questioning this traditional image the campaigns constructed. Not that she thinks it’s not real, but the repeated representations of local areas need to be changed in order to impose better and modernized images of the nation. The statement could also be linked to criticisms of nation branding projects that they are homogenizing a culture and proposing a unitarity vision of the nation. For participant nr. 6, the campaigns are creating a negative image to the country rather a positive one.

In addition, these traditional representations could also apply to the way the campaigns portray limited images of Thai people. Respondents holding this opinion argued that most of Thai people presented in the advertisements are those living in the countryside, e.g. farming people. Participant nr. 5 questioned the lack of representing bigger group of Thai population such as those living in the city (unhappily):

“I feel like the video represents only one group of people. And of course, this group are represented as happy because they live in the countryside, having ‘slow life’ without stressing over traffics like people in the city. Still, the representations are too limited.”

The word ‘limited’ is suggesting a negative perception towards the campaigns. In a way, participant nr. 5 suggested there should be more diversity in representing Thai people. This critique on marginalizing people in nation branding project corresponds to scholars Kaneva (2011) and Aronczyk (2013) where they suggest the project enhances the differentiation and normalization of people within the nation.

The last aspect of *Thainess* that has been challenged is ‘Thai music’. Respondents argued that the music used in the campaigns is “nothing special”. The music is criticized as being normal sounds which could be found in any Asian countries. Participant nr. 12 shared his story of when his Dutch husband commented on Thai music as similar to Laos and Indonesian music. This is where participant nr. 12 realized that tourism campaigns tend to claim certain things in social life as ‘uniquely ours’ or that it is originally an essence of Thailand. In other words, he implied that nation branding efforts are used to propose an ideology – a constructed meaning of *Thainess* to society.

#### **4.3 The relationship between video analysis and discourse of interview analysis**

In this section, the relationship between the video analysis and the interview analysis will be presented. Based on the visual analysis, the two selected tourism videos showed five main elements of *Thainess*; the rural and urban life, food, religion/arts/festivals, happiness, and wellness. However, the interviews with Thai diaspora present a different relation and vision of the nation. There is more heterogeneity in interviews as participants disagree and challenge the official construction of the nation, which suggests that they are critical of this top-down nation branding efforts. Respondents recognized that nation branding effort is needed for external audiences, but it doesn't mean they identified with it.

For the construction of ‘rural and urban life’, respondents’ stories in diasporic conditions reflect the images presented in the campaigns. Images of beautiful sceneries, landscapes and good weather of Thailand has been compared to the lack of mountains and terrible weather in the Netherlands. The campaign’s emphasis on nature also symbolizes the ‘simple’ life Thai people have. Because of the peacefulness the nature offers, the videos represent Thai people as having stress-free life. Respondents also mentioned this notion of nature lovers and unstressed life in the interviews. In the diasporic condition contexts, Thai diaspora tended to adapt the presented way of life into their Dutch society. They attempted to mix the two cultures together, for example,



learning to be more ‘independent’ like the Dutch and less ‘collective’ community like Thais. This resulted in most respondents avoid finding Thai community in the Netherlands.

In terms of the responses to the tourism campaigns, participants showed great engagement with *Amazing Thailand* campaigns. However, results have showed that most of the participants criticize the campaigns rather than agree with them. Words used to criticize the campaigns are ‘too exaggerate’, ‘too traditional’, or ‘fake’. It is true that respondents were aware of the campaigns being official tool to promote the tourism industry, but they also challenged the discourse of nationalism as being too limited. On the contrary, they suggested a more diverse representations of the campaigns and expected wider aspects of being Thai such as living in modern city to be shown.

For Thai food, the element was brought up both in the discussion of diasporic conditions and the engagement with *Amazing Thailand* campaigns. Food is essential in Thai diasporas’ lives because it is performed in their everyday lives, both for themselves and for their Dutch/international friends. Despite coming from different regions with different eating habits, Thai diaspora studied in this research confirmed Thai food is what hold Thai people and their community together. However, food was also seen as a negative trait due to its ability to gather Thai people in a big group. Participants criticized the way Thai people use food as an excuse to gather for gossiping about others. Respondents also shared incidents where Thai people fight over this issue. Similarly, images of the sharing of food in the campaigns were perceived as ‘too unrealistic’ because such action could not be experienced anymore in Thailand. As a result, although a strong relationship between the representations of Thai food in the national campaigns and diasporas’ lives are presence, respondents challenged the constructed nation as not representing the real situation of the nation. It is here that respondents showed a different view of the nation.

The third element, Thai religion, is also perceived differently among Thai diasporas. While the campaigns highlight the importance of Buddhism being an element of *Thainess*, respondents’ interviews showed a different result. In the first part of the interview where diasporic conditions were discussed, respondents argued that Buddhism could not be used as a category to define *Thainess*. It is important to note that only one respondent is Muslim, therefore, the fact that other twelve respondents agreed to this notion is appealing. This means that they are aware of the diverse religions within the borders of Thailand as opposed to generalizing the

whole country to one religion. Taking their personal experiences into consideration, respondents admitted they are not conforming to the ‘good’ Thai Buddhists because they rarely go to temple. As for the responses on *Amazing Thailand* campaigns regarding the representation of Buddhism, respondents only mentioned the tangible aspects of the religion, i.e. the temple, monks, or Buddha statues which they know it’s a symbol of Buddhism, however, no relation has been made. This could therefore be implied that Buddhism is not identified as *Thainess* for respondents as the nation branding project constructed.

The relationship between the representation of arts/festivals in the videos and respondents’ interview also go into different direction. Based on the previous element of Buddhism not being *Thainess*, it is logical to see why traditions and festivals did not come up as often in the discussion. This is because most of the traditions and festivals presented in the campaigns are mostly religious events, thus respondents did not identify them being an important element of *Thainess*. However, during the discussion of the campaigns, respondents showed great relation to these events. In other words, the festivals might not be perceived as *Thainess*, but being Thai and living in Thailand for sometimes in their lives make them related to the festivals.

Another contrasting ideas between the *Thainess* as constructed by the campaigns and respondents’ interviews is the concept of ‘Thai happiness’. Respondents were critical to the representations of Thai’s ‘smiles’ and ‘kindness’. Most of them did not define ‘Thai happiness’ as smiling. In fact, the concept was not brought up at all during the discussion of Thai national identity. On the contrary, respondents related to these representations more as exaggerating images to attract tourists, something they found as not related to their everyday lives. The kindness of Thai people as shown in the campaigns were also seen to only apply to foreigners and not Thai people. Similarly, the last element of *Thainess* shown in the visual analysis, ‘Thai wellness’, was not considered part of the Thai national identity as they felt the practice was intentionally aimed for external tourist only.

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to examine the relation Thai diaspora make with the constructed nation in nation branding efforts. In order to answer research questions “*how do members of Thai diaspora in the Netherlands relate to the construction of the nation in Amazing Thailand tourism campaign and how do they articulate their own national identity in this process*”, the modernist approach to nationalism was used as the guiding theoretical framework. Following Gellner (1983) and Anderson (1991) thought, nationalism in this research is defined as a modern ideology for dominant social groups to maintain their power. By using the ‘imagined community’ theory, or the socially constructed idea that individuals share things in common without personally knowing each other, the theory allowed the research to uncover if Thai respondents imagined themselves as belonging to Thai community, even if they are living outside the borders of Thailand.

In addition, theories of nation branding by Aronczyk (2013), Kaneva (2011), Kaneva and Popescu (2011) criticizing the effort as political tool which “narrowly circumscribe national imaginaries” (Kaneva & Popescu, 2011, p.203) was applied in analyzing the tourism national campaigns. The research also took national identity as a performance (Gill, 2005; Edensor, 2002) to see how Thai diaspora perform their national identity during the interviews. The connection between nationalism and nation branding is then drawn to reveal the extent top-down official projects shape its citizen’s national identity. The connection was that, since nation branding and tourism advertisements are intended to (re)present the nation to international markets and external audiences, the project is considered “another form of imagined community” (Fernandez, 2017, p.12). The internationality of national identity constructed by nation branding experts is therefore effective in studying how members of that nation make sense of the project. Consequently, the study went further to explore the relation of diaspora community outside the nation, the Thai diaspora in the Netherlands, assuming mobility to cause different vision of the nation.

Furthermore, the research attempted to de-essentialize the official’s narration of Thai nationalism in the tourism advertisements through the discourses used by participants. The theory on Thai nationalism was then explored to understand the constructed meaning of *Thainess*, so that comparison between representations in the advertisements and those from diasporas’ interpretation of the campaigns could be made. In this manner, reviewing these

different theories, along with the use of visual analysis on selected campaigns, in-depth interviews with members of Thai diaspora and discourse analysis method, the study was promised sufficient tools in answering the research question. This mix methods of analyzing both visual elements and interview data provided the research more insights as the analysis did not only examine the constructed ideology of *Thainess*, but also how these elements of Thai national identity are understood by its afar national members.

Through the visual analysis of the 2013's *Amazing Thailand: it begins with the people* and 2015's *Amazing Thailand: Discover Thainess*, as well as, the discourse analysis of the interviews, results have showed that preliminary assumptions were met only to some extent. Although the visual analysis proved that nation branding project constructs a single vision of the nation through five main aspects; rural/urban life, food, religion/arts/festivals, happiness and flexibility, the discourse analysis performed in interviews showed opposite findings. In the interviews, respondents were able to recognize and take pride on the highlighted elements of *Thainess*, however, the majority of them were critical about these representations. They criticized how the campaigns normalize Thailand and its people to have same features, when in (their) reality, there are different types of Thais and distinct aspects of *Thainess*. Drawing from personal experiences, respondents related their lives, both when living in Thailand and in the Netherlands, to the images shown in the campaigns.

The aspects of *Thainess* that have been challenged are mostly portrayals of Thai people being unrealistically happy, smiley, and kind. Respondents pointed out that these traits might influence the way foreigners think about Thai people. They admitted the representations are positive images of the nation, however, the images neglect the more realistic aspects of being Thai. Findings have showed that diasporic condition is a condition of multiplicity, that each individual performs or refuses to perform national identity in their own way. The fact that participants are not happy with the campaign and challenge these national representations could demonstrate that in everyday life, the idea of a nation is way more disputed and challenged than the official discourse tries to convey. Not everyone who comes from the same large background shares the same opinions, as some people are more attached to certain things and some are not. By looking at the nation from the grassroot level, we realize that this idea that we are all the same is purely a myth. It is true that people accept this idea of a 'Thai nation' and can reproduce it, however, we do not see the homogeneity that the nation is promising. Therefore, to answer the

first research question, members of Thai diaspora in the Netherlands relate to the construction of the nation in *Amazing Thailand* campaigns critically – as results suggest, indeed, nation branding efforts are criticized by members of the nation.

Another assumption regarding the articulation of national identity diasporas perform in ethnic premise has also been proved to some extent. Again, there are cacophony of voices presented in the discourse analysis of the interviews. Results have showed that there are moments when respondents reproduced the discourse of nationalism and emphasized positive features of being Thai through language, food, characteristics, and flexibility, however, there are moments when they are critical about them. Such critical moments are when they used the ‘us versus them’ frame to make a differentiation from the group they do not want to be associated with, for example, the Thai uneducated women resided in the Netherlands for marriages. These are moments when they preferred a hybrid identity, switching themselves from a Thai person to a Thai/Dutch identity. This could also imply that the discourse of nationalism suggesting Thai community as a collective Thai identity have been shifted from an ethnic based identity towards a civic identity. Being diasporas and living in the Netherlands might be an answer to why participants articulate their own national identity more on the social ties of the host nation than the myths of *Thainess*. As a result, to answer the second research question, members of Thai diaspora articulate their national identity by constructing their own vision of the nation, making use of their experiences of living in the Netherlands, and performing their own national identity through the learning/socializing culture of the host nation, hence, (re)producing a hybrid identity.

Apart from contributing to the Thai nation branding research, this study suggests that nation branding literature could benefit from understanding how members of the nation themselves make sense of national tourism campaigns. Although directly to foreign audiences, nevertheless, how the campaigns are made sense of by people who are portrayed in them is provided in this study. The findings support the cultural approaches studies, where nation branding is seen as a discourse and ‘politics of identity’ criticized by members of the nation. Especially as results on the discussion of the campaigns suggest huge criticisms, nation branding in this study is perceived as “limits the range of possible national identity narratives and shapes them for the benefit of external (Western) audiences” (Kaneva, 2011, p.128). In relation to this notion, the study also supports Gill (2005)’s argument of national identity being a performance. When talking about their life as a diaspora in the Netherlands, participants were able to express

themselves more easily than when discussing *Amazing Thailand* campaigns. This implies that people tend to perform national identity in particular context when it suits them, but when it doesn't, they go for other types of identities. This explains why results on the diasporic conditions, especially the Thai way of life section, are longer and more emphasized by respondents than the discussion on *Amazing Thailand* campaigns. Based on this fact, it could be implied that nation branding efforts fail to resonate people through their campaigns.

Additionally, the research also contributes to national identity studies, especially on ethnic and civic approach of national identity (Lecours, 2000). Regarding the Thai national identity, the theory suggests that the nation is built on ethnic basis such as historical pasts and narrative myths. This is true only when participants share their stories of being in diasporic conditions, where the Thai way of life such as language and food are seen to connect them with their culture of origin. Also, when asked to identify their national identity, participants revealed they are undoubtedly Thai; they perceived national identity as an inborn trait. However, within these features and the discussion of *Amazing Thailand* campaigns, the majority of participants challenge the discourse of nationalism by criticizing the campaign. The fact that they criticized national campaigns could imply that they are developing a more civic approach towards hybrid national identities (Aydin, 2016). Therefore, it is fair to say they become more aware of nationalism being a socially constructed concept because of their diaspora experiences – national identity is not an inherited trait, but a learnt process. On this note, the study also contributes to transnationalism literature as it supports the argument of national identity being produced and reproduced constantly across transitional spaces (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Finally, the study's emphasis on discourse analysis in interview transcripts (highlighting words, sentences, paragraphs respondents used) reveals that, indeed, nationalism is a discourse that affects the way me and participants talk about ourselves and the world we live in. It seems as if nation and national identity are mundane concepts which we assume their meanings are common sense knowledge. When in fact, participants found it difficult to define *Thainess* without relating to the constructed nationalism they read or experienced from nation branding projects.

Although discourse analysis was proved to be beneficial for analyzing the interview data in this research, the method contains certain limitations as well. The first limitation found was its instrument of relying on the researcher to select and analyze the data. As previously mentioned in chapter 3, the researcher's perceptions might affect the way data are analyzed and presented.

Thus, it is important to acknowledge that being a Thai researcher myself might lead to some prejudices as opposed to the researcher being an outsider of the Thai community. The second limitation found regarding the performing of discourse analysis was the method's reliance of present moment and personal discourses of respondents. Since in-depth interviews are highly individual and context-based, the results could only be applied to Thai diasporas who live in the Netherlands and not elsewhere. A lot of Dutch cultural values were brought up during the interviews, hence, some of the results would not be found if the study was done in another context.

Considering the status of respondents in this study with high education level and mostly white-collar professions, it comes as no surprise why most of them criticize the *Amazing Thailand* tourism campaigns. Their understandings of nation as a construction created by nation branding experts and national identity being unfixed are close to academics' debate. Nonetheless, results would have been different if respondents were from another social backgrounds, perhaps a more ethnic approach to national identity that match the *Thainess* myths or less criticisms towards the campaigns might have been found. Furthermore, the fact that respondents in this study challenged portrayals of the nation and national identity in the selected *Amazing Thailand* campaigns does not mean they would interpret other nation branding projects the same way. A suggestion for future research would be to study on other types of nation branding projects, for example, different campaigns with contrasting themes or mediums that present the notion of *Thainess* more implicitly – if the campaigns were more implicit, respondents might relate to them differently. It could also be beneficial in future research if the study is done through focus groups, in order to strengthen the notion of national identity being a performance. By comparing different groups of diasporas discussing nation branding campaigns, results might tell us how, even belonging to the same diaspora community, national identities are performed diversely.

Whether the two selected *Amazing Thailand* campaigns are or not more relevant to trigger different visions of the nation and performance of national identity than other nation branding projects is yet to be furthered research. In this study, the relation Thai diaspora make with the constructed nation in nation branding efforts and their negotiation of national identity has been proved to be interrelated. Nation branding efforts are heavily criticized by Thai diasporas in the Netherlands.

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## Appendix A

### Visual Analysis

#### Campaign 1: 2013 Amazing Thailand: it begins with the people (1 minute)

(the campaign is aimed at reminding locals and visitors alike of the uniqueness of the Thai experience. The campaign run across worldwide cable channels including CNN, AXN, as well as online (YouTube).

<b>Narration</b>	<i>“Thai people are born in such a <b>unique</b> place. We have lots of water, so we keep a jar of water in front of our house <b>to welcome guests</b>. We float markets on it, we throw it <b>for festive fun</b>, and we use it to shower elephants... sometimes. Our weather allows us to <b>laugh</b> only on two days; the days which are <b>sunny</b> and the days which are not. <b>Food is plentiful</b>. We have fish in the water, rice in the fields, that’s why we always make lots of it <b>so we can share</b>. <b>The way of Thai, our way of unique happiness and it begins with the people...Amazing Thailand</b>”</i>
<b>Images</b>	<b>(Rural and urban life)</b> Beautiful landscapes/scenery with beaches, nature, water, floating market (the importance of water to Thai culture)  Foreigners enjoying sunny days at the beach  <b>Food</b> from local, buffalo suggesting the rice field, a lot of seafoods (abundant land)  <b>Smiling Thai people</b> ; mostly from <b>rural/ working class people</b> (kids, women, men). Smiling of both Thai and foreigners ( <b>hospitality/happiness</b> )
<b>Sequence</b>	Leading by the narration → describing the importance of water to Thai culture, festivals, and Thai food. <b>End with SMILES = Happiness</b>
<b>Music</b>	Thai music with different tones and moods to fit with different aspects of highlighted topics; exciting music for festivals and fun aspects of Thai people.

**Campaign 2: 2015 Amazing Thailand: Discover Thainess (2:25minutes)**

Texts	Discover the meaning of life	Discover True Beauty	Discover what you really love to do
Images	<p>(Rural life = unspoiled by (Western) city; hospitality, authenticity) Water, nature, sunset, hills, mountains, foreigner saying hi to local people,</p> <p>Thai guy offering the foreigner tea (rural setting) VS Thai lady offering a foreign couple orange juice in a hotel (urban setting), → <b>Hospitality</b></p> <p>Modern Thai family making merits with Buddhist monks in the city, a taxi driver paying respect to buddha statue → <b>Religion</b></p> <p>TukTuk (Thai three-wheels motorbike) waiting for his foreign customer → <b>Authenticity</b></p>	<p>(The 'unique' Thai characteristics and festivals) Thai people cheering and dancing in the Buddhist ordination ceremony</p> <p>Boat competitions, (Women) Thai traditional dance in the Northern temple, different region festivals, water festivals, religious festivals in the temple → <b>Thai Arts</b></p> <p><b>Thai Religion</b> → Buddhism, temples, monks, Buddha statues, calmness</p> <p><b>Thai Wellness</b> → Thai style of massage and Thai traditional medicine</p>	<p>(Urban life = hotels, restaurants) Thai floating market (food selling on boats), Thai cooking process using local ingredients/utensils (traditional way of cooking)</p> <p>High-class restaurant with beautiful/sky views (modern way of cooking/fusion food) → <b>traditional VS modern</b></p> <p>Street food (local city market)/ Chinese market (diverse ethics) → <b>Food</b></p> <p>Thai massage showing foreigner enjoy the service, Thai herbal medicine</p> <p>Exciting Thai boxing match</p> <p><b>Thai Arts</b> → Thai silk products made in the traditional way, Thai boxing</p>
Sequence	<p><b>Rural and city life</b> → a guy fishing, kids playing on a boat, kids playing with chicken, kid playing with the lotus, kid riding on a buffalo, a lady walking with her "Kratib" (Thai Tupperware), different landscapes, Thai urban VS Thai rural</p>	<p><b>Thai Festivals</b> → Thai traditional dance (women), boat competitions (men), water festivals, Loy Krathong,</p> <p><b>Thai Fun</b> → Thai people laughing/dancing, play with foreigners</p>	<p><b>Thai Food</b> → showing the process of cooking Thai food, traditional VS modern way of cooking, high-class restaurants and local street foods (diversity)</p>
Music	Thai music with different tones and moods to fit with different aspects of highlighted topics; exciting music for Thai boxing, calmness (soft music) for religious-related topics		



**Main themes from the visual analysis:**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Campaign 1</b>	<b>Campaign 2</b>
1. Rural and Urban life	Beautiful landscapes/scenery with beaches, nature, water, floating market (the importance of water to Thai culture)	Water, nature, sunset, hills, mountains Different aspects of Thai city; modern city
2. Thai Food	Food from local, buffalo suggesting the rice field, a lot of seafoods (abundant land)	Showing the process of cooking Thai food, traditional VS modern way of cooking, high-class restaurants, and local street foods (diversity)
3. Religion/Arts/Festival	Elephant showering, Songkran festival	Buddhist ordination ceremony temples, monks, Buddha statues  Thai silk products made in the traditional way, Thai boxing
4. Thai Happiness	Smiling Thai people; mostly from rural/ working class people (kids, women, men). Smiling of both Thai and foreigners	Thai people cheering and dancing in the Buddhist ordination ceremony
5. Thai Wellness	-	Thai style of massage and Thai traditional medicine

\*No presence of King and the royal families\*

## Appendix B

### Interview Guide

#### Introduction

*Hi! Thank you very much for your time. As I mentioned in the email, this interview should last around an hour. We will talk about how you left Thailand and arrived in the Netherlands. I will ask questions about your own experience as well as more general opinion on your understandings of Thainess. Small videos from the Amazing Thailand campaigns will also be shown to you in order to discuss what kind of images the campaigns represent and what do you think about them.*

*I have to mention this interview will be recorded, since I will transcribe our discussion afterwards and use the text in my research analysis. This research is going to be used only for academic purposes and your participation is completely voluntary. That means you have the right to not answer any questions that you do not want to, as well as, stop the interview when you do not want to continue. If you don't want me to use your name or other information in my master thesis, you can tell me, and I can assure you of the privacy of this information. Do you have any questions? If not, we may begin the interview.*

#### **1. Experience of being diaspora: (Self- national identification)**

I would love to know about you. Can you please introduce yourself and tell me about your journey to the Netherlands?

What brought you to the Netherlands? How did you move here?

How old were you when you first moved to NL?

How long have you lived in NL?

What is it like to be Thai in NL?

How do you feel about being Thai in NL? Were you struggles? If so, how did you cope?

Do you have any Thai friends here? How did you meet them?

What does Thainess mean to you?

What are the essential elements for being Thai?

Do you think you represent Thainess in your everyday life?

#### **2. Material probes as examples of nation-branding: (interpretations/relations of Amazing Thailand campaigns)**

We are now moving to talk about the TAT Amazing Thailand tourism campaigns.

What do you know about Amazing Thailand tourism campaigns?

How do you know about them?

Anything you remember of the campaigns?

Have you seen or come across their videos? If so, how?

What do you think are the main aims of the campaigns?

What do you think about the videos in general?

### **2.1 Video 1: 2013 Amazing Thailand: it begins with the people (1 minute)**

What is your first reaction on the video?

How are Thai people represented in the video?

Can you identify/relate yourself with the things they say?

How do you think foreigners/Dutch people viewing these videos will think of Thai people?

Do you think these are the things foreigners/Dutch people are expecting of Thai people?

What do you think about the 'happiness', 'nature', 'religion', 'food', 'rural/urban areas' images?

Why do you think the videos emphasize Thai smiles so much?

### **2.2 Video 2: 2015 Amazing Thailand: Discover Thainess (2:25minutes)**

What is your first reaction on the video?

What do you think of this video?

What do you like about this video? What do you dislike about this video?

Do you agree that these representations of Thailand are true? If not, why?

Do you think these representations influence the ways foreigners/Dutch think of Thai people?

How is Thainess presented in the video?