

The Impact of MNC Brands on Country Soft Power: A Refugee Context

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Summary

Soft power is a diplomatic strategy used by nations. Though firms are contributors to soft power, little research exists at this level. The growing importance of humanitarian diplomacy, public-private partnerships (UN Sustainable Development Goal 17), and the increasing influence and intertwined relationships of multi-national organizations (MNCs) with host and home nation governments, highlights why more research in this area is needed. This exploratory paper's objective is to see if and how soft power can accrue through MNC brands - a so-called reverse or inverse country-of-origin (COO). The background of this study is that of refugees. Refugees highlight the intense political context of global governance with the potential of impacting trade, offshoring, and mobility of talent. This study looks at the refugee perception of 'non-home' countries through the brands they interact within refugee camps. It has policy implications for MNCs working in global governance, policy officials working in diplomacy, and third sector organizations working with the private sector. There are future opportunities for research and teaching in this field.