

# JKT48's stage performance from Anholt's Nation Branding Perspective

Affan Sandhy Adinata<sup>1\*</sup>, Muhammad Najih Farihanto<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Communication Studies, Ahmad Dahlan University, Yogyakarta, 55166, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author's email: affan2000030205@webmail.uad.ac.id\*, muhammad.farihanto@comm.uad.ac.id

## ABSTRACT

### Keywords

Cool Japan  
Nation Branding  
JKT48  
Simon Anholt  
Nation Branding Index  
Pop Culture

This study aims to analyze the role of JKT48 in Japan's national branding strategy through promoting pop culture in Indonesia. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach, data was collected through literature studies and documentation. The findings indicate that JKT48 effectively introduces and popularizes Japanese culture in Indonesia, which aligns with the nation branding concept proposed by Simon Anholt. Support from the "Cool Japan" program has proven to strengthen cultural relations between Japan and Indonesia and increase the interest of Indonesian tourists in visiting Japan. This study recommends enhancing collaboration with other idol groups, providing stronger financial and logistical support, and using digital media more effectively. Additionally, the "Cool Japan" program is suggested to expand by incorporating other elements of Japanese culture, such as cuisine, traditional arts, and technology. Thus, Japan's national branding strategy can be more optimal and positively impact global perception.

## 1. Introduction

JKT48 (Jakarta Forty-Eight) in Indonesia is an adaptation of the AKB48 group from Japan. JKT48 plays a significant role in introducing Japanese pop culture in Indonesia. As an idol group based in Jakarta, JKT48 has successfully popularized Japanese music, dance, and various aspects of Japanese culture through its performances. The costumes they wear, inspired by traditional Japanese school uniforms, youth fashion, and contemporary dance choreography, reflect the development of Japanese pop culture. This initiative aligns with the "Cool Japan" program, which enhances Japan's global appeal (Mihic, 2020).

JKT48's stage performances serve as a medium for direct interaction with their fans, known as "wota." Their stage performances include music shows, dramas, and theater acts. JKT48 members bring the same performance characteristics as AKB48. The essence of Japanese pop culture remains very strong despite some adjustments. In several moments of their stage performances, JKT48 members wear school uniforms similar to those worn by Japanese schoolgirls, complete with the iconic bangs hairstyle. The communication style of JKT48 members also adopted from AKB48, applying several principles established by AKB48, such as proactive communication with fans. Additionally, JKT48 consistently presents energetic, cheerful, agile, and cute stage interactions, known as "kawaii" — a cute culture from Japan popularized in the 1970s. Kawaii refers to anything adorable related to girls, including fashion style, behavior, and appearance (Matsui, 2016). Nowadays, kawaii has permeated most aspects of Japan, including fashion, art, and government.



**Figure 1.** JKT48 performances feature Japanese school uniforms. Source: X account @Chocofy

The interaction between fans and JKT48 is facilitated through chants and chant mixes, which are supportive shouts or songs synchronized with the rhythm of the songs performed on stage. Through these chants, fans try to communicate by shouting phrases like 'oi oi oi' or 'hai hai hai' during JKT48's stage performances. Fans not only use Indonesian but also chant using the words 'Taiga! Faiya! Saiba! Faiba! Daiba! Baiba! Jya-Jya!' which is adopted from AKB48 fans' chants in Japan. These supportive phrases are also chanted during certain JKT48 songs such as 'Heavy Rotation,' 'Fortune Cookie,' and 'Seventeen.' Additionally, fans adjust their chanting according to the music being performed. JKT48's stage activities are closely related to communication and image formation. This aligns with Cool Japan's goal of introducing Japanese culture to the international community, including Indonesian society. During JKT48's performances, inclusive interactions occur, allowing for the exchange of information between members and Indonesian fans.

A fundamental issue that needs to be addressed is the need for a deep understanding of how pop culture elements like JKT48 can be effectively used as a medium for nation branding. Nation branding is the process of building, managing, and measuring a country's reputation on a global level. Simon Anholt, a leading expert in this field, defines nation branding as a systematic effort to shape and promote a country's positive image (Dinnie, 2022). Nation branding involves various elements, including national symbols, culture, history, and political image (Anholt, 2016). Multiple initiatives have been undertaken to address this issue, including the Cool Japan program by the Japanese government, which aims to promote pop culture, fashion, design, cuisine, and other creative products. Furthermore, research on nation branding by Simon Anholt and the development of the Nation Brands Index (NBI) have provided a robust framework for understanding and measuring a country's reputation in the eyes of the world (Dinnie, 2022). The Nation Brands Index (NBI) is a tool developed by Simon Anholt to measure and evaluate the image and reputation of countries worldwide (Browning, 2023). The NBI assesses six key dimensions: Exports, Governance, Culture and Heritage, People, Tourism, and Investment and Immigration. In its application, the NBI developed by Anholt evaluates nation branding across these six dimensions, which are:



**Figure 2.** Nation Branding Simon Anholt Hexagram

**Exports:** The perception of the quality and appeal of a country's products and services. **Governance:** A country's government's competence, integrity, and performance. **Culture and Heritage:** The richness and appeal of a country's culture and historical heritage. **People:** A country's

population's friendliness, openness, and diversity. **Tourism:** The attractiveness of a country as a tourist destination. **Investment and Immigration:** The attractiveness of a country as a place to invest, work, and live. A country's reputation can be consistently compared and evaluated through the Hexagram Nation Branding tool developed by Anholt, providing the necessary data to develop more effective national branding strategies (Anholt, 2016).

Previous research has yet to specifically focus on the potential of idol groups like JKT48 as a medium for nation branding. The unexplored potential lies in how these idol groups can strengthen Japan's national image through dynamic and sustainable cultural interactions in Indonesia. With its popularity and large fan base, JKT48 has significant potential to expand the influence of Japanese culture, a possibility that previous researchers still need to explore thoroughly. An in-depth analysis of JKT48's role as an effective cultural ambassador can fill this research gap. This approach can reveal how JKT48 functions as entertainment and a strong medium for cultural diplomacy, strengthening Japan's national identity and expanding its influence on the global stage (Mihic, 2020).

This study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how JKT48's stage performances can be used in Japan's national branding strategy. Hopefully, this research will offer new insights that policymakers and creative industry players can implement to develop more effective and impactful national branding strategies. Consequently, Japan can maximize its use of pop culture to enhance its positive image in the eyes of the world.

## 2. Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on analyzing JKT48's stage performances from the perspective of Simon Anholt's nation branding. The research was conducted in Yogyakarta, utilizing two primary data collection methods: literature review and documentation study. A descriptive qualitative method is appropriate when the studied phenomena are natural, and findings are obtained directly (Fajri, 2021). In this method, the research outcomes heavily depend on the researcher as the key instrument, requiring a solid theoretical foundation and extensive knowledge to ask questions, explore issues, and construct a realistic framework for the study object (Ardiyanto, 2019).

The qualitative data collected are based on field facts such as objects, social rules, or phenomena described in narrative writing (Fazhari, A., & Rudianto, 2021). The results of this research consist of data and facts organized in the form of words or images rather than numbers or calculations. In preparing qualitative research reports, data citations based on field results strengthen the support for what is stated in the report (Hediana, S., & Winduwati, 2020).

The literature review examined relevant literature, including books, journal articles, research reports, and other documents related to JKT48, nation branding, and Simon Anholt's theory. These data sources were obtained through library searches, academic databases, and the Internet. The documentation study involved collecting and analyzing relevant documents, such as JKT48 performance videos, online interviews with JKT48 members, media articles, and related promotional materials.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study employs triangulation techniques, which compare and verify findings from various data sources. This technique ensures that the interpretations based on the collected data are accurate and trustworthy. Validity is further reinforced by cross-checking literature and other data sources.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1. Result

The authors' observations indicate that JKT48's performances are appreciated for their entertainment value and are regarded as a positive representation of Japanese culture by their fans in Indonesia. The researchers' observations show a correlation between JKT48 and Japan's nation-branding efforts in Indonesia. JKT48 can be considered one of Japan's cultural ambassadors in

Indonesia. The observations also demonstrate that JKT48's stage performances meet the criteria of the Nation Branding Index initiated by Simon Anholt.

JKT48's appearances on various television shows, dramas, and advertisements have increased their visibility and popularity among the Indonesian public. Additionally, JKT48 actively participates in charitable and social activities, further enhancing its positive image in the public eye. These activities help promote Japanese culture and strengthen social and cultural relations between the two countries.

JKT48 has achieved various successes in promoting Japanese culture in Indonesia, such as increasing the popularity of Japanese pop culture and attracting more Indonesian tourists to visit Japan. However, they face several challenges, including competition with local idol groups and cultural adaptation. Support from the Japanese government through the "Cool Japan" program has been instrumental in overcoming these challenges.

Based on the Nation Branding Index, JKT48 contributes to enhancing positive perceptions across various dimensions, which are:

1. **Export:** Evaluating a country's products and services as high-quality and innovative is crucial. In the context of JKT48, promoting Japanese pop culture through this idol group can enhance the positive perception of Japanese cultural products. According to data collected by JKT48 Official and IDN Media, since its establishment in 2011 until 2022, JKT48 has released 330 songs with an average of 1.5 million listeners per song. Currently, there are approximately 15 million fans, predominantly aged 15 to 29 years, with 60% being male and 40% female. This demonstrates that JKT48, through Japanese pop culture, is well-received by Indonesian society.



**Figure 3.** Statistical data presentation on JKT48 by Winston Utomo, CEO of IDN Media (2022).

2. **Governance:** Measuring the perception of a country's government's competence, integrity, and performance. Support from the Japanese government through the "Cool Japan" program demonstrates the government's commitment to promoting national culture, which can enhance the reputation of the Japanese government internationally. According to a report from [www.id.emb-japan.go.jp](http://www.id.emb-japan.go.jp) on April 23, 2021, JKT48 received the 3rd Reiwa Foreign Diplomatic Mission Award from the Japanese Ambassador to Indonesia, recognizing their role in facilitating cultural exchange between Indonesia and Japan.



**Figure 4.** Representatives of JKT48 received an award from Ambassador Kanasuei Kenii. May 24, 2021.

3. **Culture and Heritage:** Assessing the extent to which a country's culture and heritage are valued and considered rich and appealing. JKT48, as a representative of Japanese culture in Indonesia, plays a significant role in introducing elements of Japanese culture, both pop and traditional. This is demonstrated through JKT48's stage performances, which are heavily influenced by Japanese culture, starting from their pop culture-inspired fashion, performing AKB48 songs translated into Indonesian, and strong stage interactions that embody the *kawaii* persona of Japanese girls.



**Figure 5.** Last Voyage Shani's last theater show. May 5, 2024  
Source: X account @JKT48Official

4. **People:** Measuring the perception of a country's friendliness, openness, and societal diversity. Through JKT48's interactions with Indonesian fans, the aspects of openness and friendliness of Japanese culture can be strengthened, thereby supporting a positive perception of Japanese society. JKT48's interactions, such as greeting fans and inviting them to participate in mini-games at certain events, have become a notable phenomenon and characteristic in the eyes of Indonesian fans and the public. Additionally, JKT48 members engage in off-stage interactions, such as handshake events where they greet fans directly and 2Shot sessions where fans can take photos with JKT48 members. These off-stage interactions typically occur during special events like the Summer Tour.



**Figure 6.** Mini Games at Summer Tour 2023. July 15, 2023. Source: X account @saattriaa

5. **Tourism:** Evaluating the attractiveness of a country as a tourist destination. Cultural promotion activities by JKT48, which bring Japanese nuances to their stage performances, can stimulate tourists' interest in visiting Japan. Through their energetic, cheerful, and charming performances, JKT48 directly showcases Japanese culture. The frequent use of Japanese-inspired clothing and props during their performances has become a distinctive identity, making Indonesian audiences familiar with and interested in Japanese culture. This, in turn, positively impacts the increase in tourist visits from Indonesia to Japan.

Country/Area <sup>1</sup>	2019 Jan.-Apr.		2024 Jan.-Apr.	
	Visitor Arrivals	Growth Rate(%)	Visitor Arrivals	Growth Rate(%)
South Korea	2,647,397		2,999,900 **	13.3 **
China	2,895,449		1,861,600 **	-35.7 **
Taiwan	1,593,227		1,938,600 **	21.7 **
Hong Kong	699,852		808,100 **	15.5 **
Thailand	512,754		466,200 **	-9.1 **
Singapore	129,169		178,400 **	38.1 **
Malaysia	164,766		180,200 **	9.4 **
Indonesia	136,476		179,400 **	31.5 **
Philippines	188,700		260,000 **	37.9 **
Vietnam	177,928		250,000 **	40.5 **
India	57,667		70,000 **	21.0 **
Australia	243,400		330,000 **	35.3 **
United States	542,671		790,000 **	45.7 **

Figure 7. Indonesian tourist data January-April 2019 compared to January-April 2024.  
Source: JNTO.go.jp.id

According to statistical data released by the Japan National Tourism Organization, the number of tourist visiting Japan from Indonesia has increased. This is undoubtedly influenced by the significant role of JKT48, whose stage performances are deeply rooted in Japanese culture and serve as a medium for Japan's nation branding in Indonesia. Consequently, JKT48's efforts align with one of the Nation Branding Index (NBI) criteria: strengthening the tourism dimension.

6. **Investment and Immigration:** The attractiveness of a country as a place to invest, work, and live. Effective cultural promotion can create a positive image that supports investment and immigration to Japan. JKT48 helps Japan create a unique image that other countries cannot replicate, owing to the authenticity of *kawaii* that is exclusive to Japan. *Kawaii* has become one of the many cultural riches of Japan. This is evidenced by JKT48 being appointed brand ambassadors for several brands, such as Shopee, Erigo, and Free Fire. As a music group under the same umbrella as AKB48, JKT48 indirectly attracts investment interest from various brands in Japanese products and cultural ambassadors.



Figure 8. JKT48 as a brand ambassador 12.12 birthday sale 2023.  
Source: Shopee.co.id

The activities of JKT48 help introduce the rich and diverse elements of Japanese culture, receive positive responses from the Indonesian public, attract tourists to visit Japan, strengthen social relations between Japanese and Indonesian people, and increase investment interest from various brands in Japanese products and culture. The "Cool Japan" program supports these efforts by providing both material and non-material support. JKT48 has successfully met the criteria of the Nation Branding Index (NBI) proposed by Simon Anholt. Through their stage performances and popularity, JKT48 has become a spearhead in promoting Japanese culture in Indonesia. This demonstrates that idol groups

can be an effective tool in nation branding strategies, especially in introducing and popularizing their country's pop culture.

### 3.2. Discussion

**Simon Anholt's Nation Branding Theory and Its Application in Various Countries.** Nation branding is the process of building, managing, and measuring a country's reputation on a global level. Simon Anholt, a leading expert in this field, defines nation branding as a systematic effort to shape and promote a country's positive image (Dinnie, 2022). Nation branding involves various elements, including national symbols, culture, history, and political image (Anholt, 2016). Measuring and evaluating these programs is essential to maximize the nation's branding efforts. Therefore, Anholt developed a tool called the Nation Branding Index (NBI) to measure and evaluate the image and reputation of a country (Dinnie, 2022).

The Nation Branding Index provides data on nation branding programs that can be used to evaluate them to ensure consistent efforts in shaping a country's image (Dinnie, 2022). The NBI includes six dimensions or categories: exports, governance, people, culture and heritage, tourism, and investment and immigration (Dinnie, 2022).

The export dimension includes the perception of the quality of a country's products and services. In this dimension, a country determines what will be used as a nation branding product and avoids less impact aspects (Yildiz, 2018). The governance dimension examines the competence and contribution of the government in matters related to image building (Yildiz, 2018). The people dimension includes the perception of a country's openness and friendliness. The culture and heritage dimension explores the consumption of more contemporary products and culture (Yildiz, 2018). The tourism dimension measures people's desire to visit a specific place or country (Yildiz, 2018). The investment and immigration dimension encompasses the interest of groups or individuals in investing or living in a particular country (Yildiz, 2018).

Many countries have implemented nation branding strategies to build their positive image on the international stage (Lahrech et al., 2020). For instance, South Korea's "Korea, Sparkling" campaign aims to attract tourists and promote Korean pop culture, such as K-pop and Korean dramas. Germany's "Germany - Land of Ideas" campaign focuses on innovation and technology. Meanwhile, New Zealand promotes itself as a natural tourism destination with the "100% Pure New Zealand" campaign (Dinnie, 2022).

Nation branding strategies generally involve the use of mass media, cultural diplomacy, and participation in international events. Countries often use appealing logos and slogans to build a strong visual identity. Additionally, collaboration with famous figures and global brands can help increase a country's visibility and appeal in the eyes of the world. The importance of public involvement in supporting and reinforcing the nation's branding message cannot be overlooked (Dinnie, 2022).

Culture and media play key roles in supporting nation branding strategies. Culture can be used as a diplomatic tool to build closer relationships with other countries. Media, including television, film, music, and the internet, can help disseminate positive images and compelling stories about a country. For instance, South Korea's entertainment industry has successfully used K-pop and Korean dramas to promote a positive image of the country globally (Dinnie, 2022).

Similarly, Japan's efforts to shape its international image are carried out through nation branding programs. These efforts aim to create a better image in foreign relations. Through its authentic contemporary culture, Japan strives to present a different impression from its past by showcasing a renewed spirit through popular culture that can be enjoyed internationally. With important assets such as manga, anime, idol groups, and other popular cultures, Japan has managed to attract global attention, thereby supporting Japan's soft power needs for diplomatic purposes (Kanji, 2016).

**JKT48 and the Cool Japan Program.** The "Cool Japan" program is a Japanese government initiative to promote Japanese pop culture, including anime, manga, fashion, music, and cuisine, to the world. The goal of this program is to enhance the appeal of Japanese culture and attract more tourists and foreign investment. It also aims to strengthen Japan's image as an innovative and creative country (Cool Japan Movement Promotion Council, 2014).

Japan implements various strategies to promote its pop culture, including supporting anime and manga from production to distribution, organizing Japanese cultural festivals in various countries, and supporting the global expansion of Japanese fashion and music brands. The Japanese government also collaborates with private companies and international organizations to promote elements of Japanese culture worldwide (Cool Japan Movement Promotion Council, 2014).

The Cool Japan program has successfully increased the global visibility and appeal of Japanese culture. For instance, the popularity of Japanese anime and manga has significantly risen in various countries, drawing tourists to visit Japan and experience its culture firsthand. Additionally, this program has helped reinforce Japan's image as a modern, creative, and innovative country. This positive impact is evident from increased tourists and foreign investments in Japan (Cool Japan Movement Promotion Council, 2014). Japan's efforts bore fruit after more than 15 years, making Japan the first country from the Asia-Pacific region to rank first in the NBI, surpassing Germany, which had held the top position for six years (Mcgrath et al., 2023).

The idol industry, a part of Japan's popular subculture, has gained attention in Indonesia. One of the most famous idol groups is Akihabara Forty-Eight (AKB48), established in 2005, which served as the blueprint for JKT48. This group introduced a new concept, providing fresh air to the Japanese music industry through a group of energetic, agile, and *kawaii* teenage girls. AKB48's appeal lies in their cheerful music paired with energetic choreography and in introducing novelty through the concept of 'Idols you can meet.' This concept is prestigious for AKB48 fans, who can visit their idols through daily theater performances and interactive music concerts. Fans are invited to communicate with the group members, providing an unforgettable experience. Additionally, fans have the opportunity to participate in handshake events and have brief conversations with their chosen members. The Japanese government recognized the great potential of AKB48's innovative idea and used it as a means to advance their nation branding through popular culture.

Japan's nation branding program is carried out in collaboration with non-governmental entities that have strategic roles in spreading and succeeding Cool Japan. The cooperation between the Japanese government and non-governmental entities is established through popular culture as a cultural diplomacy strategy. One non-governmental collaborator is Akimoto Yasushi, a non-political Cool Japan Promotion Committee member and the producer of AKB48. Yasushi designed the expansion of AKB48 by forming idol groups in ten locations, including AKB48 based in Akihabara, Tokyo; SKE48 based in Sakae, Nagoya; NMB48 based in Namba, Osaka; HKT48 based in Hakata, Fukuoka; NGT48 based in Niigata; STU48 based in Setouchi, Hiroshima; JKT48 based in Jakarta, Indonesia; BNK48 based in Bangkok, Thailand; CGM48 based in Chiang Mai, Thailand; MNL48 based in Manila, Philippines; AKB48 Team SH based in Shanghai, China; AKB48 Team TP based in Taipei, Taiwan.

Idol groups like the 48 Group play a crucial role in the Cool Japan strategy. AKB48, as a famous idol group in Japan, has become an icon of Japanese pop culture, contributing to promoting Japan's positive image internationally. JKT48, as a sister group in Indonesia, participates in popularizing Japanese culture abroad through musical performances, theater shows, and fan interactions. These idol groups not only attract the local public's attention but also help build a positive image of Japan globally.

**JKT48 sebagai Media Nation Branding Jepang di Indonesia.** Indonesia has become one of the target countries for AKB48's expansion. JKT48 is an idol group formed in 2011 by Yasushi Akimoto, a renowned producer from Japan who also founded the idol group AKB48. JKT48 is the first sister group of AKB48 established outside of Japan. The name JKT48 is derived from the abbreviation of Jakarta, the city where the group was formed. The primary goal of forming JKT48 is to introduce the concept of "Idols you can meet" in Indonesia, where fans have the opportunity to meet and interact directly with the group members through theater performances and handshake events (JKT48, 2024).

JKT48 was first introduced to the public in Jakarta on November 2, 2011. The audition process for the first-generation members attracted thousands of participants; eventually, 28 members were selected to undergo intensive training. Since its inception, JKT48 has focused on theater performances as one of its hallmarks. The JKT48 theater is located in Mall fX Sudirman, Jakarta, and performances are held almost daily. The songs performed are mostly adaptations of AKB48 songs translated into Indonesian (JKT48, 2024).



The establishment of JKT48 can be seen as a modern step in Japan's strategy for implementing its nation branding program in Indonesia. Through this effort, Japan has provided fresh air to the creative industry, particularly the music industry in Indonesia, with the emergence of an idol group that brings a new concept. Since its founding in 2011, JKT48 has garnered approximately 15 million fans, predominantly male (60%) and female (40%). This idol group has captivated Indonesian society by releasing 330 songs, each with an average of 1.5 million listeners. JKT48 engages in communicative, cheerful, and energetic stage interactions in their performances. This aligns with the export dimension of Simon Anholt's Nation Branding Index. JKT48 meets the criteria for high-quality cultural products with international appeal, as many people have developed an interest in Japanese culture (Anholt, 2016). The friendliness and openness in JKT48's stage performances are key attractions for Indonesian society. Before performances, JKT48 members greet their fans with friendly and charming slogans, which aligns with the people dimension of Simon Anholt's Nation Branding Index, as JKT48 can win the hearts of Indonesians through stage actions that create a positive perspective toward Japan (Anholt, 2016).

The *kawaii* impression, which represents Japan's cute culture, is also evident in JKT48's stage performances. Japanese cute culture is depicted through JKT48's performances, where they wear *kawaii* Japanese girl outfits with adorable appearances. Recognizing JKT48's significant progress, the Japanese government in Indonesia, through the Japanese Embassy, awarded JKT48 as the Japanese cultural ambassador. In 2021, JKT48 received its third cultural ambassador award, known as the Reiwa Foreign Diplomatic Mission Award. The Japanese government takes JKT48's efforts seriously in promoting Japanese culture through their stage performances. This aligns with the governance dimension of Simon Anholt's Nation Branding Index, as the Japanese government is committed to nation branding by spreading its pop culture (Anholt, 2016).

The tourism dimension is also a significant aspect of Japan's nation branding efforts. The impact of JKT48's participation in promoting Japanese culture in Indonesia has led to an increasing interest among Indonesians in Japanese culture. This has indirectly resulted in a rise in Indonesian tourists visiting Japan (Anholt, 2016). Renowned brands in Indonesia have started to notice JKT48's immense potential, from clothing brands like Erigo to major marketplace giants like Shopee, and more recently, from the online gaming world, Free Fire, which has shown interest by collaborating with JKT48 as brand ambassadors. The investment and immigration dimension of Simon Anholt's Nation Branding Index can be fulfilled through these investments in JKT48, which is a sister group of AKB48 (Anholt, 2016).

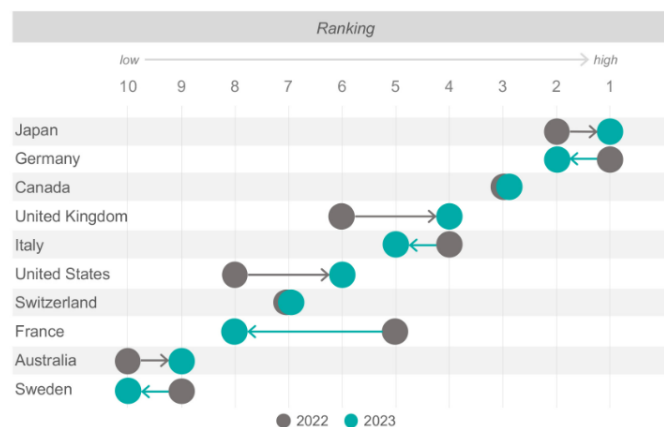


Figure 9. Nation Branding Index Ranking Chart by Ipsos. November 1, 2023

The NBI ranking chart published by Ipsos in 2023 shows that Japan has taken the top spot, displacing Germany, which held the position for six years. This chart demonstrates that Japan's nation branding through the Cool Japan program has yielded significant results, particularly through the nation branding efforts involving popular culture, such as idol groups like JKT48, with their stage performances.

The findings of this study indicate that JKT48 plays a crucial role in Japan's nation branding strategy, particularly in introducing and promoting Japanese pop culture in Indonesia. Through their

activities and stage performances, JKT48 engages fans by greeting them with slogans or introductory phrases that highlight the unique characteristics of each member. JKT48 showcases their singing, dancing, and interaction skills with fans during their performances. Additionally, the lyrics of their songs often revolve around the themes of Japanese schoolgirls' lives and are translations of AKB48's songs. The *kawaii* fashion style and expressions of JKT48 members align with Japanese oriental culture. JKT48's success in creating a positive image of Japan among Indonesians aligns with Simon Anholt's nation branding concept, which emphasizes the importance of cultural elements in forming a positive national image (Anholt, 2007). Support from the "Cool Japan" program has also proven effective in strengthening Japan's nation branding strategy, showing that government initiatives can play a key role in supporting these efforts.

JKT48's success in promoting Japanese culture in Indonesia has strengthened cultural relations between the two countries and improved perceptions of Japan in Southeast Asia. The popularity of JKT48 in Indonesia has also increased Indonesian tourists' interest in visiting Japan, as evidenced by the rise in the number of Indonesian tourists visiting Japan in recent years. This demonstrates that pop culture can be an effective tool in nation branding strategies, influencing a country's image and boosting tourism and investment. Japan's efforts to shape its international image through nation branding programs aim to create a better image in foreign relations. Japan strives to present a new spirit and a better image through its authentic contemporary culture through internationally enjoyed popular culture (Viktorin et al., 2018).

JKT48's success shows that idol groups can be an effective medium in nation branding strategies. For further development, it is recommended to establish more sister groups in various countries, which can help expand the reach of Japanese culture worldwide. Also, idol groups can engage in more international collaborations and cross-cultural projects, strengthening cultural ties between Japan and other countries (Anholt, 2016).

#### 4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that JKT48 plays a significant role in Japan's nation branding strategy through the promotion of pop culture in Indonesia. This aligns with the nation branding concept put forth by Simon Anholt, as this Indonesian sister group of AKB48 fulfills the six dimensions of the Nation Branding Index, which include exports, governance, culture and heritage, people, tourism, and investment and immigration. Support from the "Cool Japan" program has been a relevant strategy in strengthening cultural relations between Japan and Indonesia, as well as increasing the interest of Indonesian tourists in visiting Japan. JKT48's success in promoting Japanese culture indicates that pop culture can be an effective tool in nation branding strategies.

It is recommended that collaboration with other idol groups be enhanced, financial and logistical support be provided, and digital media be utilized more extensively. The "Cool Japan" program should also be expanded to include other elements of Japanese culture, such as cuisine, traditional arts, and technology. Collaboration between both government and private sectors is crucial in supporting a sustainable nation branding strategy. Further research is needed to measure the effectiveness of these nation branding strategies. Public perception surveys and economic impact analyses can provide more specific recommendations for future development.

#### 5. Acknowledgment

The researcher expresses gratitude to God Almighty for the blessings and health granted, enabling the completion of this research journal. The researcher also extends heartfelt thanks to Dr. Muhammad Najih Farihanto, M.A., the supervising lecturer from the Communication Studies Program, colleagues at Sangkala Laboratory, the researcher's parents, Dhini Ariesta, Arum Melati, Danang Raihan, Lathifa Camelia, and Rafly Sopian, who have guided and supported this research.

This research has limitations, and further studies are recommended, involving more variables and using different methods, such as quantitative or mixed approaches. The government and cultural organizations need to optimize nation branding strategies through pop culture by providing greater support to idol groups like JKT48. The energetic and interactive stage performances of JKT48 should also continue to be supported and promoted, as they play a significant role in introducing and

popularizing Japanese culture in Indonesia. Regular evaluations of the "Cool Japan" program are necessary to ensure its effectiveness in achieving the desired goals.

## 6. References

- Anholt, S. (2007). *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Anholt, S. (2016). *Places: Identity, Image and Reputation*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ardiyanto. (2019). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Pustaka Akademik.
- Cool Japan Movement Promotion Council. (2014). *COOL JAPAN PROPOSAL*. [https://www.cao.go.jp/cool\\_japan/english/pdf/published\\_document3.pdf](https://www.cao.go.jp/cool_japan/english/pdf/published_document3.pdf)
- Dinnie, K. (2022). *Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice* (3rd ed.). Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Fazhari, A., & Rudianto, H. (2021). *Teknik Penulisan Laporan Penelitian*. Media Ilmu.
- Hediana, S., & Winduwati, W. (2020). *Pengantar Penelitian Kualitatif*. Graha Ilmu.
- JKT48. (2024). *JKT48 Official Website*. [www.jkt48.com](http://www.jkt48.com)
- Kanji, L. (2016). Illustrations and Influence: Soft Diplomacy and Nation Branding through Popular Culture. *Harvard International Review*, 37(2), 40–45.
- Lahrech, A., Alabdulwahab, S. Z., & Bouayach, S. (2020). Nation Branding and How It Is Related To Foreign Direct Investment Inflows. *International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues*, 10(2), 248–255. <https://doi.org/10.32479/ijefi.9345>
- Matsui, T. (2016). Nation Branding Through Stigmatized Popular Culture : The " Cool Japan " Craze Among Central Ministries In Japan Author ( s ): Takeshi Matsui Source : Hitotsubashi Journal of Commerce and Management , Vol . 48 , No . 1 ( 48 ) ( October Stable URL : <http://.Hitotsubashi Journal of Commerce and Management>, 48(1), 81–97. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/43295053?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/43295053?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents)
- Mcgrath, J., Bobev, M., & Liedel, K. (2023). *Nation Brands Index 2023: Japan takes the lead for the first time in NBI history*. Ipsos.
- Mihic, T. (2020). (STILL) Cool Japan. In *Re-imagining Japan after Fukushima* (pp. 87–116). ANU Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv103xdt4.10>.
- Viktorin, C., Gienow-Hecht, J. C. E., Estner, A., & Will, M. K. (2018). *Nation Branding in Modern History* (1st ed.). Berghahn Books. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvw04dpw>
- Yildiz, S. (2018). *The Human And Culture Factor In Nation Branding : A Study On Foreign Academicians Working In Turkey Ulus Markalaşmasında İnsan Ve Kültür Faktörü : Türkiye ' De Görev Yapan Yabancı Akademisyenler Üzerine Bir*. 0–2.