

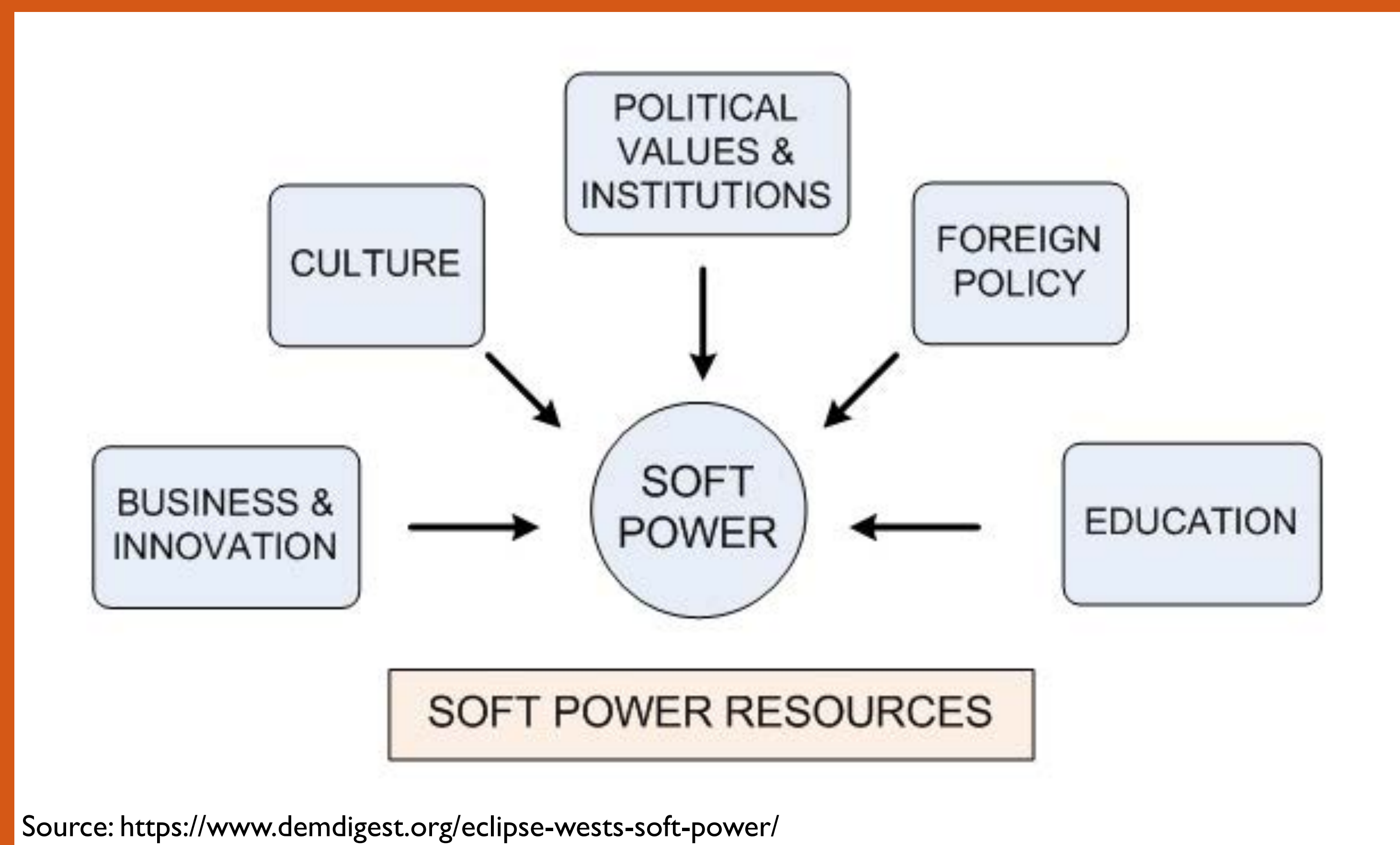
Global media and soft power representation: A comparative analysis of Indian tourism as experienced individually and represented in *The New York Times* and Travel Channel

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RQ: “How does India’s soft power as represented in international media, compare with India’s soft power as a visitor?”

Critical thematic analysis exploring Indian soft power and its representation in international media, specifically in articles from the Travel Channel and New York Times, combined with personal experiences in India.



Method and Terms

- Using a critical thematic analysis, the researcher coded for these themes in the data: art and beauty, food and drink, Indian history, and the modern versus traditional scope of Indian culture. The researcher then took each source of data and analyzed them to see whether they generally upheld or undermined India’s soft power attempts.
- Soft Power** – “the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction” (Nye, 2008, p. 94).

Conclusion

As a tourist, India’s soft power image of an up and coming, technologically advancing, beautiful, and culturally diverse nation were upheld. The group was taken to see magnificent architecture, beautiful cities, and put together shops, but we were not taken to run down areas or parts of India not considered beautiful. The food and activities were enjoyable, and reinforced this soft-power image. However, international media had more articles and ideas contrary to India’s soft-power image, where failings of the country were publicized. Information on gang-rapes in Delhi, rising crime in Agra, and havoc brought on by Indian tourists were everywhere. The one exception was Travel Channel, with tourist-oriented articles designed to draw people into the best parts of India. This research adds to the expanding literature on Soft power and its use, specifically in its interactions with global media. For further study, a larger sample size in terms of both countries and news outlets could be used to see the scope of the relationship between soft power and global media.

Categories of Culture

	Seen in India	Media Observations
Art and Beauty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tour guides took groups to the Taj Mahal (pictured), Humayun’s Tomb, the Lotus Temple, the Ganges River, and the city of Jaipur, as well as artisan shops around each The view from the Amer Fort in Jaipur, overlooking the city and tree-filled hills, was “one of the most incredible views anyone could ever have the pleasure of seeing” (Linebarger, 2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Creativity and...clang of commerce run deep through the veins” of Indian villages (Christiansen & Holden, 2015) The Taj Mahal was described as “the most perfect specimen of Muslim art in India” (7 Wonders, 2007), “iconic” (Coulter, 2017), and noted for its “number of [different] architectural styles” (7 Wonders, 2007). The Village Mawlynnong has acquired a “local renown for its fastidious cleanliness” and the surrounding beauty (Bearak, 2014)
History and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large numbers of animals roaming the streets (Linebarger, 2017) Tour guides explained in detail the importance of animals to the Hindu religion The Diwan-i-Khas, just outside of Agra, holds a pillar incorporating symbols from all major religions that existed during the time it was built (Linebarger) The main tour guide dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, but always kept a scarf with her to cover her head in religious places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel Channel has an entire article dedicated to describing various festivals and celebrations that take place in the country (Walsh, 2009) Coulter’s article describes India as a whole as a country full of history and “busting with sights, sounds, and colors” (2017) New York Times highlighted Agra officials welcoming tourists (Authorities, stakeholders, 2015) The nonprofit “Women on Wheels” (Daniel, 2014) helps women be free of the patriarchal society by giving them the ability to obtain their license Many parts of India are thought of in terms of “Old India” and “New India” (Snyder, 2014)
Negative Portrayals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An iced coffee left two group members sick for a day (Linebarger, 2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kolkata highlighted as a “life-changing trip” to go as a “voluntour” to help “kids of sex-workers living...in Kolkata” (Corbett, 2013) One New York Times article highlighted heightened rape crimes in Delhi (DNA Correspondent, 2013) One article noted that crime in Agra led to decreased foreign tourists at the Taj Mahal (Aditya, 2016)

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