

*Nicaraguanidad*, Advertising Campaigns, and a Plurinational State:  
An Illustration of Nicaragua's Failure to Adopt a Plurinational Representation of "El Ser  
Nicaraguense"

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On my honor  
I have neither given nor received  
Unauthorized aid on this thesis.

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Spring 2014

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## **Abstract**

Nicaragua presents the first case in which plurinationalism in a country became legislated and regional autonomy was granted to the inhabitants of the Atlantic coast. By using content analysis and interviews, this paper explores the social representations of national identity in advertising campaigns used by both the private and public sectors in Nicaragua. I argue that both sectors work as intermediaries that continue to reinforce the dominant expression of "Nicaraguanidad" as merely that of the Pacific coast. This position is founded on the assumption that national identity is constructed and deconstructed discursively through means of socialization. Although Nicaragua was the first country to grant regional autonomy to a region, findings showed that the discourse on national identity presented in promotional campaigns by both the private and public sectors has not been successfully transformed to represent Nicaragua as a plurinational state. This paper concludes that these representations of "Nicaraguaness" contribute to the maintenance of a predominantly Pacific national identity discourse.

*Keywords: plurinational, national identity discourse, Nicaraguanidad, identity*

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## **National Identity, Media and the Plurinational State of Nicaragua**

*The more ethnically diverse the people we live around, the less we trust them.*  
-Robert Putnam, 2007

The idea of a nation and national identity tends to be thought of as biologically or genetically given even though it is constructed, perpetuated and transformed in discursive practices (Wodak et al 2009). The notion that a country is one singular nation is complicated in cases where various ethnic groups exist. This happens particularly in cases where the inhabitants do not share the same historical background or culture yet live in the same territory which makes it hard to define an all-encompassing notion of national identity. This phenomenon, various ethnic groups or nations living together within the same country, is now being referred to as “plurinationalism” in some places, and “multiculturalism” in others. Although both concepts refer to the idea of having a culturally diverse society, the contexts in which they are used differ. In North America and Europe the concept of “multiculturalism” is based on the phenomenon of increasing migration. In Latin America the concept of “plurinationalism” refers to the recognition of a diverse culture that has been there throughout history, yet has been homogenized through the process of constructing a national identity. Both terms, however, challenge the traditional concept of a homogenous nation which shares the same history.

This idea of “plurinationalism” has received increasing attention in the last decade in Latin America. One case that is particularly interesting is the case of Nicaragua. Unlike other Central American countries, Nicaragua experienced the simultaneous occupation of two colonial powers. The Atlantic and Pacific coast, each with their own reason for colonization, structure of domination, and settlement patterns. The Pacific Coast was dominated by Spain. The Atlantic Coast was dominated by the English for over 200 years and from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards

by the United States of America (Solis 1989). Consequently, the pacific coast population is mestizo and Spanish speaking, whilst the Atlantic coast population is characterized by a rich mix of six ethnic groups and a mestizo population as well.

Nicaragua presents the first case that plurinationalism in a country became legislated and regional autonomy was granted to the inhabitants of the Atlantic coast. Interestingly, although “plurinationalism” has been officially recognized, the discourse surrounding national identity has not been accepted in popular discourse. The popular expression of “Nicaraguanidad” (Nicaraguaness) was not truly reconstructed and has failed to accommodate all the different identities. Not only has it failed to represent Nicaragua as a “plurinational” country, but also remains centred exclusively on the national identity of the Pacific.

This paper will focus on the social representations of national identity in advertising campaigns used by the private and public sector. It argues that both sectors work as intermediaries that continue to reinforce the dominant expression of “Nicaraguanidad” as merely pacific. The paper’s position is founded in the assumption that national identity is constructed and deconstructed discursively through means of socialization (media, education, legislation and everyday practice). Thus, in a paper that seeks to examine discourse of national identity, advertisements are an appropriate choice of analysis. Advertisements provide the viewer with “reality as it should be- life and lives worth emulating” (Shudson 1984:220). Indeed, prior research shows that the media has been employed to promote the nation and reiterate the self-identity made by people over and against other people or states.

## A Review of Changing Conception of National Identity

### **Conceptualizing National Identity**

Probably the most influential work on National Identity in recent time is the work by Benedict Anderson (1983). Anderson introduced the history and development of both the concept of nation and national identity. He addresses the problem of national identity by defining it as an “imagined political community.” It is imagined because even the members of the smallest nation will never know all, or even most, of their fellow citizens. Yet, with a notion of national identity an image of their close association is fully realized (Anderson, 1983). Thus, national identity is a discursive construct, as it is (re)produced by members of a specific nation through shared vernaculars, texts, cultures and other sets of symbols (Anderson 1983; Hall, 1992). This discourse is actively negotiated through time and various actors. Simply stated, “discourses of national identity are ever changing” (Willis 1993:29) and not consistent or unalterable. They are dynamic and susceptible to changes of situational settings (De Cillia et al. 1999).

The current research considers national identity to be a socially constructed phenomenon that allows individuals to recognize their place in the world and their commonalities with other members of the same nation (Kirloskar-Steinbach 2004). National identity is not so much about sharing a culture, but is more about belonging to one (Nielse 1999). It creates a sense of belonging by offering people authenticity, historical continuity and rootedness in a common geographical territory (Dieckhoof and Gutierrez 2001). Some have argued that it is the most potent form of collective identity (Silk and Andrews, 2005). Thus representations of national identity can be used to unify and homogenize populations by the basic human need of belonging.



Discourses around national identity are “inherently practices of inclusion and exclusion” (Hogan 2005:195), and as narratives of who we are, they are narratives of who we are not. A national identity creates a feeling of “unity among the members of the “in-group” and distinction from those of the “out-group” (Billing 1995; Cavallaro 2001; Hall 1996). Moreover, discourses of national identity not only exclude those outside the nation, but also those marginalized within the nation. This notion helps to preserve the disadvantage of marginalized members of a nation, as well as reinforce social boundaries between the imagined us and the imagined them (Hogan 2005; Anderson, 1983).

For national identity to be effective for the population it’s constructed nature should be naturalized and embedded in the everyday life of the nation (Billing 1995; Edensor 2002; Ozhirimli 2000). But who are the actors responsible for the construction of national identity? Most theories conclude that it is predominantly constructed by the state and the dominant class. Some even argue that it enables dominant structures of society to determine and stabilize conventions (Wodak 2001; Meyer 2001; Bourdieu 1984). While national identity is constructed within the realm of the economical, the political, and the cultural, most theorists argue that it is within the cultural realm that national identity is really consolidated. Pierre Bourdieu (1984), for instance, suggests that culture is unifying, and as such it is a source of national identity’s production. Culture can help the state in exercising power over its population by helping to homogenize the population and increase a sense of unity (Chudžíková 2011). Culture offers the members of a nation shared meanings, habits, rituals and ways of speaking that are resources to further establishing a sense of belonging (Edensor 2002).

Nevertheless, given that many actors play a role in it’s (re)production, one can conclude that within a single nation there is not a single national identity, but rather multiple competing

and complimentary discourses of national belonging. However, since its beginning, the nation has been seen used to forge a culturally homogenous society. In modern times, this concept of a nation or a national identity as a single, exclusive, and homogenous cultural entity has proven to not fit several nations across the world.

### **Conceptualizing Plurinationalism**

In the last two decades has been a shift from the notion of a nation as a culturally homogenous citizenship project to a new concept of plurinationalism (Hale 2002). This shift was clearly exemplified in the 1980s and 1990s, when many Latin American countries (such as Nicaragua, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, and Ecuador) implemented “multicultural citizenship reforms” that established certain collective rights for indigenous groups and racial minorities (Hooker 2005). This highlighted the fact that the notion of nation was inherited from the Europeans. Thus it had a colonial structure based on the idea of ethnicity as a source of power and aimed to be uni-national and monocultural (Walsh 2008).

Some argue that the legislation of “plurinationalism” or implementation of “multicultural citizenship reforms” focused primarily on affirming new rights and implementing a presumably more just relationship between the historically oppressed and the rest of society (Hale 2002). These implementations, however, have raised a series of debates. Nationalists see the constitutional recognition of ethnic communities as a possible threat or an abdication of a strong sense of national unity (Linz 1997). While Latin American constitution-makers have wagered that “ethnic diversity may promote national unity by drawing attention to the problem of political exclusion, emphasizing the importance of rights to democracy, and infusing the political culture with the values of participation, inclusion and tolerance” (Van Cott 2000:278).

But what exactly is plurinationalism? Monica Chuji (2008:14-16) defines it as “ a new form of social contract that respects and harmonizes the rights of indigenous peoples and nationalities with the judicial structure and political force to recognize their status as political subjects with clear rights.” Thus, she emphasizes that plurinationalism proposes unity in diversity. Raul Prada (2007) writes of plurinationalism as an emergent process to articulate and change heterogeneous territorial and sociological formations into a new national landscape.

The most elaborate definition of plurinationalism in Latin America was developed by Luis Maldonado Ruiz (2008). He defines it as the legal and political recognition of cultural diversity. He highlights the fact that the implementation of plurinationalism challenges governmental attempts to “divide indigenous peoples, de-ethnicize them through labels such as “peasants” “inferiors” or denigrate them with racist terms such as “savages,” “naturals,” “tribes,” “hordes” and “ethnics.” For Maldonado, the key elements of a plurinational state/nation are: 1) the recognition and respect of the diversity of peoples and cultures, 2) the transformation of the state and hegemonic powers incorporating nationalities and peoples into the new state implies the abolition of all forms of exploitation and exclusion 3) interculturality that implies respect among different nationalities, peoples, and cultures. In all, Maldonado argues that a plurinationalist state/nation, would end systems of domination and replace them with relations of equality.

The implementations of these concepts is changing the conceptions of citizenship in Latin America, as they present a new way of conceiving an idea of national unity that is not dependent on the myth of cultural homogeneity predominant since colonization. Nevertheless, these implementations are far from perfect, and although certain autonomy has been granted to several indigenous groups, their recognition has not fully been accomplished. Plurinationalism requires

extreme changes in the subjectivities of other citizens through reemphasizing the recreated discourses of a plurinational society. A successful plurinational or multinational state “has to be based on pluralism, on the recognition of the value of the diversity rather than just in an acceptance of the plurality of the society as a fact (Linz 1997:37).” It requires a genuine shift from the predominant conception of the society as “monocolored to a multicolored, checker board society.” To use terminology introduced by Giovanni Sartori, “To move from a plural society to a pluralistic society in which the value of that pluralism is recognized as deserving recognition and respect it needs a change in attitude on the part of the majority (1997).” Thus, it is important to question whether the legislation and inclusion of the term plurinational is a symbolic or a concrete victory for those marginalized.

### **The Role of Advertising in The (Re)production of National Identity**

Previous research highlights that media plays an important role in the development, enhancement and activation of a sense of national identity (Anderson 1983; Entman 1991; 1993; Rivenburgh 1997, 2000). Throughout history media has contributed to hegemonizing people by favouring the dominant identity and constantly reiterating it among the people (Motyl, 2001). Research indicates that advertising content shows a powerful representation of our societies, culture and identities which ultimately serves to legitimize the dominant discourse. In other words, advertisements sell visions of the “imagined community” by representing discourses of national identity (Anderson 1983). It is within the current context of “global culture industry” (Lash & Lury 2007), globalization, and capitalism that the concept of nation and national identity as a representation of Anderson’s imagined community is increasingly reproduced, represented and articulated. This occurs through contemporary media such as magazines, televisions, movies, digital media, and most pertinent to this paper: advertising.

Several scholars have argued that advertisements serve as “cultural intermediaries” (Bourdieu, 1984). In other words, advertisements play a key role in reproducing culture and identity given their ability to reproduce common sense, meaning and symbolic boundaries (Featherstone 2007; duGay et al 1997; McFall, 2002; Negus 2002; Nixon 2003). Pierre Bourdieu (1984) introduced the concept of “cultural intermediaries” to refer to what he thought was a newly emergent class responsible for cultivating new fields of cultural production through negotiation and legitimization of their sense of aesthetic, taste and life-style (Bourdieu 1984).

Advertising is regarded as playing a central role in the (re)conceptualization of the nation and therefore that of national identity (Askew and Wilk 2002; Frosh, 2007; Millard et al. 2002; Moreno, 2003; Prideaux, 2009). In fact, Hogan (2005, p. 193) argues that “advertisements sell more than products; they sell values, ways of life, conceptions of self and “other” and ideologies including capitalist consumerism, imperialism, racism and patriarchy.” This relationship is reciprocal. On the one hand, advertisements play a key role in encouraging a specific discourse on national identity. But on the other hand, advertisement practitioners are well aware of the positive reaction that using national identity discourse has in promoting a product. Advertisements are a rich source of images, stories and vocabulary to study the construction of national identity. An analysis of discourses on national identity used by advertisement campaigns launched both by the public and private sector in Nicaragua provides us with a critical inquiry into the contemporary articulation of national identity.

## Analysis and Findings

### **National Identity and its Representation in the Private Sector**

CEM JWT is the biggest leading advertising agency in Nicaragua and it offers its services to the products sold by the Pellas Group and other businesses such as the international Spanish mobile company, MOVISTAR. The national brewery company in Nicaragua is in charge of the distribution and advertising campaigns for the “Nicaraguan beer,” Toña, as well as other national beers such as Victoria Frost and Victoria Clasica. Both the vice president of the creative department at CEM JWT and the brand manager of the Nicaraguan National Brewery provided insight of the role and importance of the discourse of national identity in previous advertising campaigns.

Both interviewees expressed that it was important to use this idea of national identity because it allows for the creation of an emotional bond with people. They both observed that not all brands and companies choose this strategy, and that this is rather dependent on the brand itself. Nevertheless, just as the brand manager of the National Brewery Company stated, the goal of any brand or product is to become more than a commodity:

*You know, like the famous pyramid of Maslow... down you have the necessities, then comes the desires and at the end, at the top are the demands. When your product manages to reach the top- which is the place that all the brands and product want to be- then you have managed to successfully create an emotional bond and most importantly to successfully state that the product is indeed on the side of the country.*

-Excerpt from National Brewery Company Interview, brand manager. 01/25/14

By using what the vice president of the creative department referred to as “national pride campaigns,” the product states, “I am Nicaraguan just like you... I know what you need because I am Nicaraguan like you... I speak like you... I am in love with Nicaragua just as you are”

(CEM JWT Interview, 01/23/14). Nevertheless, this technique is not only about stating that a product is Nicaraguan, the product has to demonstrate it, and if it manages to do so, it creates a bond with the people, and therefore it is accepted as a Nicaraguan product. When a product achieves this, “the decision to buy it is a more emotive issue and a less rational one (National Brewery Company Interview, 01/25/14).”

According to the CEM JWT representative, Group Pellas was the precursor of using this idea in their advertising campaigns. In 1992, the company launched a television advertisement that captivated the Nicaraguan audience so much that it stayed on air for 10 years. The CEM JWT representative explained that the TV commercial was named “this is my land, these are my people.” He further states that “during the 18 years, and as far as I remember, this was the precursor of using the slogan “The (blank) of Nicaragua.” Indeed, Flor de Caña, is known not only nationally but also internationally as the Rum of Nicaragua. By directly connecting the brand with the country, Flor de Caña also invokes feelings of belonging.

The case of Nicaraguan national beer is different. As explained by the brand manager, in Latin America a brewery usually has a beer that is especially connected to this idea of “national pride” or “national identity” and has another one or more, that barely use it. In Nicaragua, the beer that “belongs to the country” is Toña. The brand manager states that throughout the year, Toña has associated itself with Nicaragua and operates and exploits the Nicaraguan “National pride.” The other national beers that they distribute are Victoria Frost and Victoria Classica but they don’t use this idea of “national identity” to promote these products as much.

Another company that has successfully created a bond with the Nicaraguan people is Movistar. According to the CEM JWT official, although Movistar deliberately aims to maintain

a close bond and image with the people of Nicaragua, it also follows very strict regulations to maintain a consistent image that is easy to recognize around the world. Nevertheless, “Movistar wants to be cool and young, and indeed makes use of this idea of national identity to position itself and to maintain its position in Nicaragua (CEM JWT interview, 01/23/14).” For example, in a recent campaign, Movistar presented young people with a “smartphone” that showed a picture of a smile in front of their face and thus representing their mouth. (See appendix A for reference) In the T.V. commercials they are speaking to each other “through” the smileys in their smart phone, yet still using a lot of Nicaraguan mannerisms, which successfully connects the product with being cool as well as being Nicaraguan.

The interviews revealed that there are various ways in which the discourse of Nicaraguan national identity is used by different products. The interviewees agreed that Toña is the product that uses the concept of national identity the most and that has successfully taken lead in the country because of it. The brand manager further explained that “Toña has achieved such status because it has been rather consistent throughout the year and has maintained a strong bond with the folkloric aspect of the national identity.” Ron Plata, on the other hand “is a rather popular brand that uses different manifestations of the Nicaraguan national identity (CEM JWT interview, 01/23/14).” In its first campaigns it made a lot of use of language and traditions. The word “pinolero<sup>1</sup>” was constantly used in their motto, as in fact their logo was “Take out the pinolero that is in you.” In 2007, however, the company decided to use this idea of national identity in a more dynamic way using jargon and the Nicaraguan language to allude to this idea.

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<sup>1</sup> Pinolero is a colloquial term for a Nicaraguan. It derives from “pinol,” a toasted ground corn that is the main ingredient for Pinolillo, a powdered form of the pinol which is used in a variety of local cuisine and beverage preparations.



The data already presented from the interviews shows that the national identity portrayed in the ads of these products is pacific. Although by using a national identity discourse companies want to state that “I am Nicaraguan just like you,” most of the actors, images, and landscapes evoked throughout the ads are predominantly pacific. Nevertheless, interviewees stated that the exclusion of the Atlantic coast was not a deliberately one but rather one that was mostly due to the lack of funding. “Nicaragua is a multinational country, with diverse ethnicities, language, and background. When we are in the creative process of making these advertisements we definitely think about including or making reference to the national identity predominant in the Atlantic coast, yet we all know that it is expensive to go there (CEM JWT interview, 01/23/14).”

Although there has been a lot of development and construction to create a more integrated country, Nicaragua still lacks a proper road that fully connects the pacific to the Atlantic. Nevertheless, “products are sold in the Atlantic coast just as they are sold in the pacific coast.” Both professionals explained that only in few cases the products create specific advertising campaigns exclusively for the Atlantic coast. “Movistar, Flor de Caña and Ron Plata have sometimes created specific billboards for the coast.” The CEM JWT representative clarified made the revealing statement that:

*Normally the ad campaigns are made for the whole country, you know, and thus companies have two options, either they pay more and include some aspect of the Caribbean coast to cover the entire country, or not.... but it is still covering 90% of the country.*

- Excerpt from CEM JWT interview. 01/23/14

## ***Nicaraguanidad Displayed Through Advertising Campaigns by the Private Sector***

The predominant manifestations of national identity conveyed in the advertisements were distilled by identifying the beliefs, values and other cultural symbols that are embedded in the advertisements. Four major national identity discursive strategies were identified: 1) invoking a nationalistic sentiment; 2) verbal landmarks; 3) invigorating traditions and 4) the “Nicaraguense” physical characteristics as portrayed by the ads. The following section will present these strategies and describe them by drawing examples of the data obtained in the private sector.

### ***Invoking a Nationalistic Sentiment***

Advertisement campaigns of these companies use both phrases and visuals to invoke a nationalistic sentiment. This technique involves the creation of a feeling of oneness between the product and the audience. Yet, there are different tactics that companies use to tackle this technique. For instance, in its “precursor” advertisement of 1992, Flor de Caña ingeniously quotes the most famous Nicaraguan poet, Ruben Dario with the verse “Nuestra patria, está hecha de vigor y gloria<sup>2</sup>.” By evoking Ruben Dario, this commercial also invokes a nationalistic sentiment, creating a sense of “oneness” with the audience in that, this rum, just as every single Nicaraguan is proud of Dario. Similarly, the Spanish mobile Company Movistar, recently launched an advertisement campaign in which the main character is the renowned “salsero de Nicaragua,” Luis Enrique. In the ad, he narrates “uno siempre regresa al lugar que lo vio nacer<sup>3</sup>.” In follow up ads, Movistar present scenes of popular bands from several parts of the country singing in their native city, such as Caribbean taste from el Bluff and Malos Habititos from El Crucero. Interestingly, the ads did not only present really famous bands, but also bands that are

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<sup>2</sup> “Our nation is made of force and glory”

<sup>3</sup> “One always goes back to the land that saw you being born”

just famous in their specific location and that have never appeared in T.V. before (as explained by CEM JWT representative) such as Ayote en Miel from Estelí, or Estrellas del Norte from Matagalpa. By using a national artist as the main actor of the ad, and most importantly very locally known bands, Movistar is indirectly saying that “although we are not Nicaraguans, we know the talent that Nicaraguans have, and how you always go back to your native country.” Moreover, by connecting these artists to the idea of “coming back to your roots” the ad augments the feeling of belonging to Nicaragua; to a Nicaragua that is mother of so much talent.

Another tactic used to invoke this nationalistic sentiment is by using possessive pronouns or explicitly stating that the product is Nicaraguan. One of the Flor de Caña ads for instance ends “y este es mi ron... Flor de Caña, el ron de Nicaragua”<sup>4</sup> stating that the product shares the national identity of the audience which creates a stronger bond and in turn invokes a nationalistic feeling. Likewise, every single TV commercial by Toña ends with the phrase “Como mi tierra no hay dos, como mi Toña ninguna<sup>5</sup>,” elevating the product as high as the nation. The product also promotes this feeling of “oneness” or of belonging by stating that the consumption of this beer is explicitly directed to the flavour of our roots: “celebrando con Toña somos nicas más felices, pues la Toña es la cerveza y el sabor de mis raíces.”<sup>6</sup>

This nationalistic sentiment is also raised by using visual landmarks such as cultural, historical and culinary references both through phrases and song lyrics as well as scenarios presented in the ads. The logos of both Flor de Caña and Toña are an image of the old railway tracks at the entrance of “Ingenio San Antonio” flanked by tall palm trees and the San Cristobal volcano (the largest in Central America) in the far background. The “Ingenio San Antonio” belongs to the Pellas family, who are shareholders with Industrial Brewery S.A and producers of

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<sup>4</sup> “And this is my rum... Flor de Caña, the rum of Nicaragua”

<sup>5</sup> “Like my land there are not two, like my beer none”

<sup>6</sup> Celebrating with Toña we are happier Nicaraguans, because Toña is the beer and the flavor of my roots.

Flor de *Caña*. By directly associating the brand to this iconic volcano both brands are making it easier to associate it directly with a national pride. Nevertheless, advertisement campaigns also invoke well-known landscapes of the country by simply mentioning them in the lyrics and showing aerial views and scenes of various places such as Granada islets, Managua, the Caribbean, Granada, white sand beaches, Apoyo Lagoon, docks in the Atlantic coast, the Concepcion volcano and the historic site of Rafaela Herrera Castle (in Toña and flor de Caña ads). Up until recently, however, most of the visual landmarks were predominantly pacific; this shows the absence of the Atlantic coast as part of this representation of Nicaraguan national identity.

Ads further invoke this collective feeling by displaying cultural symbols- mostly culinary ones. Nicaraguans are very proud and fond of their cuisine. Food is a very important part of celebrations and everyday life and thus an important part of the Nicaraguan national identity. By using clear close ups of several Nicaraguan dishes; advertisements truly invoke a feeling of “Nicaraguaness.” Culinary references found throughout the advertisements are national dishes such as caballo ballo and its traditional dishware; tajadas con queso, guacamole, and tostones con queso frito, among others (Ron Plata, Flor de Caña, and Toña). Toña presents these culinary references more extensively in that it does not only present the food, but also the process of making them as well as the traditional way of selling them (i.e. a woman selling quesillos in a fair and three women walking with canastos on their heads selling cajeta, mamones y mango and traditional homemade bread).

Ron Plata, on the other hand, uses the collective and popular culture predominant in Nicaragua as a cultural symbol to invoke a nationalistic feeling. Most of its ads use examples of friends or family gatherings, which is a common custom, to connect the product directly to the

“Nicaraguaness.” Again, these cultural symbols prove to be extensively pacific, and only recently the “Palo de mayo” is included. None of these ads make reference to traditional food from the Atlantic, which is rather rich and different from that in the Pacific. Likewise, they don’t display specific cultural symbols from the Caribbean, which highlights the idea that the private sector, as a cultural intermediary is promoting an exclusively pacific national identity.

One can conclude, however, that by creating a sense of “oneness” with the audience, this strategy further blurs the distinction between the companies and the audience. In a way this strategy aims to prove that the product is not separate from Nicaraguans, that the product is Nicaragua. Phrases that emphasize strong collectivistic tendencies such as “being one,” “mine,” “together,” “share,” “friend,” “family” are used to emphasize a sense of oneness with the Nicaraguan audience.

### *Reference to Verbal Landmarks*

Some advertisements use ambiguity, and jargon to allude to the idea that just as the audience is, the product is also Nicaraguan. In one of Flor de Caña’s ads, for instance, a sense of ambiguity is used by stating “mi gente, mi tierra y mi ron<sup>7</sup>.” By mentioning the rum at the end and after the land and the people, the ad is elevating the rum to the importance of the audience and the nation. Likewise, in one of the lyrics of an ad, Toña uses “y si muriera y volviera a nacer no naceria en otro lado<sup>8</sup>.” This is a very strong statement that can make the audience feel that Toña is indeed Nicaraguan. By stating that if “I would die and reborn again, I wouldn’t like to be born in any other place,” the company creates a strong potential for identification thus invoking the feeling of national identity. Similarly, the many Victoria ads use the double meaning of the name of the beer (victory) to reinforce a connection between the beer and the national identity. One ad states

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<sup>7</sup> My people, my land and my rum

<sup>8</sup> And if I would die and would be born again I wouldn’t want to be born anywhere else

“nuestra Victoria, es toda la emoción, es la alegría, es la pasión<sup>9</sup>.” The lyrics are stating that our “victory” is “all of our emotion, happiness and passion.” This ambiguity allows the product to create a strong bond with the audience as it might understand the beer as a victory of all Nicaraguans.

Ron Plata and Movistar, use Nicaraguan popular language and sayings to create a strong bond with Nicaraguans. In 2008 advertising, Ron Plata presents the new idea of using mixers to drink the product by alluding to jargon commonly used such as “el chaparro, la gigantona, el chele, la morenaza, una aventada.” In other advertisement, Ron Plata uses young people’s common jargon such as “andas con la pelota” instead of hanging out with friends, and “chino, chele y flaco” to refer to the common tradition of giving a nickname to each of your friends. By using this technique, Ron Plata is clearly stating “I am as Nicaraguan as you are as I know your language and how to use it.” Similarly, in their last campaign, Movistar refers to the fact that when you return to your homeland, you return to the place “donde dejaste el ombligo” (where you left your belly button), which is a very traditional phrase in the country.

### ***Invigorating Traditions***

The private national ads also arouse this idea of national identity by linking the product with a well-known tradition: it being a cultural tradition or an everyday life customs. This emphasize that the company not only recognizes the importance of these traditions but also that it does something to help in upholding them. Flor de Caña, for instance, depicts and narrates an example of two people in a car asking for directions, to show the common scenario that even though Nicaragua is known for having an odd address system, the people are friendly enough that you will always find your way. Similarly, Ron Plata connects to the Nicaraguan viewer

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<sup>9</sup> Our Vicotory, is all the emotion, is the happiness and the passion.

immediately by presenting most of its ads in “fiestas pinoleras” or social gatherings. El pinolillo, is a cornmeal and cacao-based traditional drink in Nicaragua, therefore, “fiestas pinoleras” is a more nationalistic way to refer to a “Nicaraguan party.” By linking the product with these common gatherings, it is emphasizing that the consumption of it is in fact part of this custom. Moreover, in its last advertisements, Ron Plata started referring to the typical more relax gatherings, such as barbeques out in the porch with plastic chairs and tables as “Ron Plateada.” It is saying that it is no longer a barbeque out with friends, but it is now rather a “Ron Plateada”; putting the product in the center of the event.

Toña has successfully associated itself with one of the main traditional celebrations in the country: Las hipicos. The product has done so not only by locating all of their ads within such tradition, but also by partially sponsoring them. By presenting its advertisements in this celebration, the product further evokes other cultural traditions to accentuate their Nicaraguaness. Toña’s ads show the famous gigantona dancing, different manifestations of our national folklore dance, bull riding and traditional bands playing guitar and marimba with their national costume. Although different folkloric dances are represented throughout the ads, the most often displayed is el Güegüense, which was recently proclaimed as a “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” by the UNESCO. El Güegüense is not only shown as a dance, but also two ads show artisans making and painting the famous Güegüense mask. Toña makes an ingenious connection to other tradition by connecting the making of the Güegüense to the art crafts tradition making of Nicaragua. Other traditional dances are also shown for a small fragments of the ads such as el baile de las inditas<sup>10</sup> and el baile del abuelo y la abuela<sup>11</sup>. An interesting technique is that most of the costumes that the people dancing wear are red or green,

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<sup>10</sup> The dance of the little native nicaraguans

<sup>11</sup> The dance of the grandfather and the grandmother

which are the official colors of the brand, thus, reinforcing the bond between Toña and Nicaraguan traditions.

### *“El Nicaraguense” Portrayed by the Ads*

Although it is commonly known that advertisements tend to use extra pretty and fit people, the physical characteristics of the actors in such nationalistic advertisement campaigns are interpreted hereby to reveal what it is that this ad promote as “Nicaraguense.” In most advertisements, the protagonists of the plot line, “the main Nicaraguans,” tend to be young actors, particularly fit and beautiful, around their 30s, with brown and some have fairer skin than the average Nicaraguan. In the case of Ron Plata, which is a product that mainly targets a young audience, they show young people with different looks but with typically Latin American traits such as brown and black hair, eyes and brown skin color. Toña presents a rather controversial example. The CEM JWT official revealed that in 2013, other companies discovered that the production, the singers, and the models used in the ads were all from Costa Rica. The models in the ads have very white skin and in some cases they even have blonde hair. One can interpret this as not being a real representation of the “typical Nicaraguan” but actually represent the features of the upper classes.

However, some of the ads do include people that are more representative of the Nicaraguan lower status population. In most ads, Toña presents scenes with a most “popular” image of Nicaraguan, such as: three old ladies wearing traditional everyday cloth (long skirts with solid colors, button up shirts, with flowery patterns) and brown, chubby short middle age men doing arts and craft or playing instruments. Nevertheless, none of the actors with such characteristics are the protagonists of the ads and their presence is relegated to extras in the plot line. The first Flor de Caña ad, on the contrary, did not hired models. The ad showed



hardworking people doing their everyday work such as a brown man working on the sugar cane fields, an old woman throwing tortilla, two middle age engineers, that were not fit, and had the usual “panza nica<sup>12</sup>” that grown up men tend to have in Nicaragua. The ad uses very rural people and thus is a unique example and rather different from nowadays, when models are hired.

An interesting point to raised is that only in recent ads Movistar, Ron Flor de Caña and Toña started to include cast members that represent the Caribbean population and culture. Actors representing the Caribbean tend to have very distinctive features such as, Rasta hair, really black skin and big body structures. Moreover, ads also started to include cultural symbols and traditions from the Atlantic Coast, such as showing their national dress, and scenes of people dancing Palo de Mayo (a traditional dance from the Caribbean coast). Nevertheless, the private sector representation of the “Nicaraguaness” has throughout the yeas been exclusively pacific, and it is only until now that there has been a very mild incorporation of the Atlantic Coast presence.

### **National identity and its Representation in the Public Sector**

The main governmental institutions responsible to “sell” Nicaragua or to promote the culture and identity of Nicaragua are the Institute of Culture (INC) and the Institute of Tourism (INTUR). Interviews conducted with officials in both institutions provided great insight into how they understand and use the concept of Nicaraguan identity as well as to discover which is the dominant discourse surrounding “Nicaraguaness” in the public sector.

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<sup>12</sup> Colloquial way of describing Nicaraguan men big bellies

The director of the media and press of INC explained that the institute is in charge of encouraging a strong national identity through the promotion of manifestations and traditions that represent it. According to the director, the definition of *Nicaraguanidad* is:

*Our Nicaraguanidad is our way of being, not only culturally but socially, humanly and politically too. But what identifies you as part of this nation? The Güegüense, our Ruben Dario, la Gritería. Yet, this Nicaraguanidad, this Nica identity is reflected differently across the country.*

-Excerpt from INC's media and press director, 01/30/14

It is important to note that all of the cultural symbols referred to are predominantly pacific. Nevertheless, he explained that the institute tries to represent all parts of Nicaragua. He clarifies "the government attempts to rescue and promote, through the work of the Institute of Culture, all of those manifestations of our identity that are spread throughout the country." The institute provides tools, trainings and workshops, for the people and communities throughout the country to get together to create a stronger presence of their traditions as well as allow for the Nicaraguan identity to reflect even more clearly in each of the cultural expressions found around the country.

In the case of the Atlantic coast, although the institute does not have an office, they have permanent with institutes that are responsible for the promotion of culture, such as: theatre, dance and fine arts. He further explained that each locality has its own expression of our national identity and that, "Even though the Atlantic Coast possess different traditions they are part of our territory, of our geography... We integrate them in our identity, they all belong to our plurinational identity. (INC Media and Press Director Interview, 01/30/14) In all, the director explained that for INC, even though the Nicaraguan identity is disseminated, and each of its expressions is rather independent they all take part of the vitality that the Nicaraguan identity possesses.

Bayardo Rodriguez, the Coordinator of the Inventory Project and the Department of Cultural Heritage of Nicaragua, explained that, the department documents and creates booklets and brochures of the richness of the Nicaraguan culture as expressed in different municipalities and departments around the pacific coast of Nicaragua. These are given to universities, municipalities, public libraries and other cultural institutions to promote the admiration of our heritage and to provide them with reference. When asked if a similar inventory was being produced for the Atlantic Coast he stated that, “We try to document manifestations of our “nicaraguaness”, yet due to lack of budget we have not been able to include the culture of the Caribbean.” The institutes’ weak participation reveals a possible priority given to the promotion of the national identity of the pacific.

The representative believes that it is important to promote, protect and document the Nicaraguan culture, because “our culture is part of our identity. Our past is part of who we are.” According to him, the heritage of Nicaragua is an inexhaustible source of information and by documenting it you can provide information to people so they can identify with it and contribute to its preservation. Another strategy that the institute is promoting to create more awareness is organizing workshops in different departments throughout the country so people know more about their Nicaragua. Workshops have been organized in Rivas, Matagalpa, Leon, Granada y Masaya. Not a lot of workshops have been organized in the Atlantic coast given the lack of budget, and also there is not much inventories about the heritage and national property existent in the area.

The Institute of Culture advertises or promotes the Nicaraguan culture and national identity through indirect strategies. Whenever they organized cultural events or big celebrations, they invite the media, and that is the way they advertised themselves. The Institute of Tourism

(INTUR) on the other hand, is in charge of advertising and promoting Nicaragua as a brand. The head of the graphic design department stated that, “These past years INTUR has tried to position the brand “*Nicaragua... unica... original*” with a consistent image to present itself both nationally and internationally. She further explained that

*INTUR is trying to put together a consistent idea of “national identity” so that at the international level, people remember Nicaragua easily. Nicaragua is such a multicultural country, and has a vast array of cultural symbols from which to form our identity and use it in our international campaign, but the hardest part is perhaps, to find the most representative aspect of it.*

-excerpt from Interview with the Head of the graphic design department, 02/03/14

There are approximately 28 international touristic fairs and INTUR has started to choose certain cultural symbols and traditions to create a consistent image to represent the “Nicaraguan identity” in the fairs. This has consisted of pictures of volcanos and beaches, or our unique Ometepe paired up with a reference of the Güegüense, a national folklore dress, as well as gastronomy component. When the situation allows it, the representative explains, they bring a marimba in, and play traditional music to invoke this sense of “Nicaraguanidad.” An interesting point raised in the interview, was the fact that in these fairs, they also display a “Flor de Caña, cajeta<sup>13</sup>, la marimba and of course our folklore.” This reveals, that indeed, Flor de Caña has such a strong international presence that it has started to even been used to represent Nicaragua by other cultural institutions.

As to the representation and traditional expressions from the Atlantic Coast, the representative explained that at the moment, INTUR is opting to not use the image of the Atlantic Coast internationally due to the lack of infrastructure, service and available activities that can be offered there to the public. She elaborates by affirming that they have in fact

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<sup>13</sup> National sweet

“forgotten it, and it is very rare to actually direct any marketing strategy to the Atlantic Coast.” This year, however, “a consultancy report for each site in the Atlantic coast was conducted to have an inventory of the cultural tradition of each sector and to start the strategy to position the site.”

INTUR also organizes campaigns to promote Nicaragua within the nation. In the past years, for example, the institute is trying to bring awareness of the richness of the Nicaraguan culture and identity by organizing contests as well as tournaments, such as the national contest of gastronomy and the surf tournament. This is done for people to have this concept of “national identity” very vivid in their mind. The idea is that with modernization, globalization and development, people are more exposed to other touristic destinations, as well as to other cultures, thus forgetting what they have right in front of them. The representative explains, “People start wanting to have a burger rather than gallo pinto.<sup>14</sup>” Thus, INTUR is making an extra effort to maintain our “Nicaraguanidad” on the top of our head. The institute promotes the Nicaraguan national identity by also using promotional videos, spots and brochures to provide information about the richness of Nicaragua.

### ***Nicaraguanidad displayed through Promotional Campaigns of the Public Sector***

It is important to point out that the promotional campaigns of both the INC and INTUR have a different audience than the one the private sector has. INTUR aims to promote tourism and so they want to project a unique national identity that will attract tourism, both nationally and internationally. The INC attempts to raise awareness of the importance of our national identity and the different aspects that define it and thus targets a local audience. An analysis of brochures

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<sup>14</sup> Traditional Nicaraguan dish: beans with rice

and booklets produced by the INC and INTUR as well as T.V. commercials produced by INTUR revealed four strategies that allude to the Nicaraguan national identity. These strategies include: 1.) emphasizing the importance and uniqueness of the Nicaraguaness; 2.) an apparent display of the Nicaraguan diversity; 3.) linking religion, history and politics to the Nicaraguaness; 4.) the “Nicaraguense” portrayed by the ads.

### ***Emphasizing the importance and uniqueness of Nicaragua***

One of the strategies to promote a sense “Nicaraguaness” used by both institutes is to emphasize the uniqueness and importance of the Nicaraguan culture. This emphasis on the importance and uniqueness of the country highlights the boundaries of the “nation” and thus provides material for the intensification of a pride feeling of belonging. The product that INTUR sells is “Nicaragua”, and their brand logo is “Nicaragua, Unica... Original.<sup>15</sup>” The logo is telling both Nicaraguans and the international market that Nicaraguans are unique and original. By using such positive adjectives, the national audience can feel special and the feeling of belonging to such a unique place is intensified. Similarly, the INC motto is “Fortaleciendo nuestra identidad.<sup>16</sup>” By using the possessive pronoun “our” the institute is directly connecting with the audience. The entire campaign of the INC addresses the uniqueness of the Nicaraguan identity and as such the importance of it. For instance, every booklet that the institute has created of different departments and cities around the country explain what Nicaraguan heritage is and why it is so important. The booklets state that it is important to have this inventories given that they will aid in the “Fortalecimiento de nuestro ser nicaraguense<sup>17</sup>” and “Conoceremos mas sobre

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<sup>15</sup> In English: “Nicaragua, Unique and Original.”

<sup>16</sup> Strengthening our identity

<sup>17</sup> Strengthening our Nicaraguan Identity.

nuestra cultura e identidad local y nacional.<sup>18</sup>” These directly link the uniqueness and importance of these symbols to the formation and preservation of the Nicaraguan identity.

Another way that the national identity is expressed is by emphasising the importance of things that are uniquely Nicaraguan. In a video produced by INTUR for the international market, the narrator makes several statements such as, “Only here we navigate rivers and lakes from the Caribbean to the Pacific.” By using the term “only” the institute is emphasizing that these are things that are unique to Nicaragua. By doing this, a sense of proudness can be potentially aroused in the local audience in that they will recognize the uniqueness of Nicaragua and feel proud of being Nicaraguans themselves. A unique cultural heritage that has been proclaimed to be a “Masterpiece” by UNESCO is “El Güegüense.” In the INTUR 2013 touristic guide, a picture with a man wearing the Güegüense mask appears four times throughout the 13 page long small booklet. An image of el Güegüense also appears in every poster of the campaign to promote the creation of inventories of the Nicaraguan heritages. By using the world renowned symbol of el Güegüense, it is easy to invoke a sense of pride of being Nicaraguan and at the same time present the symbol as key aspect of our “Nicaraguaness” to foreigners. The Garifuna culture, the Atlantic cultural heritage that was also proclaimed masterpiece of the world by UNESCO, is scarcely presented throughout these campaigns. Nevertheless, the main cultural tradition presented from the Atlantic is the maypole. The INTUR even created a special brochure just to explain its history and development.

### ***Seeming Emphasis on Diversity: Food, Destinies and People***

A “seeming” display of the rich diversity found throughout Nicaragua is another strategy used. In addition to highlighting the diverse population, the promotional campaigns also

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<sup>18</sup> We will get to know our culture and local and nacional identity.

advertise the rich diversity of the country through destination and gastronomic examples. By highlighting “diversity” both Institutes are showing that the “nicaraguanidad” encompasses a diverse array of expressions. Although most of these campaigns mention the diversity prevalent in Nicaragua, the expressions of “Nicaraguanidad” of the Pacific are much more dominant in the verbal and visuals of the material. Thus, the word “seeming” is used to refer to the idea that this diversity is only used in a superficial manner.

In their brand manual, INTUR states that “Nuestras vidas están llenas de vivencias distintas, teñidas de múltiples colores.<sup>19</sup>” Immediately after which a list of what “Nuestro Güegüense is<sup>20</sup>” is presented. This list includes the Nicaraguan national bird (guardabarranco), Ometepe island, coffee, mangoes, Palo de Mayo, among others. Most of the things listed are symbols and references from the Pacific. There are only two things that are specific to the Atlantic Coast (el Caribe and Palo de mayo) and only a few others that could be related to it (playa, arena, sol, tropic, arrecifes, y cayos). Nevertheless, the fact that INTUR refers to Nicaragua as “El Güegüense” shows the overemphasis of the history of the Pacific Coast. The Güegüense is a play that represents the rejection of the Spanish colonial domination by indigenous and mestizo people,<sup>21</sup> thus emphasizing only one of the two colonial powers that dominated Nicaragua. Nevertheless, further in the manual it is stated that “We are respectful of the international right and the right for auto-determination of the indigenous people.” Given that the audience of INTUR is mostly international, it can be argued that this is a marketing strategy rather than a real adaptation of a diverse identity.

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<sup>19</sup> Our lives are full of different lifestyles, stained of multiple colours.

<sup>20</sup> In English: Our Güegüense is

<sup>21</sup> As explained in <http://vianica.com/go/specials/21-el-Güegüense-macho-raton.html>



This sense of diversity is also portrayed by showing the diverse natural landscapes that Nicaragua offers. In one of the INTUR ads for instance, the narrator states, “The beaches of Nicaragua are a symbol of diversity. In the Caribbean we have beautiful islands yet to explore. In the Pacific, limitless sand and beaches for those who are more adventurous.” Yet, throughout the 5 minute long video, there is an extensive use of landscapes from the Pacific such as aerial views of the coast of San Juan del Sur, Ometepe Island, Concepcion Volcano, Apoyo Lagoon and others. This emphasis on the Pacific alludes to the fact that mentioning the diversity existent in the country is more of a touristic strategy rather than a conviction actually adopted by the Institutes. The few references to landscapes in the Caribbean are mostly white beaches and boats navigating in the clear Atlantic Ocean. Another example that portrays this emphasis is the mention of the Spanish colonization in another promotional video by the INTUR, “Nicaragua esta marcada por su pasado indigena, Y por el transito de Espana.” The narrator then mentions “and our Caribbean Coast which preserves the culture of the indigenous people.” This statement is later augmented by an erroneous fact: “the music and dance of the Caribbean encompasses all of our territory.”

This seemingly diverse identity of Nicaragua is also portrayed by culinary references. For instance, the INTUR tourist guide refers to the Nicaraguan gastronomy as “based on corn that has been handed down from generation to generation from the Pre-Colombian period.” Then they proceed to mention various corn-based dishes that are also predominantly Pacific such as Las Rosquillas<sup>22</sup> and Nacatamal<sup>23</sup>. Contradictorily, after listing a number of dishes that are only available in the Pacific, the next paragraph states that, “The varied gastronomy of Nicaragua goes hand in hand with multiculturalism. The Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast boasts delicious dishes

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<sup>22</sup> A Nicaraguan traditional snack

<sup>23</sup> A traditional dish based on cornflour and wrapped in a plantain leaf

with a base of coconut.” This is further supported through the pictures and images used both through brochures and in the video, which have mostly to do with the pacific cuisine. This contradictions, illustrates that the mentioning of the diversity and richness of the Caribbean Coast is done more because “diversity sells” rather than a way to incorporate their culture and traditions to the Nicaraguan identity.

The “diverse” aspect of the Nicaraguan identity is also reinforced by the fact that both the INTUR and the INC create brochures for specific places in Nicaragua. INTUR has produced brochures for most departments of the Pacific Coast, and only two for the entire Atlantic Coast. In one of the brochures for the Atlantic Coast, all of the different cultural manifestations and ethnic groups of the area are condensed. In fact, the introductory section mentions “Multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural, this area is rich with destinations and indescribable beauty.” The brochure includes information from Bluefield, el Bluff, Rama Cay y Green Hills, Corn Island, Little Corn Island, Orinoco y Marshal Point. Most of it is a documentation of the different activities that can be done there. There is not much reference to the culture and diverse ethnic groups predominant in the area, except for the tradition of the ethnic communities of Garifuna, whose dance, language, and music is also considered heritage of humanity by the UNESCO.

### ***Incorporating Religious and Historical Aspects into the National Identity***

An interesting way in which both of these governmental entities portray this idea of Nicaraguaness is by linking its uniqueness and importance to a specific religion as well as to important historical events. References to several religious festivities are found throughout this institute’s promotional campaigns. For instance, INC puts a picture of a local church in each of the posters to promote the creation of cultural inventories. Likewise, the religious festivities of la griteria and Santo Domingo, are both presented as key parts of our “Nicaraguaness” in the

INTUR brand manual. The promotional videos made by INTUR are charged by several examples of religion practices such as images of famous Cathedrals and churches found around the country, priests leading service and people praying or lighten on candles inside of them. The video “Nicaragua the next thing” also shows images of local saints such as “La virgin de la immaculada concepcion” o “la virgen de Socorro.” The responsibility of linking the Nicaraguan national identity with the Christian religion, can be given to the current government. The Sandinista government has connected Nicaragua with Christianity, which can be reflected in one of their logos: *Nicaragua Cristiana y solidaria*<sup>24</sup>. This idea of directly linking the national identity with the Christian religion is illustrated by the fact that “Cristiana<sup>25</sup>” is one of the characteristics listed as Nicaraguans in the INTUR brand manual. In the end of the spot video for international promotion, the narrator states “Te invito a conocer nuestra Nicaragua, *bendita y linda*.” Therefore, stating that Nicaragua is indeed blessed.

The uniqueness of Nicaragua is also linked to specific historical events as well as people. Throughout the brochures produced both by the INTUR and INC, several national monuments of Ruben Dario and Sandino are presented. Likewise, in one promotional video for the international fairs several historical events are linked to the Nicaraguan identity. For example, “la lucha contra la invasion filibustera estadounidense en 1856<sup>26</sup>.” is paired with a picture of Andres Castro throwing a rock to William Walker followed by images of a museum full with pistols and monuments from the battle. Interestingly, another event highlighted is “el triunfo de la revolucion popular sandinista sobre la dictadura somocista en 1979, iniciando la ruta de la

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<sup>24</sup> Nicaragua, Christian and solidary

<sup>25</sup> Christian

<sup>26</sup> The fight against the American filibustering invasion of 1956

democracia, en Nicaragua<sup>27</sup>.” This triumph is demonstrated with several images of the anniversary celebration of the revolution, such as multiple aerial views of the Juan Pablo square full with thousands of Nicaraguans on a 19<sup>th</sup> of July, wearing their red and black shirts, several packed busses and processions of motorcycles with people holding red and black flags. By connecting this historical event to the national identity, the institutes are further including a political aspect into this idea of Nicaraguanness. This further illustrates the power that the current government has in the shaping of this identity.

### *The “Nicaraguense” Presented by the Promotional Campaigns*

Unlike the advertisement campaigns of the private sector, the promotional campaigns produced by the public sector do not hire models. Instead, both the brochures and the promotional videos present real people doing day-to-day activities, both through images and video recordings. The fact that these promotional campaigns do not hire models, and instead show the typical Nicaraguan, illustrates the characteristic of the Nicaraguan that the governmental institution value and encourage. The INTUR videos for instance, show typical Nicaraguans with brown skin color, thick body structure and short, doing different activities. For instance, farmers are shown harvesting different produce as well as fruits and vegetables being sold in traditional markets, which are out on the street and in big traditional baskets. Similarly, these people are shown doing activities that are highly connected to the concept of a unique identity. Such activities involve men doing traditional pottery, painting handmade adornments, picking up coffee beans and cutting coconuts with a machete<sup>28</sup>. In the brochures and booklets offered by the INC, of seemingly working class Nicaraguans, doing different activities such as

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<sup>27</sup> The triumph of the Sandinista Revolution over the Somocista dictatorship in 1979, starting the route towards democracy in Nicaragua

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serving a vigoron, or selling arts craft, or praying in a church. By showing everyday people doing everyday activities, the videos and brochures become more available to the Nicaraguan people, and thus identification with the people presented in the videos is more possible.

It is important to emphasize that in all of the recent promotional campaigns produced by both institutes an image of a Caribbean is shown doing day-to-day activities too. For instance, in the videos produced by INTUR, several man and women from the Atlantic coast are shown doing activities such as fishing, playing drums, engaging in witchcraft and doing more traditional things such as wearing their traditional clothing and dancing their traditional dances. Similarly, in the brochure for Managua, INC includes one lady that seems to be dancing the famous maypole.

Another point to notice is that although there is no protagonist in the video campaigns of INTUR, in the promotional video for the international marketing there was a woman dressed in traditional clothing that was constantly presented like to introduce some kind of transition. It is interestingly to notice that she had very fair skin, was very fit and had dyed blonde hair. This is similar to what happens in the private sector in that the main protagonist seem to have fairer skin color than the average Nicaragua, and the average Nicaraguan seems to be relegated to secondary characters.

It is important to emphasize that in this past two years INTUR launched two videos that focused a lot on the Caribbean Coast: Spot Caribe and Nicaragua, the next thing. This is in alignment with what the head of graphic design department stated in the interview: that INTUR is currently trying to incorporate and develop the Caribbean Coast as a stronger touristic destination in Nicaragua.

## Conclusion

As announced in the introduction, I analysed advertising campaigns of both the public and private sector to analyse the national identity discourse in Nicaragua. The companies representing the private sector are those who associate their products with Nicaragua as well as use and reproduce representations of "nicaraguanidad." For the public sector an analysis of promotional campaigns launched by the two governmental entities responsible for promoting Nicaragua (INC and INTUR) was conducted. The findings showed that both sectors indeed (re)produced the notion of Nicaraguan national identity in their promotional/advertising campaigns. Nevertheless the reasoning, audience and strategies of both sectors were different.

The private sector's primary reason to (re)produce this notion of "nicaraguaness" is to create an emotional bond with the audience in order to elevate the product to a status higher than that of a mere commodity. Thus, the target of the private sector is the domestic market. Given that the goal of the private sector is to market their product, the way this sector represents the Nicaraguan national identity is by directly and indirectly connecting it with the product. The strategies through which the Nicaraguan national identity is presented and reinforced by the private sector are invoking a nationalistic sentiment, using verbal landmarks, invigorating traditions as well as showing "the nicaraguense" through the advertisements. Although a diverse array of expressions, verbal landmarks and cultural traditions were found throughout the advertising campaigns, most of them were originated in the Pacific. The most representative expressions were traditional celebrations such as Los Hipicos, natural landmarks such as Ometepe and the Concepcion volcano and verbal landmarks predominantly linked to the jargon of the youth of the Pacific. Nevertheless, in the recent years of 2012 and 2013, the campaigns of

the companies analyzed in this study started to include natural landmarks as well as cast members that represent the Caribbean Coast.

The public sector's reason, on the other hand, uses this notion of national identity to promote Nicaragua as a unique touristic destination as well as to promote and protect the culture. Thus the national identity discourse promoted attempts to encompass the diversity of the country. Most of the promotional campaigns of both the INC and INTUR present a multi-cultural Nicaragua. Nevertheless the cultural expressions and representations of the nicaraguanidad are also extensively pacific. Although both institutes refer and mention particular representations of the Atlantic coast there seems to be certain contradictions with the amount of cultural promotion that they do in the area.

In all, the current paper provides evidence that the discourse on national identity in Nicaragua is still predominantly pacific. Although Nicaragua was the first country to grant regional autonomy to the Atlantic coast, the discourse on national identity presented in advertising and promotional campaigns by both the public and private sector has not been successfully transformed to represent this idea of Nicaragua as a plurinational state. One can conclude that the representations of Nicaraguanness found through the different strategies used by both sectors potentially contribute to the maintenance of a predominantly Pacific national identity discourse. In other words, by showing the routines, everyday life and supposedly typical Nicaraguans, these campaigns encourage a mono-cultural national identity.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

It should be noted that this paper does not aspire to be comprehensive and absolute analysis of the representation of national identity in Nicaragua, as this would require more complex methodology and data. As is true in all research, this study has some limitations. In

particular, one can point out that it is limited in scope because its findings are difficult to generalize in other countries. Another limitation is that the study solely analysed the content of the campaigns that were openly available to the public, and that older campaigns were not available given of the change in format of the videos. It is also important to note that the advertising and promotional campaigns are not the only responsible agent in the dissemination of a sense of national identity in Nicaragua, but are only a part of a complex public sphere that forms and redefines national identity. These limitations suggest directions for future research. Ideally, future research should employ richer case-level data that would encompass more members of the private and public sector as well as other cultural intermediaries that promote the Nicaraguan national identity.



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Appendix A



**Example of recent Campaign launched by Movistar. 2013.**