GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Institutionalizing Nepal's Soft Power: Practical Public Diplomacy Initiatives for Culture, Heritage, and Global Nepali Engagement

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite Nepal's considerable cultural wealth and international goodwill, its soft power remains underutilized because the country lacks a coherent, institutionalized public diplomacy strategy — a gap identified by most research analysis. Nepal's branding is fragmented and its global visibility limited.

Nepal ranked 101 out of 193 countries in the Brand Finance Global Soft Power Index 2025, indicating the country is in the early stages of developing a coherent soft power diplomacy strategy and translating it into sustained, impactful initiatives. Nepal has long relied on Mount Everest, Lumbini, the Gurkhas, and the Sherpas as its principal soft power assets; however, it possesses many other cultural and heritage resources with global appeal.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under its Public Diplomacy mandate, MOFA is tasked "to integrate cultural diplomacy into Nepal's broader foreign policy objectives by promoting mutual understanding, strengthening international goodwill, enhancing Nepal's national identity abroad, and contributing to constructive engagement with the global community."

The recent establishment of MOFA's Public Diplomacy Division is a timely step toward addressing this gap, but it must be paired with concrete, implementable initiatives rather than broad policy aspirations alone.

This memo recommends that the Public Diplomacy Division, MOFA institutionalize some practical, low-cost, high-impact tools for sustained soft power influence. The memo draws on a qualitative review of primary and secondary sources. The principal secondary source is the AFCAN document, "A Report on Nepal's Soft Power: Identifying the Potentials and Gaps," alongside Nepal's foreign policy documents and comparative literature on soft power and public diplomacy. Primary research consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted with MOFA and IFA officials.

The recommendations are proposed by the author's professional experience in tourism promotion, hospitality management, marketing, and cultural heritage, combined with independent analysis of international best practices in soft power and public diplomacy.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

01. Economic/Gastro diplomacy led by a proposed "Orange Diplomacy" initiative to boost momentum for citrus farmers, support agriculture, and lay the groundwork for premium branding once GI protection is secured.

02. Once new Industry Property Bill is passed, urgently scale up Geographical Indications (GI) registration for indigenous knowledge, ancestral foods, and living cultural traditions to secure their intellectual property rights and ensure global recognition.

03. Curated diplomatic gifts to promote the country's local branded goods, gastro products, artistic heritage and other traditional items

04. Institutionalising soft power strategies for MOFA and diplomatic missions through cultural and wellness traditions, and people-to-people engagement initiatives.

KEY VISUALS



Globalize Kukur Tihar
("Dog Appreciation Day")



Promote Mha Puja as Nepal's Tradition of Self-Care and Well-being:



Orange Diplomacy:
Economic/Gastro Diplomacy to promote Nepal's National Fruit.



Crafted in Nepal:
Promoting Authentic Nepali Products

KEY TAKEAWAY

Soft power is the feel-good factor of diplomacy. Much of Nepal's soft power has been inherited through generations; what is needed now is to strategically package, promote, and project these assets for greater global visibility.