

Nation Branding - perception and attitudes about Mongolia in Croatia

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Abstract

Nation brand is not just a combination of brand's elements of identity (elements like a sign or a logo, a color, a slogan ...), but it implies a long-term strategic goal and organized efforts to determine what it wants to achieve and where to position the nation (country) on the perceptual map of the world nations. It is a prerequisite to look at the nation as a brand to gain proper position of the nation in the world.

A nation as a brand implies the active role of all citizens as they are an integral part of the national identity. This is why there are serious challenges in achieving the desired position which is under great influence of image and reputation of the nation and/or country. Although there are many challenges, there are also many advantages why the nation branding needs to be managed strategically and systematically in the long term. The main advantages are: eliminating negative stereotypes (if they exist), creating a positive image, achieving desired and possible world reputation and influence in today's and future international relations, building and maintaining tourist attractiveness for a specific (desired) groups of tourists.

The paper presents the research findings of the survey conducted in Croatia about the perception of Mongolia and current identity solutions of nation brand of Mongolia ie. sign/logo, slogan and other elements of the identity.

Keywords: Nation brand, branding, Mongolia, perception and attitudes, Croatia.

1. Introduction

A nation as a brand implies a different profile of people involved in various activities who are an integral part of the national identity. There are some challenges in building a desired position that can easily be described as an image and reputation of the nation and/or country. Although there are many challenges, there are many advantages why the nation and/or country branding needs to be managed strategically and systematically in the long term. The main advantages can be: eliminating negative stereotypes, creating a positive image, achieving desired and possible world reputation and influence in today's and future international relations, building and maintaining tourist attractiveness for a specific group of tourists. One must keep in mind that in contemporary society brands can spur affinity or discrimination, helping define both individual and collective identities (Saviola, Marazza, 2013). It is important to know the perception of the nation, and the reason why is for the proper construction and management of a nation brand. Brand perception depends on numerous factors and dimensions.

This article will present the result of seven dimensions: value system; quality of life; business potential; heritage (historical, artistic, cultural, natural); touristic potential; products produced in the Country; and sports and sports achievements. Of course, it should be taken into account that the article deals with the perception of Croatian students about Mongolia and Mongolia is an exotic and rather unknown country to them. Regardless of the real knowledge about the country and the possible similarities and differences, perceptions exist. Perception is a very real and dynamic category that can nevertheless be managed. This is not an easy process, and its starting point is knowledge of the current perception in order to determine the weaknesses and strengths that the national brand currently has. The strength of the nation brand is determined by the citizens of the country. Equally important is the perception of the nation brand by real and potential tourists.

In this case, it is the perception of Croatian students about Mongolia, the perception of the nation brand of Mongolia, and its tourist brand. Croatian students do not know Mongolia well enough and no participant of the research included in the sample (n = 140) has ever visited Mongolia. Their answers are only related to their perception without real knowledge about Mongolia but can be a good indicator, especially if their perception of Mongolia is put in relation to their perception of other known or equally unknown countries. To be more exact, how Mongolia is seen by citizens of other countries and how to "direct" their perceptions in the desired direction. This is a long-term but feasible process. For a good overview of the results obtained, it is useful to compare the results for several countries by the same or similar sample of respondents as well as to make a brief comparison of the country from which the respondents (Croatia) and the countries whose national brand is being surveyed (Mongolia). Although Croatia has more than one million inhabitants (Croatia 4.1 mils vs. 3.1 million Mongolia), Mongolia has a significantly larger land area (Croatia 156 594 km² vs. 1 564 120 km² Mongolia) Figure 1.



Figure 1. Mongolia vs Croatia – comparison of surface area in km².

Source: <https://mapfight.appspot.com/hr-vs-mn/croatia-mongolia-size-comparison>; accessed 3.4.2019.

For a more detailed view of Mongolia and Croatia please see The Global Gender Gap Report 2018; World Economic Forum in Figure 2.

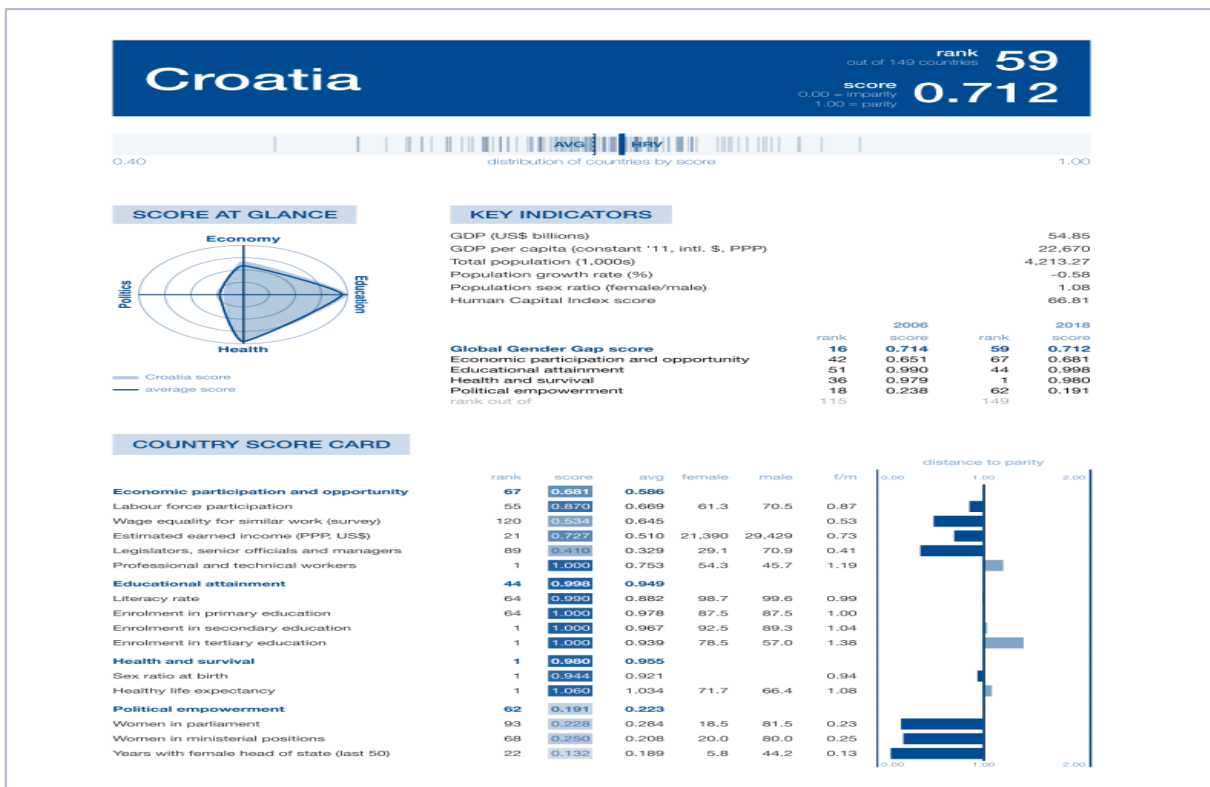
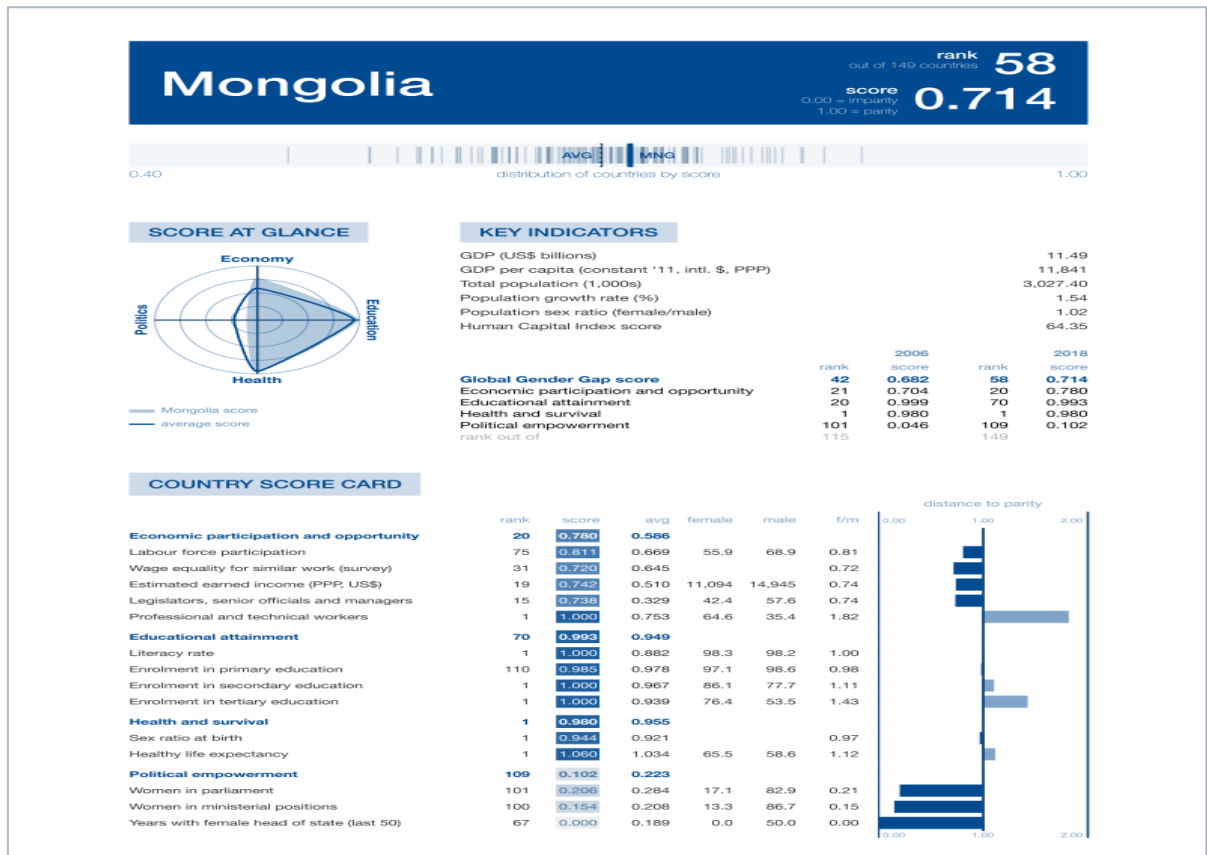


Figure 2. Mongolia vs Croatia - facts according to WEF

Source: The Global Gender Gap Report 2018; World Economic Forum, ISBN-13: 978-2-940631-00-1, The Report and an interactive data platform are available at http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf.

2. Theoretical frame

There are numerous examples in the literature about brand management and psychology of consumer behavior and the existence of strong emotions towards brands such as loyalty and/or

love for individual brands. For example, du Plessis (2011) presents a paradigm about the role of emotions and that they assist reasoning and cause rationality. This paradigm also emphasizes that emotions attract attention which creates memories and influences our decisions. There is significantly less writing about negative emotions towards individual brands, but there are certainly strong feelings for both countries and their brands. These feelings include disliking certain brands of products and services, as well as countries and brands of nations. Ollins (2002) explains that concept of a country as a brand seems to encourage animosity in some people who think that re-branding is appropriate only for corporations, and not for countries because countries have a certain dignity and much more value than a product. Nation branding can also be described as a process through which countries tell their own stories in order to influence the attitude of international target markets (Yalkin, 2017). Yan (2010) on the other hand emphasizes that national branding goes beyond the narrow purpose of the country of origin or placing brands to promote specific economic interest.

Today it is easy to express different feelings through social media about everybody and everything from the safety of one's home and in general through the Internet. Besides the Internet, the entertainment industry also has a significant impact on a country's image, especially in shaping perception about certain places, creating positive or negative perception and emotions (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). It is interesting that negative feelings towards a brand can have a greater impact than positive feelings. Negative feelings can turn into active hatred. Certainly, brand managers can avoid such feelings through active listening, involvement, and negotiation with participants of the target market. Listening implies an integral part of active communication. With the open communication channels, market research is a convenient way to find out what participants of the target market like or dislike concerning certain brand. Involvement includes active socialization with participants of the target markets and understanding of their feelings. Negotiation means finding a way to compensate for (un)favorable feelings. If clients' feelings about the brand are not recognized (especially hatred), and if this is not compensated appropriately, it may happen that long-term brands do not reach their full potential, regardless of the effort made to build the brand (Kucuk, 2016, pp. 125-135., adapted).

Promising the overall value of the brand makes no sense if it is not in accordance with the desires, expectations, and needs of the target markets - without forgetting that one of the more important target markets is the internal public or the country's residents. In a competitive environment, competing activities should be taken into account, and the defense of one's own brand should be planned in a way to anticipate and expect that the competitors' goal is to take on new positions for which the brand of (our) country is already in place.

The first thing to keep in mind is that there are no gaps between what the target markets want and the values that the brand offers and advocates. But if that is not the case then recommendations for short-term activities can be given and what to do and not to do. What not to do: do not get greedy (you need to respect long-term and not short-term profitability), do not miss to motivate and keep your people (keep your experts by signing exclusive contracts to work only for you) and do not help your potential competitors (do not help your competitors with information how you built a successful brand - if you do not have at least the same mutual benefit). What to do: create fear of competitors (to encourage and maintain fear of attack by competitors in the way that brand managers do not think whether there will be a competing attack, but that they expect it and are ready to respond to it), focus on competitive intelligence (it is necessary to collect information constantly in order to anticipate competitive activities, which

is the assumption of readiness to respond to attacks or, on the other hand, if competitors are perceived to consider the attack), set the right incentives (a rewarding program for the involved managers in the case of defense and not only in the event of an attack but also in the event of increase in the value of the brand), create loyalty (loyalty increases the likelihood of successful defense against a competitive attack because loyal customers are less interested in what they can be promised by a competitor - loyalty can be built by unconditionally delivering the promised value, unforgettable experience and everything related to advocates and brand ambassadors, build connections with government officials (for the purpose of institutional readiness for different responses from various attacks, not to mention that they should be permanently included as stakeholders of the brand), create intellectual property barriers (constantly explore and influence the development of discipline so that it is always a step ahead of all, and all the knowledge is protected so that competitors can not quickly imitate them), engage the channel (build special relationships and loyalty in channels of distribution and brand communication) (Calkins, 2012., pp. 220-234, adapted).

In general, in branding, the biggest challenge is to brand the nation or state. No nation or state is one-dimensional, and branding involves a complex approach for which there is no harmonized theoretical background or a single approach in practice. The basic thesis can be established to recognize the benefits of the country and/or nation, but it is less known how to actually do it. Another important element in the successful branding of a country is awareness as a key indicator of peoples knowledge about the existence of a country. Branding may be an elementary tool in enhancing awareness as well as altering or reinforcing stereotypical views (Hakala et al., 2013). Another view of the importance of awareness is that consumers view countries on macro and micro levels. Macro being associations and beliefs about the country and micro being associations and beliefs about its products (Pappu, Quester, 2010). The advantage of branding a country can be summarized as a desire to take and/or maintain a stable position in the virtual world map of countries in order to achieve long-term benefits. As in any positioning, it is necessary to answer the questions: why is it significant, to whom it is positioned - and / or what are the target segments in which we want to occupy a superior position according to our priorities and in relation to competitors, what is the basis of positioning of a brand, is the basis of brand positioning a long-term defense, and the most important issue being that often it is not very clear who is in charge of building and managing the brand of a country or a nation.

The advantages of good nation brands are quite easy to understand, because a good brand influences the perception of the country and increases the interest for foreign investments in the country, promotes the country as a desirable tourist and business destination of the world's "nomads" and it helps to promote state policy in international relations, encourages the international exchange of the country and ultimately but most importantly promotes the national cohesion of the country and its citizens. Source of nation branding lies in the concepts of national identity and country-of-origin that evolved due to the lowering of trade barriers between nations which resulted/s in the emergence of the nation branding as countries turned to brand management techniques in order to compete effectively on the world stage. (Keith, 2008, p.38 - in figure 3).

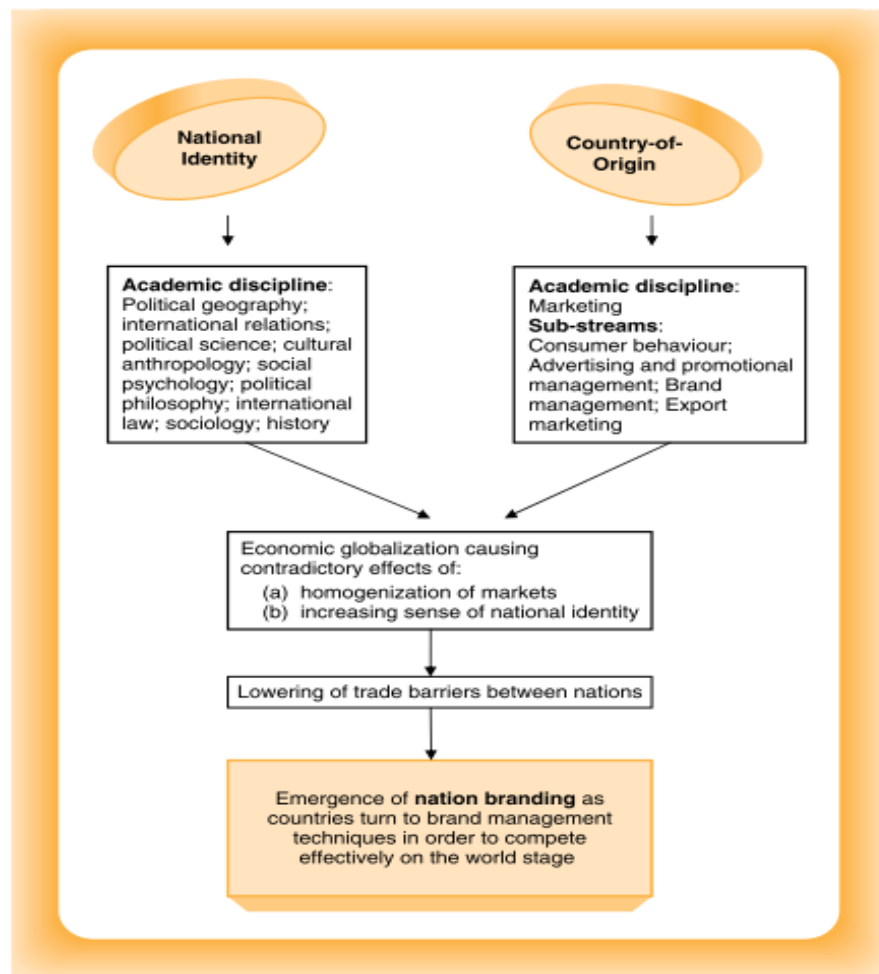



Figure 3. The evolution of nation branding. Source: Keith, D., Nation branding, Elsevier, 2008., p. 38

There are successful examples of changing perceptions of states that can be recognized as successful or less successful (re)branding. Spain, Ireland, and Croatia are such examples (Moilanien & Rainisto, 2014). In Spain, it can be said that this is a long-term strategic branding project that has helped to speed up the change of view from Franco's dictatorship to the perception of the modern country and the passion-embedded nation. Croatia's change of perception as a country affected by war can be thanked by the strong sports results and above all by the successful management of the tourist attraction that presents Croatia as a country "full of life". The example of Ireland can be seen through the fast-paced value of the national value which is accompanied (but also allows to some extent) by the change in the perception of Ireland as a poor emigration destination into the modern perspective of an immigration state ("fill your heart with Ireland"). These are the examples where the nation brand begins to develop from a tourist country to a destination. The danger of modern branding of a country is the uncritical long-term identification of the tourist brand with the brand of the country. The tourist brand promotes the country as a destination and is primarily targeted at tourists, while the brand of the country is not directed exclusively to tourists (real and potential) but to the entire public with a special emphasis on the country's inhabitants as one of the target segments of national branding. The brand must be supported by them whereby they, along with the "user" role, have a more responsible role of "creator and maintainer" within the country.

Perception of a tourist and a national brand as the same is often because the above-mentioned examples (Ireland, Spain, and Croatia) show how much a tourist brand can be successful in

changing the perception and identity of the state in the function of creating a nation brand. Many authors point to this. Thus Anholt (2007) states that tourism is the most important "communicator" within the state. Tourism is certainly important because many nations/countries want to be stronger brands than others and take action to achieve this competitive advantage through tourism because it makes it easier and more justified. Branding through tourism is a good prerequisite and can serve as a starting point for a successful nation branding. However, one should keep in mind that in the long-term the brand of the state should be a higher concept of a tourism brand. For example, the nation brand has a major influence on foreign investments as well on support and improvement of the value of products produced in different countries - the "made in" approach. Of course, the question is what it is and how much it is "made in" when many components and final products consist of components produced in different countries of the world. For example, how many components (parts) of a VW car are produced in Germany and how many are produced in other countries, or whether the entire VW car is produced outside Germany, and VW, regardless what the answer is, still has a perception of a German strong brand. That is why new umbrella concepts such as "origin of the brand" or "cultural origin of the brand" are becoming more important (Olins, 2008) and not only is it very close to the brand of the state and/or the nation but can be seen and spread as regional multinational brands that "cover" a larger area than the states themselves or are in more states. Examples can be olive oil from Mediterranean countries, Danish wine, and Scandinavian design. Country-of-origin has a significant effect on consumer evaluation in cases where there is a strong link between a country and a product category (Andehen et al., 2015)

Numerous approaches to power measurement (and/or value) and methodology or procedure are not harmonized. By searching secondary data, different results were found using different approaches or methodologies for Mongolia and Croatia as seen in figure 4.

 Mongolia	Rank 2011	Rank 2012	Rank 2013	Rank 2014	Rank 2015	Rank 2016	Rank 2017
Anholt – Gfk Roper Nation Brands Index	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anholt – The Good Country Index	-	-	-	109	-	119	-
Bloom Consulting Country Branding Ranking Trade	-	-	-	84	-	-	85
Bloom Consulting Country Branding Ranking Tourism	-	-	-	136	-	-	137
FutureBrand Country Brand Index	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
East-West Global Index 200	32	-	-	-	-	-	-
Portland Communications - Soft Power 30 Ranking	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Digital Country Index	-	-	-	-	-	-	130


 Croatia	Rank 2011	Rank 2012	Rank 2013	Rank 2014	Rank 2015	Rank 2016	Rank 2017
Anholt – GfK Roper Nation Brands Index	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anholt – The Good Country Index	-	-	-	46	-	40	-
Bloom Consulting Country Branding Ranking Trade	54	70	81	88	-	-	84
Bloom Consulting Country Branding Ranking Tourism	29	19	27	28	-	-	27
FutureBrand Country Brand Index	40	41	-	44	-	-	-
East-West Global Index 200	40	-	-	-	-	-	-
Portland Communications - Soft Power 30 Ranking	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Digital Country Index	-	-	-	-	-	-	60

Figure 4. Nation brand index - Mongolia vs Croatia.

Source: [http://countrybrandingwiki.org/index.php/Rankings - Country by Country](http://countrybrandingwiki.org/index.php/Rankings_-_Country_by_Country) (accessed: 01.04.2019.)

According to this source and in accordance with different approaches, it is evident that the brand Croatia is stronger than brand Mongolia. Only at Bloom Consulting Country Branding Ranking Trade are almost equal: Croatia has 84 and Mongolia 85 rank.

For the purpose of considering the importance of branding of countries and the complexity of the concept we have tried to explore the brand of the country. We have decided on a methodology in which an important place has associations with the country. This methodology uses the instrument research - a survey questionnaire - which includes 6 dimensions of association: Value system, Quality of life, Business potential, Heritage & Culture, Tourism, Made-in Concept (Figure 5).

STATUS			EXPERIENCE		
VALUE SYSTEM	QUALITY OF LIFE	BUSINESS POTENTIAL	HERITAGE & CULTURE	TOURISM	MADE IN
Political freedom	Health & education	Good for business	Historical points of interest	Value for money	Make products that are authentic
Environmental standards	Standard of living	Advanced technology	Heritage, art & culture	Range of attractions	Make products of high quality
Tolerance	Safety & security	Good infrastructure	Natural beauty	Resort & lodging options	They create unique products
	Would like to live/study there			Would like to visit for a vacation	Would like to buy products made in that country
				Food	

Figure 5. Main FutureBrand Rank dimension used for developing the research instrument

Source: Country Brand Index 2014-15 (Future Brand;<https://www.futurebrand.com/uploads/CBI2014-5.pdf>; 31.01.2019.)

With the FutureBrand Country Brand Index with the Associations, more categories are considered for the calculation of the final index: awareness, familiarity, preference, consideration and decision/visitation. This survey was not taken into consideration neither in the compilation of the research instrument nor in the analysis of the results because the research instrument which is a survey questionnaire was developed on the basis of the dimension of the association from the Futurebrand methodology with the appropriate adaptation of particular features in individual dimensions and adding a new dimension of sport & sport achievements because the assumption of whether sport and sport achievements had significance in the valuation of the state within wanted to be tested. Each dimension consists of 4 features as can be seen in Figure 6.

VALUE SYSTEM

- political freedom in the COUNTRY
- ecological standards
- legal equality
- tolerance towards others and diversity

QUALITY OF LIFE

- health care in the COUNTRY
- education
- life standard
- safety

BUSINESS POTENTIAL

- technological progress in the COUNTRY
- infrastructure
- entrepreneurial atmosphere
- openness for foreign investments

HERITAGE

- historical sites in the COUNTRY
- art
- culture
- natural beauty

TOURISM - TOURISTIC POTENTIAL

- given value for money in tourism in the COUNTRY
- number and variety of touristic attractions
- accommodation capacities
- gastronomy

PRODUCTS OF THE COUNTRY - ("Made in the COUNTRY ")

- the authenticity of products produced in the COUNTRY
- quality of products produced
- the uniqueness of products produced
- price of products produced

SPORT & SPORTS ACHIEVEMENTS

- level of support and investment in sport in the COUNTRY
- achievements of the sportsman on sport competitions
- the behavior of the sportsman in victories and defeats
- the behavior of the fans in victories and defeats

Figure 6. Features and dimensions of nation brand

Source: Vranešević, T., Perić, N., Vujić, N., Project: Developing instruments for measurement of the strength of state brands, 2018., developed and adapted according to Country Brand Index, Future Brand (<https://www.futurebrand.com>; 17.02.2018.)

3. Results and Analysis



3.1. Methodology

A sample of respondents represented 140 full-time students of the undergraduate study at the Faculty of Economics in Zagreb. The sample was suitable - respondents/students who participated in the classroom and who expressed the willingness to participate in the research. The characteristics of the sample were 35% of men and 65% of women, all at the age of 20-30 years. In most cases (71.4%) come from a family of 3-5 members. Of the average income families (by their estimate only) 60% of respondents, 25% of respondents are from the family with above-average income and 15% of those with under-income income.

The survey was conducted online using Qualtrics program during March of 2019. Participants were questioned about Mongolia. Testing for Croatia and other emerging countries (India, Canada, Serbia) was conducted at the end of 2018, with the sample being 80 participants (n = 80). Participants were also students of the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Zagreb (in this case, students at postgraduate level included postgraduate level students in the sample). Samples were mutually independent. Research instruments followed same research logic.

3.2. Results

7 dimensions that were observed collectively have average grades for Mongolia ranging from 2.64 to 3.59 on scale 1-5 where 1 = Extremely negative, 2 = Negative; 3 = Neither negative nor positive, 4 = Positive and 5 = Extremely positive. The results are: for Croatia value system is 2.60, while for Mongolia value system is 2.84; quality of life 3.30 vs 2.66; business potential 2.74 vs 2.64; heritage 4,48 vs 3,59; touristic potential 4.16 vs 3.32 ;. products produced in the Country ("made in") 4.05 vs. 3.13; sports and sports achievements 4,25 vs 2,95. Results for an overall evaluation of Croatia and Mongolia as a brand are: Croatia - mean 3,65 vs Mongolia - mean 3,00 as seen in figure 7.

Dimension "I evaluate the ..." of the Country (Croatia vs Mongolia)	Croatia 	Mongolia 	Difference
... value system	2,60	2,84	-0,24
... quality of life	3,30	2,66	0,64
... business potential	2,74	2,64	0,10
... heritage (historical, artistic, cultural, natural)	4,48	3,59	0,89
... touristic potential	4,16	3,32	0,84

... products produced ("made in")	4,05	3,13	0,92
... sports and sports achievements	4,25	2,95	1,30
Overall evaluation of Croatia and Mongolia as a brands	3,65	3,00	0,65

Figure 7. Mean (average value) of dimensions and overall evaluation of Croatia and Mongolia as a brand

In the dimension value system, Mongolia was better rated. The biggest differences in Croatia's favor are in assessing sports and sports achievement, and the smallest difference is in business potential. All mid-grade differences are statistically significant (two-way pair sample test, p less or equal to .001) except for the business potential dimension where the difference is not statistically significant.

Within the explorative analysis of the results, it was necessary to check the predictive ability of the total and the same dimensions at the overall assessment of Croatia and Mongolia as a brand. By using line range regression - where the overall rating of the brands is used as a dependent variable and the dimension estimates as independent variables for Croatia are $R = .627$ and $r^2 = .393$ while for Mongolia $R = .588$ and $r^2 = .311$. This suggests that when it comes to the overall rating of the national brands Croatia and Mongolia, the dimensions for Croatia have a slightly higher predictive capability (at least considering simple linear regression) with respect to the dimensions of Mongolia. Simplified it can be concluded that the dimensions "explain" 40 percent of the Croatia rating as the brand and just over 30 percent of Mongolia as a brand. The difference is probably due to the fact that Croatian respondents do not know so well Mongolia as opposed to Croatia.

The value of the state as a brand may also be expressed through a relationship with the state, or how attractive it is for the respondents to live in it, to spend a vacation there, or to buy products produced in that country. For that purpose we have used the questions *I love to live in Croatia; I love to spend my vacation in Croatia and I love to buy products produced in Croatia*. For Mongolia – questioning was conducted in Croatia, where the citizens of Croatia participated in the questioning of claims: *I would love to live in Mongolia; I'd love to spend my vacation in Mongolia, I'd like to buy products that are produced in Mongolia*. Used was Likert scale where 1 = I strongly disagree, 2 - I disagree, 3 - I'm not sure, 4 - I agree and 5 - I strongly agree. Because all participants are Croats, Croatia was expected to have significantly higher ratings (I love to live in Croatia where mean is 4,16; I love to spend my vacation in Croatia (mean 4,34); I like to buy products that are Made in Croatia - mean 4,11) than for Mongolia (I'd love to live in Mongolia - 2,06; I love to spend my vacation in Mongolia - 3,14; I'd like to buy products that are produced in Mongolia (Made in Mongolia) - mean 2.97). Figure 8.



	Croatia (mean)	Mongolia (mean)	
I love to live in Croatia	4,04	2,06	I'd love to live in Mongolia
I love to spend my vacation in Croatia	4,29	3,14	I'd love to spend my vacation in Mongolia
I like to buy products that are produced in Croatia (Made in Croatia)	4,21	2,97	I'd like to buy products that are produced in Mongolia (Made in Mongolia)

Figure 8. The relationship between Croatia and Mongolia

For a more detailed view of the individual results, we give a comparison of the results on the same questions (but within another survey) for the countries of India, Canada, and Serbia (figure 9).





	Mongolia (mean) 	India (mean) 	Canada (mean) 	Serbia (mean) 
I'd love to live in the Country	2,06	1,83	3,23	2,04
I'd love to spend my vacation in Country	3,14	3,06	3,66	2,71
I'd like to buy products that are produced in the Country (Made in Country)	2,97	2,81	3,67	3,06

Figure 9. Mongolia, India, Canada & Serbia - comparison relationships to the Countries

Beside perception, it is very unlikely that respondents (all citizens of Croatia) are well acquainted with the situation in Mongolia because none of the respondents had ever been in Mongolia, but that is another proof that perception plays a very important role in the strength of a brand.

Respondents were asked to evaluate the tourism sign and slogan of Croatia and Mongolia and to evaluate the contribution of tourism sign and slogan to the perception of the country as a successful brand on scale 1-5; where 1 = Extremely negative, 2 = Negative; 3 = Neither negative nor positive, 4 = Positive and 5 = Extremely positive. The average grades are as follows: a) The average rating of the sign and slogan for Croatia is 3.95 and Mongolia is 3.71; b) Contribution of touristic sign and slogan to the perception of the Country as a successful brand - Croatia 3,48 and Mongolia 3,55 as seen in figure 10.





	Croatia (mean)	Mongolia (mean)	
I evaluate the touristic sign and slogan of Croatia	3,99	3,71	I evaluate the touristic sign and slogan of Mongolia
I evaluate the contribution of touristic sign and slogan to the perception of Croatia as a successful brand	3,48	3,55	I evaluate the contribution of touristic sign and slogan to the perception of Mongolia as a successful brand

Figure 10. Touristic sign and slogan and contribution to the perception - comparison Croatia vs Mongolia

As in the previous case, for a more detailed view of the individual results, we give a comparison of the results on the same questions (but within the second survey) for the countries of India, Canada, and Serbia Figure 11).

	Mongolia (mean)	India (mean) 	Canada (mean)	Serbia (mean) 



				
I evaluate the touristic sign and slogan of the Country	3,71	3,57	3,77	3,57
I evaluate the contribution of touristic sign and slogan to the perception of the Country as a successful brand	3,55	3,50	3,63	3,50

Figure 11. Mongolia, India, Canada & Serbia - comparison touristic sign and slogan and contribution to the perception of the Country as a successful brand

When interpreting the results of the questionnaires it should also be taken into account the ratio of respondents to the surveyed countries: all respondents are citizens of Croatia, Serbia was visited by 60% of respondents, Canada by 12.5%, India by 4.4% and Mongolia by no participants.

3.3. Research limitations

The limitations of the research were primarily related to the sample: a relatively small sample size ($n = 140$ and $n = 80$; sample composition - students of the Faculty of Economics Zagreb, comparison of the results of the research carried out at the end of 2018 with the research conducted in 2019; the samples of respondents are different, as well as the different levels of "knowledge" of individual countries by individual respondents. We consider that although there are limitations they are not of such nature that they would significantly undermine the indication of the obtained results.

4. Conclusion

Croatia students - none of whom had ever been to Mongolia - rated Mongolia as a brand with an average grade 3. The average rating for I'd love to live in Mongolia was 2.06; for I'd love to spend my vacation in Mongolia 3.14; for I'd like to buy products that are produced in Mongolia (Made in Mongolia) 2.97. Furthermore, the tourist sign and slogan of Mongolia was rated at a grade of 3.71 and a contribution of touristic sign and slogan to the perception of Mongolia as a successful brand with a mean grade of 3.55. In general, Mongolia has comparable results with other countries (India, Canada, and Serbia), while much higher ratings were given by Croatian students when asked to evaluate Croatia. An interesting exception is the value system dimension where Croatia students gave a higher rating to an unknown state than the country they live in. This is a good indication of the overall dissatisfaction of the people of Croatia with that dimension.

In general, the results indicate that the brand of the country is very complex to construct and that it needs to be further explored in order to exploit the significance of a brand in today's global circumstances and above all in the dominant globalization processes. The brand of a nation is not just about other people outside the country ("tourists") but - and it should be primarily - for the people who live in that country. Residents of a country are at the same time the creators and maintainers of the brand and as such act as the cause and consequence of the (non)successful branding within the state. The known deviation in predictable abilities of the chosen dimensions

may indicate that it is easier to make and manage the brand of a country if it is directed to non-residents rather than residents. Perhaps this is because citizens of a country are better acquainted with the values on which the brand lies and are taking additional factors when assessing the state. This is quite challenging because there is no successful brand if it is not evaluated as such by clients - in this case, the residents of the country. It is encouraging that all tourist signs and slogans were positively rated above average and that their contribution to the perception of the specific country as successful brand was also assessed.

Certainly, this is a pilot study on a limited sample of students (n = 80) and it can be expected that a larger sample might get different results and thus this remains the recommendation for further research. The recommendation for further research may be a survey of the resident population of the surveyed countries and a comparison of their results with non-residents, and a concrete recommendation would be to conduct research on Croatia and Mongolia in Mongolia in order to compare the results. It is also recommended to conduct a more detailed and more specific analysis of the obtained results in order to examine the impact of certain features on individual dimensions and the impact of individual dimensions on the overall assessment of the state. The use of structural modeling using Smart-PLS or Amos technique is recommended. For a more credible assessment of the state's brand strength, together with the respondents' perception should to some extent take into account other specific "firm" indicators of the country's performance, such as the standard of population, education opportunity, gender equality ... which only confirms the initial assumption that the brand is a complex construct in which perception - though significant - is just one of the many factors. Consequently, we hope that this approach and the results presented in the paper will be an stimulus for future research in the field of nation branding.

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