

Assessing the Impact of Tourism on Country Brand Value

Botond Géza KÁLMÁN¹, Zoltán ZÉMAN², Szilárd MALATYINSZKI³

Abstract

This research explores the connection between tourism statistics and country brand value, as well as the impact tourism has on it, by utilizing public data sources and employing statistical techniques. A country's brand reflects its image as perceived by foreign audiences, representing the nation's reputation and standing internationally. This perception is mirrored in the influx of tourists visiting the country. While brand value is typically not measured by the number of arrivals, but rather by the country's tourism image, prior studies have shown that higher brand value leads to an increase in foreign visitors. However, fewer investigations have focused on whether the volume of tourists directly influences the country's brand value. The findings of this study demonstrate a significant link between the two, revealing a causal relationship. Nevertheless, there is some uncertainty surrounding the causality, which future research aims to clarify. The goal of this preliminary study was to explore whether this question could be effectively addressed.

Keywords: *Country Brand Value, Tourism Statistics, Nation Branding, Tourist Arrivals, Causal Relationship.*

JEL codes

L83, M31, Z32, C30, F59

Introduction

The competition between nations is growing more fierce on a global scale, and a nation's national brand, or "country brand," is important in this struggle. The idea of a country brand centers on how a particular nation is perceived internationally and how this perception affects foreigners' decisions, whether they are tourists, business travelers, or investors (Anholt, 2007). According to Kotler and Gertner (2002), the goal of a country brand is to draw attention from abroad to the particular nation, which can enhance diplomatic and commercial ties while also promoting tourism. The quantity and purpose of international visitors to the nation must be considered when assessing the nation's brand, since these visits can serve as significant markers of the nation's perception.

An important economic indicator that shows a country's appeal to tourists traveling for leisure as well as business is the number of foreign nationals arriving there. Tourists and other private visitors usually choose their destinations based on a nation's culture, natural beauty, recreational options, and overall perception (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011). The political stability, business prospects, and quality of relationships are critical variables for individuals traveling for business, together with the nation's economic climate (Jiménez & San Martín, 2012). Since the view of a country is influenced in part by the experiences and impressions of those who visit it in person, both types of visitors are crucial to the construction and growth of the national brand.

The scholarly community and policymakers have been paying more and more attention in recent years to the research of the correlation between the nation's brand and the number of foreign immigrants. This growing interest is partially attributable to the realization that the nation's brand matters not just for travel

¹ Department of Finance and Accounting, Faculty of Economics, John von Neumann University, Address: 10 Izsáki út, Kecskemét HU-6000, Bács-Kiskun megye, HUNGARY, e-mail: kalman.botond.geza@nje.hu; Economic Research Institute and Department of Economics and Management, Faculty of Economics, Kodolányi University (KJE), Address: 25 Rákóczi utca, HU-8000, Székesfehérvár, Fejér megye, HUNGARY, Email: kalman.botond.geza@kodolanyi.hu; Department of Economics and Finance, Budapest Metropolitan University, Address: 1-9 Nagy Lajos Király útja HU-1148, Budapest, HUNGARY, e-mail: eupemq@instructor.metropolitan.hu. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8031-8016> (Corresponding Author)

² Doctoral School of Management and Business Administration, John von Neumann University, Address: 10 Izsáki út, Kecskemét, HU-6000 Hungary, Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2504-028X>, Email: zeman.zoltan@nje.hu

³ Faculty of Economics, Kodolányi University (KJE), Address: 25 Rákóczi utca, HU-8000, Székesfehérvár, Fejér megye, HUNGARY, Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1624-4902>, Email: mszilard@kodolanyi.hu

and tourism but also for commercial partnerships and foreign investments (Dinnie, 2008). Foreign visitors are directly impacted by the nation's brand, which has a major impact on the nation's perceived trustworthiness and allure. In addition to bringing in more tourists, a strong national brand can foster long-term economic growth and the development of corporate partnerships (Pike, 2009).

Research indicates that a variety of factors, such as socioeconomic conditions, political climate, economic stability, and cultural attractiveness of the nation, affect the correlation between the number of tourists and the nation's brand (Anholt, 2007; Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011). The nation's brand has the power to raise the nation's profile internationally, attracting more foreign travelers and business travelers. Meanwhile, as foreigners' experiences and viewpoints shape foreigners' perceptions of the nation and contribute to its further development, a growth in the number of arrivals can also be advantageous to the nation's brand (Hakala et al., 2013).

It is crucial to take into account that commercial and private visitors have distinct goals and expectations while analyzing the distinctions between the two types of visits. While the country's natural, cultural, and recreational features are what draw in private tourists, business travelers are more concerned with the nation's economic prospects, political stability, and standard of the business climate (Rose & Thomsen, 2004). The nation's brand has a big impact on both groups, though it shows up in different ways. Although the quantity of leisure travelers can have a direct impact on the nation's reputation, business travelers may also be more influenced by political and economic considerations when forming an opinion of the nation's brand (Ghemawat, 2001).

Depending on the target audience that a country brand is intended to reach, multiple strategies are frequently needed. While brand plans for business emphasize economic stability, business prospects, political security, and high-quality infrastructure, country brand strategies for tourism frequently highlight the nation's natural beauty, cultural legacy, and leisure options (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993). Though they employ distinct strategies and messaging, both attempts seek to make the nation seem more appealing. A nation's capacity to effectively cater to the demands of various target audiences and project a cohesive image that appeals to tourists and business travelers alike will determine how successful its development will be (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011).

Evaluating the correlation between the nation's brand and the influx of foreign nationals is significant not only for international marketing and tourist purposes but also for the domains of international relations and economic policy. The battle between nations is changing into one of perception and image, with the nation brand playing a crucial role, as a result of globalization and the expansion of international trade (Anholt, 2007). The nation's brand affects not just global commercial relations, international collaboration, and investment decisions, but also travel and tourism within the nation (Dinnie, 2008). Thus, the nation's economic and political standing abroad may be directly impacted by the effective management of its national brand.

This article's goal is to thoroughly investigate the connection between the nation's image and the number of foreign visitors, paying special attention to the function of both leisure and business travelers. Our goal in doing this research is to examine how the nation's brand affects the choices made by various kinds of tourists as well as how it advances the nation's social and economic advancement. Furthermore, we investigate the ways in which the rise in tourism impacts the nation's image and the variables that affect this relationship. The goal of the study is to advance knowledge of the relationship that exists between tourists and the nation brand, which will aid in the creation of more potent national marketing and tourism initiatives.

In summary, the correlation between the nation's brand and the quantity of international visitors to the country is a complicated phenomenon that is dependent on numerous aspects. This article's goals are to highlight the importance and role of these elements as well as demonstrate how they can be used and handled skillfully to strengthen the nation's brand. In order to provide a complete picture of the nature and dynamics of the relationship between the nation brand and the number of tourists, we employ a range of theoretical and empirical methodologies during the research.

Literature Review

A nation's strategy for enhancing its standing in the world economy and on the international scene is called its "country brand," often referred to as its "national brand." The fundamental idea behind the notion is that, in order to attract foreign investors, visitors, and business partners, a nation's image and reputation must be actively controlled (Anholt, 2007). A positive image and reputation are becoming increasingly important in today's global competitive world. Therefore, the goal of the country brand is to communicate to the outside world the components of the national identity—such as historical significance, cultural values, scenic beauty, and economic prospects—in a cohesive and understandable way (Anholt, 2007). diverse countries employ diverse tactics in an effort to set themselves apart from one another and cultivate a desirable image. For instance, some nations prioritize ecotourism and their natural beauty, while others place more emphasis on their culinary traditions, cultural legacy, or innovative potential (Kotler & Gertner, 2002).

In order to provide a cohesive and favorable image, developing a national brand frequently entails balancing cultural, political, and economic factors (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). In order to establish a genuine and trustworthy impression, branding must emphasize local values and identity (Mossberg & Kleppke, 2005). In addition to tourism, the nation brand is important for overseas trade and diplomacy since it can enhance relations between nations (Dinnie, 2022). Building a strong national brand is a difficult process that calls for ongoing focus and careful preparation (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2006). To develop a cohesive and favorable image, building a country brand frequently entails balancing cultural, political, and economic factors. A complete national identity plan involving collaboration between the government, businesses, and civil society is essential for successful country brand management, in addition to highlighting the good aspects of the nation (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). An authentic and genuine impression is produced by branding, which heavily emphasizes local values and identity. The benefit of presenting the nation in its true light is that it forges a deeper emotional connection with the target audience, which has a significant and long-lasting impact on public opinion abroad (Mossberg & Kleppke, 2005). Thus, a well-crafted national brand can enhance the nation's appeal to foreign investors, travelers, and business associates, enhancing bilateral ties and raising the nation's standing in the worldwide arena (Dinnie, 2022).

The tourist industry, which can be one of the most important vehicles for boosting the value of the national brand, highlights the significance of the country brand in particular. As a result, there is a close relationship between the national brand and tourism, as the former greatly influences the latter's growth and allure. A good national brand can draw more travelers and tourists to the nation, which boosts the local economy in the process. Positive experiences and perceptions from travelers help to create the nation's image abroad, which may lead to the arrival of more tourists (Dinnie, 2008). Since visitor experiences and perceptions have a direct impact on a nation's reputation and image abroad, tourism is one of the most significant ways to develop a national brand (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993). Since nations compete with one another for visitors, well-thought-out national brand strategy can provide them an advantage in the world market (Pike, 2004). In order to generate curiosity and boost visitation, it is imperative that marketing efforts and country marketing in the tourism sector are consistent (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). Moreover, the country brand can be reinforced and tourist sustainability increased by highlighting national and local values and attractions (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011). According to Hakala et al. (2013), the country brand therefore boosts both the quantity and quality of tourism as well as visitor experiences.

Because tourists' judgments and preferences are strongly influenced by the power of the national brand, the number of visitors to the country is significantly influenced by it. A destination's attractiveness can be increased by a strong national brand because travelers are drawn to places with a good reputation and image (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011). A strong national brand can make a nation stand out from the competition and provide travelers with an alluring substitute (Pike, 2009). Travel decisions are greatly influenced by the genuine and immersive information that travelers want, which is supplied by skillfully created national branding (Dinnie, 2008). For instance, Japan stresses the balance between technical

advancement and the preservation of traditional culture, whereas Spain has effectively developed a brand centered on the Mediterranean lifestyle, cultural diversity, and sunny beaches (Pike, 2009). Through effective marketing strategies and campaigns, the number of tourists can be raised. Travel decisions and tourist preferences are influenced by the image and message of the nation brand (Anholt, 2007). Furthermore, it is imperative to consistently focus on the upkeep and advancement of the national brand to guarantee the sustainability of a favorable perception and the ongoing engagement of travelers (Hakala et al., 2013). According to Morgan, Pritchard, and Pride (2011), effective nation branding generally supports both the long-term economic growth of the nation and the long-term sustainability of tourism in addition to increasing the number of visitors.

The literature looks at the connection between the nation brand and the distribution of tourists by continent from a number of angles, including economic growth plans, international relations theories, and tourism marketing. A thorough examination of the distribution of visitors by continent can help to understand the efficacy of national brands. The country brand is a major factor in drawing in tourists and business travelers.

The continent from which a particular country draws tourists is greatly influenced by its national brand. Kotler and Gertner's (2002) research demonstrates how nations can leverage branding strategies to boost foreign travel and how these strategies might affect visitor demographics, such as distribution by continent. The writers stress that a country's ability to attract more tourists depends on how its national image and brand messaging are shaped.

From the perspective of international tourist rivalry, the issue of visitor distribution by continent is equally significant. According to a study by Pike (2004), the national brand has an impact on international tourism flows and can alter the volume and motivation of visitors from other continents. The findings demonstrate the strong correlation between country marketing strategies and changes in the distribution of visitors by continent.

National brands have an impact on business interactions in addition to tourism. Dinnie (2008) conducts a thorough analysis of the ways in which the nation's image influences the geographic distribution of foreign tourists as well as the political and economic variables that influence the shift in visitor demographics. The author also discusses how decisions made by tourists are influenced by the nation's brand and how this influences how visitors are distributed across continents.

Analyzing the connection between regional economic circumstances and the national brand is another crucial aspect of research. A study by Morgan, Pritchard, and Pride (2011) demonstrates how a nation's economic status and tourism policies affect travelers' home countries and how they affect shifts in the distribution of travelers by continent. The writers stress that regional tourism strategies and economic development have an impact on the continents from which tourists originate.

Analyzing the relationships between the national brand and the visitor distribution by continent reveals the ways in which the development of a nation's image influences the geographic dispersion of travelers. Research indicates that a country can attract more tourists from other continents by implementing focused marketing techniques and managing its national brands well. To better understand the relationships between the country brand and the distribution of visitors by continent, it is worthwhile to consider conducting a full investigation of cultural, economic, and political issues in the course of future research.

When it comes to business travel, the circumstances alter slightly. When it comes to business relationships, how one perceives their business partner and their home nation is crucial to a productive working relationship. The most crucial aspect of the partnership is the perception of the business partner, which includes the partner's dependability, knowledge, and reputation. This view directly affects the decision of whether or not to develop and sustain a business relationship (Rose & Thomsen, 2004). Simultaneously, the corporate decisions and risk perceptions are influenced by the political-economic climate and the stability of the national image of the business partner's nation (Ghemawat, 2001). Building trust between organizations is crucial for successful economic transactions, and the nation's image and reputation can play a role in this regard (Jiménez & San Martín, 2012). Since cultural variances and variations in business

practices can impact the effectiveness and profitability of a commercial partnership, national culture and business ethics also play a significant influence (Hofstede, 2001). Political risks and economic shifts can have an impact on the dependability and durability of international business partnerships, therefore the stability of political and economic ties between nations is also crucial (Aguinis et al., 2020). In general, how a business partner and his nation are viewed has a big influence on how successful commercial relationships grow, thus businesses need to consider these things when making strategic decisions.

Tourism is one of the key components of the national brand. Based on how foreigners see and feel about the nation, this establishes the value of the national brand (Anholt, 2007). Because the national brand has a major influence on the growth and allure of tourism, the relationship between the country brand and tourism is equally remarkable. The nation brand serves as a tool to raise the nation's profile in the tourism industry and boost its allure to prospective tourists. For instance, travelers may be drawn to a nation's distinctive cultural legacy or stunning natural settings, increasing the likelihood that they will select that nation as their travel destination (Anholt, 2007). Furthermore, a strong reputation may lay the groundwork for tourist growth and guarantee a steady stream of visitors over the long haul, so effectively managing the nation brand can also help to boost the sustainability of the tourism industry (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011).

The amount of persons visiting the nation for personal travel is positively correlated with the perception of the nation, or the "country brand." This correlation is moderately strong and statistically significant. This implies that as a nation's image improves, so does the number of visitors arriving for private, primarily tourism-related, reasons. It is worthwhile to elaborate on this discovery from several angles. A country's culture, level of political stability, economic standing, and appeal to tourists and business travelers are all integral parts of its complex idea of "country brand." Decision-makers who choose to travel to a certain nation may also be greatly influenced by the perception of that nation that develops in the eyes of the world community (Anholt, 2007).

Because of their increased desirability, more foreign visitors arrive as a result of the country's growing brand. On the other hand, the opposite relationship is also possible. As a result, there may be a positive correlation between the growth in immigration and the enhancement of the value of the national brand. This could be due to a number of factors. As high visitor numbers transmit favorable signals to global audiences, an increase in tourists and visitors can assist boost the nation's international visibility and image (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011). Tourist satisfaction has a direct impact on brand perception, and the experiences and views of visitors determine the nation's brand value (Dinnie, 2008). High attendance can also encourage investments and the growth of the local economy, which enhances the strength of the national brand (Pike, 2009). As a positive image of the nation spreads among foreign audiences, the media attention and word-of-mouth generated by tourists can help raise the value of the nation's brand (Anholt, 2007). However, in order to prevent potential issues brought on by tourism, which could harm the nation's brand value, it is crucial that the growth in tourism occurs in a sustainable way (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). of general, if the rise of tourists is well-managed and included into a long-term branding strategy, it can positively impact the nation's brand value. The current study investigates whether the authors' finding is consistent with other published sources on the relationship, given the paucity of previous research on the topic. In other words, the objective is to establish or refute the link between the rise in tourism as a cause and the corresponding rise in the value of the national brand.

Therefore, it is crucial that developing the nation's brand includes enhancing the nation's competitiveness on the international stage in addition to growing tourism. Effective diplomatic efforts, better trade connections, and a rise in foreign investments can all be attributed to a well-managed national brand (Dinnie, 2022). Countries need to approach nation branding strategically while competing in foreign markets since it can have a positive impact on the nation's political, economic, and cultural integration into the world community (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2006).

Ultimately, because it enhances the nation's standing both economically and internationally, the national brand is crucial in determining the direction of foreign trade and tourism. The good perception of a nation can be strengthened with the help of country brand management, which can boost tourism, draw in foreign

capital, and make a nation more competitive internationally. Building and sustaining a strong national brand is a difficult, long-term strategic endeavor that calls for continual coordination and attention from all parties involved. However, it is crucial that nation brand plans emphasize the country's worldwide social, cultural, and economic integration in addition to drawing tourists and investors for the sake of long-term viability.

After reviewing the literature, the authors formulated the following hypotheses:

H1: A relationship can be shown between the country brand and the number of people arriving in the country.

H2: An increase in the number of foreigners coming to the country for private purposes (tourism, visiting relatives, friends) improves the perception of the country (increases the score achieved in the country brand index).

Methodology

The authors confirmed their theories with data from publicly accessible sources. Anholt Nation Brand Index (NBI), one of the most well-known indexes, served as the basis for measuring the nation brand. It has been releasing the rating of 60 non-country territories and countries every year since 2008. The survey was conducted by the global polling firm Ipsos, which released the most recent report in 2022. 23 indicators make up the rating. These fall into six main categories: exports; government quality; the country's cultural heritage and how it is used; the perception of its citizens abroad; tourism; and chances for foreign workers, students, investors, and settlers.

The index's designers use a technique they have established to score the indicators' performance. Following that, a total score is determined for every nation based on the scores, and the annual ranking is created using the total scores in descending order. The 2020–2021–2022 annual rankings were utilized by the study's authors to conduct their examination. In this study, the scores were analyzed because ranking numbers (rank) contain less statistical information than scores.

The authors of the current study compare the NBI scores with other, later-to-be-detailed sources of tourism indicators, such as the number of visitors to the nation. It is crucial to highlight that the NBI's tourism pillar evaluates perceptions and international judgments rather than actual data. The NBI gives us an understanding of how people regard a certain country from a tourism perspective, but it is not a reliable source of information about the amount of tourists that enter the nation annually.

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) publishes the United Nations (UN) tourism statistics on its website (UNWTO tourist Statistics Database), and these statistics contain the precise tourist data. The most recent edition appeared in 2023. The annual numbers of visitors to each nation for business and leisure travel (such as vacations, visits with family, and friends) as well as the continent of origin of those visitors are used in this study's statistics ("where they come from").

The sources are all freely accessible to the public, widely utilized, founded on international organization procedures, and their utilization does not give rise to any ethical questions when it comes to research.

The authors used a correlation test to examine Hypothesis H1. In the process, the relationships between the NBI score and tourism-related variables were looked at. Propensity Score Matching (PSM), a causality test, was used to evaluate the H2 hypothesis. When randomized experiments are not feasible, propensity score matching (PSM) is a statistical method used in causal research to compare treatments and control groups (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1983). Reducing variation among observable factors that could skew conclusions about causality is the aim of PSM (Rubin, 2005). In order to achieve this, we couple up the individuals in the so-called treatment group (we look at changes in their values) with a control group whose propensity scores are identical to ours and which represent the likelihood that the treatment would have an effect (Caliendo & Kopeinig, 2008). As a result, treatment effects rather than group disparities from the beginning can be blamed for the discrepancies between the two groups.

A statistical technique called Propensity Score Matching (PSM) is frequently employed in the fields of economics, health, and social sciences to reduce selection bias in observational research. The method's foundation is matching the observations between the treatment and control groups based on one or more potential confounding variables. This makes the groups more comparable and, as a result, increases the reliability of evaluating the treatment's impact. The following is a summary of the PSM steps.

The selection of the treatment (or intervention) and control groups is the initial stage in applying PSM. People who got a particular therapy or intervention, or who are impacted by a particular intervention or change, make up the treatment group. The people in the control group weren't given this treatment or modification. For instance, patients who received the drug as part of a treatment group and those who did not receive it make up the control group when evaluating the efficacy of a new medication.

Estimating the propensity score is the next stage. Considering the contributing factors, the propensity score shows the likelihood that an observation will be in the treatment group. The variables that affect how the value of the studied indicator changes are known as influence factors. To estimate the score, a logistic regression model is typically utilized, in which the effectors are the predictor variables and the outcome variable is whether or not the individual belongs to the treatment group (0 or 1).

The next stage is to match individuals in the treatment and control groups according to the predicted propensity score for each observation. There are various methods for matching. We assign each observation in the treatment group to the observation in the control group whose propensity score is closest to it in a one-to-one match (also known as nearest-neighbor matching). A maximum difference (caliber), within which the score difference is permitted, is established during the calibration matching (caliper matching). Pairs are deemed valid only if their difference falls under this limit. Many-to-one matching allocates several observations from the control group to every observation in the treatment group, or the other way around: multiple treatment group elements are allocated to one control group element. In every situation, the intention is for paired samples to have equal propensity scores in order to reduce any initial differences that can skew estimates of the treatment impact. Because the one-to-one pairing (nearest-neighbor matching) is so straightforward and easy to understand, the author of this study is favored. This is the matching process that takes place if this process yields appropriate partners. This approach was also used in the research reported in this study.

Checking whether the distribution is balanced between the treatment and control groups in terms of propensity score and covariates (confounding factors) is the next step in the matching process. We refer to this process as the balance check. There are various methods for doing this. The distribution of propensity scores between the two groups can be visually compared using graphic approaches, such as density plots or box plots. Standardized differences or t-tests are used in numerical approaches to evaluate the significance of group differences. The propensity score estimation or matching process must be redone using a different method or caliber value if the balance is deemed inappropriate.

Estimating the impact of the therapy, intervention, or change comes next after matching based on the propensity score has produced an appropriate balance. The effect can be estimated using a variety of techniques. The "Average Treatment Effect on the Treated" (ATT) approach was employed by the writers among them. In this instance, the individuals in the treatment group and the individuals in the matched control group are compared with respect to the mean difference in the outcome variable. It is important to note that the average treatment effect (ATE) can be calculated for the total population in addition to treated individuals.

Thus, in observational research, propensity score matching is a useful method for reducing selection bias. In order to ensure that the confounding elements supporting the study are distributed evenly in both groups, the approach allows comparisons between the treatment and control groups. Selecting the right matching process and estimating the proper propensity score are crucial when using PSM. The goal of all of this is to arrive at more trustworthy and precise judgments regarding the impact of the intervention or treatment.

Results

The correlation test results for hypothesis H1 are displayed in Figure 1. The figure illustrates the substantial relationships that were found between the country brand score and the number of visitors arriving for leisure (three columns on the left), business visitors (second column group), and visitors from each geographic region (third and fourth column groups) in 2020 for the years 2021–2022.

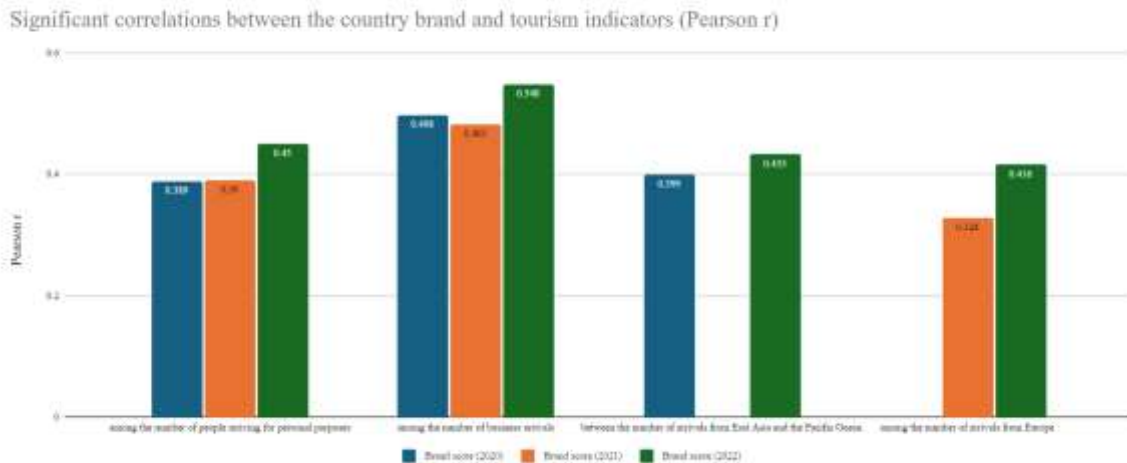


Figure 1. The Relationship Between the Country Brand Score and Tourism Indicators

Source: authors' own results

The correlation study's findings indicate that, during the reviewed time, there was a substantial positive association between the performance of the national brand and the reason for the visit. As time goes on, this gains more and more strength. The annual NBI score has a stronger correlation with the number of visitors for commercial purposes than it does with the number of visitors for personal reasons. This is an unexpected outcome because, in theory, the partner's perception matters more in business relationships than the partner's nation's viewpoint. Two of the arrivals' continents of origin—Europe and East Asia and the Pacific, with the latter showing a higher association—show a positive correlation with the annual performance of the NBI score. The correlations are medium strength ($0.3 < r < 0.6$) in all cases.

Table 1 provides an overview of the test (PSM) results for the causal relationship (hypothesis H2).

Table 1. Output Values of the PSM Test

Summary of units			
Number of treated units:	12		
Number of control units	12		
Balance summary - Before matching			
Variable	Mean of treated group	Control group mean	Standardized mean difference
number of people arriving for personal purposes	8.25	4.68	0.5
country brand score	2.36	1.69	0.68

Variable	Mean of treated group	Control group mean	Standardized mean difference
number of people arriving for personal purposes	7.94	4.67	0.33
country brand score	2.34	1.66	0.21

Source: authors' own results

By comparing the treated group (treated units) and the control group (control units), the Propensity Score Matching (PSM) analysis aimed to reduce the disparities between the two groups according to the variable distribution. By doing so, prejudice is lessened and causal conclusions are roughly made.

There are a balanced number of units in the analysis because the authors looked at 12 units (countries) in each group. Prior to matching, there were more visitors in the treatment group than in the control group who came for personal reasons. There is a moderate (0.5) but significant difference in the standardized mean between the two groups. The treatment group outscored the control group in terms of nation brand score prior to matching. There was a substantial difference between the two groups on this variable as well, as seen by the rather large standardized mean difference of 0.68.

Following the matching process, there was a reduction in the standardized mean difference (from 0.5 to 0.33) in the number of individuals who arrived with a personal objective. There is still a disparity between the two groups, but it is no longer as great even though the balance has improved. The standardized mean difference of the country brand score dramatically dropped (from 0.68 to 0.21) following correction. This suggests that PSM was successful in mitigating the disparities between the two groups on this variable, resulting in a marked increase in similarity between the two groups.

In summary, the results showed that, following the adjustment, the balance was improved by the nation brand score and the amount of individuals arriving with a personal purpose, as indicated by the decreased standardized mean disparities. This implies that the discrepancies between the two groups were successfully minimized through the use of propensity score matching. The standardized mean difference for the country brand score variable significantly decreased (from 0.68 to 0.21), suggesting that the matching was very successful in this case. The number of visitors with a personal purpose was similarly better balanced after the adjustment; nonetheless, the remaining difference (0.33) shows that there is still a difference between the two groups on this variable. Based on the aforementioned, the authors concluded that there is a strong likelihood of a causal association between the number of individuals visiting the nation for leisure (such as travel or visitation) and the rating of the nation brand index (effect). Therefore, a rise in the nation's tourism metrics—that is, the quantity of visitors visiting for leisure—affects the view of the nation favorably and raises the value of the nation's brand. The authors believe that this proves hypothesis H2.

Limitations and Further Research Directions

The propensity score matching improved the balance in the case of the number of visitors with a personal purpose, as seen by the lowering of the standardized mean difference to 0.33; nonetheless, there is still a difference between the treated and control groups. This could be interpreted as a warning sign that there might still be bias on this variable. Therefore, the authors believe it would be beneficial to conduct additional sensitivity tests in the following phase of the study to determine the potential impact of the remaining discrepancies on the findings. It becomes necessary to use different causal models or matching

algorithms (such as kernel matching and nearest neighbor matching) and compare the outcomes with the present findings.

It's also possible to split the sample into smaller groups or include other variables, including other statistical indicators related to tourism. More factors can be balanced and a more precise propensity score can be computed using the earlier process. Additionally, the latter approach can aid in determining the degree to which the findings are generalizable. Additional statistical analyses, such as regression analysis using data weighted by the propensity score (propensity score weighting), can be carried out based on the outcomes of the propensity score matching. Causal inferences can be reinforced in this way. Adding more items to the sample is an additional choice. This lowers the uncertainty of the estimations and boosts the results' statistical power.

When conducting more research to examine the correlation between the nation's brand and tourism figures, it is beneficial to employ diverse analytical methods such as robustness analyses. Robustness analyses aim to improve the results' dependability by utilizing various modeling techniques and assumptions. Interactions between various variables can be included during these analyses, along with the ways in which these interactions impact the evolution of the national brand. These kinds of analysis help us better understand the elements that determine the number of visitors to the nation and how this change impacts the nation's image abroad.

It is also advised to include additional variables to the research that enhance the current framework for analysis. Economic stability, political climate, security conditions, infrastructure for tourism, and other socioeconomic factors, for instance, can all have an impact on a nation's reputation and tourism industry. By including these elements, the causal link can be more thoroughly defined and the development of the national brand in various circumstances may be better understood. It is envisaged that greater information regarding the nature of the relationship between the nation brand and the number of tourists can be produced by incorporating various variables and broadening the scope of current research frameworks.

Various analysis strategies that facilitate a deeper comprehension of cause and effect interactions are valuable. One of these methods is longitudinal analysis, which monitors changes over an extended period of time, allowing you to look at variations in the number of visitors and the nation brand. This method can assist us in comprehending how the value of the national brand fluctuates in response to changes in visitor numbers and the contributing elements to these fluctuations. It is also important to take into account the feedback methods, as they have the potential to further muddy the connection between the quantity of visitors and the national brand.

Summary

The study conducted by the authors demonstrated a positive, medium-strength correlation between the number of individuals visiting the nation for private reasons and the perception of the nation (the country brand). As per the correlation analysis conducted throughout the research, there is a positive association between the number of visitors to the country and their perception of it. This outcome is significant because it shows that an increase in tourists has a favorable impact on how the nation is viewed abroad, raising the value of the national brand. The quantity of tourists serves as a form of feedback that influences the nation's brand; the greater the number of visitors, the more favorable the country may be perceived to be. The extent to which a nation's brand expands and improves influences the social and economic advancement of that nation, since it gains appeal to investors and other economic players in addition to tourists (Dinnie, 2008).

By analyzing the relationship's direction, it was feasible to show a causal association between the country brand score (effect) and the amount of visitors arriving for personal reasons (reasons). Owing to some uncertainty surrounding the latter result, it might be worthwhile to conduct robustness analyses, incorporate new variables, and use various analytic techniques in subsequent studies to enhance the validity of the results and gain a deeper understanding of the cause-and-effect relationships. Numerous chances for additional research arise when the causal relationship between the amount of visitors arriving for private reasons and

the nation's reputation is examined. While the present study verified a reasonably robust positive association between the two variables, it presents various doubts regarding the applicability of these findings to other nations and areas. Consequently, the authors suggest more research that considers various demographic and sociocultural aspects, as well as focuses on various nations and geographic regions. We can have a better understanding of how the relationship between the country brand and visitor numbers varies under various conditions with the help of studies of this kind.

In conclusion, the research conducted by the authors demonstrated a strong positive correlation between the development of the number of individuals visiting the nation for personal reasons and the perception of the nation; however, additional research is required to fully understand the nature of this cause-and-effect relationship. To establish the generalizability of the research results in many contexts and to make more grounded conclusions, additional in-depth research is needed to investigate the relationship between the number of tourists to the country and the country brand. Subsequent investigations have to employ distinct robustness assessments, incorporate novel variables, and employ alternative analytical methodologies to enhance comprehension of the correlations and guarantee the authenticity of the findings.

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