

COUNTRY BRAND RANKINGS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: "ONE THING IS IMPORTANT: TO BE GOOD NOW"

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ABSTRACT

Brand rankings have long been common in the world of products and services: rankings of the top 100 global brands are released by Interbrand and BrandZ-Kantar-WPP among others. For example, the top five brands of the Interbrand 2020 list are Apple, Amazon, Microsoft, Google and Samsung, followed by the first non-technological brand, Coca-Cola. The situation is similar in the case of the BrandZ-Kantar-WPP 2020 ranking, with the order of the top five being Amazon, Apple, Google, Microsoft and Visa. Like classic brand rankings, country brand rankings are also available. Moreover, there is a new one almost every year, such as the Anholt Nation Brands Index, the FutureBrand Country Brand Index, the Anholt Good Country Index, the Bloom Consulting Country Brand Ranking (Tourism Edition and Trade Edition), the Young&Rubicam Best Countries, the Reputation Institute Country RepTrak and the Global Soft Power Index. It is impossible to discuss all of these in a single article, and not all of them have published a fresh country brand ranking that was created during the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore we only scrutinize the first three of them. One of the aims of the publication is to present their methodology, dimensions and attributes, as well as the results of the individual rankings, with special regard to how they changed in 2020. The other purpose of this writing is to highlight that the basis of a good country brand and a good country image is in fact nothing more than the good country itself – similar to a classic brand, where the starting point is a good product and service.

Keywords: *Country branding, Country brand indexes, Country brand rankings, Nation branding, Covid-19*

1. THE COMPETITION OF COUNTRIES IN OUR MINDS

Let us face it, we tend to compare our own country with other countries. There are nations that stand on a lower rung of the imaginary ladder, and there are countries above us. Maybe this is also related to our superiority or inferiority complexes, but we can also find a marketing-based explanation in the background – namely, the position of a country or a country brand on that ladder basically depends on the value or values we associate it with, and the thoughts and emotions that emerge in us when we hear the name of the country. As Kotler and Keller point out (2012), brands exist in consumers' minds. The strength of a brand depends on what the customer has seen, read, heard, learned, thought and felt about the brand over time. In other words, the strength of a brand exists in the minds of existing or potential customers and the direct or indirect experiences they have had with the brand. The question is, of course, whether the value of all this can be calculated and scientifically proven. This is not so simple in the case of traditional products and services either, but brand rankings such as Interbrand Best Global Brands or BrandZ-Kantar-WPP The Most Valuable Global Brands attempt to do so. Similar lists of countries are published from time to time as well – some of them can be disputed, but there are also lists that have become accepted in recent years, insomuch that foreign ministers and prime ministers of governments draw conclusions according to the results. These lists include examples that are not specifically brand rankings, but are still worth mentioning because of their frequency of being cited. Such rankings include the IMD competitiveness report and the World Economic Forum global competitiveness report As Péter Ákos Bod points out in his

article on the topic (2009, 32.), "In a professional sense, we can consider these lists as beauty contest rankings that we do not have to agree with, and – as it often happens in beauty contests – a high ranking on the list does not always reflect real values. However, a significant step backwards on these lists has a negative effect on the global perception of the country." Similar rankings are also regularly published by renowned journals such as *The Economist*, *Forbes* or *Euromoney*. Country lists by credit rating agencies such as Moody's Investors Service, Standard&Poor's, Fitch-IBCA or Japan Credit Rating Agency can be considered some kind of thematic rankings. However though, this article aims to stay true to the theme and specifically discuss country brand rankings, not the abovementioned lists. It is worth considering that almost every year at least one new ranking is published, which is then re-released each year. These include the Anholt Nation Brands Index, FutureBrand Country Brand Index, Anholt Good Country Index, Bloom Consulting Country Brand Ranking (Tourism Edition and Trade Edition), Young&Rubicam Best Countries, Reputation Institute Country RepTrak and Global Soft Power Index. It is impossible to cover all of these in a single article, and not all of them have recent country brand rankings created during the Covid-19 pandemic, therefore the study only looks at the first three. The article describes the methodology, dimensions and factors of the Anholt Nation Brands Index, the FutureBrand Country Brand Index and the Anholt Good Country Index, and then analyses the countries' shifts in the rankings during the Covid-19 pandemic. Before going into detail, however, it is worth discussing the usefulness of these rankings. First of all, publicly available rankings are important for the public opinion: everyone may be interested in where their own country ranks, how they compare with their neighbours, or which countries are rated the best or worst in the world, according to different criteria. It is no coincidence that the media are also happy to receive new rankings and report on them, as the subject is sure to be of interest to readers, viewers and listeners. The results of the rankings are useful for one more thing besides a comparison with other countries: to show how a country's ranking has changed compared to previous years or even earlier years. As country image (or country brand, if you like) changes slowly, it is worth paying attention to any significant shifts in the overall ranking or in any of its dimensions. The importance that some governments attach to this is illustrated, for example, by Finland's annual publication *Building the image of Finland – Review of the country image*. One of the main chapters of the review is about where Finland ranks in the various country brand surveys. On the basis of these, the document explains the country's main strengths and weaknesses and, more specifically, what the public thinks of them worldwide, i.e. how they perceive the Finland brand (Finland.fi Toolbox, 2017). But rankings also have another significance: they provide PR value for those compiling the lists, and can therefore result in paid government contracts. This may include consultancy, but many rankings are produced in such a way that detailed country analyses are only available for a fee, as the researchers have to be paid. The Scottish Government, for example, does this every year in the case of the Anholt Nation Brands Index and then publishes the detailed results, ensuring that people in Scotland can see how their country is perceived. This also helps to better inform the government (especially organs of state responsible for foreign affairs) of all the actions that need to be taken to further improve the country, and, consequently, the country brand (Gov.scot 2021). Last but not least, rankings can be particularly important in a situation where the whole world is affected by a topical issue – in this case, a pandemic. A change in the perception of a country can be an indicator of how well or badly it has managed the pandemic, and more specifically how this management has been reported in the international media. After all, our judgement of a country is greatly affected by the most important information pieces we have about it, that is, what news we have received about it, if any. The above information may well summarise the practical relevance and usefulness of each of these rankings.

If the analysis of rankings is done systematically by a country's government, it will certainly be more aware of what the country is perceived to be by the broad international public – whether before, during or after the pandemic.

2. THE ANHOLT NATION BRANDS INDEX

This index was the first attempt to set up a ranking of countries as brands. It was launched in 2005, and it has now grown into one of the world's largest social science research projects. It has had various complicated names: first it was called Simon Anholt's Nation Brands Index, then it was mentioned as Anholt-GMI Nation Brands Index and from 2008 as Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index, then in 2017 it was renamed Anholt Nation Brands Index powered by Ipsos, its current name. It can be seen that these names all include the word Anholt, referring to Simon Anholt, the creator of the concepts of country brand and country branding, and at the same time the best-known international authority in the field, the author of several books on the subject. In terms of research methodology, it must be pointed out that the research is conducted in 20 countries, and uses a representative sample to monitor the influence and attractiveness of 50 countries. This is also the most common reason for criticism regarding the ranking: on the one hand, only 50 countries are included (although, for example, Hungary is on the list), and on the other hand, the survey itself only takes place in 20 countries. However, as they say, if a research makes exactly the same mistake from time to time, the changes can be interpreted in the very same way, and that is the point. In addition, the sample itself is relatively large, with a total of 20,000 people being interviewed – and the last time it was conducted between 7 and 30 July 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic had been tangible for more than four months (Ipsos 2020). The measurement is based on six dimensions, that is, competence fields, alongside 23 attributes in total. These are summarised in Table 1. According to the above criteria and the results of the survey, Germany had the best country brand in 2020, which means it is now in the lead for the sixth year in a row. The Top 10 is dominated by European countries (Germany, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden), but Canada, Japan, Australia and the United States are also included. It is also true that the latter country finished in 1st place a few years ago, and now it is only 10th, which shows that the public perception of the US is deteriorating globally (or at least among the respondents in the 20 countries surveyed) (Ipsos 2020). In the context of the latter, it may be interesting to note that when we examine each dimension (see Table 2), the United States does best in the dimensions Exports and Culture. The former is no particular surprise, as the vast majority of global brands are American, be it technology companies, food, fast food chains or financial service providers, and the list goes on. In the field of culture, however, the United States' 5th place out of 50 countries may seem overly upscale at first. But if we consider that this includes not only cultural heritage (in which the country, having been founded in 1776, has limited opportunities), but also modern culture such as movies, pop music or sports, we may easily understand the result.

Table following on the next page

Dimension	Attributes of the specific dimension
Tourism	Visit if Money was No Object; Natural Beauty; Historical Buildings; Vibrant City
Exports	Science and Technology; Buy Products; Creative Place
Governance	Competent & Honest; Rights & Fairness; Peace & Security; Environment; Poverty.
Investment and immigration	Work & Live; Quality of Life; Educational Qualifications; Invest in Business; Equality in Society
Culture	Sports; Cultural Heritage; Contemporary Culture
People	Welcoming; Close Friend; Employability

Table 1: The dimensions and attributes of the Anholt Nation Brands Index (Source: Papp-Váry, Árpád (2019): Országmarkázás – Versenyképes identitás és imázs teremtése ("Country Branding – Creating competitive identity and image"). Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó.)

Ranking	Total of all dimensions	Tourism	Exports	Governance	Immigration and investment	Culture	People
1	Germany	Italy	Japan	Canada	Canada	Italy	Canada
2	United Kingdom	France	United States of America	Switzerland	Germany	France	Australia
3	Canada	United Kingdom	Germany	Sweden	Switzerland	United Kingdom	Italy
4	Japan	Spain	United Kingdom	Germany	United Kingdom	Germany	United Kingdom
5	France	Greece	Canada	Australia	Sweden	United Kingdom	New Zealand

Table 2: The top 5 countries in the overall ranking and 6 dimensions of the Anholt Nation Brands Index

(Source: Ipsos (2020): Germany Retains Top "Nation Brand" Ranking, the UK and Canada Round Out the Top Three (<https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/Germany-Retains-Top-Nation-Brand-Ranking-the-United-Kingdom-emerges-ahead-of-Canada-to-Round-Out-the-Top-Three-US-and-China-Experience-Significant-Divide>), published: 27 October 2020, retrieved: 2 April 2021.)

Table 2 also highlights another interesting fact: if we are seeking to find the most ideal country brand, it is probably nothing but a combination of Italy and Germany. This is because one of the countries is weak in aspects that the other is strong in, and vice versa.

While Italy's tourism and culture are highly valued, as are the people who live there, the investment and immigration dimension receives significantly lower scores, not to mention governance. In contrast, people, landscapes, culture, food, and even fashion are weaker in Germany, while governance, the economy, and "engineering" brands are generally highly valued. Thus, in fact, if Italy and Germany were united, it would create the best country – or at least the best country brand – in the world. Of course, if we recall that there were aspirations for this in the 20th century, we may quickly realize that this is not a good idea after all.

3. THE FUTUREBRAND COUNTRY BRAND INDEX

The second best-known ranking following Anholt Nation Brands Index is related to FutureBrand, a global consultancy, and evaluates 75 countries – those that belong to the top 75 countries based on World Bank data regarding their GDP (gross domestic product). The dimensions under assessment are shown in Table 3.

Dimension	Factors of the specific dimension
Value system	Political freedom; Environmental friendliness; Tolerance
Quality of life	Education; Health; Standard of living; Safety and security; Would like to live/study there
Business potential	Good infrastructure; Advanced technology; Good for business
Tourism	Value for money; Attractions; People's desire to visit for a holiday; Resorts/Lodging; Gastronomy
Heritage and culture	Heritage; Historical points of interest; Art and culture; Natural beauty
Made in	Authentic products Quality products Unique products People's desire to buy products made here

Table 3: The dimensions and factors of the FutureBrand Country Brand Index (Source: FutureBrand (2020): The FutureBrand Country Brand Index 2020 – A unique country perception study. (<https://www.futurebrand.com/futurebrand-country-index-2020>, Published: November 2020. Retrieved: 4 December 2020))

While the first three associations (value system, quality of life, business environment) define the country's so-called status, the other three (tourism, heritage and culture, made-in) define the (country) experience. As a result, a separate ranking can be set up for each of the six dimensions, and a summary list can also be created based on them. According to the latter, the Future Brand Index 2020 summary list is headed by Japan, followed by Switzerland, Norway, Germany, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, and finally New

Zealand. It is worth highlighting the dominance of Scandinavian countries, because all 4 made it to the Top 10. It is also interesting that Hungary ranked 56th out of 75 countries, which is a significant decline as the country ranked 38th in the 2019 ranking. The data for the research was collected between 2 and 11 September 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic had already been raging for six months. Thus, the experts involved in the survey were also interviewed about this, asking how their countries had dealt with the pandemic. Based on the experts' opinions, according to the citizens, the most typical activities and measures that contributed to the crisis management of the given countries were: Acting swiftly and rapidly; Preventative measures put in place; Clear and actionable guidance; Consistent guidelines; Strict rules and regulations; Borders shut down; Equipment provided; National unity/togetherness; Everyone's responsibility; Financial support given; Calm and level headed approach. According to the opinion of the 2,000 experts interviewed in September 2020, the countries that had handled the pandemic the best by the time of the survey were Thailand, Taiwan, Japan, USA, Sweden, South Korea, Germany, China and New Zealand. The Future Brand report also highlighted that country brands are more important than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic – and although we cannot control events, we may control how resistant the country is to them. In this context, Future Brand also surveyed when people view a country as successful from the outside and when they do not. This is summarised in Table 4.

For a country to be viewed successfully as a country brand it is seen as:	For a country to be viewed unsuccessfully as a country brand it is seen as:
Confident	Untrustworthy
Influential	Unreliable
Politically stable	Weak
Economically progressive	Outdated
Innovative	Corrupt
Trustworthy	Economically and politically unstable
Respected	Unsafe
Tolerant	Aggressive
Reliable	Bad for business
Safe	Slow
Honest	Unfriendly/intolerant and lacking respect
Well developed	
A leader	
Good for business	
Independent	
Authentic and with a good quality of life	

Table 4: What makes us think that a country is successful and what makes us believe it is not (Source: FutureBrand (2020): The FutureBrand Country Brand Index 2020 – A unique country perception study. (<https://www.futurebrand.com/futurebrand-country-index-2020>, Published: 1 November 2020. Retrieved: 4 December 2020))

4. THE ANHOLT GOOD COUNTRY INDEX

The table that can be linked to FutureBrand's name already shows, in part, that a good country brand depends on a good country – just like a classic product, where the starting point is good product and good service. It is no coincidence that in 2014, the most prestigious international authority on the subject, Simon Anholt, came up with a new ranking that no longer lists countries according to their attractiveness and brand image, but according to how much good they do for the world. It was a big philosophical shift, as Anholt has been talking and writing about the importance of brand image for almost fifteen years since the early 2000s: according

to his country brand hexagon model, when we judge countries, we think of them on the basis of six dimensions, that is, tourism, exports, governance, immigration-investment, culture and people. The best possible image of these must be displayed outwards, which of course is also related to what a country does in each area, that is, what the reality is regarding that image. The previously described Anholt Nation Brands Index was created in 2005 on the basis of the image of each country assessed according to the above six dimensions, as well as their overall image, which became decisive indicators in the assessment of brand building as an activity for many years. It is also true that Anholt was already trying to avoid the term 'country branding', using the term 'competitive identity' instead (Anholt 2007). He also pointed out how ineffective country brand campaigns are in many cases. "Since I started working in this field, I have never seen a whit of evidence or properly substantiated study proving that marketing communications programmes, slogans or logos have ever successfully changed or could change the international perception of various places." (...) "Governments that spend taxpayers' money on showing the world how cool, fantastic, wonderful or attractive the country is are not only unworthy of power, but should go to jail because that activity is pointless", he said, adding that "The annoying thing about this lie called country branding is that it encourages many countries to spend crazy amounts on futile propaganda programmes that they could not actually afford, and in the end only those vile PR agencies make a profit" (Anholt 2016). "I don't believe in the existence of this method, but if it does exist, it certainly has nothing to do with communications, logos or slogans; or it is only related to governmental measures", he stated emphatically. Starting out along this line, his focus shifted to deciphering what could be good governmental measures and what could be bad – not primarily for the country in question, but for the whole world. The problems that individual nations need to solve are, in fact, global problems such as climate change, migration, terrorism, deep poverty, inequality, war conflicts and enforcement of human rights. In addition, Anholt highlighted another aspect, pandemic and biosafety, when he gave his first big speech on the topic in 2014. He emphasized that this global problem can only be tackled by countries jointly, and it cannot be solved with inward thinking. According to him, "we've got to start collaborating a bit more and competing a bit less" (TEDx Talks 2014). So it is not enough for countries to be beautiful, it is also important to be good. Anholt's latest book, published in 2020, is therefore titled 'The Good Country Equation: How We Can Repair the World in One Generation'. It is quite funny that a good few years before that, British comedian Danny Wallace (who most of us know in connection with his book and film titled Yes Man) came to the same conclusion. In 2005, Wallace made a six-episode documentary comedy for the BBC about how to start our own country ("How to start your own country?"). In the series, he did a lot of research, interviewed various EU officials and mini-state leaders, then established his country in his own apartment, designed a flag for it, recorded its anthem, and recruited citizens. The name of the country was announced at an event in London that attracted thousands of people: the micronation was named "Kingdom of Lovely". However, there is a point that is even more relevant to our topic – he summarised the country's constitution in just two words: "Be good". Well, even if Anholt did not know Wallace's series "How to start your own country" for some reason, the Good Country Index was actually based on the principle of "Be good" – it shows what each country does on its own for others, for the well-being of the global community. Simon Anholt explained the essence of the Good Country Index in his TED presentation in 2014, which has since been viewed on Youtube by nearly five million people – he stated that the idea of the Good Country Index is quite simple: you just have to measure how the countries of the Earth contribute to common good at the level of humanity and what they take away from it. A wide range of data from the UN and other international organizations are used for this purpose, and for every country, we take stock so that it is immediately visible whether a country is the net creditor of humanity, or vice versa, that is, a burden to the planet, or somewhere in between.

Thus, there is no country image dimension in the Good Country Index, and there is no opinion poll to assess the image of each country, as in the case of the Nation Brands Index, which can also be linked to Anholt. Instead, there are ‘hard numbers’: complex statistics of 35 data points, many of which are provided by the UN – however, it is also worth noting that when the Good Country Index for a specific year is published, the statistics available for the analysis are in fact already a few years old. The 35 data points can be divided into 7 categories as shown in Table 5.

Category	Indicators (divided by GDP)
Science & Technology	The number of international students The export of scientific journals The number of international publications The number of Nobel Prizes (cumulated value) The number of patents
Culture	Creative goods exports Creative services exports UNESCO dues in arrears as % of contribution (negative indicator) Freedom of movement, i.e. visa restrictions Freedom of the press (based on mean score for Reporters without Borders and Freedom House index as a negative indicator)
International Peace & Security	Number of peacekeeping troops sent overseas for UN missions Dues in arrears to financial contribution to UN peacekeeping missions as percentage of contribution (negative indicator) International violent conflicts: Attributed number of casualties of international organised violence (negative indicator) Exports of weapons and ammunition (negative indicator) Internet security: Global Cybersecurity Index score
World Order	Percentage of population that gives to charity Number of refugees hosted Number of refugees overseas (negative indicator) Population birth rate (negative indicator) Number of UN treaties signed
Planet & Climate	National ecological footprint (negative indicator) Environmental agreements compliance Hazardous pesticides exports (negative indicator) Renewable energy share in total energy consumption Ozone: consumption of ozone-depleting substances (negative indicator)
Prosperity & Equality	Open trading: The situation of trading across borders UN volunteers abroad Remittance cost (negative indicator) Foreign direct investment (FDI outflow) Development assistance: Development cooperation contributions
Health & Wellbeing	Food aid Pharmaceutical exports Voluntary excess donations to the WHO Humanitarian aid donations International Health Regulations Compliance

*Table 5: The seven dimensions of the Good Country Index Version 1.3
(Source: The Good Country Index (2021): (<https://index.goodcountry.org/>, retrieved: 2 April 2021))*

While the 2019 ranking of the good country index examined 153 countries, their number was only 149 for the year 2020 because of the amount of publicly available adequate data for the analysis. Based on the results, the nations in each category can be ranked here as well, and the absolute winner can also be announced. However, Anholt already emphasized in his 2014 TED presentation on this topic that the ranking is not about good, better and best countries but rather about good, gooder and goodest countries. More importantly, it is advisable to avoid the interpretation 'bad, worse, worst countries' as these countries are not bad, but rather selfish. They only pay attention to themselves and are not interested in the fate of the world. But which is the best (or more accurately: the goodest, that is, most unselfish) country based on the latest rankings of 2020? Well, it is none other than Sweden, which finished in the first place in the overall list without winning any of the categories, but performing well in general. It is in the top 10 of 149 countries in 5 categories, and if we look at its statistics, it is essentially a net creditor of humanity in all of the seven dimensions listed, that is, it does more good for the planet than bad. It is also striking is that the top 10 countries of the overall ranking are all but one European. Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Canada, the Netherlands, Finland, France, the United Kingdom, Spain and Norway were ranked in the top 10. According to Anholt, this is because these countries are really doing a lot (of good) for other countries, especially within Europe of course, and (if they are members) within the European Union as well. As Anholt points out in all his speeches, one of the most fantastic things to create a better world is in fact the European Union itself. But what is the situation if we examine the top 3 countries in each category? Looking at the table, we can immediately see some interesting findings. One of these is that the country doing the most positive things for world order (at least according to UN data and this ranking) is the country that broke out World War II many decades ago. Moreover, Germany is at the forefront in another dimension, health and wellbeing. Even more interestingly, Georgia is on top in two categories: they do the most for the world in terms of international peace and security, and prosperity and equality – this result is easier to understand if we consider that data received are always weighted by the country's GDP, which is not very high in the case of Georgia. However, the most interesting category for us Hungarians is probably science, where Hungary finished in 2nd place. All this is due to the fact that (again, in relation to GDP) we perform well in attracting foreign students, international publications and the number of Nobel laureates – and this ranking takes into account not only the country where the Nobel laureate lived and worked when receiving the award, but also where was the laureate born. If we look at Hungary's overall result in the Anholt Good Country Index, the country is ranked 30th among 149 countries, which is an improvement compared to the previous year. when we were 39th, albeit from 153 countries. It is less favourable that almost all European countries are ahead of Hungary, but let us focus on the good aspects of the ranking here, at the end of the study: we may see world powers such as the United States (38th), Russia (47th) or China (60th) behind Hungary.

Table following on the next page

Position	Overall ranking	Science & Technology	Culture	International Peace & Security	World Order	Planet & Climate	Prosperity & Equality	Health & Wellbeing
1	Sweden	Ukraine	Belgium	Georgia	Germany	Norway	Georgia	Germany
2	Denmark	Hungary	Netherlands	Ireland	Austria	Finland	Denmark	Norway
3	Germany	United Kingdom	Luxemburg	Mongolia	Netherlands	Switzerland	South Korea	Sweden
4	Canada	Czech Republic	Denmark	Kyrgyzstan	Australia	Sweden	Singapore	Denmark
5	Netherlands	Latvia	Sweden	Rwanda	Finland	Lithuania	Luxembourg	Netherlands
6	Finland	Austria	Austria	Uruguay	Norway	Croatia	United Arab Emirates	Switzerland
7	France	Denmark	France	Moldova	Denmark	Slovenia	Cyprus	United Kingdom
8	United Kingdom	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Slovenia	Bulgaria	Malta	Germany	Botswana	Canada
9	Spain	Netherlands	Estonia	Singapore	Sweden	Portugal	Sweden	United States of America
10	Norway	Finland	Malta	Malawi	Cyprus	Australia	Mauritius	United Arab Emirates

Table 6: The top 10 countries in the overall ranking and the 7 dimensions of the Good Country Index

(Source: The Good Country Index (2021): Results 1.4. (<https://index.goodcountry.org/>, retrieved: 2 April 2021))

5. COMPARING THE THREE COUNTRY BRAND RANKINGS AND THEIR RESULTS

As mentioned above, the three country brand measurement methodologies are quite different, even if it is true that Simon Anholt created two of them. The most similar characteristic of the rankings is the number of dimensions and the number of indicators associated with them. However, there is a big difference between the number of countries studied (50 – 75 – 149), not to mention the sample size – while 20,000 people are interviewed in the case of the Anholt Nation Brands Index, their number is 2,000 for The Future Brand Country Index, and public data from the UN is used for the Anholt Good Country Index instead of polling. This is shown in Table 7.

Point of comparison	Anholt Nation Brands Index	The Future Brand Country Index	Anholt Good Country Index
First year of publication	2005	2010	2014
Number of dimensions	6	6	7
Number of indicators	23	22	35
Number of countries evaluated	50	75 (based on World Bank Top 75 GDP)	149
Sample	A total of 20,000 people, but only from 20 countries, all of whom express their opinion about the 50 countries	A total of 2,000 experts and opinion leaders who travel frequently, each evaluating 7 countries that are close to them	It is not carried out through opinion polls, but on the basis of UN factual data, interpreted in relation to the countries' GDPs
Time of last data collection	Between 7 July and 30 August 2020 (the COVID pandemic had lasted for 4 months)	Between 2 and 11 September 2020 (the COVID pandemic had lasted for 6 months)	The availability of UN data is slower, data is always a few years old. (The COVID effect is not yet perceptible in this ranking.)

Table 7: A comparative analysis of the three country brand indexes

(Source: Own comparison based on the individual rankings)

Although there is a relatively large difference between each methodology, the difference is not so big in terms of their end results, especially when looking at the top10 countries. As Table 8 shows, Germany, Canada and Sweden are at the forefront of all three rankings.

Ranking	Anholt Nation Brands Index	The Future Brand Country Index	Anholt Good Country Index
1	Germany	Japan	Sweden
2	United Kingdom	Switzerland	Denmark
3	Canada	Norway	Germany
4	Japan	Germany	Canada
5	France	Canada	Hollandia
6	Italy	Denmark	Finland
7	Switzerland	Finland	France
8	Australia	Sweden	United Kingdom
9	Sweden	United Arab Emirates	Spain
10	United States of America	New Zealand	Norway

*Table 8: The top 10 countries of the three country brand indexes
(Source: Own edited version based on the individual rankings)*

Seven countries made it to the top 10 of two lists: Denmark, the United Kingdom, Finland, France, Japan, Norway and Switzerland. Of course, there are also countries that are only one ranked so high in one of the rankings: the United States, Australia, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain and New Zealand. In this respect, it is therefore reaffirmed that a good country brand is based on a good country.

6. "ONE THING IS IMPORTANT: TO BE GOOD NOW"

It may sound strange at first that the lyrics of Napoleon Boulevard, a Hungarian pop band, provide one of the most important pieces of advice in country branding, but the Good Country Index presented in this study proved that it is very much true. Moreover, if we examine the original version of the lyrics, we may discover another interesting connection. In fact, it is the music of the Italian film *State bouni se potete* ("Be good if you can"), which was released in 1984, although it was only presented in Hungary in 1989. In the film, one of the children (later an adult) is often tempted by the Devil as his patron, St. Philip Neri, tries to put him on the right track – as the saint did in reality with street children and criminals in the 16th century. In fact, the main message of St. Philip Neri is not only "Be good if you can", but also "Stay good if you can", another translation of the original Italian title, which is also suggested by the film itself. Well, this advice is much more important nowadays than ever, as we live in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. On second thought, it is the first truly common matter since World War II, affecting our daily life across the planet. Of course, we could also mention climate change, but people do not have to wear masks or lock themselves away at home, not meeting anyone. At least not yet. This also means that the nearly eight billion people on Earth have one thing in common, which will hopefully become a memory soon: the coronavirus. This situation could even provide an opportunity for global cooperation, helping each other; but to be sincere, we can only see traces of this. Instead, politicians are primarily concerned with their own countries, focusing on their communication with their own citizens. Their main message is to protect their own country, instead of joining forces with other countries to defeat the virus together. The reintroduction or even reinforcement of border control also shows the closure of nations, with other countries marked in red, yellow or green at best.

There is also competition in vaccine development, not only between companies, but also between countries. Research takes place in several locations, but they only share information partially. Meanwhile, we also see that rich countries have concluded multiple contracts for millions or even tens of millions of vaccines, while poorer countries cannot afford them. There is even a special term for this: vaccine nationalism. True, there are examples of developed countries offering their help, but overall, the above actions tend to sharpen the differences. All this affects the solution of all other global challenges: according to Bill Gates, the pandemic returned the world back to the level where it was twenty-five years ago in terms of the eradication of deep poverty. (Business Insider 2020). However, this whole thing cannot be blamed on politicians alone. In most places, polls show that people are extremely receptive to this right now – according to them, good leaders are the ones who do the most for their own people and good countries are the ones that selfishly focus on themselves. This also means that Anholt and his team still have a lot of work to do to make the good country approach widely accepted.

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