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Nation branding and sustainability: A comparative analysis of European countries

Ulus markalama ve sürdürülebilirlik: Avrupa ülkelerinin karşılaştırmalı bir analizi

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Abstract

The environmental problems of the 21st century have led countries to pay attention to issues of sustainability. The UN Sustainable Development Goals have encouraged member-states to strive for social, economic, and environmental objectives through policies that address nature, poverty, peace, equality, and diversity in society up to the year 2030. In recent years, sustainability became one of the leading discourses of a commercial culture shaped by brands, in addition to political, social, and economic fields. In this period, sustainability has also been applied to the countries' nation branding strategies. This article aims to analyze the impact of sustainability on the formation of nation brand identity based on European countries. As the research sample, the nation branding websites of 27 European Union countries and Great Britain, Norway, Switzerland, and Türkiye were analyzed by a thematic analysis with a qualitative methodology. The research highlights that Northern European nations, which have high scores in the Sustainable Development Growth Index, are more successful in linking sustainability to their nation brand identities. Ultimately, this article highlights the expanding importance of sustainability in nation brand communication in an effort to contribute to existing studies and practices in the field.

Keywords: Europe, nation branding, nation brand identity, sustainability, thematic analysis

Öz

21. yüzyılda dünyada yaşanan çevresel sorunlar, devletlerin sürdürülebilirlik kavramıyla yakından ilgilenmelerine zemin hazırlamıştır. 2015 yılında Birleşmiş Milletler tarafından ilan edilen "Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Hedefleri", üye devletlerin toplumsal, ekonomik ve çevresel hedefler doğrultusunda doğa, yoksulluk, barış, eşitlik ve çeşitlilik gibi alanlarda politikalar üretmesini teşvik etmiştir. Son yıllarda ise sürdürülebilirliğin politik, toplumsal ve ekonomik alanların yanı sıra, markalar aracılığı ile şekillenen tüketim toplumunun da önde gelen söylemlerinden biri olarak yerleştiği dikkat çekmektedir. Bu süreçte sürdürülebilirlik olgusunun,

ülkelerin ulus markalama stratejilerine de entegre edilmeye başlandığı görülmektedir. Bu çalışma sürdürülebilirliğin ulus marka kimliğinin oluşumu açısından ne derece etkili bir rol üstlendiğini Avrupa ülkeleri bağlamında analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında 27 Avrupa Birliği üyesi ile Birleşik Krallık, İsviçre, Norveç ve Türkiye'den oluşan 31 ülkelik bir örneklem belirlenmiş, bu ülkelerin ulus markalama web siteleri nitel bir tematik analiz yöntemiyle çözümlenmiştir. Gerçekleştirilen çözümleme sonucunda ulus markalar ve sürdürülebilirlik bağlantısı dört farklı seviyede kategorize edilmiş olup, Küresel Sürdürülebilirlik Endeksi'nde üst sıralarda yer alan Kuzey Avrupa ülkelerinin sürdürülebilirlik hedeflerini ulus marka kimliklerine daha etkin bir biçimde entegre ettikleri ortaya çıkmıştır. Sonuç olarak sürdürülebilirliğin ulus marka iletişiminde belirginleşen rolüne dikkat çeken bu çalışma, sürdürülebilir ulus markaların oluşturulması çabalarına katkı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avrupa, ulus markalama, ulus marka kimliği, sürdürülebilirlik, tematik analiz

Introduction

Since the early 2000s, nation branding has emerged as a unique marketing strategy for countries to promote their cultural and economic assets. In contrast with previously established marketing communications such as "destination branding," "place branding," or "city branding," nation branding provides countries with a complex communication strategy to publicize their products, attractions, and national brands to international target audiences. Over the past two decades in the 21st century, nation branding has become a key marketing activity for countries across the globe through the establishment of governing bodies such as nation brand initiatives or offices set up by the country's political authorities. With its growing potential and importance, nation branding has greatly contributed to countries' political ambitions, in addition to helping meet their commercial goals by generating soft power and strengthening the state's public diplomacy efforts (Gilboa, 2008; Rasmussen & Merkelsen, 2014).

Based on the contemporary developments in the field of nation branding, this article aims to discuss the impact of sustainability in the formation of nation brand identity. The notion of sustainability has made an impact on the strategic communication of nation brands as well as their positioning in the globalizing world. Having been discussed since the early 2000s as a movement to transform the world for the better in terms of economic, social, and environmental conditions, sustainability was made an agenda by the United Nations in 2015. Organized as Sustainable Development Goals[1], the 17 goals were put forward by the member states, who claimed their dedication to achieving the goals by 2030. This period also marked a growing interest in sustainability in the market, as corporate brands were increasingly involved in developing sustainability projects. As sustainability became a marketing discourse alongside global political

initiatives, governments became engaged in integrating sustainability into their nation brand identities. The goal of this paper is to evaluate how sustainability is utilized to create a brand identity in nation branding. Existing literature mainly focuses on how sustainability is used in organizations (Ki and Shin, 2015). Others have pointed out how governments use sustainability to attract foreign investment and promote eco-tourism (Frig & Sorsa, 2020; Hassan & Mahrous, 2019). As this paper will further discuss in the literature review, studies on nation brands' sustainability communication are limited. Therefore, it is essential to offer a broad perspective on how sustainability is used in nation branding. This paper sets out to bridge the gap in the existing literature by carrying out a thematic analysis of how European countries use sustainability in their nation brand communication. For this purpose, this article first engages in a conceptual discussion of nation branding and sustainability. Following that, it will review the nation branding activities of European countries through a thematic analysis to highlight how sustainability is incorporated by governments in various ways as a component of their nation brand identity.

Nation branding

The term nation branding was coined in 1996 by Simon Anholt, who suggested that nations can be branded with strategies similar to those used to market products and services (Anholt, 2011, p. 289). Anholt (1998, pp. 395-396) notes that countries already attain certain brand images as a result of historical and cultural associations gained over the centuries, yet the image of a brand should be systematically governed through a process of strategic communication. Similarly, Olins (2002, pp. 243-244) argues that nations are first and foremost historical phenomena that maintain their images over centuries, such as the French revolution providing a national image for modern France or scientific advancements in Germany that lead the audience to think about the country as a rational nation. The nation's image is impacted by a series of different agents, such as a news item about the country, the achievements of the country's national brands, important people, political events, and even the latest movie that depicts the nation in a specific way (O'Shaughnessy & Jackson, 2000). Therefore, nation branding aims to produce a truthful depiction of the nation, which forms the nation's brand identity (Dinnie, 2008, p. 18). The nation brand identity will enable the target audiences to perceive the nation in the desired way, paving the way for the ideal brand image to be actualized in the audience's minds. In this respect, Dinnie (2008) points out that nation branding can provide countries with the necessary means to differentiate

themselves in the perceptions of the target audiences by defining the term as "the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences" (p. 15).

The existing literature on the subject illustrates that nation branding may help countries to achieve certain political, economic, social, and cultural goals (Nas, 2021, pp. 32-33). As noted above, nation branding is a highly political activity since it is administered by governments according to their ideological standpoints. There may be certain changes in the power structures of a country, where a certain political party can win the elections and dominate the country's communication with the foreign public. Yet if the nation constantly changes the way it speaks to foreign audiences, this will inevitably result in ambiguous messages. In this regard, nation branding enables a country's political bodies to discuss and agree on common values, traditions, and ideas that constitute the nation. Regardless of the political party in power, nation branding aims to sustain the image of the nation systematically and consistently. Therefore, nation branding paves the way for countries to answer significant questions regarding who the nation is and what its main characteristics are (Nas, 2017, p. 205). These questions encourage countries to generate truthful messages regarding the nation brand by providing a sense of unity for the domestic audiences. Various countries have successfully negotiated their political identities with their citizens and conveyed them to foreign audiences, such as Sweden's "Open Skies Open Minds" campaign, which underscores democracy and transparency as the country's core political ideology (Marklund, 2014), and Malaysia's "Malaysia: Truly Asia" campaign, which emphasizes that the country's most valuable asset is its Asian culture (Bouchon, 2014).

In addition to a nation's political aims, nation branding contributes to the economic aims of a country. In this respect, the target audience of nation branding activities includes tourists, investors, business people, international corporations, and foreigners who may consider moving to a country to live or for education (Nas, 2021, p. 36). Promoting the image of the nation also encourages cooperation between a country's national brands and its nation brand, as the reputation of the national brands can be transferred to the nation brand image (White, 2012). A communication strategy based on the nation brand's national, industrial, economic, and financial assets can attract foreign investors and skilled workers by providing the nation a "competitive identity" advantage (Anholt, 2007, pp. 2-3). Examples of the economic aims of nation branding involve projects such as Germany's "Land of Ideas[2]" campaign, which focuses on German

industry and innovation by inviting entrepreneurs from all over the world to invest in the country; and Türkiye's "Turquality" project supporting national brands in their exports and foreign investments[3].

Thirdly, nation branding can contribute to the social and cultural image of the country in the global arena. By promoting the country's values, tradition, lifestyle, music, art, literature, film, media, and ideology, governments actively engage in drawing foreign public attention through their cultural and social attractions. In this regard, a key term that accompanies nation branding's cultural and social significance is "soft power," as theorized by Joseph Nye (2004; 2008). According to Nye (2008, p. 95), international relations of the post-Second World War era are characterized by countries' capacity for soft power, which refers to their cultural assets, rather than hard power, which is the tangible military or economic weapons of a state. The success of the Americanization of culture through the spread of global brands such as McDonald's, Coca-Cola, and Nike, as well as the "McDonaldization of society" (Ritzer, 1983), have highlighted American soft power, which was capable of countering the communism of East Germany and the Soviet Union. Nation branding can generate soft power for countries by promoting their cultural assets, historical significance, worldviews, and ideological projections. For example, throughout the 2010s, Türkiye's soap operas were exported to many countries on different continents, resulting in a positive association with the nation brand image (Larochelle, 2020; Yörük & Vatikiotis, 2013). In other parts of the world, Japanese anime culture or Korean pop music gained global popularity and constituted the basis of Japan's "Cool Japan" strategy (Valaskivi, 2013) or the "Korean Wave" (Jang & Paik, 2012). Finally, the increasing attraction of a nation brand's cultural symbols and products can provide governments with the means to engage in public diplomacy more efficiently. Eventually, public diplomacy can enable a government to realize its political, cultural, or economic ambitions by facilitating direct communication with foreign publics and managing the country's reputation (Rasmussen & Merkelsen, 2012, p. 812).

The process of branding a nation mainly involves four complementary stages: The decision for the nation brand's positioning, the designation of the nation brand's identity, communicating to the target audience by also monitoring and analyzing the nation brand's image, and lastly, evaluating the performance of the brand by assessing nation brand equity (Nas, 2021, p. 3). To carry out these procedures, countries initiate responsible institutions or commissions with the participation of official government

representatives, ministries, business organizations, brand ambassadors, advertisers, and public relations experts. As the first step, the decision to position the nation brand requires the assessment of competitors in the market and the target audiences. After determining the competing nation brands and the target audience, the nation brand identity is constructed by the nation brand's textual and visual elements, such as the slogan, logo, and story, that ideally reflect the country's core promise and identity. Communicating to the target audiences results in the formation of a certain nation brand image, which needs to be assessed and analyzed according to the brand's goals. Finally, brand equity is achieved as the indicator of the strength of the nation brand, which is measured by indexes such as Anholt-Ipsos and Brand Finance. According to the Anholt-Ipsos 2021 nation-brands index, Germany is the strongest nation brand, followed by Canada and Japan[4]. The index measures the power of nation brands according to categories including tourism, people, exports, culture and heritage, investment and immigration, and governance, a formula called the Nation Brand Hexagon.

Studies on nation branding also conduct critical analyses of the social, political, and economic implications of the nation brand (Kaneva, 2011). Various studies have pointed at nation branding as a tool to legitimize authoritarian government politics (Fauve, 2015, p. 111; Schatz, 2008, p. 61), spread colonialism (Miño, 2022, p. 2763), commodify national values (Aronczyk, 2013) and reproduce nationalist ideologies (Jordan, 2014; Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011). Furthermore, recent studies on the social aspects of nation branding have highlighted that the representation of national identities has been highly patriarchal and far from achieving gender equality (Kaneva & Cassinger, 2022). In this regard, critical approaches to the subject emphasize that nation branding should depict a truthful narrative of the nation and prioritize issues including gender equality, diversity, peace, and justice. It is important to note that critical responses to nation branding parallel developments in fostering the idea of sustainability, especially in the second half of the 2010s. As discussed conceptually in the following section and argued according to the research findings, sustainability is becoming a key notion in the formation of a nation brand identity.

The concept of sustainability

In the first two decades of the 21st century, various social movements emerged and gained worldwide popularity by pointing at environmental problems and demanding

change, such as the "Extinction Rebels" in Australia, "Fridays for Future" in Europe, the "Sunrise Movement" in the United States, and the "People's Climate March" in New York City (Weder & Voci, 2021, p. 163; Thorson, Edgerly, Kligler-Vilenchik, Xu, & Wang, 2016, p. 4785). While sustainability gained popularity in sounding environmentalist concerns, it later gained wider recognition as a moral compass and impacted brands and corporations (Frank, 2017, pp. 311-312). Aiming to achieve development by being sensitive toward the issues of equality, welfare, and justice, sustainability maintains economic, social, and environmental goals (Sharma, Kaur, & Syan, 2021, p. 107). Economic sustainability encourages corporations to increase production efficiency, minimize energy consumption, and develop new markets with new products (Sharma, Kaur, & Syan, 2021, p. 108). In this regard, corporations' economic intentions merge with their ecological goals, as sustainability requires considering the production and consumption processes' positive or negative impacts on the environment (Sharma, Kaur, & Syan, 2021, p. 113). Finally, economic and ecological sustainability should be complemented by social sustainability, since economic growth should be viable, equitable, and bearable, aiming at tackling social problems such as poverty and gender inequality (Sharma, Kaur, & Syan, 2021, p. 114). With time, sustainability has been integrated into corporations' social responsibility frameworks as a crucial goal (Pompper, 2015; Ott, Wang, & Bortree, 2016), offering an alternative to the existing system (Weder & Voci, 2021, p. 164), sometimes referred to as "green modernity" (Beck, 2010).

Sustainability received global acknowledgment particularly after the introduction of the United Nations Sustainable Development Program, which was launched by the member states in 2015 (Weder & Voci, 2021, p. 164). Named "The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," seventeen goals were put forward to tackle poverty, improve education, and reduce inequality, in addition to the core goal of saving the environment[5]. As sustainability became a crucial part of the inter-governmental politics of states and also a part of corporations, "sustainability branding" emerged as a separate branding activity that aims to communicate a firm's sustainability goals to its target audiences (Sharma, Kaur, & Syan, 2021, p. 164). Since the notion of "green consumers" (White, Hardisty, & Habib, 2019) and "green consumption" (Roser-Renouf, Atkinson, Maibach, & Leiserowitz, 2016, s. 4763) emerged, pointing out consumer sensitivity toward issues regarding social, environmental, and economic inequalities and injustices, brands began to incorporate equality-oriented messages into their strategic communication efforts. Furthermore, consumers' attention was not only limited to environmental concerns, but also spread to other problems and issues in society, as they began to

make purchasing decisions based on political and ethical concerns (de Zúñiga, Copeland, & Bimber, 2014; Stolle, 2013). In this regard, sustainability branding differs from green branding, as it also covers sensitive social issues in addition to environmental problems (Sharma, Kaur, & Syan, 2021, p. 164). When applied appropriately, sustainability branding can contribute to brand equity by influencing consumers' purchasing decisions (Sharma, Kaur, & Syan, 2021, p. 165).

As an outcome of the growing presence of sustainability in consumer culture, organizations other than firms were also interested in integrating a sustainable approach into their operations. Developed by Ki and Shin (2015, s. 37), "Organization Sustainability Communication" (OSC) highlights the more inclusive and diverse application of sustainability messages that are not limited to firms but also used by other organizational bodies. In this regard, sustainability communication is also applied by non-profit and higher education institutions (Ott, Wang, & Bortree, 2016, p. 674). Universities, in particular, have effectively employed sustainability communication to highlight their campus sustainability campaigns (Carpenter, Takahashi, Cunningham, & Lertpratchya, 2016, s. 4864; Ott, Wang, & Bortree, 2016, p. 683). In addition to these organizations, sustainability has also been a crucial narrative for nation brands to communicate their brand identity to target audiences. Governments attempt to connect to target audiences by emphasizing their environmental commitment and eco-tourism (Hassan & Mahrous, 2019). Aiming to encourage sustainable development, governments use nation branding to attract national firms to invest in sustainable businesses (Frig & Sorsa, 2020). Other scholars have drawn attention to the impact of gender equality in shaping nation branding messages (Kaneva & Cassinger, 2022; Larsen, Moss, & Skjelsbæk, 2021). Countries' scores in sustainable development goals are monitored by international institutions, such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), which sets up several sustainability standards (Economic, Social and Environmental)[6], and the Sustainable Development Report, published by Sustainable Development Solutions Network and Institute for European Environmental Policy. According to the Sustainable Development Report, Finland, Sweden, and Denmark rank at the top in the 2021 Sustainable Development Goals Index (SDGI) (Table 1).

Table 1: Sustainable development goals index, 2021[7]

SDG Index Rank	Country	SDG Index Score	SDG Index Rank	Country	SDG Index Score	Regions	SDG Index Score
1	Finland	80.8	18	.Slovak Rep	70.0	**European Union**	**71.4**
2	Sweden	80.6	19	Latvia	69.3	Northern Europe	80.6
3	Denmark	79.3	20	Portugal	69.1	EFTA Countries	75.1
4	Austria	78.0	21	Hungary	68.5	Western Europe	74.0
5	Norway	76.7	22	Spain	68.5	Baltic States	69.3
6	Germany	75.3	23	Italy	68.5	Southern Europe	68.3
7	Switzerland	74.0	24	Croatia	68.0	Central and Eastern Europe	68.0
8	Estonia	73.7	25	Lithuania	66.1	Candidate Countries	55.3
9	Slovenia	73.5	26	Luxembourg	65.8	Albania	NA
10	France	72.7	27	Greece	64.8	Bosnia and Herzegovina	NA
11	.Czech Rep	72.6	28	Malta	63.6	Liechtenstein	NA
12	Belgium	72.5	29	Romania	61.6	Montenegro	NA
13	Netherlands	72.1	30	North Macedonia	59.9		
14	Iceland	72.1	31	Serbia	59.3		
15	Poland	71.0	32	Cyprus	58.6		
16	Ireland	70.6	33	Bulgaria	57.6		
17	United Kingdom	70.2	34	Turkey	55.7		

The GRI standards provide organizations with the means to report their progress in sustainability goals in a reliable, transparent, and consistent way. The guidelines offer various topics under three categories: environmental, economic, and social impacts of sustainability. Organizations assess and report their progress in the topics that are listed under three main standards. As part of the economic standards, organizations report their progress in categories such as economic performance, market presence, tax, anti-corruption, indirect economic impacts, anti-competitive behavior, and procurement practices. Environmental standards cover materials, supplier environmental assessment, energy, waste, environmental compliance, emissions, biodiversity, and water effluents. Finally, social standards include employment, labor/management relations, occupational health/safety, training/ education, diversity/equal opportunity, non-discrimination, freedom of association/ collective bargaining, child labor, forced/compulsory labor, security practices, rights of indigenous peoples, human rights assessment, local communities, supplier social assessment, public policy/customer health/safety, marketing/labeling, customer privacy, and socioeconomic compliance[8]. As part of the research methodology, GRI standards (Economic, Environmental, Social) are taken as criteria for coding to analyze how nation brands reflect these standards to communicate their nation brand identity. The existing literature on the subject shows that the studies analyzing the relationship

between nation branding and sustainability are limited. In this regard, this article aims to contribute to the existing literature by undertaking a thematic analysis of nation brands' sustainability communication in Europe.

Aim and Methodology

To analyze the relationship between nation branding and sustainability communication in the 21st century, this article undertakes a thematic analysis of nation brand websites in Europe.

Aim

This research aims to analyze the sustainability communication of nation brands in Europe. It focuses on how countries disseminate sustainability messages from their official nation branding websites. In exploring sustainability communication, this research also aims to illustrate how nation brands use sustainability as an element of their nation brand identity. Therefore, it is important to address the ways in which nation brand websites publish content about economic, social, and environmental sustainability to varying degrees. Accordingly, the following research questions were established:

RQ1: How do the nation brands use sustainability in their nation brand communication?

RQ2: To what degree do the nation brands integrate sustainability in the formation of their nation brand identity?

Method

To analyze the impact of sustainability on the formation of nation brand identity, a thematic analysis was conducted on European countries. According to Scharp and Sanders (2019), thematic analysis is "a qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within a data corpus" (p. 117). Researchers apply thematic analysis especially when they need to analyze and understand the patterns that emerge from the data by generating codes and themes. Rather than intending to arrive at generalizations, thematic analysis "minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). The thematic analysis enables the researcher

to point out and interpret the cultural dynamics behind the texts, statements, or representations (Thomas, 2020, p. 149). The method is preferred by researchers for the purposes of identifying, exploring, explaining, and comparing the themes that emerge from the data (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012, p. 31). According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87), thematic analysis can be conducted in six main steps. The researcher first familiarizes himself/herself with the data by reading, re-reading, and taking notes, generates initial codes, searches for themes, reviews the themes, defines and names the themes, and finally produces a report by writing academic work. Following Braun and Clarke's methodological perspectives, thematic analysis was applied in this research to the sustainability communication of European countries.

For the aim of providing proper analyses and explanations for these research questions, several sampling and coding steps were taken following the thematic analysis method. Sustainability communication is a growing trend in how nation brands represent their promises to target audiences. This research's sample was limited to European countries in order for data to be moderately limited and to be more manageable in terms of coding. The sample of European countries was determined by the 27 European Union member countries and an additional four countries (Great Britain, Norway, Switzerland, and Türkiye), which are not EU members but maintain close geographic, cultural, and economic ties to the EU. Based on this research sample, data were retrieved through the nation brands' official websites, which were gathered in September 2022. Nation brands use the internet in a variety of ways, as most of them are active on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram, etc. However, the data from social networking sites were excluded from the research as the amount of data from these platforms is huge, which makes it difficult for qualitative analysis to handle. Therefore, the data was limited to the nation brands' websites, which are considered the main platform for nation brands to define their nation brand identities for target audiences.

After getting familiar with the data by observing the nation brands' websites, according to the thematic analysis method put forward by Braun and Clarke (2006), initial notes were taken and themes were searched for according to the coding criteria described below:

Coding Criteria 1: How does the nation brand mention sustainability on its website's main page? This criterion aims to analyze how nation brands prioritize sustainability by reflecting it through textual and visual brand identity elements.

Coding Criteria 2: How does the nation brand mention sustainability in its posts (other than on the main web page)? This criterion aims to analyze the amount of focus given to sustainability on nation brand websites and their subject matter.

Coding Criteria 3: Which GRI standards (Economic, Environmental, Social) are mentioned and highlighted by the nation brand? This criterion aims to analyze how the posts are integrated with the GRI standards and construct the nation brand identity.

In searching for recurring patterns that will collate certain themes, the data were analyzed according to three main coding criteria. When observed on the nation brand websites, there appear three main approaches regarding the ways in which sustainability is mentioned by the nation brands. There are nation brands that do not mention sustainability, that highlight sustainability on their main page, and that mention sustainability not on their main page but in other posts. The initial observations and re-readings of the websites illustrate the different ways nation brands use sustainability in their communication efforts (RQ1). Furthermore, the positioning of sustainability messages on nation brand websites highlights that certain nation brands put more emphasis on sustainability and tend to integrate sustainability goals into their identity, whereas others do not prioritize sustainability but also do not ignore the notion and pay it some attention in their posts (RQ2). In the end, the analysis focuses on how nation brand websites highlight sustainability on their main pages.

To generate a better understanding, the main pages of the websites were qualitatively analyzed in terms of the amount of sustainability content mentioned and the textual/visual brand elements compatible with sustainability. In the second step, a similar procedure was performed for the nation brands that do not highlight sustainability on their website's main page but in posts published further into the website. In the third coding criteria, the nation brands were evaluated in terms of the GRI standards for sustainability. GRI highlights three dimensions as standards: economic, environmental, and social sustainability. Therefore, the nation brands' websites were analyzed in terms of how they reflect one or more GRI standards, which indicates the degree to which they integrate sustainability goals in their nation brand identity (RQ2).

Findings

After the analysis of the data with the determined codes, four themes were generated, displaying four different ways in which nation brands approach sustainability in the formation of their nation brand identities. A descriptive analysis was conducted on four different themes and proposed through tables. The descriptive analysis offers concrete insights about the websites' headings, sub-headings, posts' titles, and the varying modes of sustainability presented in the posts. The themes were then analyzed in a detailed way to point out how they reflect the coding criteria and meet or lack sustainability standards to varying degrees. The first theme (nation brands with very strong sustainability association) illustrates nation brands that emphasize sustainability on the main pages at the forefront of the website and mention economic, environmental, and social sustainability in posts linked to main page entries (Table 2). These countries are successfully evaluated in terms of integrating sustainability into their nation brand communication.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of nation brands with very strong sustainability association

Nation Brands	Website	SDGI Index	Coding Criteria 1	Coding Criteria 2	Coding Criteria 3
Sweden	https:// sweden.se	2	**Heading**: Welcome to Sweden. **Sub-Headings**: Openness in Sweden, Democracy in Sweden, Sweden's national minorities, The average Anderssons, Sami in Sweden, Work-life balance, Swedish school system, Gender equality, Elderly care in Sweden, Sustainable Sweden, Making fashion sustainable, Sustainable business, Swedish design, Sweden and sustainability, 10 ways to a greener future, Energy use in Sweden, Swedish recycling and beyond.	**Titles for sample posts include**: Sweden and sustainability, Energy use in Sweden, 10 ways for greener future, Swedish recycling and beyond, Swedish architecture, Swedish design, Making fashion sustainable, Swedish innovations, Sustainable business, Swedish monarchy, 10 Swedish superwomen, Starting a business in Sweden.	Economic, environmental, social sustainability are manifest in the posts.

Denmark	https://denmark.dk	3	**Heading**: Once we were brutal Vikings. Now we are one of the world's most peaceful societies. Welcome to Denmark. **Sub-Headings:** Nation of cyclists, Gender equality, Pioneers in green energy, Let's go green together, Danish work-life balance, Innovation.	**Titles for sample posts include:** Denmark and the World, Suatainability in Denmark, Quiz: Green Living in Denmark, The Danish approach to innovation and design, Denmark is a laboratory for green solutions, Why are Danish people so happy?, Danish architecture in Denmark and around the world, Urban solutions, Denmark on a journey to build a society for everybody, The Danish labour market, Danish society and the business environment, Denmark and Human Rights, Why Denmark is a great place to live.	Economic, environmental, social sustainability are manifest in the posts.
Germany	https://www.germany.travel	6	**Heading**: Germany Simply Inspiring. **Sub-headings**: Together We Care, FEEL GOOD: Sustainable Travel in Germany, Sustainability and barrier-free.	**Titles for sample posts include**: Discover Germany – the accessible holiday destination, Feel Good in Germany, Cities: Innovative and Social, Natural Landscapes: Unique and Well-Protected, Sustainable enjoyment - traditional and innovative, Sustainable accommodation - diverse and comfortable, Comfortable and climate-friendly rail travel to Germany, Sustainable discoveries - vibrant and exciting, Sustainable travel - climate-friendly and comfortable.	Economic, environmental, social sustainability are manifest in the posts.

The second theme (nation brands with high sustainability association) refers to the nation brands that approach sustainability as an important phenomenon by fulfilling at least two GRI standards, yet fall short of fully integrating sustainability into their nation brand identity (Table 3). These nation brands use sustainability not as an integral element of their nation brand but as an accompanying factor.

Table 3: Descriptive analysis of nation brands with high sustainability association

Nation Brands	Website	SDGI Index	Coding Criteria 1	Coding Criteria 2	Coding Criteria 3
Finland	https://www.visitfinland.com/en/	1	**Heading**: Happiness: It's in our nature: The happiest country in the world. **Sub-headings**: Finnish moments of happiness, 11 sustainable travel tips.	**Titles for sample posts include**: Travel sustainably Make mindful choices as you travel, Cycling holiday in Finland, 8 stores to visit for Finnish design icons & future classics, Practical tips for travelers.	Environmental, Social sustainability.
Switzerland	https://www.myswitzerland.com/en/	7	**Heading**: We need Switzerland. Get inspired now! **Sub-headings**: 100% women, Sustainability.	**Titles for sample posts include**: My Swisstainable Journeys, Sustainable Gastronomy, Sustainable travel by public transport, Sustainable summer activities, Sustainable cities, Switzerland Mobility, Barrier-free travel.	Environmental, Social sustainability.

The third theme (nation brands with medium sustainability association) points to the countries which do refer to sustainability on their main pages, and mostly use the notion in posts to promote their tourist attractions and by emphasizing only one GRI standard (Table 4).

Table 4: Descriptive analysis of nation brands with medium sustainability association

Nation Brands	Website	SDGI Index	Coding Criteria 1	Coding Criteria 2	Coding Criteria 3
Norway	https://www.visitnorway.com/	5	**Heading**: Embrace Autumn in Norway. **Sub-headings**: Sustainability.	**Titles for sample posts include**: Our national labelling scheme: Visit a destination with a focus on sustainability, Become a better traveler: 9 tips for responsible travel, THE sustainable Lysefjorden in Ryfylke.	Environmental sustainability
Türkiye	https://goturkiye.com/	34	**Heading**: Naturally Türkiye. **Sub-headings**: Türkiye Sustainability.	**Titles for sample posts include**: Green hospitality, Sustainable tourism, Green transportation, UNESCO cultural and natural heritage, Sustainable gastronomy, Sustainable events and festivals and Eco-certificates and eco-labels.	Environmental sustainability

Spain	https://www.spain.info/en	22	**Heading**: You deserve Spain. **Sub-headings**: None.	**Titles for sample posts include**: Nature and sustainability, Four sustainable activities you can do near Malaga, Eco-friendly souvenirs, Enjoy 100% responsible tourism.	Environmental sustainability
Greece	https://www.visitgreece.gr/	27	**Heading**: Harvest #winegrapes. **Sub-headings**: None.	**Titles for sample posts include**: 6 tips for sustainable travel in Greece, Four up and coming sustainable destinations in Greece, Cycling in Greece and bike friendly label, Health benefits of Meditarrenean diet.	Environmental sustainability
Italy	https://www.italia.it/en	23	**Heading**: Come to live Italian. **Sub-headings**: None.	**Titles for sample posts include**: Campania Parks: sustainable tourism in the region's protected area, FattorMia, the start-up for sustainable and smart farm holidays and weekends, Sicily's green tourist marinas: Blue Flag sustainability.	Environmental sustainability
United Kingdom	https://www.visitbritain.com/gb/	17	**Heading**: Welcome to another side of Britain. **Sub-headings**: None.	**Titles for sample posts include**: 9 tips for a sustainable stay in Cornwall, The pick of Britain's most sustainable places to eat, Top tips for feel-good sustainable travel in Britain, Like Cornwall's coastal beauty, love its sustainable traditions.	Environmental sustainability
France	https://www.france.fr/en	10	**Heading**: Explore France. **Sub-headings**: Eight best practices to travel sustainably in France.	**Titles for sample posts include**: Parisian florists who practice the art of sustainable bouquets, 7 eco-responsible ways to preserve the beauty of the coastline, 6 sustainable travel tips for foodies in France.	Environmental sustainability
Netherlands	https://www.holland.com/	13	**Heading**: Holland Stories. **Sub-headings**: Cycling, Greener cities.	**Titles for sample posts include**: Rotterdam pioneer hub of sustainability, The 11 Michelin Green Star restaurants of the Netherlands, Hotel Jakarta: the greenest hotel in the Netherlands.	Environmental sustainability
Malta	https://www.visitmalta.com/	28	**Heading**: More to Explore. **Sub-headings**: Sustainable Malta.	**Titles for sample posts include**: Chadwick Lakes, Salina Nature Reserve, Buskett Woodlands, A Taste of Wardija.	Environmental sustainability

Austria	https://www.austria.info/en	4	**Heading**: Feel the Winter Love. **Sub-headings**: None.	**Titles for sample posts include**: Experts for sustainable aquaculture and fresh vegetables from Vienna, Experience sustainable cuisine in Carinthia, Landhofmühle in Burgenland: Naturally sustainable.	Environmental sustainability
Slovenia	https://www.slovenia.info/en	9	**Heading**: From Garden to Heaven. My Way. **Sub-headings**: Discovering green Slovenia.	**Titles for sample posts include**: Less Plastic, More Sustainability, Slovenia featured on Sustainability Leaders, Forests reflect Slovenia's attitude towards sustainability, Slovenia - green and on the path of sustainability, Slovenia Green – a new film about Slovenia's sustainability, Slovenia is the first country in the world with a sustainability rating.	Environmental sustainability
Estonia	https://www.visitestonia.com/en	8	**Heading**: Where expectations meet reality. **Sub-headings**: None.	**Titles for sample posts include**: Sustainability plan, Saaremaa, a sustainable island destination, Estonia's Michelin Green Star recipients, For the green traveler, Top sustainable holiday destinations in Estonia, A sustainable seven-day tour of Estonia.	Environmental sustainability

Finally, the fourth theme (nation brands with low sustainability association) shows the nation brands which do not have or have very limited content in terms of sustainability on their websites (Table 5). In the meantime, three countries (Portugal, Belgium, and Czechia) were excluded from the analysis since they do not have properly established nation branding websites.

Table 5: Descriptive analysis of nation brands with low sustainability association

Nation Brands	Website	SDGI Index	Coding Criteria 1	Coding Criteria 2	Coding Criteria 3
Poland	https://www.poland.travel/en	15	**Heading**: Poland: Cities worth discovering. **Sub-headings**: None.	**Titles for sample posts include**: Sustainable summer adventures in Poland, A Guide to Łódź: National Geographic's "Best of the World" Sustainable Destination in 2022.	Environmental sustainability (limited)
Ireland	https://www.ireland.com/en/	16	**Heading**: Travel through time. **Sub-headings**: None.	**Titles for sample posts include:** How to travel sustainably in Ireland.	Environmental sustainability (limited)

Lithuania	https://www.lithuania.travel/en/	25	**Heading**: Real is Beautiful. **Sub-headings**: None.	**Titles for sample posts include:** Eco-Friendly Day in Lithuania: Electric Transportation, Plant-Based Culinary Heritage, and Sleeping on Eco-Farm.	Environmental sustainability (limited)
Luxembourg	https://www.isitluxembourg.com/	26	**Heading**: Welcome to Luxembourg! **Sub-headings**: None.	**Titles for sample posts include:** Luxembourg Sustainability Forum, Free travel throughout the country with trains, buses and trams.	Environmental sustainability (limited)
Hungary	https://visithungary.com/	21	**Heading**: Wellspring of Wonders. **Sub-headings**: None.	No content	
Latvia	https://www.latvia.travel/en	19	**Heading**: Explore Latvia. **Sub-headings**: None.	No content	
Slovakia	https://slovakia.travel/en	18	**Heading**: #Good Idea Slovakia. **Sub-headings**: None.	No content	
Croatia	https://croatia.hr/en-gb	24	**Heading**: Autumn in Croatia. **Sub-headings**: None.	No content	
Bulgaria	https://bulgariatravel.org	33	**Heading**: Discover Bulgaria. **Sub-headings**: None.	No content	
Romania	https://omaniatourism.com/	29	**Heading**: Romania: Natural and Culture. **Sub-headings**: None.	No content	
Cyprus	https://www.visitcyprus.com/index.php/en/	32	**Heading**: A Fusion of Experiences. **Sub-headings**: None.	No content	
Portugal	**N/A**	20			
Belgium	**N/A**	12			
Czechia	**N/A**	11			

Sustainability as the core of nation brand identity

The first theme that emerges, according to the thematic analysis, points at the nation brands that successfully manage to integrate sustainability into their identity. In this regard, Sweden, Denmark, and Germany are two nation brands with a strong emphasis on sustainability. Both countries explicitly refer to sustainability on their website's main pages in a clear way. For example, Sweden's website[9] emphasizes two main subjects: "Life & people in Sweden" and "Sustainable Sweden." Under the tab "Life & people in Sweden" there are several pages, including Openness in Sweden, Democracy in Sweden, Sweden's national minorities, The average Anderssons, Sami in Sweden, Work-life balance, the Swedish school system, Gender equality, and Elderly care in Sweden. Although these pages are not directly positioned under the "Sustainable Sweden" tab, their content is closely related to Sustainable Development Goals as addressed by the UN. Openness in Sweden and Democracy in Sweden pages inform the reader about the core political identity of the Swedish nation brand, which is at the same time mentioned in UN social development goals. Additionally, the pages inform the readers about how daily life is experienced in Sweden by explaining how an ordinary Swede lives (The average Anderssons), the experience of multiculturalism (Sami and other national minorities), the welfare of individuals maintaining a work/life balance, women's rights, gender equality, the rights of elderly citizens, and the education system. By informing readers about the main characteristics of Swedish public life, the country aims to promote itself as a sustainable nation with a focus on equality, welfare, democracy, transparency, and peace. Furthermore, social sustainability is accompanied by economic and environmental sustainability on the tab "Sustainable Sweden," which provides insights on sustainable fashion, sustainable business, a greener future, energy use in Sweden, and recycling in Sweden. Under these tabs, the content focuses on the kinds of opportunities offered by the nation brand centered around sustainable development in business and the environment.

The other country with a successful nation brand identity association with sustainability is Denmark. Its website[10] opens with the following statement: "Once we were brutal Vikings. Now we are one of the world's most peaceful societies. Welcome to Denmark." The page links to content where the history of Denmark is narrated. Although the statement doesn't directly refer to the notion of sustainability, it indicates that the nation brand is self-confident and open to self-criticism about its past issues and problems. By engaging in such criticism, Denmark aims to put forward a contrast

between the past and present, and to emphasize its current peaceful society, which is a reference to sustainable development goals in terms of social sustainability. Below the heading, various tabs elaborate on the sustainability goals of the country. For example, in "A nation of cyclists," cycling is highlighted as a crucial element of the Danish lifestyle, referring to Denmark's ambitions for a sustainable environment and social life. In "Gender Equality: An incomplete success," gender equality is underscored as a core value of Danish life. It is discussed as an ambition that is not yet fulfilled, but the nation brand shows its determination to eradicate gender inequality. The following tab, "Pioneers in clean energy," highlights Denmark's economic investments in renewable energy, and the tab "Let's Go Green Together" makes the following call to uphold environmental and economic sustainability as core ambitions of the nation brand: "Denmark has high ambitions when it comes to the green transition. We hope you will join us." The tabs further below the main page of the website include entries about "The Danish work-life balance" and "Innovative for more than a thousand years," emphasizing the innovative and peaceful lifestyle that Danish people experience. Although Denmark does not explicitly refer to the notion of sustainability on its main page, the entries manage to attain the utmost associations with sustainability in their content. In sum, Sweden and Denmark, as countries ranked second and third on the Sustainability Development Goals Index, manage to communicate sustainability messages in terms of social, environmental, and economic goals. The sustainability-related communication of these nation brands illustrates that sustainability is positioned as the core value of their nation brand identities.

Ranking sixth on the Sustainable Development Goals Index, Germany's nation brand website[11] highlights the "Together We Care" slogan on the landing page, which links to the "FEEL GOOD: Sustainable Travel in Germany" post. The posts under the page include content about German cities designed according to renewable energy, well-protected natural landscapes, organic food, biodiversity, and rail travel. In addition, the page provides a "myclimate CO2 calculator," which calculates the CO2 footprint of a journey according to information provided by readers. The analysis of the nation brand website contents in this research shows that Germany is one of two nation brands (in addition to Switzerland) emphasizing accessibility for people with disabilities under the tab on the main page, "Sustainability and barrier-free." Under "Discover Germany – the accessible holiday destination," the post informs the reader that the country is wholly accessible for visitors with disabilities. The page further provides information for potential visitors with different varieties of disabilities, including restricted mobility,

visual impairment, hearing loss, deafness, learning difficulties, allergies, and food intolerances. In sum, Germany centers its nation brand on sustainability by employing three strategies through its website: the "Together we care" tab, which is highlighted at the top of the main page, the "Feel Good: Sustainable Travel in Germany" tab in the middle of the main page, and finally the "Sustainability and barrier-free" tabs below the "Feel Good" tab. The nation brand's sustainability communication based on economic, environmental, and social sustainability highlights that Germany prioritizes sustainability as a core nation brand identity.

Sustainability as accompanying nation brand identity

The second category of nation brands as analyzed in this research points out the countries that recognize sustainability as an important goal but fall short in highlighting sustainability in their communication efforts compared to the countries in the first category. In this regard, Finland's website[12] opens with the heading, "Happiness - it's in our nature. The happiest country in the world." Following this theme of happiness, the website's main page is designated with pages that illustrate "Finnish moments of happiness," such as "rejuvenate in sauna," "reconnect with nature," "cherish the cold," and "see your first northern lights." On the Finland web page, there is an "11 Sustainable Travel Tips" post that is located at the bottom of the page, under the tab "the latest from us." This post provides the reader with information about how to travel in Finland sustainably and introduces the label, "Sustainable Travel Finland," used by local stores, restaurants, and other related businesses as an indicator of their environmental and social sustainability. Even though Finland ranks first on the Sustainable Development Goals Index, sustainability is not fully integrated into the nation brands' sustainability communication. The notion of "happiness" is significant in terms of maintaining peace and well-being in society, which is compatible with social development goals. However, the happiness entries are only related to the country's natural features as touristic assets and do not provide a view into the Finnish lifestyle. Furthermore, the website only focuses on environmental sustainability by pointing out the country's natural features, with a limited emphasis on social sustainability through the notion of "happiness" and no emphasis on business opportunities and economic sustainability.

Seventh on the Sustainable Development Goals Index, Switzerland initiates its sustainability communication in a way that is similar to Finland to accompany their nation brand identity. In this regard, the Switzerland website's main page is mostly

focused on content regarding the country's natural, historical, and other touristic attractions. The website mentions sustainability below the main page, under the "Sustainability" tab. The other content about social sustainability is highlighted near the sustainability tab. Here, the website introduces the "100% Women" label, which highlights that the country is a safe and ideal place for women to travel. Under the "Sustainability" tab, the content highlights the slogan "Swisstainable – sustainable travel in Switzerland." By listing Swiss achievements in recycling, mobility, air quality, food, and natural conservation, the page focuses on Switzerland's potential for sustainable tourism. Although the tab "Swisstainable" creatively combines the Swiss nation brand with the goal of sustainability, the emphasis is largely put on the country's environmental potential with the use of the term "sustainable tourism," rather than social and economic sustainability goals. Nevertheless, the Swisstainable label can potentially be used to refer to other areas of sustainability in the future by expanding sustainability communication, especially on the Swiss websites' landing pages.

Sustainability for branding destinations

The third category of nation brands applies sustainability communication in a limited way, since they do not tend to integrate sustainability as a core value of their nation brand identity, but rather use the discourse of sustainability to brand their tourism assets, particularly their natural and historical attractions. Thus, this category of nation brands applies sustainability in their communication to promote their destinations with natural significance and to emphasize the beauty of these tourist attractions. On many of these websites, sustainability is not highlighted on the landing web pages or, in the case of Norway and Türkiye, sustainability is mentioned on the main web page but mainly from an environmental perspective, illustrating the countries' natural landscapes. Rather than showing their advancements in terms of transforming their businesses, economy, society, and nature according to sustainability goals, this category of countries uses sustainability as a technique to brand their attractive destinations.

   To provide some examples, Norway ranks fifth on the Sustainable Development Goals Index but lacks sustainability communication on its website. Norway's website[13] opens with a seasonal greeting, "Embrace Autumn in Norway," and the heading "Amazing adventures await" is highlighted. The posts below point to the country's natural and historical assets, such as museums, places to visit, art, sports, skiing, and the Northern Lights. At the bottom of the page under the "Info" tab, there is a "Sustainability" button

that directs the reader to Norway's sustainability messages, with the post "Visit a Destination with a Focus on Sustainability." The post informs the reader about the initiative "Sustainable Destination," which is a label for Nordic countries. The page refers to several labels that can be used by travelers in search of sustainable experiences, such as "Ecotourism Norway," the ecolabel "Nordic Swan," "Eco-Lighthouse," "Green Key," "ISO 14001," and "Blue Flag." The post provides information about sustainability as part of Norway's national identity, yet it is focused on environmental sustainability without any reference to social and economic sustainability. In a similar way, the Türkiye website also launches by highlighting the country's natural and historical assets, including "Naturally Türkiye," "Turkish Riviera," "Istanbul is the New Cool," and "Turkaegean: Coast of Happiness." Among these tabs, "Türkiye Sustainability" is also mentioned, with links to a series of posts listed under "Sustainability: Go Türkiye." The content provided on this web page offers readers information about "green hospitality," "sustainable tourism," "green transportation," "UNESCO cultural and natural heritage," "sustainable gastronomy," "sustainable events and festivals," and "eco-certificates and eco-labels." Although sustainability is frequently mentioned in these posts, similar to the Norwegian nation brand identity, the Türkiye identity is also limited to popularizing the country's natural assets and issues regarding environmental sustainability. Unlike the previous category of countries integrating sustainability in their nation brand identity or approaching it as a crucial brand identity element for at least two global sustainability goals, the countries categorized under the third theme (including Türkiye, Norway, Greece, Spain, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Italy, France, Malta, Austria, Estonia, and Slovenia) mention sustainability on their websites in a variety of ways, but it is largely limited to the environmental sustainability context through the branding of natural attractions.

Finally, there is a fourth theme: countries with limited analysis of environmental sustainability or no mention of sustainability on their websites. These countries mention sustainability on their websites in a limited way through a few blog posts or do not mention sustainability at all, which visibly distinguishes them from other nation brands.

Discussion and Conclusion

In recent years, sustainability has proved to be a significant concept recognized by states across the globe. Countries have so far declared their commitment to sustainable development goals and activated several policies toward this end. This article argued that nation branding provides countries with an opportunity to communicate their

sustainability goals to the rest of the world. In this regard, this article aimed to analyze how sustainability is communicated by European nation brands and the degree to which this notion was integrated into the nation brands' identities. The outcome of the analysis illustrates that 17 countries refer to sustainability on their websites to varying degrees, whereas 11 countries do not mention this concept. The nation brands that integrate sustainability into the core of their nation brand identity (Sweden, Denmark, Germany) and the nation brands that prioritize sustainability as something that accompanies their identity (Switzerland, Finland) are also ranked among the top 10 countries on the Sustainable Development Goals Index. The exceptions are Norway, Austria, Slovenia, and Estonia, countries that rank among the top 10 but do not apply sustainability communication frequently compared to other nation brands. The third and fourth categories of countries (other than Norway, Austria, Slovenia, and Estonia) rank between 10 and 40 in the SDGI. Hence, it is possible to argue that countries with high SDGI scores are more likely to communicate sustainability in their nation branding messages and integrate this notion into their nation brand identity more effectively.

Using sustainability branding to communicate sustainability messages to target audiences is a tool utilized by nation brands that are actively engaged in government policies focused on sustainability (Sharma, Kaur, & Syan, 2021, p. 164). The results of the research show that there is a substantial number of nation brands, as shown in Table 5, which do not make any references to sustainability. This finding shows that sustainability communication is not considered a main approach to nation branding. This result also highlights the need for a well-structured set of policies to be communicated to targeted audiences in order to achieve sustainability communication. As pointed out in the existing literature, nation brands which manage to form a "social responsibility framework" (Pompper, 2015; Ott, Wang, & Bortree, 2016) in national policies incorporating social, economic, and/or environmental goals perform better in sustainability communication. Even with the advancements in this area, the research shows that sustainability communication does not offer an alternative to the existing system of relations, which is against what Weder and Voci (2021, p. 164) discussed in terms of sustainability trends. Another conclusion can be reached by examining the geographical distribution of the nation brand-sustainability relationship. The emphasis on sustainable communication is enhanced especially in Northern Europe, whereas in Central and Southern Europe, the association between sustainability and nation brand identity is weaker. Examining the connection between geography and politics reveals the diverse ideologies of nations. For example, the Scandinavian region is especially successful in

its sustainability endeavors and in encouraging civil society to bring about economic and social progress.

There are, however, several limitations and problems with these arguments that can be addressed by future research. As noted by several scholars in the field, nation branding may not always convey truthful reflections of the countries, which necessitates deeper cultural analysis on the subject and researching how sustainability goals are practiced by the countries that emphasize this notion, as well as how their citizens embrace these values. One should be cautious that sustainability can be used by nation brands as a marketing trick, rather than reflecting what is taking place in reality. Additionally, since this research is based on the analysis of nation brand websites, other communication platforms, especially YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, can be evaluated for a more complex analysis of the sustainability communication of nation brands. Finally, the analysis only points out the sustainability communication of nation states in 2022, and there may be changes in how nation states can apply further communication strategies and enhance sustainability values in their nation brand identities. This is a shift that can be addressed in future research.

Endnotes

[1] United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: https://sdgs.un.org/, Accessed: 10.02.2023.

[2] Germany Land of Ideas website: https://land-der-ideen.de/en, Accessed: 10.02.2023.

[3] Turquality website: http://www.turquality.com/about-us/what-is-turquality-2?__r=8d2bee365c8f2ee, Accessed: 10.02.2023.

[4] Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brand Index: https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2021-10/NBI-2021-ipsos.pdf, Accessed: 10.02.2023.

[5] United Nation Global Sustainability Goals: https://sdgs.un.org/goals, Accessed: 10.02.2023.

[6] Global Reporting Initiative Sustainability Standards: https://www.globalreporting.org/media/nmmnwfsm/gri-policymakers-guide.pdf, Accessed: 10.02.2023.

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[8] Global Reporting Initiative Sustainability Standards: https://www.globalreporting.org/media/nmmnwfsm/gri-policymakers-guide.pdf, p. 11. Accessed: 10.02.2023.

[9] Sweden Official Nation Brand Website: https://sweden.se/, Accessed: 10.02.2023.

[10] Denmark Official Nation Brand Website: https://denmark.dk/, Accessed: 10.02.2023.

[11] Germany Official Nation Brand Website: https://www.germany.travel/en/home.html, Accessed: 10.02.2023.

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