

Nation Brand Radar

A practical guide to understanding, diagnosing, and strengthening national reputation

National brand is a strategic determinant of economic performance, geopolitical room to maneuver, and institutional credibility.

In today's environment, countries compete simultaneously for foreign investment, global talent, tourists, students, strategic partnerships, and influence in multilateral forums. These decisions are made under uncertainty. When information is incomplete, perception becomes a shortcut for trust.

A strong national brand lowers friction. It reduces perceived risk for investors, accelerates deal-making, attracts talent without excessive incentives, and strengthens diplomatic credibility. A weak or incoherent brand does the opposite. It raises the cost of capital, narrows partnership options, concentrates tourism --

The Nation Brand Radar (NBR) was created to solve a very practical problem. Governments talk about reputation, soft power, competitiveness, and national image all the time, but most decisions are still made without a clear diagnostic tool. Existing rankings tell countries where they stand, but rarely explain what to do next.

NBR is not another league table. It is a decision tool designed to help leaders understand where their country stands across reputation, competitiveness, attractiveness, and influence, and which levers can realistically be pulled to improve real outcomes.

This report explains what NBR is, who it is for, how it works, and how it supports real policy and strategy decisions.

Who is the Nation Brand Radar for

NBR is designed for institutions that influence how a country is perceived and experienced internationally. Typical users include

- Foreign ministries and diplomatic services
- Tourism boards and destination marketing organizations
- Investment and trade promotion agencies
- City and regional governments
- Universities and higher education systems
- Innovation districts and tech parks
- Cultural institutions and creative economy agencies
- Multilateral organizations and development banks
- Multinational companies

These actors already shape national reputation through policy, funding, partnerships, education, culture, and governance. NBR helps them see the combined effect of those actions on global perception.

What most countries do today

Today, national branding efforts typically suffer from four common problems

- Fragmentation across ministries, agencies, and campaigns
- Over reliance on slogans, logos, or short term promotion
- Heavy focus on rankings without diagnostic depth
- Little connection between perception data and policy levers

The result is activity without clarity. Campaigns run, reports are published, but leaders struggle to explain why perceptions are not shifting or why progress feels uneven.

How the Nation Brand Radar is different

NBR treats national brand as a system that shapes behavior, not just perception.

NBR is built around three principles

1. Diagnosis before promotion

NBR shows where the brand is structurally strong or weak, not just how visible it is. It separates reputation into twelve clear dimensions and visualizes them as a single footprint.

A distorted or uneven radar tells leaders exactly where alignment is missing.

2. From insight to action

Each dimension is linked to levers governments and institutions can influence, and to outcomes they care about

- Education policy and global talent flows
- Cultural diplomacy and creative exports
- Innovation systems and technology ecosystems
- Governance, integrity, and rule of law
- Global engagement and leadership visibility

This keeps the framework grounded in decisions leaders can actually make.

3. No single score, no false winners

NBR does not crown winners and losers. A smaller, more balanced footprint closer to the center reflects higher brand maturity. The goal is coherence, not hype.

Methodology overview

The Nation Brand Radar is a diagnostic framework that combines perceptual signals and observable performance indicators to assess a country's position across twelve dimensions of national brand maturity.

The methodology is designed around three principles: decision relevance, transparency, and comparability.

1. Dual structure: perception and performance

NBR integrates two complementary data layers.

Perceptual measures capture how a country is viewed by external stakeholders such as senior executives, policymakers, investors, and institutional leaders. These measures reflect trust, credibility, emotional connection, and perceived leadership.

Performance measures capture what a country actually does and achieves, using observable indicators such as investment flows, student mobility, innovation output, cultural exports, governance metrics, and global engagement.

Reading these layers together allows users to identify gaps between what is believed and what is delivered.

2. Twelve decision-relevant dimensions

Each country is assessed across twelve dimensions that reflect how nations compete and are evaluated globally. These dimensions span visibility, credibility, attraction, institutional quality, cultural reach, and leadership capacity.

Importantly, the dimensions are not abstract constructs. Each is linked to policy areas and institutional levers that governments, cities, and national agencies can influence, such as education systems, innovation ecosystems, cultural diplomacy, governance quality, and international engagement.

3. Indicator selection and data sources

Each dimension is operationalized using multiple indicators drawn from reputable global data sources, including international organizations, multilateral agencies, and widely used global datasets.

Indicators are selected based on three criteria.

They must reflect real behavior or outcomes. They must be comparable across countries. And they must be relevant to decisions governments actually make.

Where perception data is used, it is collected using consistent survey instruments and standardized scales.

4. Normalization and aggregation

Dimension scores are aggregated using transparent and consistent rules. The objective is not statistical sophistication for its own sake, but clarity. Users should be able to understand why a dimension is strong or weak and which inputs drive that result.

5. The radar visualization

Results are displayed as a radar profile rather than a single score or rank. The closer a dimension is to the center, the stronger and more mature it is.

The shape of the radar matters more than the absolute value. Balanced, compact shapes signal coherence and maturity. Distorted shapes signal misalignment, overreliance on a few strengths, or vulnerability to shocks.

How to read the radar

The radar captures both perception and performance. It links how a country is seen to what actually happens on the ground.

Each radar shows twelve dimensions of national reputation. The closer a dimension is to the center, the stronger and more mature it is. Large or uneven shapes signal gaps, volatility, or over reliance on a few strengths.

The value of the radar is not the number. It is the pattern.

Patterns reveal whether a country is

- Visible but not trusted
- Respected but not inspiring
- Admired culturally but weak institutionally
- Strong in performance but under recognized

From diagnosis to strategy

NBR explicitly links perception gaps to economic, diplomatic, and institutional consequences.

NBR is designed to support a clear pathway

Diagnosis → Priority setting → Policy or strategy response

Examples

- Weak emotional connection may point to under investment in cultural exchange or storytelling
- Strong performance but weak perception may signal a communication gap, not a policy failure
- Weak integrity scores cannot be fixed with campaigns and require institutional reform

This clarity is what makes NBR decision useful.

What NBR ultimately enables

NBR helps countries move from

- Promotion to positioning
- Campaigns to coherence
- Awareness to trust
- Recognition to influence

It treats national reputation as a system that can be measured, managed, and improved, not a vague concept owned by marketing teams alone.

A final note

Countries do not compete only on economics or security. They compete on trust, credibility, and relevance. The Nation Brand Radar was built to help leaders see those dynamics clearly and act on them with confidence.

National reputation is no longer a communications problem. It is a strategic one.

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