How to measure and manage country reputation

N. Hitz, M. Schwaiger & J. Gabel

Published online: 15 Oct 2024.

Submit your article to this journal ↗

View related articles ↗

View Crossmark data ↗

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

🔓 OPEN ACCESS | Check for updates

How to measure and manage country reputation

N. Hitz, M. Schwaiger and J. Gabel

Institute for Market-based Management, LMU Munich School of Management, Munich, Germany

ABSTRACT

Countries benefit from a good reputation in terms of gaining a higher foreign direct investment inflow, a growing export volume, becoming more attractive as tourist destinations and, last but not least, by improving their populations' well-being. Consequently, many countries endeavor to manage their public perception actively. Since communication influences perception, advertising plays a particularly important role in the latter. However, countries need to fathom which opinions they need to encourage in order to ensure others' optimal perceptions of them. A prerequisite for tackling this challenge is a model that measures and explains country reputation. This study develops such a model. Our model conceptualizes reputation as a two-dimensional attitudinal construct, thereby avoiding one-dimensional approaches' shortcomings. It refers to the cognition-related dimension as *competence*, whereas the affect-related dimension is termed *likability*. It measures reputation, as perceived by stakeholders, by means of six reflective indicators. Furthermore, the model employs a catalogue of 30 formative indicators — structured by means of five key constructs — to identify the drivers of country reputation. By cultivating impactful drivers, countries are able to apply targeted measures to alter their reputations' ratings on the two dimensions (i.e. competence and likability). We employed data from Germany, the United States, and the United Kingdom to develop our model. Relevant criteria highlight the model's reliability and validity. A benchmark analysis of the proposed model compared to that of existing approaches illustrates its superiority in terms of its convergent and criterion validity.

Introduction

Countries generally recognize that markets' internationalization and value chains' globalization exert increasing competitive pressure on them. In order to obtain key resources, countries increasingly consider intangibles' importance for their competitive positioning (Kang and Yang 2010; Passow, Fehlmann, and Grahlow 2005). In this regard, the country brand, as the carrier of a country's reputation, could serve as an

---

asset that allows its competitive advantages to develop beyond those of other nations (Barney 1991; Passow et al. 2005). Companies have long recognized that reputation is a key intangible asset that they could use to position themselves advantageously vis-à-vis other firms. Reputation is important for consumers (Hayes, Holiday, and Park 2022; Hartmann, Marcos, and Apaolaza 2023; Page and Fearn 2006), because it simplifies decision-making, fosters trust, and points toward quality and reliability of the products or services they choose, ultimately enhancing their overall satisfaction with and confidence in their purchasing decisions. Literature indicates that reputation is also relevant for shaping countries' prosperity. Scholars examine reputation as a contributor to economic and non-economic well-being, such as the export volume, inflow of foreign direct investment, the number of tourists, and how satisfied a country's inhabitants are with their lives. While we examine these variables as focal outcomes, we need to remember that endogeneity issues might play a role. For example, a country's reputation not only affects tourism, but tourism is also a valuable tool for enhancing a country's reputation and its economic growth (Hegazy 2019) and might therefore also be a driver of its reputation.

Whatever the outcome variable under scrutiny might be, destination managers also use mass communication, like advertising, to ensure that a country stands out from its competitors. Previous research on advertising consistently highlighted authenticity's paramount importance for modern consumers (e.g. Becker, Wiegand, and Reinartz 2019). By focusing their messages on genuine reputational advantages, businesses could, like destinations, cultivate trust and long-term loyalty, thereby positioning them for sustained success in an increasingly discerning market.

To sum up, the managing of country reputation has become a decisive criterion for successful participation in the global economy (Kilduff and Tabales 2017). Certain countries, for example, Switzerland and Costa Rica, already manage their reputations actively. At this point, without anticipating later details, we define country reputation as an attitudinal construct reflecting its stakeholders' subjective perceptions about its competence and likability. A prerequisite for managing reputation is an appropriate measurement of the concept, which allows scholars to quantify respective perceptions of the country (Einwiller 2014; Gardberg and Fombrun 2002; Helm and Klode 2011; Schwaiger, Raithel, and Schloderer 2009; Yang et al. 2008). Conversely, a country ultimately suffers unless its management efforts are properly aligned and based on sophisticated measurements. Several measurement approaches have emerged in both academia and practice, most of which are either not based on a rigorous methodology or whose methodological basis is not known. Consequently, the existing approaches exhibit considerable shortcomings.

Initially, reputation's definition and conceptualization were quite vague. It was only after the publication of the works by Hall (1992) as well as Gray and Balmer (1998) that research began to recognize reputation's attitudinal nature by suggesting that it encompasses both cognition- and affect-related aspects (e.g. Breckler 1984). Established measurement techniques emerged for corporate reputation (e.g. Sarstedt and Schloderer 2010; Schwaiger 2004) and most of the available approaches for measuring country reputation consider both cognitive and affective aspects when doing so. The literature seems to agree that country reputation constitutes two overarching dimensions (e.g. Castilla-Polo 2018). Consequently, identifying areas of strength and weakness is important for managing country reputation (Yang et al. 2008).

However, since existing approaches fail to fully operationalize both these dimensions, it would be useful to break down the complex concept into subsequent concrete entities (Helm and Klode 2011). In turn, this would allow a deeper understanding of country reputation, its determinants, and its effective and efficient management.

Reputation management is a strategic tool and should take the interests of all of the relevant stakeholders into account, instead of only those of a particular group (Freeman 2010). As a second aspect of sophisticated measurement practice, country reputation models should also acknowledge that various stakeholders need to rate an entity's reputation (see e.g. Helm and Klode 2011). In this regard, assessing the general public's rating of a reputation best reflects its multi-stakeholder nature (e.g. Berens et al. 2011; Ponzi, Fombrun, and Gardberg 2011; Schwaiger 2004).

Ultimately, it is a fallacy to practice stakeholder management without actually engaging with an entity's constituents (Dowling 2000). Measurement approaches employing secondary data (e.g. data from social panels or the media) to construct a reputation index do not truly measure reputation, since, by definition, it is a perceptual concept that needs to be surveyed by an entity's key stakeholders (Helm and Klode 2011; Wartick 2002). Since individuals constitute stakeholder groups and are, therefore, the underlying basis of reputation formation (Helm and Klode 2011), they should form the core of country reputation models.

Motivated by active country reputation management's increasing relevance, and in response to the shortcomings of existing measurement approaches, we develop a model that allows the measuring and managing of a country's reputation by means of appropriate indicators. While reflective indicators are sufficient for measuring a latent variable (see Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer 2001), such as country reputation, formative indicators are helpful with managing it (Ferguson, Deephouse, and Ferguson 2000; Hall 1992; Schwaiger 2004; Helm and Klode 2011).

We contribute to academia and practice in several ways: After defining country reputation and delineating it from similar concepts, we develop a comprehensive model that includes the antecedents (drivers) of country reputation and its cognitive and affective dimension's reflections. This architecture not only allows us to granularly elicit each dimension's strengths and weaknesses, but also allows us to provide an adequate response to these, which translates into specific communicative initiatives. As our model outperforms benchmark models in terms of its convergent and criterion validity, in addition, we provide practitioners with an instrument that better identifies country reputation's most impactful drivers, which in turn allows managers to provide advertising agencies with a more valid strategic briefing on which claims to feed using creative messages.

Country reputation

Definition and conceptualization

Corporate reputation, which has more often been the topic of academic research than country reputation, is widely conceptualized as stakeholders' collective assessment of an organization's abilities (Fombrun 2012; Rindova et al. 2005). Comparable to corporate reputation, country reputation represents the relevant stakeholders'

knowledge and affective feelings (Ferguson et al. 2000; Hall 1992; Schwaiger 2004) towards their country (Gray and Balmer 1998; Kang and Yang 2010). Given country reputation's two dimensions — cognitive and affective in nature — it should be conceptualized as two dimensional. Country reputation develops through repeated direct (e.g. vacations) or indirect (e.g. word-of-mouth, media) experiences (Einwiller 2014; Kang and Yang 2010; Kiambi and Shafer 2018). These experiences are contextualized in other entities' (expected) behavior (Ferguson et al. 2000; Gotsi and Wilson 2001; Kang and Yang 2010; Rindova et al. 2005). Accordingly, an entity's reputation is built over time, reflecting past and present actions as well as future prospects (Eberl and Schwaiger 2005; Fombrun 1996; Gotsi and Wilson 2001). Ultimately, reputation has the potential to serve as a competitive advantage over a specific entity's counterparts (Barney 1991; Bergh et al. 2010; Castilla-Polo 2018; Passow et al. 2005; Schwaiger 2004).

Conversely, country branding means defining 'a complete picture of a country, its background, people, beliefs, traditions, politics, economy, and aspirations for the future' (Kilduff and Tabales 2017, 94). Building on the notion of a brand, reputation represents how an entity is judged rather than what the stakeholders associate with it (Gray and Balmer 1998). Consequently, reputation, as an appraisal of a brand, is a 'collective perception and evaluation' (Einwiller 2014, 380), whereas branding is an instrument for building reputation by forming associations between an entity and its relevant target groups (Fan 2010; Govers 2013; Chan 2023), a goal to which (mass) communication often aspires.

On the other hand, an image is the immediate 'mental picture' that a single individual (Einwiller 2014) forms of an entity, meaning it is an impulsive response to this entity (Gray and Balmer 1998, 696). Consequently, an image can be built more easily within a shorter period of time than a stable reputation requires (Gray and Balmer 1998). In this context, research mostly conceives a country image as consumer-centric, product-related associations with a country, rather than its relevant stakeholders' holistic perception of it (see e.g. Roth and Diamantopoulos 2009).

Focal measurement approaches

Since scholars can only manage quantifiable intangibles (Einwiller 2014), a variety of country reputation measurements have emerged in recent years (Castilla-Polo 2018) and countries are increasingly willing to devote resources to brand their territory and measure their reputation accordingly (Berens et al. 2011). The three most used academic approaches in the country reputation field are: the Country Brand Strength Index (Dinnie et al. 2010), the Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index (Passow et al. 2005), and the Nation Brand Molecule (Rojas-Méndez 2013). The Country Brand Strength Index (Dinnie et al. 2010) follows a company-based brand equity approach to measure a country brand's total value as an asset. The authors used objective secondary data to develop their index with the dimensions: exporting, tourism, foreign direct investments, and immigration. The government environment dimension was also added because it supports the previously mentioned dimensions and allows a positive country brand to develop. In contrast, a stakeholder-based brand equity approach is applied in respect of the Nation Brand Molecule (Rojas-Méndez 2013). In order to measure people's perceptions of a country brand's dimensions and facets,

Rojas-Méndez developed seven dimensions, which overlap partly with the Country Brand Strength Index: economy, tourism, geography and nature, culture and heritage, society, science and technology, and government. Lastly, the Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index (Passow et al. 2005) offers an approach focused on comparing governments' reputations. Passow et al. changed these dimensions into six country reputation appeals: emotional, physical, financial, leadership, cultural, and social appeal. In addition, the authors identified seven reputation drivers that need to be tackled in order to improve a country's reputation: beautiful places, upholds international laws, well-managed, responsible member of global community, supports good causes, communicates an appealing vision, and well-educated residents.

While all three offer valuable perspectives with which to approach country reputation, Table 1 envisions somewhat limited dimensions of the three academic approaches compared to those of our final country reputation model. We therefore aimed to develop a more comprehensive and holistic approach to measure and manage country reputation.

We can only speculate on the reasons for these academic models being rarely applied. Existing academic approaches might not be considered sufficient to cover country reputation's complexity. Whatever the case, we concentrate on two practical approaches that seem to be used frequently in practice. We introduce and describe two country reputation measurements that, later in this study, serve as benchmarks for the existing approaches.

Country RepTrak™ model

The country RepTrak™ model, which the RepTrak™ company developed, comprises both reflectively and formatively specified constructs to measure and manage country reputation (e.g. Berens et al. 2011). The country RepTrak™ model is based on the definition of reputation as an affective reaction to cognition-related facts about an entity (Fombrun, Gardberg, and Sever 2000; Ponzi et al. 2011). Consequently, the formative catalogue of indicators is predominantly — but not exclusively — comprised of cognition-related country characteristics. On the other hand, the reflective catalogue is supposed to only comprise affect-related indicators. Reputation is scored reflectively on four indicators (esteem, liking, admiration and respect, as well as trust), called the reputation pulse, whereas the model employs 17 indicators associated with three constructs (advanced economy, effective government, and appealing environment) that explain a country's reputation.

The country RepTrak™ model is one of the best-known measures of country reputation in practice, but previous research largely neglected it. We argue that this model has important shortcomings. First and foremost, our criticism refers to reputation's operationalization, which is based on reputation's definition as the recipients' affective reaction. As mentioned at the outset, reputation comprises two distinct dimensions, which, in accordance with reputation's definition as an attitudinal concept, also need to be operationalized (Ferguson et al. 2000; Hall 1992; Schwaiger 2004). To date, it is not clear why RepTrak™ models are not operationalized accordingly, although reputation is explicitly assumed to be an attitudinal concept (see Ponzi et al. 2011). Consequently, affect- and cognition-related aspects should be included in both the measurement and the driver constructs. While the country RepTrak™ model does

Table 1. Overview of central academic approaches.

Country Reputation Model		Dinnie et al. (2010) The Country Brand Strength Index	Passow et al. (2005) The Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index	Rojas-Méndez (2013) The Nation Brand Molecule
Likability	Feeling of comfort Likable country Identification		Emotional appeal	
Competence	Contributor to the global community Socioeconomics Internationally recognized		Responsible member of global community	
Shared values	Appealing vision Desirable lifestyle Desirable norms & values Sense of freedom Independence of the media Legal norms & values Tolerant environment		Cultural appeal Communicates an appealing vision Supports good causes	Culture & heritage
Security & global integrity	Compliance with international law Diplomatic/foreign relations Preparation for disasters Safety Stability		Social appeal Upholds international laws	
Governance & infrastructure	Developed infrastructure Developed & positioned economy Education level Employment conditions Ratio of labor cost/ output Environmental policies Political/legal infrastructure Purposeful social system Reliable business partners	Government environment Immigration Exporting Foreign direct investments	Financial appeal Leadership appeal Well-educated residents Well-managed	Government Economy
Corporate & individual capabilities	Environment entrepreneurship Quality products & services Innovations & new technologies Recognized individuals Reaction trends Recognized companies/ brands			Science & technology
Country attractiveness	Attractive places, cities, & activities Beautiful place Hospitable inhabitants	Tourism	Beautiful place Physical appeal	Geography & nature Tourism Society

seem to include these to a certain degree, the two dimensions are not properly operationalized. Splitting the model so that affect-related items are used for the measurement and cognition-related items for the driver analysis leads to problems — the construct appealing environment is an example of such problems. The driver uses the evaluation of a country's beauty as an indicator. According to the model's basic

assumptions, this aspect should be a cognitively perceived fact. However, beauty, especially beauty referring to objects that are not perceived daily, is arguably affectively shaped (Armstrong and Detweiler-Bedell 2008). Conversely, one could argue that reflections of reputation, like admiration and respect, are, given their definition as beliefs about an object at hand's good qualities, likely to be cognitively influenced (Cambridge Dictionary 2022c).

Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index

The second benchmark model is the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index (see e.g. Feinberg and Zhao 2011), which Simon Anholt and GfK developed jointly. Their survey participants rated a country's reputation according to 23 indicators along six constructs (exports, governance, culture and heritage, people, tourism, immigration, and investment) constituting the Nation Brand Hexagon (Feinberg and Zhao 2011, 65). The model aims to measure reputation by using three to five indicators per construct.

Academia and practice have used the measurement model frequently. Nevertheless, it has shortcomings that call its applicability and validity regarding assessing public perceptions of a country into question. The operationalization of country reputation's exogenous constructs is one of the model's disadvantages. This is evident in the categories exports, tourism, as well as immigration and investment. Among others, these categories operationalize the intention to buy foreign products, which is a central outcome of countries' public perceptions rather than just a facet of it (Bloemer, Brijs, and Kasper 2009; Koschate-Fischer, Diamantopoulos, and Oldenkotte 2012). Furthermore, the intention to visit a country is operationalized as a driver of the construct tourism. This aspect is, however, also described as the result of a good reputation, rather than a facet of it (Yang et al. 2008). Lastly, within the construct immigration and investment, two items are regarded as outcomes of the country reputation and not facets of it. The willingness to live and work in a country, and the intention to invest in foreign companies, are also regarded as outcomes of country reputation (e.g. Papadopoulos et al. 2018).

Further, to a far greater extent than in respect of the country RepTrak™ model, only a less detailed description of the model is available in the measurement's methodology, which makes it challenging to evaluate its validity. In terms of the scale development and index construction, Sarstedt, Wilczynski, and Melewar (2013) highlight that as an issue due to the definition of reputation's lack of comprehensibility, its lack of subsequent operationalization, and the results' lacking validation.

Model development

Country reputation is a latent variable. As such theoretical construct, it cannot be observed directly and instead needs to be operationalized by means of observable manifest measures (Diamantopoulos, Riefler, and Roth 2008, 1204).

In keeping with Schwaiger (2004), we propose measuring country reputation by means of effect indicators assigned to reputation's cognitive and affective dimensions. Furthermore, our model explains reputation by means of indicators and corresponding factors (index constructs) that drive reputation, specifically its two dimensions. We

consider this explanation as crucial, since the model's parameterization allows us to develop a list of impactful claims that we can subsequently address, for example, through appropriate advertisements to improve a country's reputation.

We avoid certain shortcomings of existing models by operationalizing constructs properly. We can specify constructs either reflectively (i.e. the items are reflections of the construct, and therefore need to be highly correlated with one another) or formatively (i.e. the items form the construct like an index does, which is why an exhaustive set of items covering the entire construct is needed). In this regard, we refer the reader to relevant sources (e.g. Bollen and Lennox 1991; Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer 2001; Diamantopoulos 2005; Rossiter 2011; Salzberger, Sarstedt, and Diamantopoulos 2016; Hair et al. 2022) for more details. We also point out that we see advantages in using formatively specified constructs for the driver analysis and reflectively specified constructs for the reputation measurement.

Generating driver constructs and indicators

We use a multilayer approach to generate driver indicators. First, we review existing measurements from country reputation and nation branding fields in a structured, concept-oriented way (Webster and Watson 2002) to identify categories and indicators associated with a superior country reputation. Since reputation is essentially the appraisal of a brand, it is appropriate to incorporate branding literature. Our literature review provided 12 existing measurement approaches[1] that we could consider for our model development. We exclude the East West Nation Brand Perception Indexes and Reports (e.g. Cromwell 2011) as this approach uses media coverage to infer the country reputation rather than unfolding perceptions of it. We extracted 17 categories from the literature that are potentially concerned with a country's reputation. Fifteen of the categories are included as such in the existing measurement approaches. We derived two additional categories (lifestyle, infrastructure) from the indicators that existing measurements use to operationalize their categories.

In a second step, we conducted focus groups interviews, during which we asked the interview partners what they associated with country reputation. The second step aims to complement the list of categories that are potentially relevant in terms of forming a country reputation. In line with Robinson (2014) as well as Strauss and Corbin (1998), we set the break-off point after the second focus group, which no longer provided novel contributions. The two focus group interviews did not provide new categories but confirmed the 17 categories identified at that point. Nonetheless, the interviews offer important insights into the specific aspects that matter to our interview partners within a given category.

We next operationalize the identified categories, drawing on existing measurements' indicators, the focus group interviews' results, and on our topic expertise. In total, we use 86 indicators as a starting list to operationalize the 17 categories (see Table 2). At this point we do not yet care whether an indicator will be used as a driver, a reflection, or an outcome of country reputation. Thereafter, we apply a two-step approach to validate our indicators by seeking to improve the 17 categories' operationalization. We conducted an online survey as a first step. The participants were members of the crowdsourcing platform Prolific and were paid $4.90 as fair

Table 2. Dictionary of indicators and items.

Construct	Indicator/Item	Label
Likability	Feeling of comfort	I would feel comfortable in [country].
	Likable country	I consider [country] to be a likeable country.
	Identification	[Country] is a country I can identify with better than I can with other countries.
Competence	Contributor to the global community	[Country] is a valuable contributor to the global community.
	Socioeconomics	[Country] performs well in terms of socioeconomic aspects.
	Internationally recognized	[Country] is internationally recognized.
Shared values	Appealing vision	[Country] promotes an appealing vision regarding its society.
	Desirable lifestyle	[Country] offers a desirable lifestyle.
	Desirable norms & values	[Country] is characterized by a desirable set of norms and values.
	Sense of freedom	In [country], one experiences a sense of freedom.
	Independence of the media	The media in [country] provides independent and critical reporting.
	Legal norms & values	The norms and values that characterize [country] are anchored in law.
	Tolerant environment	[Country] offers a tolerant and diverse environment.
Security & global integrity	Compliance with international law	The activities of [country] are in line with international interests and law.
	Diplomatic/foreign relations	[Country] cultivates good diplomatic/foreign relations.
	Preparation for disasters	Regarding (its preparation for) natural disasters, [country] is classified as safe.
	Safety	[Country] can be described as a safe country.
	Stability	In terms of conflicts, [country] can be described as a stable country.
Governance & infrastructure	Developed infrastructure	The infrastructure of [country] is well-developed.
	Developed & positioned economy	The economy of [country] is well developed and positioned in terms of the future.
	Education level	The level of education in [country] is high.
	Employment conditions	The employment conditions in [country] are well designed.
	Ratio of labor cost/output	The labor cost and labor output in [country] are well balanced.
	Environmental policies	[Country] implements regulations and policies to protect the environment.
	Political/legal infrastructure	[Country] has a reasonable and transparent political as well as legal infrastructure.
	Purposeful social system	[Country] has a purposeful social system.
	Reliable business partners	Business partners in [country] are reliable and honest.
Corporate & individual capabilities	Environment entrepreneurship	[Country] provides an attractive (financial and legal) environment for entrepreneurship.
	Quality products & services	The products and services originating from [country] are of a high quality.
	Innovations & new technologies	[Country] is the home of successful innovations and new technologies.
	Recognized individuals	A notable number of recognized individuals (e.g. artists, scientists, writers, athletes, and politicians) originate from [country].
	Reaction trends	[Country] is capable of responding and adapting adequately to business-relevant (mega-)trends.
	Recognized companies/brands	Companies and relevant brands originating from [country] are internationally recognized.
Country attractiveness	Attractive places, cities, & activities	[Country] has a range of attractive places, cities, and activities.
	Beautiful place	[Country] is a beautiful and scenic place.
	Hospitable inhabitants	The inhabitants of [country] are hospitable and welcoming.

Table 2. Continued.

Indicator/Item	Label
Items to test convergent and criterion validity	
High reputation	[Country] has a high reputation in the global arena.
Highly reputable	[Country] is highly reputable.
Purchase intention	If I were going to purchase a product/service, I would likely buy one associated with [country].
Investment intention	If I were going to invest in a foreign company, I would likely invest in a company resident in [country].
Loyalty	If someone seeks my advice on [country], I will likely recommend it.
Intention to engage	In general, I speak favorably about [country].
Items that have been winnowed out/ replaced during the model development process	
Good feeling	[Country] is a country that gives me good feelings.
Admiration & respect	[Country] is a country that I admire and respect.
Trust	[Country] is a country that I trust.
Appreciation	[Country] is a country that I appreciate.
High quality products	[Country] produces high quality products and services.
Well-known brands	[Country] has many well-known brands.
Contribution to culture	[Country] is an important contributor to global culture.
Advanced technology	[Country] is technologically advanced.
Reliable workforce	[Country] has a well-educated and reliable workforce.
Education	[Country] values education.
Business environment	[Country] offers a favorable environment for doing business.
Social/economic policies	[Country] has adopted progressive social and economic policies.
Participation in the global community	[Country] is a responsible participant in the global community.
Safe place	[Country] is a safe place.
Efficient operations	[Country] operates efficiently.
Effective government	[Country] is run by an effective government.
Ethics	[Country] is an ethical country with high transparency and low corruption.
Beauty of country	[Country] is a beautiful country.
Enjoyable country	[Country] is an enjoyable country.
Appealing lifestyle	[Country] offers an appealing lifestyle.
Friendly people	The people of [country] are friendly and welcoming.
Buying products	I feel good about buying products from [country].
Scientific contribution	[Country] makes major contributions to innovation in science and technology.
Creative place	[Country] is a creative place with cutting-edge ideas and new ways of thinking.
Competent governance	[Country] is competently and honestly governed.
Citizen rights	[Country] respects the rights of its citizens and treats them fairly.
Peaceful behavior	[Country] behaves responsibly regarding international peace and security.
Responsibility for the environment	[Country] behaves responsibly to protect the environment.
Reduction of poverty	[Country] behaves responsibly to help reduce world poverty.
Performance sports	[Country] excels at sports.
Cultural heritage	[Country] has a rich cultural heritage.

(Continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Indicator/Item	Label
Items that have been winnowed out/ replaced during the model development process	
Contemporary culture	[Country] is an interesting/exciting place for contemporary culture, such as music, films, art, and literature.
Friendship of the people	I would like a person from [country] to be a close friend.
Welcoming people	The people from [country] would make me feel very welcome.
Qualification of the workforce	I would be willing to hire well-qualified people from [country].
Intention to visit	I would like to visit [country] if money were not an object.
Natural beauty	[Country] is rich in natural beauty.
Historic buildings	[Country] is rich in historic buildings and monuments.
Vibrant city life	[Country] has a vibrant city life and urban attractions.
Intention to move	I would be willing to live and work in [country] for a substantial period.
Quality of life	[Country] is a place with a high quality of life.
Educational quality	[Country] is a good place to obtain educational qualifications.
Invest in businesses	[Country] has businesses I would like to invest in.
Societal equality	[Country] cares about equality in society.

compensation for the task to ensure the data quality. We recruited 39 participants in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany.

We subsequently conducted expert interviews as a second step to validate the indicators. In the expert survey, we personally sent questionnaires to four experts, two of whom work in the field of international business relations and two of whom are senior scholars with experience of latent construct development. Both approaches aimed to ensure the categories' content validity by reviewing the comprehensiveness, completeness, and overlap of indicators, thereby determining preferences for similar indicators (see DeVellis and Thorpe 2021; Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer 2001; Rossiter 2002; Spector 1992). Thereafter, we examined all the categories individually, adjusting the catalogue of indicators according to the interview participants' suggestions. Starting with the initial set of indicators, we condensed them in keeping with the online study[2] before presenting the catalogue to the experts. The analyses of the two approaches provided a total of 46 comprehensible formative indicators that were, however, not yet free of overlap — in certain parts some of the items were at this stage just different formulations of the same content.

At this point, the approach was aimed at precisely identifying the relevant categories and indicators that could potentially explain country reputation (see Bollen and Lennox 1991; Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer 2001). By sampling the academic community, the general public, and a diverse set of experts, we endeavored to obtain logically valid results (Rubio et al. 2003). Given the group and individual interview techniques, we also wanted to add breadth and depth to our analyses (see e.g. Morgan 1996 for a discussion).

Model construction

Having operationalized 17 categories by using 46 indicators, we next constructed our measurement model. We used a large-scale, multi-country online survey to gather data. We started the survey by first asking the participants to think of a country that they believe has an above-average reputation, advising them that they should be rather familiar with this country in order to rate its reputation fairly. Next, we asked them to rate this country by using two global measures of country reputation that we, at a later stage, also employ to assess the model. Thereafter, the participants had to assess the country according to six indicators reflecting reputation's cognitive and affective dimensions. Subsequently, we asked them to rate the country according to all 46 of the driver indicators that we had developed. They had to measure all the indicators on a seven-point Likert-type scale[3]. We also randomized the indicators' order within each section. In addition, we surveyed the same items in respect of a country to which the participants assigned a below-average reputation and one to which they assigned a medium/average reputation.

Subsequently, we distributed our survey through Prolific and, as recommended, paid each participant $2.91 for participating. In total, 311 individuals took part in our survey. We dropped four participants from the sample for failing the attention checks and another two for swapping an above-average reputation country and a

below-average one throughout the survey. The final number of participants was 305, each of whom evaluated three countries. In total, we therefore received 915 country evaluations, which were sufficient for our analyses (Sarstedt and Mooi 2014). These respondents are residents of Germany (100), the United States (102), and the United Kingdom (103). The survey's average completion time was 18 minutes and four seconds. The participants' ages ranged between 18 and 82 (*mean*: 36.54). The sample included 192 female and 108 male participants. Five participants preferred not to state their gender.

Indicator purification

The first step in our quantitative model construction was purifying the indicators, which is aimed at identifying redundant indicators and excluding them from further analyses. By doing so, our aim is to have a practical, yet statistically well-grounded set of indicators. Whereas indicator purification is commonly applied to scale development with reflective items (e.g. Churchill 1979; DeVellis and Thorpe 2021), topic literature discusses its application to index construction rather ambiguously. We argue that indicator purification is problematic if it changes the essence of the measured construct (Hair et al. 2022). However, since we base our choice of indicators on their importance for index constructs, as revealed by principal component analyses, and on each indicator's correlation with its associated indicators, we maintain that the dropped indicators are redundant since they are of no individual importance for the factor and, therefore, for the country reputation concept. Furthermore, academia prefers parsimonious models with a high predictive power, but, simultaneously, with few exogenous constructs (Hair et al. 2022). Indicator purification might help in this regard. We also purify our indicator catalogue for practical reasons, since surveying a vast number of indicators to explain country reputation could be prohibitively expensive and hardly manageable in practice.

We apply discriminant power tests (i.e. paired sample t-tests, analyses of variance) and multiple exploratory factor analyses (applied to the full set of indicators and to a set of affect-based, and cognition-based indicators) to streamline our catalogue by removing indictors with low discriminant power, low communalities, or low factor loadings. However, we take care that no removed item covers important aspects of a construct not covered by the remaining indicators either. The indicator purification process leaves us with 30 indicators formative by nature, with which to explain country reputation (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Analysis steps to identify the final constructs and indicators.

Construct building

We now turn to the development of those constructs serving as the latent variables in our subsequent SEM analysis. We need to build exogenous constructs that explain reputation for our path model. In addition, we need to derive reputation's endogenous constructs, namely *competence* and *likability*.

In order to develop country reputation's exogenous constructs, we employ the final catalogue of 30 indicators in a principal component analysis. Although this analysis is essentially designed for reflective indicators, we use it in a purely explorative sense to derive hints for grouping formative indicators in a way that can be easily understood. In other words, principal component analysis does not replace logical reasoning and expert assessment, it merely supports them. Although formative by nature, the 30 indicators are correlated ($p < .010$). We regard correlation as information redundancy, which we use to carefully condense our instrument in order to also meet practitioners' criteria, particularly that of parsimony. We use a varimax rotation to extract three factors with an Eigenvalue larger than 1.000. By doing so, we preserve 73.3% of the original information. All of the indicators' communalities are above .500. In addition, all the factor loadings are sufficiently large.

The first factor contains 21 indicators. To make the final model applicable in practice, and to attribute content and meaningfulness to the constructs, we divided the first factor by the three identified overarching issues. From a statistical standpoint, as long as it's theoretically grounded, dividing a factor is an option for dealing with decreasing outer weights, higher possibility of indicators' insignificancies, and an increasing number of indicators for one construct (Hair et al. 2022). The first construct we derived contains seven affect-based indicators related to the norms and values that characterize a country. We therefore call this the *shared values* construct. The second construct we extracted from the first factor deals with countries' international ties as well as the safety and the stability commonly associated with foreign policies. The construct we derived comprises five indicators; we call this the *security & global integrity* construct. The third extracted construct comprises nine indicators dealing with governmental, macroeconomic, and socio-political issues. We call this the *governance & infrastructure* construct. We now turn to the second factor that the principal component analysis identified. The construct here entails six indicators associated with the entrepreneurial environment, the products' and services' quality, and the responsiveness of the country's economy, among others. We call this the *corporate and individual capabilities* construct. The third extracted factor comprises three indicators referring to the country's beauty and attractiveness as well as its residents' hospitality. We label it the *country attractiveness* construct (Table 3).

In addition to indicators explaining country reputation, our model also requires the development of indicators to measure country reputation. In this regard, we refer to face validity as there is very limited literature on the operationalization of countries' *competence* and *likability*. We undertake domain sampling (DeVellis and Thorpe 2021; Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer 2001) and refer to existing measurements shown to perform well when operationalizing *competence* and *likability* (Hair et al. 2022).

To determine the affective construct, we deduce that the general likability, as applied in Schwaiger (2004), is appropriate. Furthermore, identifying with an entity

Table 3. Principal component analysis for the catalogue of driver items.

Extraction 73.3%	Communalities	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Shared values				
Appealing vision	.809	**.788**	.332	.281
Desirable lifestyle	.804	**.760**	.304	.366
Desirable norms & values	.797	**.793**	.259	.319
Sense of freedom	.757	**.736**	.261	.384
Independence of the media	.629	**.708**	.253	.255
Legal norms & values	.645	**.679**	.384	.192
Tolerant environment	.719	**.753**	.156	.358
Security & global integrity				
Compliance with international law	.788	**.767**	.336	.296
Diplomatic/foreign relations	.761	**.734**	.323	.345
Preparation for disasters	.596	**.662**	.356	.177
Safety	.768	**.796**	.249	.268
Stability	.743	**.744**	.328	.287
Governance & infrastructure				
Developed infrastructure	.751	**.662**	.545	.126
Developed and positioned economy	.787	**.699**	.534	.112
Education level	.685	**.688**	.439	.140
Employment conditions	.761	**.804**	.315	.126
Ratio of labor cost/output	.610	**.679**	.377	.079
Environmental policies	.737	**.800**	.248	.189
Political/legal infrastructure	.774	**.811**	.307	.148
Purposeful social system	.777	**.799**	.316	.196
Reliable business partners	.684	**.690**	.392	.234
Corporate & individual capabilities				
Environment entrepreneurship	.709	.556	**.604**	.190
Quality products & services	.707	.555	**.564**	.286
Innovations & new technologies	.787	.330	**.818**	.098
Recognized individuals	.684	.130	**.694**	.431
Reaction trends	.740	.462	**.713**	.135
Recognized companies/brands	.769	.357	**.772**	.212
Country attractiveness				
Beautiful place	.775	.227	.218	**.823**
Attractive places, cities, & activities	.802	.209	.390	**.779**
Hospitable inhabitants	.624	.419	.000	**.670**

Note. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation. Rotation converged in eight iterations.

can be transferred from doing so with corporations — which Schwaiger (2004) did — to identifying with countries. The third indicator that Schwaiger (2004) suggested needed to be measured, is corporations' likability, which refers to the affection for an entity that one would feel if it were to cease to exist. This is, of course, hardly possible with regard to countries. We find that missing an entity due to its disappearance (Cambridge Dictionary 2022b) is primarily due to the affection for and attachment to an entity that one felt. Consequently, we suggest that comfort should be included in reputation's reflective measurement, more specifically, its *likability*.

In respect of *competence*, we transfer the recognition an entity receives from corporations — as in Schwaiger (2004) — to countries. The two remaining indicators that Schwaiger (2004) used refer to a company's performance compared to that of its competitors. We find that these indicators are only transferrable to countries to a limited extent. We therefore need to define what competence actually means before elaborating on what this could mean for countries. Competence is 'the ability to do something well' (Cambridge Dictionary 2022a), which refers to the degree that a goal

has been attained. Given common state objectives, we can derive the reflective indicators as a country's performance in respect of socioeconomic aspects, on the one hand, and its contribution to the global community, on the other hand.

To determine the six reflective indicators, we run an exploratory factor analysis with a fixed number of two factors and using varimax rotation. The correlations between all six indicators are significant ($p < .010$). The KMO measure (KMO = .876) and the Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 3806.008$, $p < .010$) indicate the data's appropriateness. The indicators' communalities are sufficiently large. We used a two-factor solution to preserve 81.3% of the original information. The six indicators are assigned to *competence* and *likability* in the hypothesized manner, while the indicators load sufficiently highly on to the respective factors (Table 4).

Model Building

To estimate our model, we rely on partial least squares (PLS), a composite-based SEM approach, which is routinely used to estimate complex cause-effect relations as found in our model (Guenther et al. 2023; Sarstedt et al. 2022, 2024). Our analysis draws on the SmartPLS 3 software (Ringle, Wende, and Becker 2015), applying the path weighting scheme at a minimum of 300 iterations and setting the stop criterion to $1*10^{-7}$. The calculation ended in keeping with the stop criterion.

Figure 2 shows the final country reputation model. The outer weights of formative indicators are displayed, whereas reflective indicators' outer loading is shown. The inner model entails the path coefficients of the relationship between the constructs. Significant path coefficients as well as outer weights and outer loadings are displayed in bold and were inferred by the software's built-in bootstrapping procedure.[4] The R^2 values of the target constructs (i.e. *competence* and *likability*) are given.

We find that all but seven indicator weights are statistically significant ($p < .050$). Hair, Risher, Sarstedt and Ringle (2019) stress that non-significant formative indicator weights signal single indicators' lower relative importance compared to that of other indicators, rather than a poor measurement quality. Given the partly large catalogues of indicators within a construct, single formative indicators' lower relevance is not a concern (Hair et al. 2019). In respect of the non-significant indicators, we checked the outer loadings, which are equivalent to an indicator's bivariate correlation with its construct (Hair et al. 2022). The outer loadings of all seven indicators at hand are

Table 4. Principal component analysis for the measurement of country reputation.

Factor analysis			
KMO	.876		
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	$\chi^2 = 3806.008$, $p < .010$		
Extraction 81.3%	Communalities	Factor 1	Factor 2
Likability			
Feeling of comfort	.877	**.866**	.356
Identification	.759	**.806**	.330
Likable country	.844	**.868**	.300
Competence			
Internationally recognized	.852	.224	**.896**
Socioeconomics	.728	.530	**.669**
Contributor to the global community	.818	.419	**.802**

Note. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation and 2 fixed factors. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.
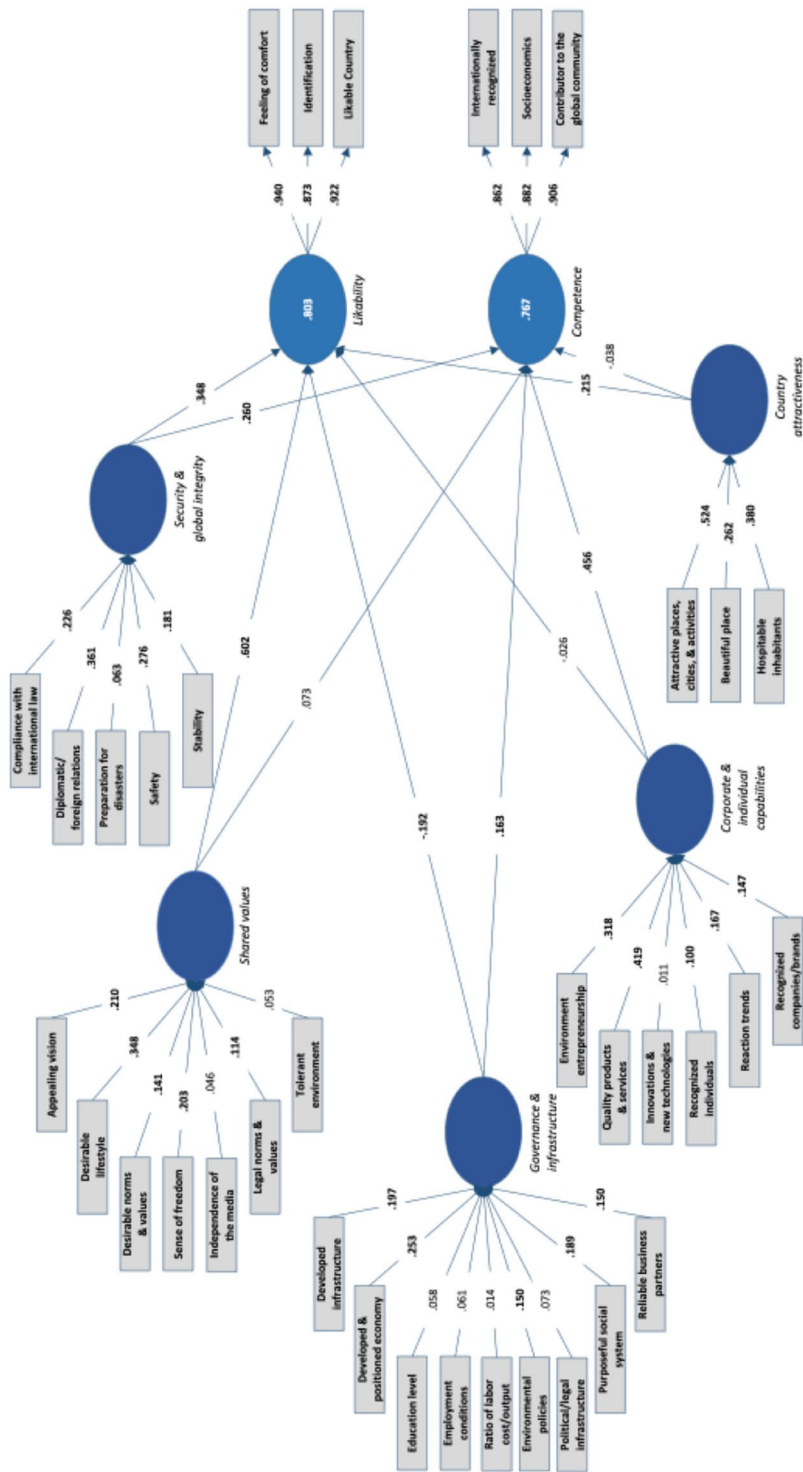
Figure 2. Country reputation management model.

Table 5. Coefficients for the country reputation model.

	Path coefficient	Standard deviation	T statistics	p values
Inner model				
Security & global integrity -> Likability	.348	.051	6.875	.000
Security & global integrity -> Competence	.260	.052	5.034	.000
Shared values -> Likability	.602	.057	10.596	.000
Shared values -> Competence	.073	.062	1.188	.235
Governance & infrastructure -> Likability	−0.192	.049	3.911	.000
Governance & infrastructure -> Competence	.163	.053	3.095	.002
Corporate & individual capabilities -> Likability	−0.026	.036	0.711	.477
Corporate & individual capabilities -> Competence	.456	.037	12.248	.000
Country attractiveness -> Likability	.215	.025	8.610	.000
Country attractiveness -> Competence	−0.038	.024	1.612	.107
Outer model				
Feeling of comfort <- Likability	.940	.004	209.681	.000
Identification <- Likability	.873	.010	86.378	.000
Likable Country <- Likability	.922	.006	150.783	.000
Internationally recognized <- Competence	.862	.012	71.091	.000
Socioeconomics <- Competence	.882	.008	107.478	.000
Contributor to the global community <- Competence	.906	.008	112.518	.000
Compliance with international law -> Security & global integrity	.226	.037	6.111	.000
Diplomatic / foreign relations -> Security & global integrity	.361	.041	8.870	.000
Preparation for disasters -> Security & global integrity	.063	.028	2.266	.023
Safety -> Security & global integrity	.276	.037	7.489	.000
Stability -> Security & global integrity	.181	.038	4.790	.000
Appealing vision -> Shared values	.210	.043	4.901	.000
Desirable lifestyle -> Shared values	.348	.041	8.415	.000
Desirable norms & values -> Shared values	.141	.039	3.628	.000
Sense of freedom -> Shared values	.203	.040	5.048	.000
Independence of the media -> Shared values	.046	.027	1.692	.091
Legal norms & values -> Shared values	.114	.027	4.271	.000
Tolerant environment -> Shared values	.053	.032	1.639	.101
Developed infrastructure -> Governance & infrastructure	.197	.049	3.991	.000
Developed & positioned economy -> Governance & infrastructure	.253	.043	5.913	.000
Education level -> Governance & infrastructure	.058	.042	1.384	.166
Employment conditions -> Governance & infrastructure	.061	.044	1.391	.164
Ratio of labor cost/output -> Governance & infrastructure	.014	.034	0.396	.692
Environmental policies -> Governance & infrastructure	.150	.040	3.734	.000
Political/legal infrastructure -> Governance & infrastructure	.073	.046	1.563	.118
Purposeful social system -> Governance & infrastructure	.189	.049	3.892	.000
Reliable business partners -> Governance & infrastructure	.150	.036	4.144	.000
Environment entrepreneurship -> Corporate & individual capabilities	.318	.040	8.029	.000
Quality products & services -> Corporate & individual capabilities	.419	.036	11.586	.000
Innovations & new technologies -> Corporate & individual capabilities	.011	.042	0.254	.799
Recognized individuals -> Corporate & individual capabilities	.100	.033	3.025	.002
Reaction trends -> Corporate & individual capabilities	.167	.045	3.751	.000
Recognized companies/brands -> Corporate & individual capabilities	.147	.047	3.090	.002
Attractive places, cities, & activities -> Country attractiveness	.524	.055	9.518	.000
Beautiful place -> Country attractiveness	.262	.061	4.320	.000
Hospitable inhabitants -> Country attractiveness	.380	.048	7.883	.000

significant and above the threshold of .500, which underpins their adequacy (Hair et al. 2022). The VIF of all the formative indicators remains below the critical threshold of five (Hair et al. 2022). The detailed results can be found in the following (Table 5).

Quality assessment

Competence and *likability* display Cronbach's *α* values of .859 and .899, respectively, therefore falling in the desirable range of .600-.950 (Hair et al. 2019, 2022). The composite reliabilities of *competence* (.914) and *likability* (.937) are also satisfactory. In addition, the bootstrap confidence intervals reveal that the upper and lower bounds of the Cronbach's *α* and the composite reliability values lie within the desirable range of .600–.950.

Competence and *likability* show satisfactory average variance extracted scores (see e.g. Bagozzi and Yi 1988) of .780 and .832, respectively (Hair et al. 2019, 2022). The heterotrait-monotrait ratio criterion (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2015; Ringle et al. 2023) is .825, therefore below the threshold of .900, indicating that *competence* and *likability* are distinct concepts. The upper bounds of the bootstrap confidence interval are significantly different from zero.

To evaluate the driver model, we first use our formative indicators to construct an exogenous latent variable that we thereafter employ to predict country reputation's reflective measures as the endogenous construct (Hair et al. 2022). The strength of the association between the variables is 'indicative of the validity of the designated set of formative indicators in tapping the construct of interest' (Hair et al. 2022, 143). To infer country reputation's alternative reflective measures, we refer to existing literature as proposed by Hair et al. (2022). Sarstedt et al. (2013) employed a Walsh and Beatty (2007) two-item scale to compare alternative corporate reputation models' convergent validities, which we adapt[5] to our research context (Cheah et al. 2018). The results reveal that the path coefficient's strength between the formatively and the reflectively measured latent variable (.900) is sufficiently high (Hair et al. 2019). When we consider each reflective indicator separately, the results remain stable with path coefficients of (1) .869 and (2) .888, respectively.

To evaluate the structural model, we refer to R^2 as a suitable measure of explanatory power (Hair et al. 2022). In our model, we explain 76.7% ($R^2 = .767$) of the variance in *competence* and 80.3% ($R^2 = .803$) of the variance in *likability*, therefore realizing substantial explanatory power for both dimensions (Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2011; Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics 2009).

Benchmarking of country reputation models

We next empirically compare the developed model's quality with that of alternative approaches. We benchmark our model against the country RepTrak[TM] model and the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index. In the process, we consider approaches, which — like the model we developed — describe reputation as relevant stakeholders' perception of a country, because they are focal in defining the social expectations that one harbors regarding entities (Sarstedt et al. 2013). More specifically, we include models that assess the general public's expectations as a proxy of all

of the relevant stakeholders' expectations. Furthermore, the given approaches correspond to our model's operationalization to guarantee comparability. We compare models that define overarching latent constructs, which more specific indicators explain (formative measurement) or which elicit those indicators (reflective measurement).

Approach and measures

Following Sarstedt et al. (2013), we examine the models in terms of their convergent and criterion validity. We also account for the flaws in reputation's operationalization in the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index by including a fourth model that removes obvious effect-indicators from the set of driver items. The two relevant quality criteria are used to determine which of the examined four models best serve as a valid instrument for scholars and practitioners to measure and explain a country's reputation.

Convergent validity

Convergent validity indicates the extent to which a given country reputation model measures the concept in question validly. To this end, we examine the degree to which a model is associated with an alternative measure of country reputation as indicated by the respective model's explanatory power (Hair et al. 2022). Convergent validity is considered a significantly important measure for assessing a model, because when a model's explanatory power declines, its dependability and consistency across different measurement time points also decrease rapidly and it exhibits lower convergent validity (Carlson and Herdman 2012).

In order to examine and compare the described four models' convergent validity, we parameterize structural equation models, using SmartPLS 3 (Ringle et al. 2015). We use each measurement model's respective formative categories as exogenous constructs that explain an endogenous variable. We again employ the items from the work by Sarstedt et al. (2013) to suggest the following two-item scale as an alternative country reputation measure, which we call *global reputation*: [Country] has a high reputation in the global arena; (2) [Country] is highly reputable.

With reference to Sarstedt et al. (2013), we treat all categories that a relevant reputation model suggests as overarching facets of country reputation as exogenous constructs. Consequently, we use the models exactly as these authors proposed to explain the endogenous variable (i.e. *global reputation*). Moreover, in the present context, we are less interested in the significance and the magnitude of the path coefficients, but more interested in the accuracy that allows us to explain reputation; that is, the proportion of *global reputation*'s variance that the respective model allows us to explain. We measure explanatory power by means of the coefficient of determination $R^2_{adjusted}$ (Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, and Kuppelwieser 2014). We do so to avoid inherently favoring those models subject to higher complexity, which, of course, increases the explanatory power measures (Hair et al. 2014, 2022).

In order to ascertain whether the differences in the respective models' $R^2_{adjusted}$ are significant, we test the scores in accordance with Sarstedt and Wilczynski (2009).

Criterion validity

Criterion validity considers how well a given model explains key outcome variables that the management of the concept under study typically targets (e.g. Cronbach and Meehl 1955; Shou, Sellbom, and Chen 2022). We identify several outcome variables that are arguably of great importance for countries and which were applied in initial studies on reputation's impact on well-being. In order to investigate criterion validity, we combine four specific measured concepts into one overarching construct, which we refer to as *future behavior*. This construct consists of (1) the intention to purchase products and services associated with a respective country, (2) the intention to invest in companies resident in this country, (3) the loyalty shown to this country, and (4) the intention to talk positively about this country.

To assess criterion validity, we create a path model for each reputation measurement, using each approach's exogenous constructs and the corresponding endogenous construct, *future behavior*. We compare the alternative models by referring to each model's $R^2_{adjusted}$ to determine their ability to explain country reputation. We assess the significance in the differences of $R^2_{adjusted}$ in the models, and again refer to the bootstrapping procedure as described by Sarstedt and Wilczynski (2009).

Sample and design

We use a multi-country online survey to gather data. We ask the participants to think of a country with which they are very familiar. The country should not be their country of birth nor their country of residence. Thereafter, the participants have to assess this country according to all four items that refer to their *future behavior* and according to the two measures of *global reputation*. Subsequently, they need to rate this country on the reflective and formative indicators of all the reputation measurements under consideration. We randomized the indicators' and items' order in each section. All the indicators and items are measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale (Table 6).

We used Prolific to distribute our questionnaire and paid each participant — as Prolific suggested — $2.39 for participating. In total, 273 individuals took part in the survey. We dropped two participants from the sample for failing to pass the

Table 6. Measures for assessing convergent and criterion validity.

Convergent validity		
Concept	Items	Source (Adapted to Study)
Global Reputation	[Country] has a high reputation in the global arena. [Country] is highly reputable.	Walsh and Beatty (2007) as in Sarstedt, Wilczynski, and Melewar (2013)
Criterion Validity		
Concept	Items	Source (Adapted to Study)
Purchase Intention	If I were going to purchase a product/service, I would likely buy one associated with [country].	Bergkvist and Rossiter (2009)
Investment Intention	If I were going to invest in a foreign company, I would likely invest in a company resident in [country].	Bergkvist and Rossiter (2009)
Loyalty	If someone seeks my advice on [country], I will likely recommend it.	Gruen, Osmonbekov, and Czaplewski (2006)
Intention to Engage	In general, I speak favorably about [country].	Harrison-Walker (2001)

attention checks. The final number of participants is therefore 271, of which 91 are resident in Germany, 90 in the United States, and 90 in the United Kingdom. The average time for completing the survey was 10 minutes and 37 seconds. The participants' age ranges between 18 and 73 (mean: 35.72). The sample includes 110 male and 158 female participants, with the remaining three participants preferring not to state their gender (Table 6).

Results

In total, we derive ten path models. We use SmartPLS 3 (Ringle et al. 2015) to estimate and set the path weighting scheme to a minimum of 300 iterations and the stop criterion to $1*10^{-7}$. To assess whether differences in the models' explanatory power are significant, we apply SmartPLS 3's bootstrapping algorithm[6] (Ringle et al. 2015). With reference to Sarstedt et al. (2013), SmartPLS 3's finite mixture PLS (FIMIX-PLS) algorithm (Ringle et al. 2015) is furthermore used to derive each considered approach's model fit. In order to do so, we analyze the ten models using a single segment for the FIMIX-PLS algorithm. The modified Akaike information criterion with factor three (AIC3) and the consistent Akaike information criterion (CAIC) serve to identify which of the four models exhibit the best model fit (see Sarstedt et al. 2011, 2013).

Convergent validity

The analyses' results confirm that our country reputation model exhibits the highest $R^2_{adjusted}$ (.677). In comparison, both the regular ($R^2_{adjusted}$ = .617) and the adapted Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index ($R^2_{adjusted}$ = .603) show lower determination coefficients. Our model also prevails over the country RepTrak™ model in terms of convergent validity ($R^2_{adjusted}$ = .673). The differences in the $R^2_{adjusted}$ between our model as the benchmark and the alternative approaches are significant ($p < .010$). With respect to the FIMIX-PLS algorithm, the RepTrak™ model as the benchmark (AIC3 = 474.743; CAIC = 489.152) and our model (AIC3 = 475.728; CAIC = 497.341) show a comparably better model fit than the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index (AIC3 = 524.170; CAIC = 549.385) and its adapted version (AIC3 = 533.425; CAIC = 558.640) do.

To measure country reputation, our model exhibits a higher coefficient of determination $R^2_{adjusted}$ (.655) than the country RepTrak™ model ($R^2_{adjusted}$ = .493) does. The differences are statistically significant ($p < .010$). Country reputation's operationalization as a two-dimensional construct in our approach provides a better model fit (AIC3 = 487.940; CAIC = 498.747) than the affect-based operationalization in the country RepTrak™ model (AIC3 = 590.182; CAIC = 597.387) (Table 7).

Criterion validity

The criterion validity analyses' results reveal that the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index best explains *future behavior* ($R^2_{adjusted}$ = .680) and has a satisfactory model fit (AIC = 475.194; CAIC = 500.409). However, the results should be taken with a pinch of salt. As discussed above, the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index clearly incorporates outcome indicators that need to be considered endogenous. If we remove these

Table 7. Results of convergent validity analyses.

	Driver Model			
	Country Reputation Model	Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index	Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index adapted	Country RepTrak
$R^2_{adjusted}$ (R^2)	**.677 (.683)**	.617 (.625)	.603 (.612)	.673 (.677)
AIC3	475.728	524.170	533.425	**474.743**
CAIC	497.341	549.385	558.640	**489.152**
	Measurement Model			
	Country Reputation Model		Country RepTrak	
$R^2_{adjusted}$ (R^2)	**.655 (.657)**		.493 (.495)	
AIC3	**487.940**		590.182	
CAIC	**498.747**		597.387	

R^2 refers to the extent to which the measurement models can explain global reputation, measured via two items 1) high reputation and 2) highly reputable.

Table 8. Results of criterion validity analyses.

	Driver Model			
	Country Reputation Model	Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index	Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index adapted	Country RepTrak
$R^2_{adjusted}$ (R^2)	**.649 (.656)**	*.680 (.687)*	.617 (.625)	.625 (.630)
AIC3	**497.926**	*475.194*	524.006	511.938
CAIC	**519.539**	*500.409*	549.221	526.346

R^2 in this table refers to which of the approaches is best able to explain and predict the future behavior of international stakeholders, measured through 1) purchase intention, 2) investment intention, 3) loyalty, and 4) intention to engage.

indicators to derive an adapted version of the index, a different picture emerges. In the competitive setting comprising our model, the adapted Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index, and the country RepTrak™ model, we find that our model explains *future behavior* ($R^2_{adjusted}$ = .649) significantly ($p < .010$) better than the adapted Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index ($R^2_{adjusted}$ = .617) and the country RepTrak™ ($R^2_{adjusted}$ = .625) do. The FIMIX-PLS algorithm shows that our developed model has the best model fit (AIC3 = 497.926; CAIC = 519.539) if the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index is trimmed to exclude the endogenous indicators in the driver model (Table 8).

Discussion

Countries have recognized that a good reputation gives them an advantageous position over other contenders and has a positive impact on their overall well-being. Country reputation's increased relevance provides an impetus for managing it as a strategic task.

The country reputation model that we develop in this study is based on reputation's definition and conceptualization as an attitudinal concept (Ferguson et al. 2000; Hall 1992; Schwaiger 2004). Consequently, a country's reputation comprises an affective and a cognitive dimension, which we call *likability* and *competence*, respectively. We measure reputation's two dimensions by means of six reflective effect indicators. The *competence* attributed to a country is expressed by its international recognition, its performance in terms of socioeconomic aspects, and its value contribution to the

global community. On the other hand, scholars consider *likability* as a type of good feeling conveyed to evaluators when they are present in a specific country, a type of identification with this country, and their general perception of it as being likeable. A principal component analysis produced a two-factor solution assigning the reflective indicators to *competence* and *likability* in the hypothesized manner.

In addition to measuring reputation, our model explains value judgments with regard to reputation's *competence* and *likability* dimensions. We derived a comprehensive list of country reputation drivers by drawing on existing approaches and on the results of focus group interviews, on an online survey, and on expert interviews. Thereafter, we reduced the large number of potentially relevant driver items to a realistic and meaningful set. Subsequently, we utilized an exploratory factor analysis to gain helpful insights into grouping drivers thematically and relating them to driver constructs. The result is a list of 30 driver items, which we assign to five constructs that explain reputation's two dimensions.

Research implications

Currently, country reputation research's central task is to conceptualize and operationalize the concept and to ultimately render it measurable. This is vital, because reputation is neither directly observable nor measurable as a latent construct (Diamantopoulos et al. 2008). Conversely, the lack of a measurement instrument means that robust results, such as the elaboration of reputation's explanatory power with regard to relevant country outcomes, are difficult to achieve.

Several measurement tools are available to the academic community, some of which researchers have used in empirical studies. However, the measurement tools are subject to shortcomings that call their usefulness for robust empirical studies into question. A large part of reputation's theoretical considerations that precede a measurement instrument's development seems to have regarded reputation as an attitudinal concept. Consequently, scholars often describe reputation as the result of affective attachments to a country and as the competence attributed to it, which means the forming of reputation is based on perceptions of the relevant country's cognitive and affective characteristics (Ferguson et al. 2000; Hall 1992; Schwaiger 2004). In this regard, we believe that reputation, like all attitudinal constructs, should be operationalized as a two-dimensional construct consisting of a cognitive and an affective dimension. The currently available measurement models do not necessarily do this. In fact, there is only one country reputation model, namely the country RepTrak™, which comprises both the dimensions. However, it uses the affective dimension as an endogenous variable to measure country reputation, while the cognitive variable is exogenous (Fombrun et al. 2000; Ponzi et al. 2011).

The country reputation measurement model that we developed in the study at hand is aimed at closing the gap regarding suitable approaches and at providing the academic world with a model that enables the exploration of other country reputation pillars. Depending on the research goal, researchers can use a catalogue of driver items to explain country reputation's two dimensions. On the other hand, researchers can use the reflective measurement scale whenever they want to know whether country reputation's current level is sufficient and they do not require a driver analysis.

This approach is recommended, for example, when ranking lists need to be generated for the most reputable countries, or when country reputation needs to be integrated as a component of structural equation models in order to investigate its moderating or mediating effects.

Practical implications

The need to actively manage reputation in order to benefit optimally from its impact on economic and non-economic indicators creates a demand for valid and reliable measurement models (Einwiller 2014; Gardberg and Fombrun 2002; Helm and Klode 2011; Yang et al. 2008). The present model allows countries to measure their reputation as well as those of suitable competitors in a first step. In order to do so, we propose administering the six reflective indicators to the general public, comprising all of the relevant stakeholder groups (if a series of studies of all the relevant stakeholder groups prove to be too costly). The results could allow us to (1) assess a country's reputation compared to that of other nations, thereby allowing us to identify their strengths and weaknesses compared to those of a set of relevant competitors. These could, for example, be countries equally dependent on a core industry, a set of large exporting nations with a similar product portfolio, or a set of countries with comparable quantities of similar raw materials. (2) If reputation is tracked over time, it is possible to detect (significant) changes in others' perception of a country. This allows reputation managers to derive information about factual changes (e.g. new legislation), incisive events, the country's advertising campaigns, and its media coverage. (3) Both of the previous aspects are based on the ability to examine a country's strengths and weaknesses separately as based on reputation's two dimensions. A country could, for example, be perceived as affectively binding, but lacking competence. This could allow the authorities to set concrete objectives, for example, by improving one dimension (e.g. *competence*) that trails behind that of other countries, while simultaneously expanding its competitive advantage based on another dimension (e.g. *likability*).

Once countries have explored the valuation of their *competence* and *likability*, determined which changes were made over time, and spotted their relative positions compared to that of the competition, they should use the driver analysis that our model provides. By using the path model, once they have derived the strengths and weaknesses of others' perception of their *likability* and *competence*, countries could take targeted measures that will eradicate their weaknesses or improve their strengths. A driver analysis should ideally use variance-based structural equation modelling as shown in Figure 2 as it will identify those claims that will improve a country's reputation best. Comparing drivers' impact, which aggregated path coefficients demonstrate in respect of performance (a country's score regarding this indicator in relation to the benchmarks) allows communication specialists to allocate scarce resources correctly to those claims that promise optimal reputation enhancement. Consequently, the parameterization of our model leads to a valuable strategic briefing and explains the aspects we should focus on in advertisements and social media messages, thereby ensuring we have proper guidance regarding promoting relevant outcomes (exports, FDI inflow, tourist visits, and the population's well-being). We consider this an indispensable tool for developing effective, targeted communication measures like advertising campaigns.

Whatever the case, identifying impactful claims prevents countries from having to address too many (supposedly effective) claims, which might confuse stakeholders rather than alter their attitude towards the country in the desired manner. Needless to say, like companies, countries should walk their talk and base their communication on comprehensible facts.

Future research

This study offers avenues for further research. First, in order to understand reputation's role better, countries would benefit by examining reputation dimensions' effect on their key target criteria. Future research could therefore focus on investigating the reputation dimensions' interactions with focal target criteria by either employing panel data to study (non-)economic outcomes or by using stakeholder surveys of intentions to, for example, purchase a country's products.

Second, the present country reputation model is based on the evaluations of study participants residing in developed countries. It would be interesting to see whether and how the modelling differs when using data from less developed countries. The formative indicators' outer weights and the structural model's path coefficients will presumably differ. This would allow even more targeted communication management of countries, depending on the recipients' origins. Just like investigating reputation with data from less developed countries, modelling based on separate surveys of specific stakeholder groups would be similarly insightful. In this way, scholars could elaborate whether, for example, international consumers exhibit a different weighting of individual drivers and constructs than investors or political actors do. Here, too, the results would allow communication messages to be personalized in a more targeted way in order to manage attitudes optimally.

Third, research should investigate the interactions between the derived exogenous constructs and all of the individual driver items further. The outer weights and the path coefficients should be regarded as statistical artefacts and as describing an indicator's (or a driver construct's) effect on an endogenous construct (country reputation or one of its dimensions), while keeping all of the other indicators (constructs) constant. In order to optimally design communicative measures, the above-mentioned interactions should therefore be considered in a more nuanced manner by potentially applying other SEM methods (Sarstedt et al. 2024).

Last, but not least, even well conducted driver analyses cannot make statements about causal relations. If a country's reputation manager needs to determine the causal impact that a specific driver has on *competence* and/or *likability*, (s)he needs to develop and implement experimental designs.

Notes

1. FutureBrand Country Index by Adams (2011); Country RepTrak by Berens et al. (2011); Country Brand Ranking by Bloom Consulting (2022); The Good Country 2022; East West Nation Brand Perception Index and Reports by Cromwell (2011); Country Brand Strength Index by Dinnie, Melewar, and Fetscherin (2010); Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index by Feinberg and Zhao (2011); Country's International Reputation Index by Fernandez-Crehuet, Rosales-Salas, and Cogollos (2019); Soft Power Index by Brand Finance

(2021); Best Countries Ranking by U.S. News (2021); Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index by Passow et al. (2005); Brand Molecule by Rojas-Méndez (2013). Given the paper's scope, we refrain from a detailed discussion of all of the available approaches and focus on those frequently cited in academia and those mostly used in practice.

2. We are well aware that omitting indicators in the case of formatively specified constructs means omitting parts of the construct. However, obvious overlaps in content lead to redundant items that should be eliminated for economic reasons.

3. Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Somewhat disagree; 4 = Neither agree nor disagree; 5 = Somewhat agree; 6 = Agree; 7 = Strongly agree.

4. For the PLS-SEM bootstrapping procedure (Davison and Hinkley 1997; Efron and Tibshirani 1986; Hair et al. 2022), we calculate 5000 subsamples and use bias corrected and accelerated bootstrapping as the confidence interval method (Hair et al. 2022).

5. [Country] has a high reputation in the global arena; (2) [Country] is highly reputable.

6. Regarding the PLS-SEM bootstrapping procedure (Davison and Hinkley 1997; Efron and Tibshirani 1986; Hair et al. 2022), we calculate 5000 subsamples and use bias corrected and accelerated bootstrapping as the confidence interval method (Hair et al. 2022).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

References

Adams, T. 2011. The FutureBrand country brand index. In *International place branding yearbook 2011*, 92–101. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Armstrong, T., and B. Detweiler-Bedell. 2008. Beauty as an emotion: The exhilarating prospect of mastering a challenging world. *Review of General Psychology* 12, no. 4: 305–29.

Bagozzi, R.P, and Y. Yi. 1988. On the evaluation of structural equation models. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 16, no. 1: 74–94.

Barney, J. 1991. Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management* 17, no. 1: 99–120.

Becker, M., N. Wiegand, and W.J. Reinartz. 2019. Does it pay to be real? Understanding authenticity in TV advertising. *Journal of Marketing* 83, no. 1: 24–50.

Berens, G., C.J. Fombrun, L.J. Ponzi, N.G. Trad, and K. Nielsen. 2011. Country reptrak™: A standardized measure of country reputation. In *International place branding yearbook 2011*, 77–91. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bergh, D.D., D.J. Ketchen, Jr., B.K. Boyd, and J. Bergh. 2010. New frontiers of the reputation-performance relationship: Insights from multiple theories. *Journal of Management* 36, no. 3: 620–32.

Bergkvist, L., and J.R. Rossiter. 2009. Tailor-made single-item measures of doubly concrete constructs. *International Journal of Advertising* 28, no. 4: 607–21.

Bloemer, J., K. Brijs, and H. Kasper. 2009. The CoO-ELM model: A theoretical framework for the cognitive processes underlying country. *European Journal of Marketing* 43, no. 1/2: 62–89.

Bloom Consulting. 2022. *Bloom consulting country brand ranking*. Madrid: Bloom Consulting.

Bollen, K., and R. Lennox. 1991. Conventional wisdom on measurement: A structural equation perspective. *Psychological Bulletin* 110, no. 2: 305–14.

Brand Finance. 2021. *Nation brands 2021*. London: Brand Finance.

Breckler, S.J. 1984. Empirical validation of affect, behavior, and cognition as distinct components of attitude. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 47, no. 6: 1191–205.

Cambridge Dictionary. 2022a. Meaning of competence. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/competence

Cambridge Dictionary. 2022b. Meaning of missing. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/missing

Cambridge Dictionary. 2022c. Meaning of respect. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/respect

Carlson, K.D, and A.O. Herdman. 2012. Understanding the impact of convergent validity on research results. *Organizational Research Methods* 15, no. 1: 17–32.

Castilla-Polo, F. 2018. The role of country reputation in positioning territories: A literature review. In *Entrepreneurship and structural change in dynamic territories*, 53–72. Heidelberg: Springer.

Chan, T.H. 2023. How brands can succeed communicating social purpose: Engaging consumers through empathy and self-involving gamification. *International Journal of Advertising* 42, no. 5: 801–34.

Cheah, J.-H., M. Sarstedt, C.M. Ringle, T. Ramayah, and H. Ting. 2018. Convergent validity assessment of formatively measured constructs in PLS-SEM. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 30, no. 11: 3192–210.

Churchill Jr, G.A. 1979. A paradigm for developing better measures of marketing constructs. *Journal of Marketing Research* 16, no. 1: 64–73.

Cromwell, T. 2011. The east west nation brand perception indexes and reports: Perception measurement and nation branding. In *International place branding yearbook 2011*, 102–111. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cronbach, L.J, and P.E. Meehl. 1955. Construct validity in psychological tests. *Psychological Bulletin* 52, no. 4: 281–302.

Davison, A.C, and D.V. Hinkley. 1997. *Bootstrap methods and their application*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DeVellis, R.F, and C.T. Thorpe. 2021. *Scale development: Theory and applications*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.

Diamantopoulos, A. 2005. The C-OAR-SE procedure for scale development in marketing: A comment. *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 22, no. 1: 1–9.

Diamantopoulos, A., P. Riefler, and K.P. Roth. 2008. Advancing formative measurement models. *Journal of Business Research* 61, no. 12: 1203–18.

Diamantopoulos, A., and H.M. Winklhofer. 2001. Index construction with formative indicators: An alternative to scale development. *Journal of Marketing Research* 38, no. 2: 269–77.

Dinnie, K., T. Melewar, and M. Fetscherin. 2010. The determinants and measurement of a country brand: the Country Brand Strength Index. *International Marketing Review* 4, no. 1: 73–91.

Dowling, G. 2000. *Creating corporate reputations: Identity, image and performance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eberl, M., and M. Schwaiger. 2005. Corporate reputation: Disentangling the effects on financial performance. *European Journal of Marketing* 39, no. 7/8: 838–54.

Efron, B., and R. Tibshirani. 1986. Bootstrap methods for standard errors, confidence intervals, and other measures of statistical accuracy. *Statistical Science* 1, no. 1: 54–75.

Einwiller, S. 2014. Reputation und Image: Grundlagen, Einflussmöglichkeiten, Management. In *Handbuch Unternehmenskommunikation*, 371–91. Wiesbaden: Gabler.

Fan, Y. 2010. Branding the nation: Towards a better understanding. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 6, no. 2: 97–103.

Feinberg, B.M, and X. Zhao. 2011. The Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index SM: Navigating the changing world. In *International place branding yearbook 2011*, 63–76. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ferguson, T.D., D.L. Deephouse, and W.L. Ferguson. 2000. Do strategic groups differ in reputation? *Strategic Management Journal* 21, no. 12: 1195–214.

Fernandez-Crehuet, J., J. Rosales-Salas, and S.D. Cogollos. 2019. Country's International Reputation Index. *Corporate Reputation Review* 24, no. 1: 14–30.

Fombrun, C.J. 1996. *Reputation: Realizing value from the corporate image*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Fombrun, C.J. 2012. The building blocks of corporate reputation: Definitions, antecedents, consequences.

Fombrun, C.J., N.A. Gardberg, and J.M. Sever. 2000. The reputation QuotientSM: A multi-stakeholder measure of corporate reputation. *Journal of Brand Management* 7, no. 4: 241–55.

Freeman, R.E. 2010. *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gardberg, N.A, and C.J. Fombrun. 2002. The global reputation quotient project: First steps towards a cross-nationally valid measure of corporate reputation. *Corporate Reputation Review* 4, no. 4: 303–7.

Gotsi, M., and A.M. Wilson. 2001. Corporate reputation: Seeking a definition. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* 6, no. 1: 24–30.

Govers, R. 2013. Why place branding is not about logos and slogans. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 9, no. 2: 71–5.

Gray, E.R, and J.M. Balmer. 1998. Managing corporate image and corporate reputation. *Long Range Planning* 31, no. 5: 695–702.

Gruen, T.W., T. Osmonbekov, and A.J. Czaplewski. 2006. eWOM: The impact of customer-to-customer online know-how exchange on customer value and loyalty. *Journal of Business Research* 59, no. 4: 449–56.

Guenther, P., M. Guenther, C.M. Ringle, G. Zaefarian, and S. Cartwright. 2023. Improving PLS-SEM use for business marketing research. *Industrial Marketing Management* 111: 127–42.

Hair, J., G.T.M. Hult, C.M. Ringle, and M. Sarstedt. 2022. *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).* 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Hair, J., C.M. Ringle, and M. Sarstedt. 2011. PLS-SEM: Indeed a silver bullet. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice* 19, no. 2: 139–52.

Hair, J., J.J. Risher, M. Sarstedt, and C.M. Ringle. 2019. When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review* 31, no. 1: 2–24.

Hair, J., M. Sarstedt, L. Hopkins, and V.G. Kuppelwieser. 2014. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM): An emerging tool in business research. *European Business Review* 26, no. 2: 106–21.

Hall, R. 1992. The strategic analysis of intangible resources. *Strategic Management Journal* 13, no. 2: 135–44.

Harrison-Walker, L.J. 2001. The measurement of word-of-mouth communication and an in-vestigation of service quality and customer commitment as potential antecedents. *Journal of Service Research* 4, no. 1: 60–75.

Hartmann, P., A. Marcos, and V. Apaolaza. 2023. Past, present, and future of research on corporate social responsibility advertising. *International Journal of Advertising* 42, no. 1: 87–95.

Hayes, J.L., S. Holiday, and H. Park. 2022. Corporate social responsibility & the advertising strategic planning process: A literature review & research agenda. *International Journal of Advertising* 41, no. 2: 210–32.

Hegazy, N.A.A. 2019. Tourism marketing in developing countries. *Socio-Economic Development: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications:* 802–16. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Helm, S., and C. Klode. 2011. Challenges in measuring corporate reputation. In *Reputation management*, 99–108. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer.

Henseler, J., C.M. Ringle, and M. Sarstedt. 2015. A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 43, no. 1: 115–35.

Henseler, J., C.M. Ringle, and R.R. Sinkovics. 2009. The use of partial least squares path modeling in international marketing. In *New challenges to international marketing*, 277–319. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Kang, M., and S.-U. Yang. 2010. Comparing effects of country reputation and the overall corporate reputations of a country on international consumers' product attitudes and purchase intentions. *Corporate Reputation Review* 13, no. 1: 52–62.

Kiambi, D., and A. Shafer. 2018. Country reputation management: Developing a scale for measuring the reputation of four African countries in the United States. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 14, no. 3: 175–86.

Kilduff, K., and J.M.N. Tabales. 2017. Country branding and its effect on the consumer in the global market. *Cuadernos De Gestión* 17, no. 1: 83–104.

Koschate-Fischer, N., A. Diamantopoulos, and K. Oldenkotte. 2012. Are consumers really willing to pay more for a favorable country image? A study of country-of-origin effects on willingness to pay. *Journal of International Marketing* 20, no. 1: 19–41.

Morgan, D.L. 1996. Focus groups. *Annual Review of Sociology* 22, no. 1: 129–52.

Papadopoulos, N., Y. Ibrahim, A. De Nisco, and M.R. Napolitano. 2018. The role of country branding in attracting foreign investment: Country characteristics and country image. *MERCATI & COMPETITIVITÀ* 2, no. 2: 85–108.

Page, G., and H. Fearn. 2006. Corporate reputation: What do consumers really care about? *Journal of Advertising Research* 45, no. 03: 305–13.

Passow, T., R. Fehlmann, and H. Grahlow. 2005. Country reputation – from measurement to management: The case of Liechtenstein. *Corporate Reputation Review* 7, no. 4: 309–26.

Ponzi, L.J., C.J. Fombrun, and N.A. Gardberg. 2011. RepTrak™ pulse: Conceptualizing and validating a short-form measure of corporate reputation. *Corporate Reputation Review* 14, no. 1: 15–35.

Rindova, V.P., I.O. Williamson, A.P. Petkova, and J.M. Sever. 2005. Being good or being known: An empirical examination of the dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of organizational reputation. *Academy of Management Journal* 48, no. 6: 1033–49.

Ringle, C.M., M. Sarstedt, N. Sinkovics, and R.R. Sinkovics. 2023. A perspective on using partial least squares structural equation modelling in data articles. *Data in Brief* 48: 109074.

Ringle, C.M., S. Wende, and J.-M. Becker. 2015. SmartPLS 3: SmartPLS GmbH. https://www.smartpls.com/

Robinson, O.C. 2014. Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 11, no. 1: 25–41.

Rojas-Méndez, J.I. 2013. The nation brand molecule. *Journal of Product & Brand Management* 22, no. 7: 462–72.

Rossiter, J.R. 2002. The C-OAR-SE procedure for scale development in marketing. *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 19, no. 4: 305–35.

Rossiter, J.R. 2011. Marketing measurement revolution: The C-OAR-SE method and why it must replace psychometrics. *European Journal of Marketing* 45, no. 11/12: 1561–88.

Roth, K.P., and A. Diamantopoulos. 2009. Advancing the country image construct. *Journal of Business Research* 62, no. 7: 726–40.

Rubio, D.M., M. Berg-Weger, S.S. Tebb, E.S. Lee, and S. Rauch. 2003. Objectifying content validity: Conducting a content validity study in social work research. *Social Work Research* 27, no. 2: 94–104.

Salzberger, T., M. Sarstedt, and A. Diamantopoulos. 2016. Measurement in the social sciences: Where C-OAR-SE delivers and where it does not. *European Journal of Marketing* 50, no. 11: 1942–52.

Sarstedt, M., S.J. Adler, C.M. Ringle, G. Cho, A. Diamantopoulos, H. Hwang, and B.D. Liengaard. 2024. Same model, same data, but different outcomes: Evaluating the impact of method choice in structural equation modeling. *Journal of Product Innovation Management* 1–17.

Sarstedt, M., J.-M. Becker, C.M. Ringle, and M. Schwaiger. 2011. Uncovering and treating unobserved heterogeneity with FIMIX-PLS: Which model selection criterion provides an appropriate number of segments? *Schmalenbach Business Review* 63, no. 1: 34–62.

Sarstedt, M., J.F. Hair, M. Pick, B.D. Liengaard, L. Radomir, and C.M. Ringle. 2022. Progress in partial least squares structural equation modeling use in marketing in the last decade. *Psychology & Marketing* 39, no. 5: 1035–64.

Sarstedt, M., and E. Mooi. 2014. *A concise guide to market research: The process, data, and methods using IBM SPSS statistics*. Heidelberg: Springer.

Sarstedt, M., and M.P. Schloderer. 2010. Developing a measurement approach for reputation of non-profit organizations. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 15, no. 3: 276–99.

Sarstedt, M., and P. Wilczynski. 2009. More for less? A comparison of single-item and multi-item measures. *Die Betriebswirtschaft* 69, no. 2: 211.

Sarstedt, M., P. Wilczynski, and T. Melewar. 2013. Measuring reputation in global markets – A comparison of reputation measures' convergent and criterion validities. *Journal of World Business* 48, no. 3: 329–39.

Schwaiger, M. 2004. Components and parameters of corporate reputation – an empirical study. *Schmalenbach Business Review* 56, no. 1: 46–71.

Schwaiger, M., S. Raithel, and M. Schloderer. 2009. Recognition or rejection – how a company's reputation influences stakeholder behaviour. In *Reputation capital*, 39–55. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer.

Shou, Y., M. Sellbom, and H.-F. Chen. 2022. Fundamentals of measurement in clinical psychology. In *Comprehensive clinical psychology*, 13–35. Oxford: Elsevier.

Spector, P.E. 1992. *Summated rating scale construction: an introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Strauss, A., and J. Corbin. 1998. *Basics of qualitative research techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

The Good Country. 2022. The Good Country Index. https://www.goodcoun-try.org/index/source-data/

U.S. News. 2021. Methodology: How the 2021 best countries were ranked. https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/methodology

Walsh, G., and S.E. Beatty. 2007. Customer-based corporate reputation of a service firm: Scale development and validation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 35, no. 1: 127–43.

Wartick, S.L. 2002. Measuring corporate reputation: Definition and data. *Business & Society* 41, no. 4: 371–92.

Webster, J., and R.T. Watson. 2002. Analyzing the past to prepare for the future: Writing a literature review. *MIS Quarterly* 26, no. 2: 13–23.

Yang, S.-U., H. Shin, J.-H. Lee, and B. Wrigley. 2008. Country reputation in multidimensions: Predictors, effects, and communication channels. *Journal of Public Relations Research* 20, no. 4: 421–40.