# Perspectives of the Nation Branding Experiment in Slovakia

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# ABSTRACT

Nation branding consists of the controlled activity of states that compete against each other, by means of soft power and market-like principles, for important resources. It has been studied as both a theoretical concept of national image and a set of practices that relate to the presence of globalisation, neoliberalism, and marketisation. The thesis is about the making of the Slovak nation brand and its implementation within the wider regional discourse of nation branding in Central and European Europe. It proceeds with process-tracing and content analysis, of legislation and relevant branding material, to track the making of the Slovak brand and its specific challenges that place it in a peculiar position within the framework of nation branding in this region. The latest data on the ranking of the Slovak brand within index scales, which is a frequent measurement of assessing the brand in the last two decades, provides results that run contrary to the claimed improvement of standing as a result of European Union accession. The thesis provides evidence why this might be one of the consequences stemming from the difficulties in coming up with and agreeing on the important indicators which are communicated to a targeted foreign audience and need to be identified with by a significant part of the domestic population. Another argument this thesis elaborates on is the alleged positive and significant correlation between nation branding and democracy. By reproducing the quantitative correlation analysis, the thesis argues that this claim cannot be extended to Central and Eastern Europe, nor to Slovakia. The findings call for a particularistic approach to nation branding in Slovakia and Central Europe.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Abstract** ..... **2**

**Acknowledgements** ..... **1**

**1. Introduction** ..... **4**

**2. Literature Review** ..... **15**

2.1 Nation Branding and Nation ..... 16

2.2 Nation Branding and State ..... 18

2.3 Branding of the Imagined Community ..... 19

Conclusion ..... 21

**3. Making of the Slovak Brand in a Regional Perspective** ..... **22**

3.1 Political Background of Strategies ..... 23

3.2 Legislation ..... 32

3.3 The Content of Branding ..... 34

3.4 Narrating History ..... 38

3.5 Constitutional Identity ..... 41

Conclusion ..... 43

**4. Nation Branding and Democracy** ..... **44**

4.1 Defining the Sample and Indexes ..... 45

4.2 Results ..... 48

4.3 Findings ..... 51

4.4 Limitations ..... 52

Conclusion ..... 52

**5. Conclusion** ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

**6. Bibliography** ..... **53**

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**7. Appendix ..... 62**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Nation branding consists of a set of activities conducted by states who seek to modify their national images to appear competitive and acquire important resources.[1] This activity, both in its theoretical depiction as an identity concept and practice, is part of a new state[2] conduct in which countries are competing with each other for resources that bring assets. In doing so, they view branding as both a product and means to justify their existence in in an era when non-state actors may be more well-known than the states themselves.[3] Whereas in the past states concentrated their resources and supplies to maintain their security agenda, the demise of the bipolar world, alongside the prevalence of capitalism and neoliberalism, has prompted them to prioritise their national images instead.[4] Neoliberalism in this context implies the pervasiveness of capitalism, combining market economics and liberal democracy to governance that impose a universal economic model with roots in the Anglo-Saxon worlds, increasing formation of public-private perspectives,[5] as well as the changing perspectives on the importance of states in resolving issues of global range.[6] The term "nation branding" was first coined by Simon

[1] The division of nation branding as a field of critical inquiry of concept and practice may be found in N. Kaneva, "Nation Branding in the Post-Communist World: Assessing the Field of Critical Research," *Nationalities Papers* 49.5 (2021): 797–807, accessed: April 2,2023, DOI: 10.1017/nps.2020.106.

[2] The terms "nation" and "state" are referred to interchangeably in the thesis as the nation branding scholarship does not strictly distinguish between them. The reasoning is that nation branding is considered to be characterised by neoliberalism where the distinction between a country founded on ethnic or civic grounds of nationalism does not matter in essence as the making of the branding product to address problems that surpass the state are important instead.

[3] C. White and I. Kolesnicov, "Nation branding in a transitional democracy: The role of corporate diplomacy in promoting national identity," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 11.4 (2015): 324–337, accessed: March 26, 2023, DOI: 10.1057/pb.2015.13.

[4] N. Kaneva ed., *Branding Post-Communist Nations* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

[5] Kaneva, *Branding Post-Communist Nations.*

[6] Kaneva, *Branding Post-Communist Nations.*

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Anholt in 1996 to refer to this new phenomenon of state action.[7] Nation branding as an occurrence takes place naturally to a certain extent, as some characteristics of state obviously spark attention, but the term "nation branding" has become linked to state-based efforts that aim to communicate the most important performance indicators of the country to the target audience. Although frequent references of tourism, export, people, governance, investment, culture, and sometimes democracy, are considered as common indicators, it is up to the countries to identify their uniqueness and sell it through the practices of nation branding.[8] The brand is primarily targeting a foreign audience abroad, yet it is important, for its credibility, that a significant part of the domestic population also identifies with it.[9]

As of now, most countries have invested into branding strategies and programmes whose fulfilment rests on the coordination and activities of state actors including relevant departments, ministries, government agencies, as well as designated non-state actors. In tracing its empirical practice and operation worldwide, Nadia Kaneva, Robert Saunders and other authors agree that the positionality of countries in Central and Eastern Europe is specific as the adoption of nation branding unfolded alongside challenges of nation-building and democratisation.[10] This thesis builds on this work by analysing nation branding in Slovakia, which has not been studied in

[7] R.A. Saunders, "Brand Interrupted: The Impact of Alternative Narrators on Nation Branding in the Former Second World," N. Kaneva, *Branding Post-Communist Nations* (New York: ROUTLEDGE, 2012): 49-79.
[8] Saunders, "Brand Interrupted," 52.
[9] Kaneva demonstrates the claim on the case-study of Kosovo which invested optimistically into branding shortly after declaring independence in 2008. However, the performance indicators it branded turned out to be the complete oppose with what the reality was in that the country is suffering from a major brain drain. The discrepancy between branding and reality has damaged the image of the country enforced by its international isolation.
[10] R.A. Saunders, "Of idols and idylls," *Popular Geopolitics and Nation Branding in the POST-SOVIET Realm*. (New York: ROUTLEDGE, 2017): 13-44; Kaneva, "Nation Branding in the Post-Communist World," 18; P. Surowiec, "Toward Corpo-Nationalism: Poland and the Brand," in N. Kaneva, *Branding Post-Communist Nations* (New York: Routledge, 2012): 124-147.

depth within its discourse in Central and Eastern Europe. This thesis follows on the argumentation to fill in the research gap on the study of nation branding in Slovakia, whose portrayal is weak within varying accounts of how it was endorsed in the Central and Eastern European.[11] The relevance of bringing up democratisation is that the initiative started in the early stages of post-socialist development in these countries where belonging to the west played a key motivation in geopolitics and economic reform. Nation branding is one of the tools that was inspired by in Western European countries which had market economics and no communist past. The thesis argues that the study and implementation of nation branding in Slovakia has been underdeveloped as its branding strategies have only recently taken on the narratives that have sparked attention of experts. The uncertainty as to what is to be branded can be explained by the discrepancies found in the development and salience of identification with the traditions of statehood and nationhood. The struggle to come up with key indicators that a significant part of the population would identify with has been reflected in stagnating nation branding index ratings,[12] which run contrary to the claimed improvement of the brand due to the acquisition of European Union membership.[13] The research question of this thesis seeks to find out how the making of the Slovak brand fits in with the scholarly discourses of nation branding and its relevance to the alleged closeness to democracy.

[11] "Slovensko ako značka" ['Slovakia as a Brand'], Hnoline.sk, accessed: February 26, 2023, https://hnonline.sk/konferencie/archiv/96017738-slovensko-ako-znacka-16-6-2022-bratislava-hotel-devin.; P. Van Ham, "The Rise of the Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation," *Foreign Affairs* 80.5 (2001): 2-6; The approach is impacted by methodological nationalism, which Kaneva thinks of as the reproduction of the nation as the primary site upon which practices of nation branding unfold.

[12] Nation branding indexes collect the data on how the country is perceived. The sample includes randomly selected audience from abroad. Two of the most authoritative indexes, to which this thesis refers to, are the Good Country Index, which measures the positive justification of countries existence, and Anholt-Ipsos nation brand index, which is a straightforward measurement of what people think about a country.

[13] Hnoline.sk.

The hypothesis of the paper is that the Slovak brand fits in well with some of the challenges ascribed to the Central and Eastern European region in how it has been coping with nation branding. These challenges relate to the dilemma of having to define state-wide values at times when the countries were, and are, still impacted by formation processes of post-socialist nation-building and stages of democratisation. At the same time, the Slovak branding development is specific in that it has been managed by a more centralised model. In practical terms, this has resulted in several unsuccessful attempts to deliver a cohesive branding message that would communicate significant indicators agreed on by both the brand makers and a significant part of the population. Despite unfolding within democratisation, the development of nation branding and democracy do not correlate in the case of Slovakia, as well as the wider region, amidst the claim that they do.

As nation branding lacks an authoritative placement within existing academic scholarly disciplines, its theory and practice resonate across disciplines. References to nation branding and its application are found in the field of marketing, national image, nation-building, international relations, or public diplomacy to name a few.[14] The consensus on nation branding and democracy varies as some claim they correlate, whilst others deny that branding has any relevance with the quality of democratic processes.[15] What is more agreed on is that the branding of nations is a product made by the controlled activity of the state that tells primarily

[14] Kaneva, *Branding Post-Communist Nations,* 18; J, Hart, "Historicizing the Relationship between Nation Branding and Public Diplomacy," *Nation branding in modern history,* ed. by C. Viktorin, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018), 221-231; Saunders, "Of idols and idylls,".; J. Pamment, and L.G. Wilkins, "Communication at the Crossroads of Development, Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *Communicating National Image through Development, Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,* (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2018): 23-51.
[15] J. D. Kemming, and C. Humborg. "Democracy and nation brand(ing): Friends or foes?" *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy,* 6.3 (2010): 183-197; J. Kingston, "Nation Branding Confronts Troubling Realities," *Nationalism in Asia* (2016): 39–55.

what they will do in the future by justifying their past and present existence.[16] The activity is impacted by a top-down initiative, a re-definition of the standing of public and private spheres of influence, which fits into the characteristic of an elite project in which neoliberalism is seen on the adoption of structural adjustments and policies that are developed by transnational capitalists.[17]

The first discourse on nation branding rests on its perception as part of the national image whose message it transmits to the targeted audience.[18] Whereas nation branding is dynamic and relates to the exemplification of most important performance indicators for the current setting, national image is thought to be either much more stable[19] or unstable depending on the whether it is impacted by political scandals, failed foreign trips, or environmental disasters.[20] For example, Simon Anholt believes that nation image is very stable and that only going to war seriously damages it, as can be seen on the rapid decrease of the Russian brand in the last index measurement.[21] Second, nation branding is found to be related to forms of diplomacy. This is to do with the development of globalisation and decolonisation that have led to the creation of many new states. As a result, mutual competition between states, on the basis of soft power, has become increasingly important in the setting of neoliberalism.[22] Whereas public diplomacy is thought to be important for supporting and facilitating long-term positive relations between states, the aim of nation branding is to acquire key resources, increase competitiveness on the

[16] Kemming, and Humborg, "Democracy and nation brand(ing)".; Kingston, "Nation Branding Confronts Troubling Realities".
[17] Surowiec, "Toward Corpo-Nationalism: Poland and the Brand," 124-147.
[18] Hnoline.sk; Van Ham, "The Rise of the Brand State".
[19] Hnoline.sk; Anholt claims that the only think that can seriously damage the national image is going to war. This can be seen on the major decrease of Russian in the Anholt-Ipsos nation brands index in years 2021 and 2022.
[20] Van Ham, "The Rise of the Brand State".
[21] Hnoline.sk; "The Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index SM," Ipsos, accessed: May 28, 2023, https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2022-11/NBI%202022%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf.
[22] Kaneva, *Branding Post-Communist Nations.*

global market of nations, and even achieve imitation of its branded indicators by other states.[23] Third, a recent account of nation branding in history has come out that traces the practices back to 19th century world fairs or as far back as notable gift exchanges where the information on where the gift came from was important.[24] However, most of the examples provided occurred under different names, as "nation branding" was introduced in 1996,[25] and were related to short-term political goals and ambitions.[26] These are in contrast to the idea of long-term branding strategies produced nowadays that extend beyond the rule of the government in office.

What makes up nation branding, and how it has been instrumental in its evaluation, has undergone significant development in that certain components have come to more important than others. There is no prescribed list of what nation branding is supposed to contain content-wise, [27] yet the tendency to place emphasis on some indicators has coincided with the ubiquity of quantitative branding measurement in the form of indexes.[28] These have gained ground in the last 15 years and consist of index scores based on the comparison and analysis of survey results on the perception of the given country.[29] The sense of view is regularly calculated on a hexagon model, designed by Anholt, including the categories tourism, exports, people,

[23] Pamment and Wilkins, "Communication at the Crossroads".
[24] C. Viktorin eds., *Nation Branding in Modern History,* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018); S. Davis, "Ethnophotography, Nation Branding, and National Competition in Transylvania: E. Sigerus' Durch Siebenbürgen," *Nationalities Papers* (2022): 1-22, accessed: April 2,2023.
[25] Saunders, "Brand Interrupted," 52.
[26] Hnoline.sk
[27] Hnoline.sk.
[28] V. Moravčíková, "Budovanie značky štátu" ['Making of the country's brand'], *Culturologica Slovaca* 1 (2016): 37-46; R. Hoefte and W. Veenendaal, "The Challenges of Nation-Building and Nation Branding in Multi-Ethnic Suriname," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics,* 25.2, (2019): 173-190, accessed: March 26, 2023. DOI: 10.1080/13537113.2019.1602371.; S. Anholt, "Hexagon" in C, Zeineddine, *Proceeding of the International Conference on Business Excellence*, 12.1, (2012): 1059-1068, accessed: May 28,2023 DOI: 10.2478/picbe-2018-0095.
[29] P. Steiger, "Slovakia as a Good Idea: The Politics of Nation Branding and the Making of Competitive Identities," in I. Götz, K. Roth and M. Spiritova, *Neuer Nationalismus im östlichen Europa* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2017): 205-227.

governance, investment and immigration, as well as culture and heritage.[30] The shift in methodology has also been reflected by many countries, including Slovakia, in that they include experts from each of these sectors when designing the brand.[31]

According to Kaneva, the challenge in taking on nation branding in Central and Eastern Europe stood in the need of the countries to distance from old economic and political systems to appear as reliable and eligible partners.[32] The need to change the national image was immense and nation branding, as a tool to manage the image, became quickly popular with Poland, Estonia, and Latvia among the first to invite consultants from the west to help them brand.[33] The reason was not that nation branding entered the public spotlight sooner in the west, but that economists and researchers were already familiar with the emerging practices that would become instrumental in the process of branding a country.[34] Soon after, experts on nation branding from the domestic scene started to emerge as well and contributed to popularising the phenomenon.[35] The widespread exposure of nation branding caught the post-socialist countries in an important stage of nation-building. Defining the most importance performance indicators was accompanied by both the ongoing democratisation and re-forged issues related to ethnic identities that were frozen during socialism.[36] The consequences that the ranging of these processes had on nation branding were reflected in the proposed content of the brand and relevant material, where marks of various reflections on national identity and short-term political ambitions may have been found. The struggles to come up with long-term branding

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[30] Anholt, "Hexagon", 1059-1068.
[31] Hnoline.sk.
[32] Kaneva, "Nation Branding in the Post-Communist World," 797–807.
[33] Kaneva, "Nation Branding in the Post-Communist World," 797–807.
[34] Kaneva, "Nation Branding in the Post-Communist World," 797–807.
[35] Kaneva, "Nation Branding in the Post-Communist World," 797–807.
[36] P. Jordan, "From Wild Dances in Ukraine to Hard Rock in Finland: A comparative perspective," *The Modern Fairy Tale: Nation Branding, National Identity and the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia* (Tartu: University of Tartu Press, 2014): 15.

strategies that would outlive the current government in power are described by various authors in Kaneva's book on Branding Post-Communist Nations, where the case-studies of Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Slovenia, or Serbia are well traced.[37] Nonetheless, these case studies do not draw many links between how the case-studies of given countries fit in with the discourse of nation branding in the region as a whole. Given the age of the data used in many of these case-studies, which is over 10 years old, new conclusions are to be drawn on unexplored case-studies such as that of Slovakia that would tell something more about how branding unveiled in the region.

The nation branding of Slovakia has been studied in several articles whose clarifies the process of how the brand was made but without much evaluation and connection to further literature. Lenka Štefčeková and Anna Vaňová wrote on the perceived and projected image of Slovakia at the time when the first drafts of branding strategies came out.[38] Their contribution rests primarily on the analysis of nation branding measurements and suggestion that the portrayal of Slovakia as a country of paradoxes is adequate.[39] Veronika Moravčíková followed suit and wrote about nation branding as a tool of marketing communication.[40] The articles is, similarly, an analysis of existing branding without explicit findings or positions on how the brand of Slovakia stands. The most recent account is from Petra Steiger, who traced the changing discourses pertained in the Slovak brand and opined that the tradition and culture are combined with innovation and technology.[41] In her conclusion, the narrative of "Good Idea Slovakia"

[37] Kaneva, "Nation Branding in the Post-Communist World," 797–807.
[38] L. Štefčeková, and A. Vaňová, "Comparison of Perceived and Projected Image of Slovakia as a Starting Point for a Country Image Building Strategy," *Socioeconomic, political and legal issues*, 1.3 (2013): 41-50.
[39] Štefčeková and Vaňová, "Comparison of Perceived and Projected Image".
[40] Moravčíková, ['Making of the country's brand'].
[41] Steiger, "Slovakia as a Good Idea," 205-227.

redresses the romantic past of the country in a naturalist interpretation which is to make the country attractive on the global market of competitive identities.

Scholarly accounts of nation branding in Central and Eastern Europe lack a comprehensive narration of how the phenomenon was put to practice with individual portrayals scattered across academic disciplines and impacted by different methodological approaches.[42] This is to do with different findings stemming, of both its depiction and practice, coming from theoretical scholarship of the concept, on the one hand, and account of branding experts and marketers, on the other hand.[43] The shift to a quantitative approach has enforced the distortions in that more focus has been devoted to exploring nation brands through the categories of the hexagon,[44] which put a different perspective on what is qualitatively described in case-studies found in other works.[45] The claimed correlation between nation branding and democracy, depicted solely by a quantitative approach, is an example of this disparity lacking a qualitative account and not making sense when applied to Central and Eastern Europe. This gap, in various findings across approaches with fewer case-studies of nation branding in Central and Eastern Europe, invites to trace the making of the Slovak brand with the use of the most recent data.

The methodology of the thesis consists of multiple methods that reflect on previous approaches, and their nuances, and that offer a versatile perspective tailored to the branding of Slovakia. The first two chapters, on the positionality of nation brand and its making in Slovakia, are taken on by qualitative approaches of process-tracing and content analysis. The last chapter, on

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[42] Kaneva, "Nation Branding in the Post-Communist World," 797–807.
[43] Kaneva, "Nation Branding in the Post-Communist World," 797–807.
[44] Two most authoritative indexes cited in articles are the Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index and Good Country Index. Both measure the brand on similar categories but ask different questions. Whereas the first is about the overall perception of the country, the latter seeks to find out how useful it is with regards to offering solutions to global issues. Due to the irregular updates on the results of the latter index, only the first is directly worked with in the thesis.
[45] For example, R.A. Saunders wrote about case-studies of nation branding strategies in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

democracy and nation branding, is approached quantitatively with a focus on the position of countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

Process tracing consists of contextualising accounts of nation branding within relevant development and related discourses. In both positivist and interpretivist theoretical frameworks, it examines a limited number of events to discover causal inference rather than opt for generalisation.[46] To avoid the risk, prior knowledge and tests of plausibility are needed.[47] The method is used to explain the relation of nation branding to the development of nationhood and statehood in Slovakia.[48] Specifically, it examines the political background of strategical documents and government legislation, as well as related discourses. In doing so, it refers to articles found in media, on the politicisation, as well as relevant legislative documents, and primary and secondary branding material produced within this process.

Content analysis in its qualitative understanding, interpreting key terms and thoughts, is used throughout the first two chapters. It depicts content and user coded scores, or other analysis, to render reliability.[49] In this thesis, content analysis is applied to primary and secondary documents that contain the nation branding label. The analysis includes focusing on key terms that are used to render the most important performance indicators and define the prioritised audience. Specific attention is paid to the narration of history through momentous years, which is found in Slovak and Czech branding material.[50] Furthermore, the approach elaborates on

[46] D. Marsh and G. Stokker, "Constructivism and Interpretive Theory," *Theories and Methods in Political Science* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010): 81; P.A Hall, "Tracing the progress of process tracing," *European political science,* (2013): 1-11, accessed: June 2, 2023. DOI: 10.1057/eps.2012.6.
[47] Marsh and Stokker, "Constructivism and Interpretive Theory".
[48] The discourses on the creation and forms of nation and state are taken from scholarly literature of nationalism studies.
[49] T. F. Carney, *Content Analysis: A Technique for Systematic Inference from Communications* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1972).
[50] S. Michálek, "Slovaks Through the Century," *Slovak Academy of Science, The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic,* (2018), accessed: May 9, 2023.



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constitutional identity to draw links to nation branding practices. The connection lies in observing the terms of self-identification on an institutional level as compared to the ones branded for purposes of competitiveness and acquiescence of resources.

The quantitative correlation is used in the last chapter in which it is used to explore the alleged link between democracy and nation branding. The variable of nation branding ranking on the Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index is put into relation with the democracy ranking on Global Democracy Index based on existing research and other similarities explained later on. To avoid confusion due to different sample sets, the rankings are displayed in percentile scores used as units. The calculation on the correlation, and its visualisation, is performed in the STATA programme. The added value of the correlation is that it can clearly express whether the operation units of Central and Eastern Europe apply to the general norm of closeness between nation branding and democracy given the sample size.

In the first chapter, the thesis begins by placing the concept of nation branding into a theoretical framework of nationhood, statehood, and imagined community to draw the connection to the Slovak branding project. It continues, in the second chapter, with tracing the process of making of the Slovak brand, as practice with reference to other empirical examples in the region, with detailed depiction of the political background, legislation, narration of history, and defining constitutional identity.[51] In the last chapter, nation branding in the region is elaborated on with democracy using data from the Good Country Index and Global Democracy Index. The sample units consist of those countries found on both indexes, countries of Central and Eastern Europe, countries of Central Europe, and Slovakia. The sample unit of Slovakia is too small to perform the Spearman's rho correlation, therefore its results it deducted from other sample

[51] The findings are weighed against comparable trends in the surrounding countries alongside accounts of Slovak self-acknowledgment of its place in the region.



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visualisations, which display other calculations of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Europe.

# 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Nation branding is thus a set of state-based activities that communicate the national image to the targeted audience to make the country look competitive and meaningful. The specific form of nation branding accepted nowadays is portrayed by the emphasis on the components found in the hexagon model consisting of the categories of tourism, exports, people, governance, investment and immigration, cultural and heritage, and respective sub-categories.[52] Countries are not only rated on indexes based on the perception they get on these categories, but arrange committees of brand makers from these sectors to construct the brand accurately with a perspective of success in its overall impact and index.[53] This does not negate the opinion that the most important performance indicators are to be identified by the countries themselves, but it suggests that the internationally recognised ranking systems of nation branding put forward a favourable product which countries, that are on these indexes, tend to follow.[54] This way, states highlight some of their strong characteristics, to attract resources, which offer a promising future as that is what nation branding is most related to according to Anholt.[55] Some countries, including Slovakia, justify their promising future by branding the story of their past to show how the nation managed to overcome various obstacles as it developed.[56] This chapter depicts

[52] Anholt, "Hexagon," 1059-1068.
[53] The branding process is furthermore accompanied by the breakdown of boundaries between representation performed by the state and state actors to include non-state actors as well as part of the process of neoliberalism.
[54] For example, the Anholt-Ipsos nation brands index contains 20 core countries and 40 other ones measured. They are put on the index either due to their strategic importance or because they initiate it themselves.
[55] Hnoline.sk.
[56] A. Bán, et al. ['Slovakia: Country with Potential'], *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic* (2011).



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the nation brand of Slovakia as a theoretical concept and draws connections between its form and relevant concepts of nation, brand, and imagined community to explain its standing. It starts by elaborating on the relevance of nationhood and statehood theories, as well as accounts of how the imagined community is branded, in the case of Slovakia.

### 2.1 Nation Branding and Nation

Nation in its ethnic understanding is thought to have emerged in modernity within the formation of a "ethnie" grouping.[57] Some of the dominant characteristics of the "ethnies" was that they contained shared myths of ancestry, common cultural background, and a sense of solidarity.[58] These attributes then translated into larger gatherings of nations that stand on myths of shared past, language, religion, traditions, and customs.[59] More specifically, the myths recognised by Anthony D. Smith include those of the narrative of common origin, migration or liberation, descent with emphasis on the nature of ancestors, heroic age, communal decline, and finally rebirth that connects with present times.[60] Although nation as a form of mobilisation, noted to have emerged in today's Germany, stood independent of state structures at first, being even antagonistic in the case of Poland,[61] it came to significantly impact the formation of nation-states in the 19th and 20th centuries.[62]

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[57] A.D. Smith, "Culture, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism," *International Affairs* 72.3 (1996): 446.
[58] Smith, "Culture, Community and Territory," 446.
[59] A.D. Smith, "Ethnic myths and ethnic revivals," *European Journal of Sociology* 25.2 (1984): 292.
[60] Smith, "Ethnic myths and ethnic revivals," 293; E. Gellner, *Nationalism* (New York: NYU Press, 1997); Another similar interpretation of Gellner of how the nation came to be formed were the mobilisations of those that shared common cultural background, rather than close personal contact, during industrialisation.
[61] P. Surowiec and M. Kania-Lundhold, "Branding Poland online: propagating and resisting nation branding on Facebook," *Social Media and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe,* ed. by P. Surowiec and V., Stetka, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018): 160-182.
[62] R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 1992).

Branding is a new sort of conduct typical of the 21st century where states need not to be defined as having civic or ethnic national foundations but need to appear as collaborative and suitable to address issues that surpass their nationhood and statehood.[63] In this model, any nation can be both inclusive and exclusive when defining its citizenry.[64] Yet these discourses still make their way into the nation branding practices. This can be seen in the presence of references to ethnic foundations of Slovakia whose myths of the past describe the country's essence.[65] Perhaps none better than the term "rootedness", found in the first draft of branding strategy from 2011, illustrate this example better.[66] Rootedness relates to the strong identification with the ethnic roots of the Slovak nation and justifies the peculiarities found in the way its citizens approach challenges.[67] Rather than evoking awkwardness, this trait is presented as having potential and with a country full of paradoxes that start with its small size.[68] In this interpretation, it is clear that the sources of rootedness go further in history than sovereign statehood, which Slovakia gained in 1993 making it one of the youngest states in Europe[69], and refers to much earlier origins found in the framework of ethnic nationalism.

[63] Hnoline.sk.
[64] R. Brubaker, "In the name of the nation: reflections on nationalism and patriotism," *Citizenship Studies* 8.2, (2004): 122, accessed: April 9, 2023. DOI: 10.1080/1362102042000214705.
[65] Steiger, "Slovakia as a Good Idea," 205-227.
[66] Bán, et al. ['Slovakia: Country with Potential'].
[67] Bán, et al. ['Slovakia: Country with Potential'].
[68] Bán, et al. ['Slovakia: Country with Potential'].
[69] An alternative explanation is presented by Liah Greenfeld, who traces the semantic shifts of the meaning of 'nation' further back into history. Going back as far as Ancient Rome, nations were thought to be groups of foreigners not enough to be considered citizens. Later on, they emerged as communities of opinions in medieval universities. Then nation as elite, and as sovereign people, or community of equals, emerged in 16th century England which Greenfeld considers to be the first nation. In this understanding, nation developed within various other statehood entities with its membership defined by a contractual citizenship; L. Greenfeld, "Etymology, Definitions, Types, lead theoretical essay," *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, 1 (2000): 251-265.



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## 2.2 Nation Branding and State

Unlike the blurry origins of nationhood that seem to occur somewhat naturally, the origins of statehood are thought to be grounded in specific compromises and power sharing deals. Steven Patton dates this moment to the Peace of Westphalia which placed the basis for state sovereignty that consisted of institutionalising confessional plurality to cease religious warfare across kingdoms and empires.[70] State authority has been since exercised in various forms and has taken on new traits. This has also been reflected on various stages of nation building processes where the relations between statehood, tied to the legacy and tradition of sovereign state, and nationhood, expressed by ethnic identities, have undergone significant development since.[71] The deeper meaning behind the changing relations, and their connection to nation branding as a more novel phenomenon, may be explained by Pierre Bourdieu's view on the state as that of overseeing power struggles among dominant groups within its realm.[72] These struggles occur also on an ideological basis within claims of various groups to universal claims. In this interpretation, nation branding is a newcomer as an "cultural intermediary".[73] Its presence may be viewed within a subfield of power where elites and professionals engaged to enforce their vision of the country.[74] As a top-down initiative, it is inherently an elite project in which the state power over identity formation is manifested.[75]

[70] S. Patton, "The Peace of Westphalia and it Affects (sic.) on International Relations, Diplomacy and Foreign Policy," *Histories* 10.1 (2019): 91-99; R. Brubaker, "Religion and nationalism: four approaches," *Nations and Nationalism* 18.1 (2012): 2-20.
[71] As the idea of state changed, in its structure and functions, many of its practices resemble what some authors, such as Carolin Viktorin, call nation branding in history. Still, these occurred when the main concern of the state was prioritising its own security before appealing to global spectrum as attractive and worthy of scarce resources, more attention, and competitiveness in the form of willingness to cooperation; Brubaker, "In the name of the nation," 122.
[72] Surowiec, "Toward Corpo-Nationalism: Poland and the Brand," 124-147.
[73] Surowiec, "Toward Corpo-Nationalism: Poland and the Brand," 124-147.
[74] Surowiec, "Toward Corpo-Nationalism: Poland and the Brand," 124-147.
[75] This fits in with structuralist view of nationalism found in Surowiec, "Toward Corpo-Nationalism: Poland and the Brand," 124-147.

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Yet in the case of Slovakia, whose brand creation and management has been centralised into unified committees underneath the auspices of the state structures, unlike Czechia and Poland, the reference to the tradition of statehood appears only dimly. The year of gaining sovereign statehood lies at the end of the branded momentous years in the nation's history, which make up one of the sources of its branding.[76] An explanation may be that it is disputed in that some claim that the Slovak Republic (known as the Slovak State), which existed during the Second World War, in 1939-1945, is a predecessor of the current Slovak Republic. Even though the legal continuity is ruled out,[77] the lack of association of many with the way Slovakia was created due to nature of the breakup of Czechoslovakia, makes it hard to assume that a significant part of the population would saliently and loyally align behind statehood. Despite this, the stability of Slovak statehood promises a major contribution to global issues by means of promising innovations and technological buildout. Without mentioning where statehood came from, it is through of as a good idea to be able to offer much needed talent and attract targeted resources.

### 2.3 Branding of the Imagined Community

The imagined community relates to the collective portrayal of the country's population as understood by Benedict Anderson.[78] In this reading, the imagined community resembles the sort of information found in newspapers where various different stories create the idea of what is going on in the country without those actors, who are written about, being consciously aware of it.[79] In the same way, memorials of anonymous identities, such as unknown soldiers, are

[76] Michálek, "Slovaks Through the Century".
[77] Dream x Reality, "Slovenský štát v. Slovenská republika" ['Slovak State vs. Slovak Republic'], Slovak National Gallery (2016), accessed: June 3, 2023. https://scd.sk/publikacia-kniznice/sen-x-skutocnost-umenie-propaganda-1939-1945/.
[78] B. Anderson, "Introduction," *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983): 37-64.
[79] Anderson, "Introduction," 37-64.

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often subject to national pride and commemoration as they depersonalise the individual to fit in with more collective identities of the nation's essence.[80] The top-down approach, in which the initiative to create a brand comes from the top levels of state administration, inspired by successful models from abroad, cannot expect the whole population to accept the brand but assumes that a significant part of the population would fit in with the characteristics it lays forward. In the current characterisation of nation branding, the nations are reimagined as a 'generic conventions of commercial discourse within neoliberalism'.[81]

The terms used to describe Slovakia's population lies on highlight the role of key individuals and characterising the population by various terms of various character traits with different intensity. The first strategy from 2011, which was to propose the performance indicators to be branded, wrote that these should be sought from the story of Slovakia as defining itself with the west throughout the 90s and becoming mature thanks to the ability self-determination and presence of a strong civil society.[82] The discourse of the population started with claiming that "rootedness", "ingenuity", "diversity", and "vitality" of the country and its population culminated in a major potential. In the next strategy from 2013, many sub-attributes of the proposed key performance traits were formed adding "authenticity", "emotionality", "folklore", "many contrasts on a small territory", "intersection of civilisations", "adaptability", "handiness", or "ambitiousness" within the sketch of moving from self-criticism to positive branding.[83] A multiple method research from 2015, which measured the identification with

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[80] Anderson, "Introduction" 37-64.
[81] N. Kaneva, "The Branded National Imagination and its Limits: Insights from the Post-Socialist Experience," *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 39.1 (2017): 116–138, accessed: May 15, 2023. DOI: 10.35293/srsa.v39i1.325.
[82] Bán, et al. ['Slovakia: Country with Potential'].
[83] O. Gyárfášová, et al. "Imidž Slovenska z pohľadu zahraničia" ['Image of Slovakia from the Foreign Perspective of Viewing Slovakia Through the Eyes of Foreign Experts: view on Slovakia in Selected Foreign Media'], *Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences and Institute for Public Affairs* (2012); In between the two strategies came out one that contained results of research on the perception of Slovakia among foreign public.

these traits, found that most respondents accustomed with the nation-state trait of authenticity, idea that there are many contrasts found on a small territory, as well as notable diversity.[84] The most recent branding, called "Good Idea Slovakia", has moved away from focusing too much on these characteristic traits and leaves the population to relate with the examples and performance indicators that resemble the content of the aforementioned qualities and peculiarities.[85] In addition, a brochure from 2018 brings forward the narrative of Slovak history through momentous years, the so called "momentous eights", where history seems to evolve around both significant years and important personalities which stand as symbols of the branded events or the climax of a set of processes.[86]

## Conclusion

The theoretical concept of nation branding has various meanings when it is elaborated on with the discourses of nation, state, and imagined community. Its understanding when tied to nation demonstrates that the terms "nations" and "state" are used interchangeably and flexibly. Even so, the branding of Slovakia, as a practice, situates the discourse of its nationhood more firmly that that of statehood. In fact, the year 1993, when it gained sovereign statehood, is one of its last momentous years to be branded. The theoretical concept of imagined community, which is likewise elaborate on with regards to nation branding, has several bearings in the practical branding examples of Slovakia. These consist of paying attention to changes in momentous years, with reference to key personalities, and the set out to define its Slovak population up until the most recent brand in which it is defined more openly.[87] But the overall frequent elaboration on what the country's brand should be, and how its population is to be displayed,

[84] M. Boťanská, et al. ['Study conducted for the Ministry of Transport, Construction, and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic'] *MB Brand Management* (2015).
[85] Steiger, "Slovakia as a Good Idea", 205-227.
[86] Michálek, "Slovaks Through the Century".
[87] Steiger, "Slovakia as a Good Idea," 205-227.

confirms that these strategies were not merely reproducing a stable discourse but defining it at the same time. The uncertainty and lack of mobilisation with regards to statehood, as well as the prevailing ethnic narrative of the nation's foundations, meant that the state had to come up with a narrative of the country's identity as well as a nation branding strategy.

# 3. MAKING OF THE SLOVAK BRAND IN A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

This chapter traces the making of the Slovak brand, both as a theoretical concept and practice, from various perspectives. The examples provided view Slovakia as having a different trajectory of branding than other countries in the region even though it shares many similarities. The chapter starts with accounting for the political background of nation branding strategies. It shows that the Slovak brand has been affected by short-term political goals due to which several efforts to produce a long-lasting brand were halted. It continues by exploring the legislative underpinning of nation branding to argue that similarly to Poland, but unlike Czechia, the Slovak brand has been enforced with minimum legislation. It continues with elaborating on the lack of consensus, both among brand makers and the society subject to branding, of the most important performance indicators of Slovakia. The shifting content of branding, which partly justifies this claim, is subsequently explored, in this chapter, as it illustrates how the Slovak brand shifted to contain more neoliberal features seem most visible on its message for the future. Nonetheless, the loaded attempts to explain and interpret the past, present in the earlier strategies in other countries as well, has not gone away as the analysis of recent scholarly and branding accounts of the momentous years of Slovak and Czech history demonstrate. The last part of the chapter looks at how constitutional identity relates to nation branding in the region

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and how it plays out in Slovakia. For purposes of clarity, a table may be found in the appendix summarising relevant claims on legislation and strategy of nation branding, identified by the thesis, in context.

### 3.1 Political Background of Strategies

The need of the post-socialist countries to manage their national images abroad was immense and many soon addressed the need of brand management from the top.[88] This meant creating government agencies or coming up with strategies that were to coordinate the presentation of the countries abroad. This was also the case of Slovakia, which set up its Information Agency as part of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic as early as 1995.[89] Its aim was primarily to resolve the negative image that the government had abroad rather than explicitly put away the label of the socialist past or face other stereotypes.[90] In the Czech Republic, the coordination of branding started even sooner with the creation of government agencies called Czech Tourism, Czech Invest (both founded in 1992), Czech Trade (founded in 1997),[91] on top of existing Czech Centers, that were to advance the new image of the country within their own agendas. The earliest Czech strategies, dating from 2005 onwards, state that the overall goal of the Czech national image was to distinguish it from the still well-known brand of former Czechoslovakia, as well as the former socialist regime but not the image of the government as was the case in Slovakia.[92] In comparison, the origins of the Polish brand are dated to early 1990s and have since been exemplified on a more campaign basis than long-term strategies

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[88] Kaneva, "Nation Branding in the Post-Communist World," 797–807.
[89] Hnoline.sk.
[90] Hnoline.sk.
[91] "Koncepce jednotné prezentace České Republiky" ['Conception of Unified Presentation of Czech Republic'], Docplayer, accessed: May 12, 2023, https://docplayer.cz/397975-Koncepce-jednotne-prezentace-ceske-republiky.html.
[92] Docplayer.

labelled as corporate-style branding.[93] It is within these post-socialist processes of state-based branding that most material analysed in this thesis emerged in addition to various mobilisations and formations of brand experts under state premises that also focused on.

Apart from stating varying different goals that nation branding was to achieve, either improving the country's image impacted by negative reputation of the current government, or clearing it of the socialist past, countries in Central and Eastern Europe drew on good cases of practice from abroad in the earliest accounts. For example, the Czech branding strategy concluded, after referring to branding systems in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, that the initiative to organise and control the brand must come from the top levels of state representation, which was to promote it most.[94] The Slovak brand makers looked at the branding models of Norway, Sweden, and Finland to depict which departments and ministries are in charge of executing the branding strategy.[95] Poland made notes about the models of Spain and Ireland to follow on their examples of economic propaganda which was featured in global media outlets.[96] Another dimension that was explored on other countries was to do with the question of centralised or decentralised branding management to secure its success. In particular, the case-study of the Netherlands was brought up again as it epitomised a centralised model.[97] Specifically, the Dutch government decided to concentrate all branding activities under the competencies of one

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[93] Surowiec and Kania-Lundhold, "Branding Poland online: propagating and resisting nation branding on Facebook".; In the case of Hungary, it is not clear when nation branding strategies first started. The agenda lies within the competence of Hungarian Tourist Agency which contains no documents or reference to legislation available online; ['Introduction'], MTÜ, accessed: May 13, 2023, https://mtu.gov.hu/.
[94] ['Conception of Unified Presentation of Czech Republic']; The Slovak branding describe the branding experience of Scandinavian countries as role models.
[95] J. Bátora and T. Gyelnik, "Branding Nórsko, Švédsko, Fínsko" ['Branding of the country: Experience of Noway, Svede, and Finland'], *Faculty of Social and Economic Studies, Comenius University* (2012).
[96] Surowiec, "Toward Corpo-Nationalism: Poland and the Brand," 124-147.
[97] Docplayer.

department at a certain point.[98] However, the decision was depicted rather negatively as it communicated the centralising aspirations of the government and did not erase the misconceptions and lack of clarity of the brand raised as an issue to be dealt with by the centralisation.[99] This was unlike the undertakings of the post-socialist governments, which were trying to redefine the positionality of the state and encouraged privatisation to different extends.

Whereas most countries in Central and Eastern Europe opted for a decentralised branding model, where individual components of branding were managed by different departments of the state, Slovakia and Hungary started with a centralised model putting all activity under the responsibility of a government agency.[100] Slovak has since been decentralising its branding management by including members of different ministries and agencies, as well as non-state actors, into unified working groups and committees. Nonetheless, the practical branding management is still different compared to that of Czechia and Poland where many initiatives arise, sometimes from bottom-up, within the public and private spheres. Even in these countries made some steps to coordinate and unify the management of their brands, it has not been as centralised as in Slovakia. In particular, the two countries have created coordinating bodies in form of a new Office of Special Plenipotentiary, in Czechia, or the Council for the Promotion of Poland, which has given out guidelines for branding in the past.[101] All in all, the decision to

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[98] Docplayer.
[99] Docplayer.
[100] "Proces tvorby a implementácie značky krajiny" ['Process of creation and implementation of the country's brand'], Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, accessed: April 20, 2023, https://www.mzv.sk/web/sk/ministerstvo/prezentacia-slovenska-v-zahranici/znacka-slovensko/proces-tvorby-a-implementacie-znacky-krajiny; L. Kulcsár and Y. Young-Ok, "One Nation, One Brands? Nation Branding and Identity Reconstruction in Post-Communist Hungary,!" *Branding Post-Communist Nations*, ed. N. Kaneva, (New York: Routledge, 2012): 193-213.
[101] "Zvláštní zmocněnci" ['Special plenipotentiaries'], Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed: May 6, 2023, https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/organizacni_struktura/zvlastni_zmocnenci/index.html; Surowiec, "Toward Corpo-Nationalism: Poland and the Brand," 124-147.

centralise the branding activity at first did not pay off for Slovakia as the politicisation and related problems that accompanied the agency obstructed the creation of the whole content for nation branding.[102]

The reason behind the early difficulties in branding was that it succumbed to short-term political goals. In general, the frequent changes of the branding content in relation to the political representation in charge bears the risk of impacting the credibility of branding, in the eyes of both the foreign target audience and significant part of domestic population, as well as its readability. As was pointed out, the task of the agency in charge of branding, the Slovak Information Agency, was to invest into changing the image that Slovakia had abroad in part due to the reputation of its government.[103] Although it was agreed, among the political representation, that the country aspires to join NATO and the European Union, the practices of government led to discrepancies between 'constitutional law and political practice'.[104] As a consequence, Slovakia received no invitation to join NATO and was among the second group of states within the talks of accessing the European Union in 1997.[105] On top of that, it obtained negative coverage in 1997 when the former foreign secretary of the United States Madeleine Albright in 1997 called it a "Black Hole in Europe".[106] Even so, the problems with the agency were tied to the politicisation of its personnel and disputes regarding the handling of finances.[107] The agency soon happened to be as much in debt as amounted the financial resources it gained

[102] Docplayer.
[103] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.
[104] "The Accession of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to NATO," Warsaw Institute, accessed: June 4, 2023, https://warsawinstitute.org/accession-poland-czech-republic-hungary-nato/.
[105] "The Accession of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to NATO".
[106] M. Dzurinda, "Slovakia, still the 'black hole' of Europe," POLITICO.EU, accessed: April 23, 2023, https://www.politico.eu/article/slovakia-black-hole-of-europe/.
[107] D. Matejčíková, "Slovenská informačná agentúra zlyhala nielen ako politická objednávka tretej Mečiarovej vlády" ['Slovak Information Agency Failed Not Only as Political Order'], SME.sk, accessed: April 23, 2023, https://www.sme.sk/c/2156967/slovenska-informacna-agentura-zlyhala-nielen-ako-politicka-objednavka-tretej-meciarovej-vlady.html.



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at the start.[108] Multiple other affairs regarding its personnel only added to its damaged reputation [109] Consequently, the new government formed in 1998 did not oversee its continuation.[110] This decision meant that Slovakia, like Hungary whose Country Image Centre was closed down in 2002 for similar reasons,[111] had no official government body that would coordinate the branding based on adopted strategies. Instead, individual branding campaigns were managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and focused on presenting Slovakia to the European Union and European Union to Slovakia.[112] The process of expounding the most important performance indicators, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, started in 2011 after another short-lived committee, in 2009, did not prove to work due to alleged politicisation.[113]

The decision to introduce a long-term branding strategy came in 2011 in relation to important milestone incorporating the upcoming Slovak presidency of the Council of European Union.[114] Such step was not the first in the region, as Poland embarked on a five-year plan back in 2003 to create a long-term nation branding programme.[115] This process was commissioned by the Polish Chamber of Commerce, who assigned the task to Saffron Brand Consultants with the

[108] Matejčíková, ['Slovak Information Agency Failed Not Only as Political Order'].
[109] Matejčíková, ['Slovak Information Agency Failed Not Only as Political Order'].
[110] Matejčíková, ['Slovak Information Agency Failed Not Only as Political Order'].
[111] Kulcsár and Young-Ok, "One Nation, One Brands?," 193-213.
[112] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs; The same was recorded in Poland. In between 2000 and 2004, most of the promotional campaigns produced or commissioned by state officials in Poland or overseas were justified with Poland's accession to the European Union found in Surowiec, 'Toward Corpo-Nationalism: Poland and the Brand," 124-147; This was accompanied by a campaign to present Slovakia as a 'Little Big Country' managed by the Ministry of Economy; "Značka Slovensko: jednotná vizuálna identita štátnej správy, koherencia vládnych politík a potreba systémového riešenia jednotnej prezentácie SR v budúcnosti" ['Brand Slovakia: Unified Visual Identity of State Sector, Coherence of Government Policies and the Need of a Systematic Solution on the Unified Representation of Slovakia in the Future'], *Government Office of the Slovak Republic*, accessed: April 20, 2023, https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/12661/1; The Brand 'Good Idea Slovakia' was meant for years 2016-2020 but was still in use in 2022 at the Dubai Expo which was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
[113] Government Office of the Slovak Republic.
[114] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.
[115] Surowiec, "Toward Corpo-Nationalism: Poland and the Brand," 124-147.

process endorsed by the Polish president.[116] Nonetheless, this attempt resulted in one video of a Briton commenting on his life in Poland, which evoked some generalisations and was not rated positively due to the small sample size.[117] Not long after, the change of government caused the project to discontinue as it did not identify with the stereotypes of Polishness implied by the footage.[118] Moving back to Slovakia, the first drafted document, called "Slovakia – Country with Potential" was formed by a group of ten experts from academia, media, and creative industry.[119] Such portrayal of Slovakia, from 2009, was also comprehended by the attributes that the authors came up with all pointing to the notion of "potential".[120] Some of the authors were engaged in a subsequent research, in 2012, that examined the view of Slovakia found abroad by conducting a focus group research, with sample of 34 experts, and surveying articles found in English and German mainstream media.[121] In their conclusion, they backed their previous findings of the strong presence of "potential" in the Slovak brand alongside the notions of "closeness" and a strong moving story of success despite the controversial government led by Vladimír Mečiar throughout the most of the 90s.[122]

The second major attempt to propose a strategy came in 2013 and this time involved experts and delegates from multiple government departments alongside media, tourism, and creative industry in the same process.[123] Such move stipulates an effort to conduct branding based on the criteria measured by the indexes, as well as by international branding standards. The fact

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[116] Surowiec, "Toward Corpo-Nationalism: Poland and the Brand," 124-147.
[117] Surowiec, "Toward Corpo-Nationalism: Poland and the Brand," 124-147.
[118] Surowiec, "Toward Corpo-Nationalism: Poland and the Brand," 135.
[119] Bán, et al. ['Slovakia: Country with Potential'].
[120] Bán, et al. ['Slovakia: Country with Potential'].
[121] Gyárfášová, et al. ['Image of Slovakia from the Foreign Perspective of Viewing Slovakia Through the Eyes of Foreign Experts: view on Slovakia in Selected Foreign Media'].
[122] Gyárfášová, ['Image of Slovakia from the Foreign Perspective of Viewing Slovakia Through the Eyes of Foreign Experts: view on Slovakia in Selected Foreign Media'].
[123] M. Timoracký, et al. "Branding of Slovakia: From Idea Concept to Messages and Communication," *Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs* (2013).

that Slovakia received a rather negative placement on the GfK-Roper Nation Brands Index (later known as Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index), where it finished on the 38th position out of 50, was reflected in the sense of urgency for a new branding strategy which may have been behind it.[124] The strategy that came out of the subsequent cooperation rearranged the standing of most important characteristic traits of Slovakia but did not result in major change content-wise. It was likewise followed, two years later, by research, consisting of multiple methods, on how the respondents, in total 250 from five different countries, perceived Slovakia based on its own findings in the document from 2013.[125] Finally, after two rounds of draft strategies a tender was put up, in 2016, with clearly defined guidelines and messages of the brand. It was won by the private company called Creative Departments Creative Department,[126] which produced physical tools, brochures, clothes, and other things where the logo was found.

As the intended duration of the branding strategy, that labelled Slovakia as a "Good Idea", is over[127] a new undertaking of making the nation branding has started again.[128] This time, its creation has encompassed further international advice with Anholt himself involved in helping to define the new brand.[129] One of the stated reasons why he is engaging this way with Slovakia is that its nation branding has stayed stagnant on his index scale even though the country joined

[124] Štefčeková and Vaňová, "Comparison of Perceived and Projected Image".; The presence of Slovakia on the index was discontinued apparently due to the lack of resources, Štefčeková and Vaňová claim in their article.
[125] Government Office of the Slovak Republic.
[126] "Expertné testovanie komunikačných posolstiev prostredníctvom kvalitatívneho a kvantitatívneho prieskumu v segmente slovenských a zahraničných odborníkov v oblasti cestovného ruchu" ['Expert testing of communication messages through qualitative and quantiative research in the segment of Slovak and foreign experts in tourism'], *Creative Deparments* (2015).
[127] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.; The Brand "Good Idea Slovakia" was meant for years 2016-2020 but was still in use in 2022 at the Dubai Expo which was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
[128] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.
[129] Hnoline.sk.

the European Union years ago, which he claims is a norm for brand improvement.[130] Some consultation and advice has been going in the background ever since.[131] According to the latest news, a Working Commission for the Representation of Slovakia Abroad, founded as the sub-committee of the Committee for Competitiveness and Productivity, is the new body responsible for coming up with the new brand.[132] After two sitting no definite details have come out and the new most important performance indicators are yet to be revealed.

Even if the responsibility for branding has expanded and stretched out, it keeps on bouncing between ministries and government agencies rather than relying on long-term strategies. Over the years, the branding management has seen the involvement the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, which was responsible for the creation of the latest brand, along with the Ministry of Economy, under whose wings the new brand is being created, and the Ministry of Transport, which oversees the work of the Slovak Tourist Agency responsible for putting Slovakia back on the index.[133] This is contrast to how nation branding was taken on in the Czech Republic, where it has stood on persisting and renewing strategies. All strategies related to nation branding are tailored with its message, which is used to brand separately segments of economy, tourism and natural heritage, culture and science, and sport.[134] The most version of this brand strategy may be found in the document on innovation strategy for years 2019-2030, found in the figure below, in which Czechia is described as the "Country

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[130] Hnoline.sk.
[131] Hnoline.sk.
[132] "Vyjadrenie: MZVEZ: I. Brocková: Vznikla nová platforma na koordináciu…" ['MZVEZ: I. Brocková: A New Platform Was Created For the Coordination…,'], TASR, accessed: April 24, 2023, https://www.tasr.sk/tasr-clanok/TASR:2022053100000410; The committee works under the Ministry of Economy.
[133] Hnoline.sk.
[134] "Inovační strategie České republiky 2019-2030" ['Innovation Strategy of Czech Republic'], Government of Czech Republic, accessed: May 13, 2023, https://www.vlada.cz/cz/urad-vlady/vydavatelstvi/vydane-publikace/inovacni-strategie-ceske-republiky-2019-2030-204816/.

for the Future".[135] The message is further broken down to accommodate each defined area of innovation with fixed target goals as to what it should achieve by 2030.[136] Regardless of the standing of Slovakia and Czechia on nation branding indexes, the issue of short-term political goals, and revisiting of the most important indicators, has taken different trajectories in the two countries. Howbeit branding was taken up quickly in the whole region, the Slovak brand seems to be coming back to reconsidering its features under whose competence whereas the Czech one is based on long-term strategies and Polish on campaigns.[137]

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[135] Government of Czech Republic.
[136] Government of Czech Republic.
[137] Surowiec and Kania-Lundhold, "Branding Poland online: propagating and resisting nation branding on Facebook".

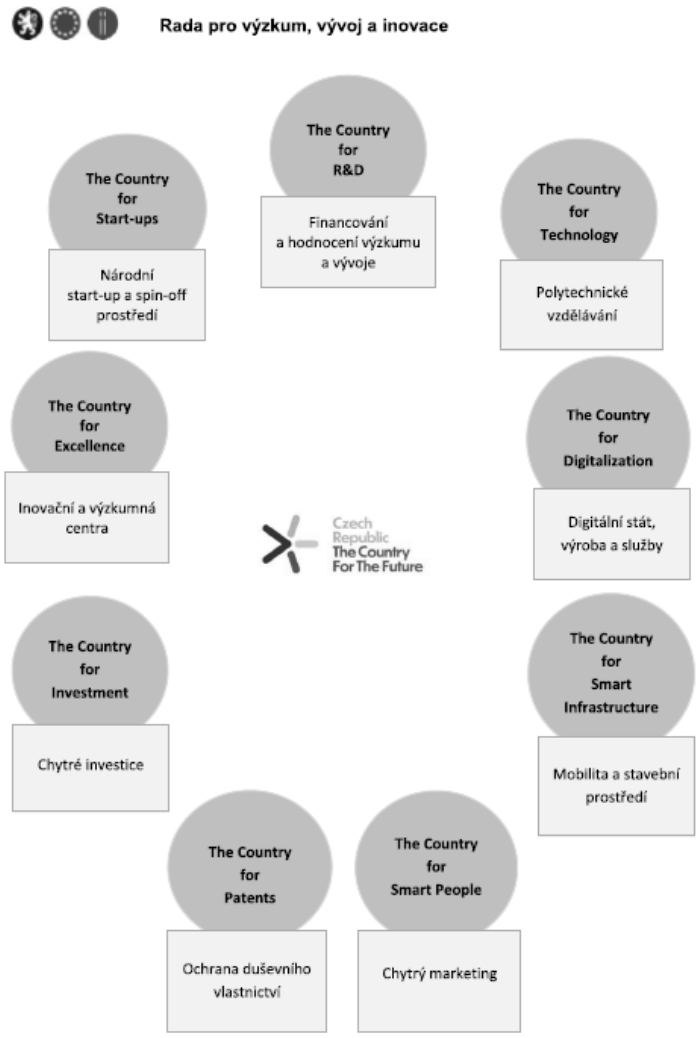


Figure 1: Nation branding depicted in the Czech Innovation Strategy for Years 2019-2030.[138]

## 3.2 Legislation

The practice of nation branding in Central and Eastern Europe has resulted in several legislative acts, all at the legal instance of a government directive, which place obligations on government bodies to implement the brand. Most can be observed in Czechia, where a directive stands behind every single strategy that is related to nation branding. In contrast, it has not been

[138] Government of Czech Republic.

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possible to see any in the case of Poland, where numerous nation branding initiatives have occurred on a more campaign basis with state department gathering in a separate Council for the Promotion of Poland, and private entities doing the same on their side.[139] Slovakia has seen the implementation of one directive in 2016.[140] Its enactment did not occur without reservations, whose inclusion in the analysis highlights the importance that the government sees in branding.[141] As a government directive does not presuppose the creation of a new act, there was no need to vote on it further in the national parliament. In sum, it was enough that a simple majority all ministers present at the negotiation voted in favour. Some ministers present had reservations, which were published with the directive.[142]

The closer look at reservations reflect the problems that came up among the ministries as well as the question of how compatible the proposed branding is with the Slovak legal code.[143] Specifically, the minister of the interior reminded the government the use of state emblem and flag is legislated in the legal code which regulates their use for potential branding purposes.[144] Moreover, he complained that he was not part of the working group that came up with the strategies proposing what the Slovak brand should be.[145] Other reservations touched on the lack of clarification on how tender, and the branding in general, was to be funded.[146] Still, this did not prevent the smooth enactment of nation branding strategy exemplified on the logo "Good

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[139] Surowiec, "Toward Corpo-Nationalism: Poland and the Brand," 124-147.
[140] Government Office of the Slovak Republic.; This is in contrast to Czech Republic, where governments have adopted a directive for each of the six strategies summarised in the strategy of unified presentation of Czechia.
[141] Meaning of reservations in relation to legislation can be found in V. Týč et al. "Reservations to Human Rights Treaties: A Case Study on the Practice of Czechoslovakia and Its Successor States," *International Community Law Review* 16.3, (2014): 371–398, accessed: March 14, 2023, DOI: 10.1163/18719732-12341285.
[142] Government Office of the Slovak Republic.
[143] Government Office of the Slovak Republic.
[144] Government Office of the Slovak Republic.
[145] Government Office of the Slovak Republic.
[146] Government Office of the Slovak Republic.

Idea Slovakia", which was assigned to be used by all ministries in their communication and promotion material.[147] The intended duration of the directive is now over, so a new one will likely be enacted in due time. Notwithstanding, the legislative development of the Slovak brand does not suggest that it is taken less seriously than it is in Czechia regarding legal instance, where six government directives have been enacted,[148] but that the more centralised thinking, which consists in concentrating all brand makers into one committee, left the country with no active directive underpinning a brand at the moment.

### 3.3 The Content of Branding

Moving from legislation to content, the thesis observes that the discourse of the Slovak branding strategies shifted from portraying the country as one with potential, or striking paradoxes, to one that is of good idea from the standpoint of exploration, investment, export, and tradition.[149] The first discourse in this regard may be found, before any legislation on branding was enacted, in years 2005-2009 when Slovakia presented itself as a "Little Big Country".[150] What this translated into can be read in a government-funded publication, which bears the same name, published in 2008 by the Ministry of Economy.[151] The book lays out an overview of the Slovak economy and draws links between the key phase of little big country and capturing titles of each chapter representing a segment of economy.[152] The chapters elaborate on the positive development of Slovakia on various graphs, visual tools, and short interviews from key

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[147] Government Office of the Slovak Republic.
[148] Docplayer.; Perhaps even more if we consider that a new government directive is in need to enact a strategy once its duration has ended. The number is therefore tied to active strategies.
[149] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.; T. Kurtanský, A. Bobovnický, and I. Čaniga, *Slovakia: the little country with a big economy* (Bratislava: Grain, 2008).
[150] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.; Kurtanský, Bobovnický and Čaniga, *Slovakia: the little country with a big economy*.
[151] Kurtanský, Bobovnický and Čaniga, *Slovakia: the little country with a big economy*.
[152] Kurtanský, Bobovnický and Čaniga, *Slovakia: the little country with a big economy*.

stakeholders.[153] Indeed, the ministry admitted to some shortcomings, such as the lack of complete energy self-sufficiency, but explained that this was a compromise in order to achieve a more important goal of entering the European Union.[154] Despite the incoming economic crisis, which was felt around the world, Slovakia seemed to stand out as a small country full of positive economic development offering many new opportunities.[155] The absence of the notion of flat tax, which was in Slovakia between 2004 and 2013,[156] could be interpreted as an indication of politicisation given that the government branded in the booklet was trying to ban it at that time.[157]

This narrative was followed in the first proposed branding strategy, which portrayed Slovakia as a unique country in that it was full of paradoxes, starting with its size, and that its population used unconventional but unique and effective manners within described by the traits of "rootedness" or "quaintness".[158] As was mentioned, the notion of "potential" stood on top of "potentiality", "rootedness", "diversity", "ingenuity", and "vitality".[159] The brand did aim to change the image of Slovakia abroad, or initiative one as the notion of Slovakia was either missing or weak abroad, but did stick to some stereotypes found in one of the slogans thinking of Slovakia as "Work in Progress".[160] The material which supported this narrative consisted of

[153] Kurtanský, Bobovnický and Čaniga, *Slovakia: the little country with a big economy*.; Most of these are foreign businessmen holding key posts in the biggest industrial companies.
[154] For example, Slovakia ceased to be energetically self-sufficient as it had to close down a nuclear reactor as a compromise made with Austria in order to enter the European Union.
[155] Kurtanský, Bobovnický and Čaniga, *Slovakia: the little country with a big economy*.
[156] Kurtanský, Bobovnický and Čaniga, *Slovakia: the little country with a big economy*; A. Peichl, "Slovakia has abolished its flat tax rate, but other Eastern and Central European countries are likely to continue with the policy," LSE Blog, accessed: May 17, 2023, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2013/03/18/slovakia-abandon-flat-tax/.
[157] Peichl, 'Slovakia has abolished its flat tax rate'.
[158] Bán, et al. ['Slovakia: Country with Potential'].
[159] Timorácký, et al. ['Branding of Slovakia: From Idea Concept to Messages and Communication'].
[160] Timorácký, et al. ['Branding of Slovakia: From Idea Concept to Messages and Communication'].

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mostly positive testimonies of foreigners living in Slovakia or notable literary works where references to Slovakia and Slovaks may be found.[161] One such was the reference made to the well-known literary work Dracula. [162] In it, Slovaks were described as somewhat unconventional with mild or kind character traits which were in contrast with the way they looked at first sight.[163] In contrast to the distinctiveness, Slovakia thinks of itself, in the relevant strategy, as an integral part of the Central European region.[164] The branding writes that it has everything found in the region in a smaller version.[165] This is nothing like the Czech branding strategies, which label other countries, including Slovakia, as explicit competitors when it comes to tourism and realisation of the goals of the brand in general.[166] Overall, the early branding strategies in Slovakia signalised that it was at the beginning of its development but with a promising future, which was something to be branded as a characteristic performance indicator.

Two years later a similar strategy followed suit, which had wider participation among brand makers as well as new data at disposal from the research on the perception of Slovakia in part thanks to the placement of Slovakia on the Gfk-Roper Nation Brands Index.[167] What came out of the engagement was a closer elaboration on some of the features agreed to be represented by Slovakia. The prime standing of the "potential" category was incorporated within the sub-

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[161] Timoracký, et al. ['Branding of Slovakia: From Idea Concept to Messages and Communication'].
[162] Bán, et al. ['Slovakia: Country with Potential']
[163] Bán, et al. ['Slovakia: Country with Potential']
[164] Timoracký, et al. ['Branding of Slovakia: From Idea Concept to Messages and Communication'].
[165] Timoracký, et al. ['Branding of Slovakia: From Idea Concept to Messages and Communication'].
[166] Docplayer.
[167] Timoracký, et al. ['Branding of Slovakia: From Idea Concept to Messages and Communication'].

attributes of "rootedness", "diversity", "vitality", and "ingenuity".[168] The description of Slovakia as a country of paradoxes was still present in the document from 2013 but was not the dominant hypothesis anymore.[169] Rather, the strategy focused on deepening the meaning of individual attributes by creating sub-categories with examples, and sometime images, as to what exactly they resemble.[170] This is roughly what the final material, found alongside the documentation to the directive, contained within the slightly changed key attributes of "diversity", "ingenuity", "vitality", and "authenticity".[171] Broken into examples, the brand was made up of cultural heritage, folklore, art, successful sports figures, as well as talented and creative people.[172] History was acknowledged but only to bolster the sketching of authenticity in that it was no longer determining as the country was quickly progressing into attributes of modernisation and innovation potential.[173] The video footage of the brand, published on social media and as an advert, illustrates sights all the way from Tatra Mountains to the production lines of the car manufacture in Slovakia, which is one of the biggest per person in the world.[174] Overall, the brand stopped thinking of the country as being full of surprising paradoxes justified by its rootedness, but has used these attestations to focus on the future, which is full of innovation and technological advancement available to those interested in it.[175]

[168] Timorácký, et al. ['Branding of Slovakia: From Idea Concept to Messages and Communication'].
[169] Timorácký, et al. ['Branding of Slovakia: From Idea Concept to Messages and Communication'].
[170] Timorácký, et al. ['Branding of Slovakia: From Idea Concept to Messages and Communication'].
[171] Timorácký, et al. ['Branding of Slovakia: From Idea Concept to Messages and Communication'].
[172] Timorácký, et al. ['Branding of Slovakia: From Idea Concept to Messages and Communication'].
[173] Steiger, "Slovakia as a Good Idea," 205-227.
[174] Steiger, "Slovakia as a Good Idea," 205-227.
[175] Steiger, "Slovakia as a Good Idea," 205-227.; The branding strategies pay attention not only to successful Slovakia and foreigners living in Slovakia, but also notable Slovaks among the diaspora who make up the nation.



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### 3.4 Narrating History

Even if the latest brand moved away from paying too much attention on rootedness and demarcating other key attributes of Slovaks, the legacy and importance of nationhood development throughout history persisted. The attempts to brand history can be observed to have taken place in Slovakia and Czechia where writings came out in 2018 to commemorate the momentous 'eights' years in both national histories.[176] According to the Czech-French political scientist Jacques Rupnik, the significance of narrating history through key years tends to say more about the commemorators than those it is commemorating in part as it expressed anxieties about the future.[177] In Slovakia, the scientist Slavomír Michálek, from the Slovak academy of science, produced a jigsaw brochure explaining the significance of years, linked to key personalities, whilst the Czech-French political scientist Rupnik published an articles on how the momentous years translated into Czech national history.[178] Whereas this discourse remained in the academic circles in the case of Czechia, alongside a reference to a century old Czech statehood,[179] the Slovak branding has involved the tale within its official material distributed out bearing the government's label.[180] Within the wider region, Andrew Graan noted that the example of North Macedonia, within its branding, has taken on a completely different effort in that it has tried to maximise the constructive narrative of its foundations in ancient history that explains the identity of this Balkan nation.[181] Analysing the overlaps and

[176] Rupnik, "Momentous 'eights' in Czecho-Slovak history".; Michálek, "Slovaks Through the Century".
[177] Rupnik, "Momentous 'eights' in Czecho-Slovak history".; Michálek, "Slovaks Through the Century".
[178] Rupnik, "Momentous 'eights' in Czecho-Slovak history".; Michálek, "Slovaks Through the Century".
[179] Docplayer.
[180] Michálek, "Slovaks Through the Century".
[181] A. Graan, "Counterfeiting the Nation? Skopje 2014 and the Politics of Nation Branding in Macedonia," *Cultural Anthropology* 28.1, (2013): 161–179, accessed: May 25, 2023, DOI: 10.1111/j.1548-1360.2012.01179.x.; A. Graan, "The Nation Brand Regime: Nation Branding



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explanations given to both interpretations therefore helps to reveal the reasoning of the country's existence throughout history to reinforce its message for the future.

In moving to the content, the Slovak and Czech narration of history begin with 1918 with the start of Czechoslovak statehood. Rather than highlighting its significance in the political sense with emphasis on the notion of sovereignty, the year 1918 is referred to as the creation of a common state of Czechs and Slovaks in the Slovak brochure of momentous years.[182] The wartime mobilisations centered around memorable declarations of Czechs and Slovaks which are referred to along with the personality of Milan Rastislav Štefánik, a Slovak-born general in the services of the French army, as the co-founder of the republic.[183] Other overlaps with the Czech discourse are to be found in the year 1938 when the republic was negatively impacted by the Munich Agreement (known as the Munich Dictate).[184] The same overlap continues with 1968 when the invasion of the Warsaw Pact to suppress the so called "socialism with human face" is described similarly in both renditions of momentous years.[185] Then the significant year 1989 is likewise found in both versions citing the Velvet Revolution, which saw the peaceful replacement of the socialist regime by liberal democracy as an important milestone.[186] Anyhow, the Slovak brochure adds some extra years to the momentous years narrative to include the Slovak National Uprising in 1944, which occurred in Slovakia against the Slovak state and in favour of restoring the interwar Czechoslovakia, and 1993 when Slovakia and

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and the Semiotic Regimentation of Public Communication in Contemporary Macedonia," *Signs and Society* 4 (2016), accessed: May 28, 2023, DOI: 10.1086/684613.

[182] Michálek, "Slovaks Through the Century".

[183] Rupnik, "Momentous 'eights' in Czecho-Slovak history".; Michálek, "Slovaks Through the Century".

[184] Rupnik, "Momentous 'eights' in Czecho-Slovak history".; Michálek, "Slovaks Through the Century".

[185] Rupnik, "Momentous 'eights' in Czecho-Slovak history".; Michálek, "Slovaks Through the Century".

[186] Rupnik, "Momentous 'eights' in Czecho-Slovak history".; Michálek, "Slovaks Through the Century".

Czechia gained their sovereign statehood once Czechoslovakia ceased to exist.[187] The idea that Slovaks had to get through various obstacles and was able to achieve sovereign statehood and self-determination runs in line with the description of the attributes of "rootedness", "authenticity", or "vitality", in the more recent branding strategies at first sight. Nevertheless, as most of these momentous years refer to periods of nationhood, not sovereign Slovak statehood, the question of its promising future underneath the label of statehood remains a matter of speculation.

Indeed, narrating the deeper meaning of Slovak statehood has not been of a success in drafting the Slovak brand with one noteworthy example recorded. Gyárfášová, et al. attempted to brand Slovak statehood within a study tracing the perceptions of the country abroad.[188] In it, they identified seven stages of statehood each lasting for around two years.[189] These were named: "choosing the civilisation circle and security placement", "road to integration", "period of self-disqualification", "short period of negative signs of international reputation", "period of fast catching-up", "period of mix of positive continuity and problematic change", and finally "Slovakia as center-stage of Eurocrisis" when the country hit the headlines as the government confidence fell over disputes of supporting the European Union-wide financial assistance to Greece in the midst of economic crisis.[190] In other words, the Slovak statehood started with not explicitly defining its geopolitical orientation at first, but only after several years consolidated its interest as to belong to the west by joining NATO and the European Union.[191] The road to

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[187] Michálek, "Slovaks Through the Century".
[188] Gyárfášová, et al. ['Image of Slovakia from the Foreign Perspective of Viewing Slovakia Through the Eyes of Foreign Experts: view on Slovakia in Selected Foreign Media'].
[189] Gyárfášová, et al. ['Image of Slovakia from the Foreign Perspective of Viewing Slovakia Through the Eyes of Foreign Experts: view on Slovakia in Selected Foreign Media'].
[190] Gyárfášová, et al. ['Image of Slovakia from the Foreign Perspective of Viewing Slovakia Through the Eyes of Foreign Experts: view on Slovakia in Selected Foreign Media'].
[191] Gyárfášová, et al. ['Image of Slovakia from the Foreign Perspective of Viewing Slovakia Through the Eyes of Foreign Experts: view on Slovakia in Selected Foreign Media'].

achieving this aim was slowed down several times due to the internal political situation, yet ended positively with a fairytale conclusion of achieving the stated aim.[192] Despite the positive conclusion of Slovak statehood, the narration did not make it much further as can be explained by its absence in the more recent strategy in whose creation more brand makers participated.[193] Similar stories are not present in the most recent strategy,[194] which concludes with the progressive and modern aspects of Slovakia, and the dispute among brand makers as to how history ought to be branded remains on the table.

### 3.5 Constitutional Identity

The acceptance of what the Slovak brand communicates about the country and its citizens relates to what is found in the constitution and its preamble. The lack of similarities between the two hints that the most important indicators are yet to become more salient or redefined in the most recent strategy to reflect the constitutional consensus. Many post-socialist countries have had amendments enacted that changed their constitutions if not completely replacing them with new ones in the last 30 years.[195] The Slovak constitution itself has been amended at least 20 times since 1993.[196] Withal constitutional identity, as what forms the fundamental law of the document, is explicitly defined only in Hungary and Poland, where relevant verdicts were said

[192] Gyárfášová, et al. ['Image of Slovakia from the Foreign Perspective of Viewing Slovakia Through the Eyes of Foreign Experts: view on Slovakia in Selected Foreign Media'].
[193] Gyárfášová, et al. ['Image of Slovakia from the Foreign Perspective of Viewing Slovakia Through the Eyes of Foreign Experts: view on Slovakia in Selected Foreign Media'].
[194] The brochure on narrating Slovak history through momentous eights is a separate document, which contains the branding logo, but its inclusion within the legislated branding strategy is disputed.
[195] B. S. Toth, "A concept at the edge of national and European constitutional law: different understandings within the same region. Constitutional identity in Poland and Hungary," *Contemporary Central & East European Law* (2022): 1-20, accessed: May 10, 2023, DOI: 10.37232/cceel.2022.02.
[196] [196] I. Halász, 'Trends of Constitutional Amendments in Central Europe after 2008,' *Hungarian Journal of Legal Studies* (2017): 177–193, accessed: May 15, 2023, DOI: 10.1556/2052.2017.58.2.4.

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and new constitutions were enacted,[197] the amendments seen Slovakia suggest the absence of long-term persistence of constitutional identity consensus.[198] Whereas most of the Slovak constitutional amendments relate to procedural matters, notably of immunity of members of parliament or the direct election of the president, several bear the mark of contentious short-term political goals, which have also been impacting the development of nation branding.[199]

Moving further, the most visible connection between the post-socialist development of constitutional identity and nation branding discourses in Slovakia can be interpreted on how the population is defined in the nation branding strategies and in the constitution. The Slovak preamble writes about both human rights, based on individual freedoms and self-determination, as well as the collective rights of Slovaks in relation to the constitution and the state.[200] The value of statehood is highlighted in accordance with government, guarantee to life and freedom, democracy, and promotion of spiritual culture and economic prosperity.[201] In summary, there is a mix of justifying the right of Slovaks to their own state and self-determination accompanied by the guarantee of individual freedoms in this respect.[202] Even though the brand of Slovakia

[197] Toth, "A concept at the edge of national and European constitutional law".
[198]Halász, "Trends of Constitutional Amendments in Central Europe after 2008," 178.; Constitutional identity expresses the fundamental law that protects the constitution and its standing in relation to European Union law is a subject of controversy in between the ruling of the European Court of Justice, which determines the supremacy of European Union law, and the ruling of German Constitutional Court.; F. Fabbrini, and A. Sajó, "The dangers of constitutional identity," *Eur Law J* 25.4 (2019): 1-17, accessed: May 15, 2023, DOI: 10.1111/eulj.12332.
[199] Halász, "Trends of Constitutional Amendments in Central Europe after 2008," 178.; A very similar clause was added in Hungary; One such example is adding a phrase about personal liberty into the constitution in 2015, which was related to the threat of terrorism debated across Europe indicating a short-term political goal, as was seen to impact branding strives as well.
[200] "THE PREAMBLE", prezident.sk, accessed: May 28, 2023, https://www.prezident.sk/upload-files/46422.pdf.
[201] "THE PREAMBLE", prezident.sk, accessed: May 28, 2023, https://www.prezident.sk/upload-files/46422.pdf.
[202] "THE PREAMBLE", prezident.sk, accessed: May 28, 2023, https://www.prezident.sk/upload-files/46422.pdf.

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from 2016 leaves the question of branded subjects more open, the recognition of who makes Slovakia has varied through other branding strategies. For examples, the strategies from 2011 and 2013 made references to successful diasporic Slovaks who help form the Slovak brand.[203] Foreigners in Slovakia were acknowledged in the brand but not those that make up the most populous ethnic minorities.[204] As both concepts evolve, with new nation branding logo and strategy to come out soon, it remains to be seen how many commonalities will the preamble and nation branding terminology share. Nation branding may think of "nation" and "state" as synonymous expressions, but the identification of the population with the Slovak brand could be an issue due to dissimilar values communicated by the government to its people as both constitutional identity and nation branding are executed from the top.

## Conclusion

Exploring the similarities between the content found in constitutional identity and nation branding, as well as the narration of the meaning of a country's history, reflects the disputes regarding the consensus of the most important performance indicators. Examples of the shifts in the branding content, presence of only one government directive, and short-term political ambitious that have impacted Slovak branding, suggest that this consensus is missing both among brand makers and the population. The presence of short-term political ambitions that have a negative effect on the long-term branding strategies, as well as attempts to narrate history in branding, accompanied by struggles to define the key indicators of the brand, may all be found in this region. Still, the Slovak brand is argued to stand out within this specific discourse as its activity has been more centralised firmly in the hands of the state who has steadily been calling in other actors into unified committees rather than coordinating the activity.[205] These

[203] prezident.sk.
[204] prezident.sk.
[205] prezident.sk.



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examples, and the way they speak back to the theoretical depiction of nation branding, demonstrate the specific development of the Slovak brand which shares some similarities with other countries in the region, at the same time, but has gone its own way.

# 4. NATION BRANDING AND DEMOCRACY

This chapter examines the compatibility of democracy with nation branding applied to Slovakia within Central and Eastern Europe. The objective is to find out whether nation branding rank correlates positively with that of quality of democracy. Whereas many authors reject that there is any positive relation between democracy and nation branding, even writing that authoritarian regimes find branding easier as they do not face much public scrutiny when executing it top-down,[206] it was during democratisation that Central and Eastern European countries first came into contact with branding as understood today. A correlation in between the index scores of 49 countries, that overlapped on the nation branding and quality of democracy lists, was calculated by Kemming and Humborg back in 2008.[207] Further support for close correlation include the work of Jeff Kingston, who claims that the brand is impacted by mainstream western media, which promotes secularism, democracy, and good governance.[208] These values, in turn, are based on transparency, accountability, rule of law, human rights, market-oriented economic policies, or sustainable development, most of which are not found in non-democratic regimes.

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[206] C. Viktorin, et al. "Beyond Marketing and Diplomacy: Exploring the Historical Origins of Nation Branding," *Nation Branding in Modern History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018).
[207] Kemming, and Humborg, "Democracy and nation brand(ing)".; Kingston, "Nation Branding Confronts Troubling Realities".
[208] Kingston, "Nation Branding Confronts Troubling Realities".

As existing findings stem from data calculated by quantitative correlation analysis, the same method is adopted and expanded on to test the claim on data from years 2021, and 2022 when Slovakia was added to the nation branding index. The calculation correlation coefficient is the Spearman's rho, which is a suitable coefficient with regards to the sample size. It is calculated on four levels At first, the most recent data from the two indexes is taken, converted into percentiles, due to different samples of the two indexes, and calculated to see whether the claim of correlation still applies. Second, a sample of Central and East European states is taken from the list, which numbers seven or eight countries depending on the year, and correlation is performed. Third, four countries compatible with the definition of Central Europe, (as per section 4.1), are analysed in the same way. The positionality of Slovakia is then deduced from the scatter graphs that visualises the coefficient for each measurement.[209]

### 4.1 Defining the Sample and Indexes

The purpose behind the use of units of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Europe separately is to avoid terminological confusion and clearly justify the selection of the countries that fall under both categories found in the indexes. Scholarship puts forward several criteria on how to grasp and delineate Central Europe inside the broader analytical category of Eastern Europe, both of which, as Lonnie R. Johnson claims, are often conflated in a terminological confusion.[210] According to Johnson, the confusion was caused by the terminology adopted by the European Union during the 2004/2007 "Eastern Enlargement". This terminology lumped "all of accession candidates into one policy region called Central and Eastern Europe".[211] Taking the existing definitions and countries on the indexes into account, this thesis applies to sample unit of Central and Eastern Europe to those countries with a communist heritage, as

[209] As well as those of other countries measured in the sample.
[210] L. R. Johnson, "Introduction: Where is Central Europe?", *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbours, Friends* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 3-13.
[211] Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbours, Friends,* 3-13.



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Johnson puts forward in one of his definitions.[212] After the fall of socialism, these countries wanted to westernise and witnessed the presence of many experts from the west who advocated on how to adopt democratic structures, capitalist model of economy, and nation branding. This includes all countries under the former iron curtain including the former Yugoslavia.[213] This justification relates also to the sample unit of Central Europe, whose selection consists of four countries and whose use helps to clarify the position of Slovakia more closely for purposes of clarity. The reason behind the selection of the Hungary, Poland, and countries of former Czechoslovakia is their political closeness, demonstrated on their membership of the Viségrad Group (known also as the V4),[214] as well as documented adoption of nation branding at similar times. Their selection is supported by previous research on the comparison of branding success by the Hungarian researcher Árpád Papp-Vary.[215] The thesis therefore operates with three samples: (1) Central and Eastern European states, which encompasses seven or eight countries on the indexes; (2) Central Europe, which contains four; (3) the case of Slovakia.

### Nation Brands Index

The Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index (known as Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands IndexSM before) is one of most well-known indexes that measures the appeal of the countries' brand image.[216] The Ipsos agency does it by conducting interviews in 20 core countries[217], selected due to their strategic positionality in geopolitics, economic importance, flow of trade, business,

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[212] Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbours, Friends,* 3-13.
[213] Kaneva, *Branding Post-Communist Nations,* 5.
[214] The V4 was established before accessing the European Union and continues today. The collaboration occurs in the form of coordination of positions at the European Union level, as well as cultural diplomacy within an organisations known as the Visegrád Fund.
[215] Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbours, Friends*: 3-13; Á. Papp-Vary, and M. Farkas, "The position of the Visegrád Four in country brand rankings," *Management, Enterprise and Benchmarking in the 21st Century* (2019): 126-137, accessed: May 30, 2023.
[216] Ipsos.
[217] From which in the region only Poland is included.

and tourism.[218] In each focus group within the given country, 10 states are randomly assigned to 60,000 respondents who give their view on the country based on six categories of export, governance, culture, people, tourism, and immigration & investment, attributing to each category a numerical score of 1, the lowest, to 7, the highest.[219] As a result, over 500 ratings for each country are generated.[220] The decision to include a country in the index depends on its strategic position or own initiative of the government.[221] In the case of Slovakia, the interest was communicated by the government tourist agency, under the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development, in 2021 and 2022.[222] The detailed scores for each of the categories measured fall outside the scope of this thesis, which will instead focus on correlation analysis with the index on the quality of democracy.[223] The reason for its use in this thesis is that the data are published on a regular annual basis in comparison to other nation branding indexes found to be cited in scholarship.[224]

**Global Democracy Index**

[218] Ipsos.
[219] Ipsos.
[220] Ipsos.
[221] Ipsos.
[222] Hnolines.sk.; Slovakia was on the index in 2011, at the initiation of a similar agency, but the results are not elaborated on as it was impossible to get hold of the final report which contained the index rank of all countries.
[223] The category of exports measure whether knowledge of where product is from impacts likelihood of its purchase. Examines strengths in science and technology.; The category of governance measures the perceived competency and honesty of government, as well as the treatment of citizens.; The category of culture measures the perceptions of country's heritage and contemporary cultural 'vibes'.; The category of people measures nation's friendliness by perception of whether respondents would feel welcome if visiting the country.; The category of tourism measures the country's appeal to tourism in natural beauty, historic buildings, monuments, and vibrancy of urban life.; The category Immigration & Investment measures country's ability to attract talent and capital in that whether people would consider studying, working, or living in the country.
[224] The V4 was established before accessing the European Union and continues today. The collaboration occurs in the form of coordination of positions at the European Union level, as well as cultural diplomacy within an organisations known as the Visegrád Fund.

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The Global Democracy Index has been published annually by The Economist Intelligence Unit since 2006.[225] It includes 165 independent states and two territories.[226] It collects data on 60 indicators which are grouped into five different categories, and ranked on a scale of 1 to 10, that consist of electoral process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties.[227] These categories reflect on whether the national elections are free and fair, on the security of voters, the influence of foreign powers on government, as well as the capability of civil service to implement policies.[228] The data is collected by a combination of experts' assessment and public-opinion surveys.[229] The reason for its selection is that it equally published data on an annual basis. Besides, the two indexes were used in previous research[230] and the two were launched in almost the same year, which adds to their authority. This makes them well placed for the following correlation in which the scores of countries are clustered by their respective samples.

## 4.2 Results[231]

**Results for 2021:**

| Name of Sample: | Sample Size: | Spearman's Rho | Scatter Plot |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

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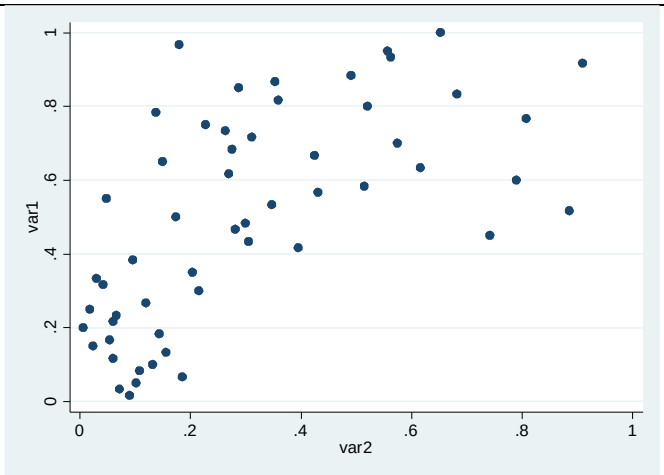
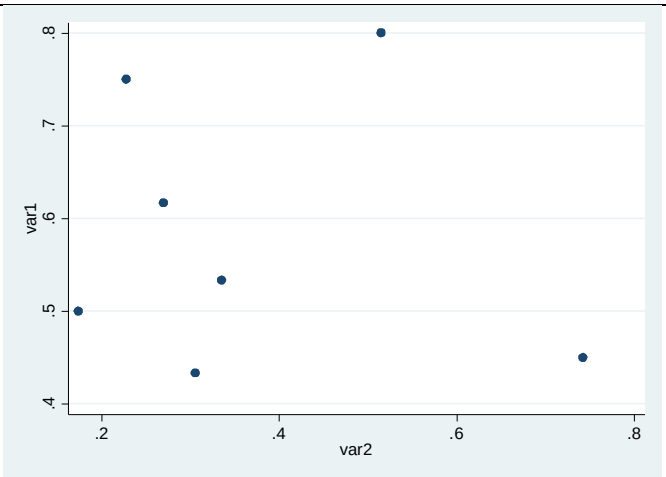
[225] "Democracy Index 2022," EIU Report, accessed: May 21, 2023, https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2022/#:~:text=The%20average%20global%20index%20score,compared%20with%205.28%20in%202021.
[226] EUI Report.
[227] EUI Report.
[228] EUI Report.
[229] EUI Report.
[230] Kemming, and Humborg, "Democracy and nation brand(ing)".
[231] The results were calculated in the STATA programme and Correlation Coefficient Calculator. https://www.statskingdom.com/correlation-calculator.html

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| All countries that intersect on the Anholt-Ipsos Nation's Brand Index and Good Democracy Index. | 55 | 0.6869<br><br>The association is statistically significant. |  |
| Central and Eastern Europe | 7 (Czech Republic, Latvia, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, Russia) | -0.0714<br><br>The association is not statistically significant. |  |

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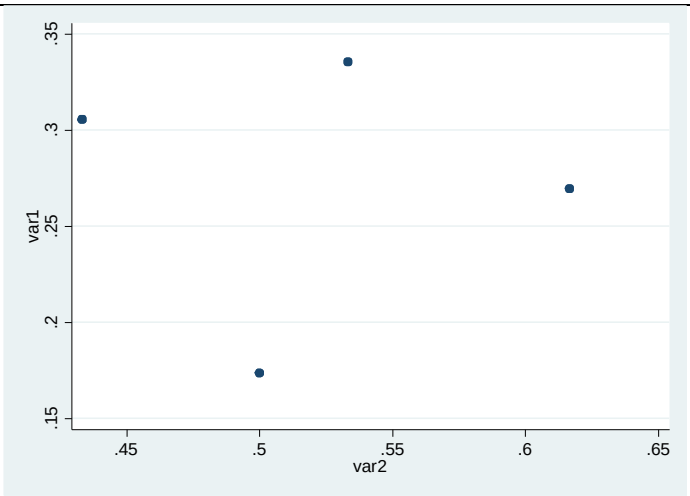
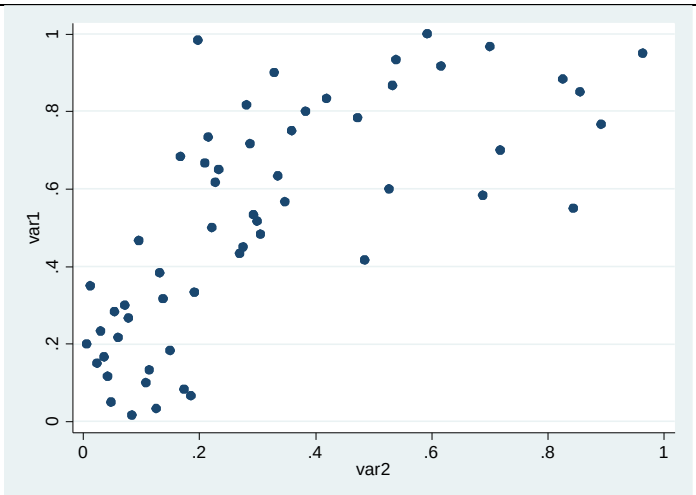
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Central Europe | 4 (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary) | - 0.02019.<br><br>The correlation is not statistically significant. |  |

**Results for 2022:**

| Sample | Sample Size | Spearman's Rho | Scatter Plot |
|---|---|---|---|
| All countries that intersect on the Anholt-Ipsos Nation's Brand Index and Good | 57 | 0.7817<br><br>The association is statistically significant. |  |

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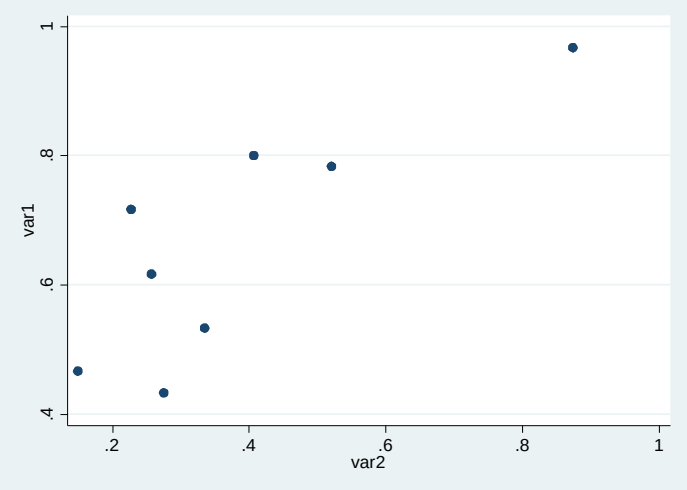
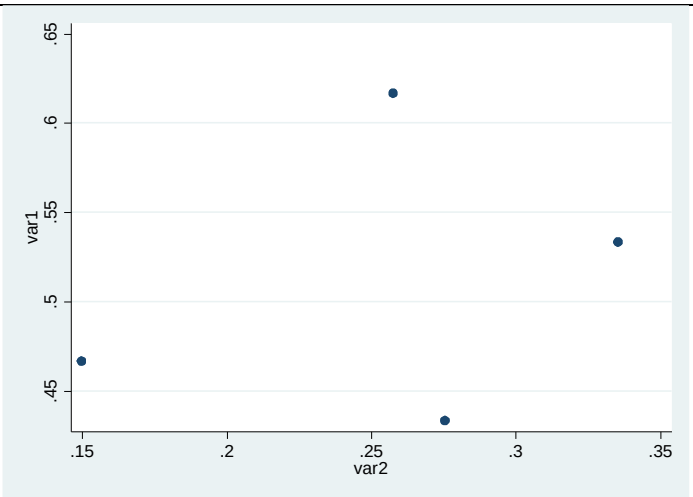
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Democracy Index. | | | |
| Central and Eastern Europe | 8 (Czech Republic, Latvia, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Serbia, Ukraine, Russia) | 0.69048. The correlation is not statistically significant. |  |
| Central Europe | 4 (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary) | 0.2735 The correlation is not significant. |  |

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### 4.3 Findings

There is a significant relationship between nation branding and democracy from the indexes of 2021 and 2022, regarding the whole sample set, which fits it with the argument of Kemming

and Humborg who used data from 2008.[232] However, the same cannot be said of Central and Eastern Europe, where it was not found to be significant. In the sample marked as Central Europe, the relationship is likewise not significant. The measurement from 2022 displays mild relationship without much significance, but that does not distort the overall results. Equally, for Slovakia, the relationship itself is not significant. Specifically, the country significantly outperforms in the quality of democracy index ranking, where it is in among the first 30 percent of all countries in contrast to the nation branding index, where it is located in the second half of the list.

### 4.4 Limitations

The main limitation of this calculation is a small sample size in the unit of measurement of Central Europe. Nonetheless, the results are supported by no significant correlation found in the larger sample of Central and Eastern Europe. Despite the similarities of both indexes and their previous use, the differing definitions of the individual components they measure would have made a deeper correlation imprecise. A longitudinal analysis since 2011 when Slovakia was first put on the index would have yielded more fine-grained results. However, the sample from 2011 is smaller, which would have made the correlation too distorted. Lastly, unlike Kemming and Humborg, this thesis did not conduct the Pearson's correlation analysis.[233] The reason was to stick to one methodology for all samples. The smaller samples were too small for Pearson's coefficient.

## Conclusion

Inasmuch as correlation is found to apply overall to countries found on both nation brands index and global democracy index, the same cannot be said for three samples analysed in this thesis

[232] Kemming, and Humborg, "Democracy and nation brand(ing)".
[233] Kemming, and Humborg, "Democracy and nation brand(ing)".



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(Central and Eastern Europe, Central Europe, and Slovakia). In particular, the country scores significantly higher on the quality of democracy even though nation branding was taken on not long after democratisation commenced.[234] The results do not suggest that non-democratic regimes might find branding easier. However, to fully understand nation branding in Central and East European states, these need to be approached and studied in a particularistic way, highlighting their idiosyncrasies within the multi-disciplinary scholarship on nation branding.

# 5. CONCLUSION

The absence of a positive correlation between nation branding and democracy, as opposed to the claim of Kemming and Humborg that they relate significantly, is just one of the features of branding that works differently in Central and Eastern Europe when put to test. Further differences are laid forward on how nation branding, understood as a product resulting from a set of self-conscious state activities in addition to its natural occurrence, has been implemented in Slovakia as its knowledge and observations grew worldwide. These differentiations have included the frequent connection of nation branding with short-term political goals, which constrained its wide-reaching implementation through its visualisations by relevant bodies and actors. Such cases could be seen to have happened in Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary, whereas the Czech brand has been built on the platform of strategies coordinated by a special officer at the foreign department. The importance of branding in the eyes of the political garniture have played special importance expressed by the inclusion of many high-ranking actors and parties with the process of creating the brand. In some countries, Slovakia and Czechia included, branding has been enforced by legislation consisting of government directives. The subject

[234] Matejčíková, ['Slovak Information Agency Failed Not Only as Political Order'].



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matter of branding has not been discussed in the parliament but has been enforced otherwise with the participation of expert groups. It is argued that the Slovak brand has steadily taken on the practices advised on an international basis in that it has focused more on defining its future, which is left open to those who want to participate.[235] Nonetheless, the disputed traditions of statehood, and far-reaching traditions of nationhood, have made countries in this region look back and offer narratives of their national histories. In focusing more on Slovakia, this thesis has supported this observation by describing the lack of common values found in the framework of constitutional identity and nation branding.

The case-study of Slovakia is also elaborated on within a more regional perspective. The key claim in this respect stands on the differentiation of a centralised brand management approach and the potential connection it has had with the current difficulties of coming up with a new brand. Unlike other countries, Slovakia opted for a centralised management of branding in which all agenda was put under one agency. The model has pertained ever since even if more actors are engaged in the branding process. This is not to say that other countries, namely Czechia and Poland, have not been trying to put all branding activity under one office, but whereas their initiatives were merely to help coordinate the brand the same could not be said about Slovakia. The complicated political development in Slovakia has resulted in the suspension of branding several times, which did not continue in grand style as it was centralised. Instead, smaller campaigns took place. At the moment, Slovakia is defining its brand again as it was over 10 years ago. The current process seems to be parallel to what it was before as the brand makers are once again gathered under a committee, which has an advisory role to the Ministry of Economy this time. In contrast, the difference is that now the index rankings of Slovakia, found on the Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index most visibly, are more important now

[235] Steiger, "Slovakia as a Good Idea," 205-227.



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than before. This is in part thanks to the re-installation of Slovakia on the index overseen by the newly established Slovak Tourist Agency. The nation branding of Slovakia has further become more interesting to branding consultants, most notably Simon Anholt, as its development is not different to the main norm in Central and Eastern Europe but runs contrary to the claim that the brand moves up on the index if the given country joins the European Union.

The findings and observations of the thesis enforce the call for a particularistic approach of the practice of nation branding in Central and Eastern Europe. Simply put, the particularism stems not from a late adoption of the concept of branding, as it has always been popular and in the interests of the states, but by the struggle to identify and communicate the most important indicators to both the international target audience and a significant portion of the domestic population. The core of these struggles goes back to the fundamental question of nation-building, in the sense of disputed salience of identification with nationhood and statehood, as well as re-emerging ethic nationalism within the restoration of democracy. The discourses that pertained the public debate, reflected in the highest political representation, impacted the way nation branding was framed and its subjects were thought of. Another topic the thesis touches on is the connection of nation branding to democracy. So far, the scholarship on this claim is scarce. Some of it, refuting the possibility, is found as a matter of speculation within the qualitative case-based accounts of nation branding in various countries. On the other hand, the argument that the two correlate significantly is found in a quantitative-based calculation of the scores of the countries that overlap in two indexes. Nonetheless, the effort to apply very similar methodology to answer the question of whether the two correlation in the case of Central and Eastern Europe, and if this applies further to Slovakia, has been dismissed in this thesis. The question deserves further attention and consideration and is to be approached by multiple or mixed methods that would analyse the components within both the nation branding and democracy indexes that make up the final score. But even in that scenario, it would be important

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to distinguish the performance of countries in Central and Eastern Europe, as their particular road to complete nation branding continues to apply. It would be further interesting to ask whether the democracy scores of Hungary and Poland, which have seen setbacks on various indicators that measures democracy, have been reflected in any way on nation branding.

In a follow-up on research of nation branding in Central Europe, further research could follow on perceiving Central Europe, and the V4, as specific case-studies for branding. In this respect Papp-Váry and Farkas have tried to answer who has the most successful brand in the region.[236] In trying to answer the question, they summarised all data on rankings and years of participation of the V4 countries on the indexes.[237] The lack of precisions, as some indexes come out once every few years or irregularly, meant that they did not go further into correlation or other comparative analysis.[238] Yet, the application of multiple methods to answering the research question of who has the most successful brand would be insightful research to conduct. The advantage of such approach is that the beginnings of branding, as understood in this thesis, are traceable to early or mid-90s in all these countries irrespective of their current shape or relevance with democracy.

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[236] Papp-Vary,and Farkas, "The position of the Visegrád Four in country brand rankings".
[237] Papp-Vary,and Farkas, "The position of the Visegrád Four in country brand rankings".
[238] Papp-Vary,and Farkas, "The position of the Visegrád Four in country brand rankings".

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# 7. APPENDIX

**Table Overview of Identified Legislation and Strategies**

| Name of Country | Year of Legislation | Name of Legislation | Other information |
|---|---|---|---|
| Slovakia | 2016 | Značka Slovensko: jednotná vizuálna identita štátnej správy, koherencia vládnych politík a potreba systémového riešenia jednotnej prezentácie SR v budúcnosti. [Brand Slovakia: unified visual identity of state sector, coherent government policies, and need for a systematic solution to unified presentation of Slovakia in the | |

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | future]. Government directive from 4.2.2016. [239] | |
| Czechia | | Východiska Koncepce jednotné prezentace ČR v zahraničí. [Conception of unified presentation of Czech Republic abroad]. Government directive no. 239 from 17.3.2004.<br><br>Koncepce jednotné prezentace České republiky. [Conception of unified presentation of Czech Republic]. Government | |

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[239] ['Process of creation and implementation of the country's brand'].

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | directive no. č. 74 from 19. ledna 2005.<br><br>Exportní strategie ČR 2012-2020. [Export strategy]. Government directive from 14. 3. 2012.<br><br>Koncepce zahraniční politiky ČR. [Conception of foreign policy of Czech Republic]. Government directive from 13. 7. 2015.<br><br>Státní kulturní politiky na léta 2015-2020 s výhledem do roku 2025. [State cultural politics for years 2015-2020 with a view until 2025]. Government | |

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | directive from 15. 4. 2015.<br><br>Inovační strategie České republiky 2019-2030. [Innovation strategy of Czech Republic]. Government directive from 4 .2. 2019.[240] | |
| **Name of Country** | **Strategy/Campaign** | **What Makes up Nation Branding?** | **Other information** |
| | 2005 – Little Big Country.<br><br>2011 – Slovakia – Country with Potential. | Rootedness, Diversity, Ingenuity, Vitality, Potential, Authenticity.[242] | The creators of branding strategies were at first nine people from civic society. Later on, the sample expanded to people from at least five different industries based on |

[240] Docplayer.
[242] Timorácký, "Branding of Slovakia: From Idea Concept to Messages and Communication,".

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| | 2016 – Good Idea Slovakia.[241] | Momentous years – 2018.[243] | the index measurement of branding.<br><br>Slovakia was put on the Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index in years 2011, 2021, and 2022.<br><br>In 2011, its position was 38th out of a sample of 50 states. In 2021, it was rated 37th out of 60 countries. In 2022 it was rated the same.<br><br>The initiative to put Slovakia on the index came from the renewed government tourist agency called Slovakia.Tourism. |

[241] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.
[243] J. Rupnik, "Momentous 'eights' in Czecho-Slovak history," *Eurozine* (2018), accessed: April 28, 2023, https://www.eurozine.com/momentous-eights-czecho-slovak-history/.; Michálek, "Slovaks Through the Century".



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| Czechia | 2004 – Východiska Koncepce jednotné prezentace ČR v zahraničí. [Conception of unified presentation of Czech Republic abroad].<br><br>2005 - Koncepce jednotné prezentace České republiky. [Conception of unified presentation of Czech Republic].<br><br>2012 - Exportní strategie ČR 2012-2020. [Export strategy of the Czech Republic for years 2012-2020].<br><br>2015 - Koncepce zahraniční politiky ČR. [Conception of | The stated goals are: europeanisation, tourism, business, trade.<br><br>Branding strategies related to the following sectors:<br><br>- Economy and innovation leader.<br><br>- Tourism and natural heritage.<br><br>- Culture and science.<br><br>- Sport. | The responsibility to coordinate nation branding activities lies within the special plenipotentiary responsible for the presentation of country abroad under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<br><br><u>Information on government-agencies:</u><br><br>Czech centers: founded in 1949, in charge of Czech representation at foreign expositions, information service, pro export policy, cooperates with both state and non-state actors, it is |

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| | foreign politics of Czech Republic].<br><br>2015 - Státní kulturní politiky na léta 2015-2020 s výhledem do roku 2025. [State cultural politics for years 2015-2020 with a view until 2025].<br><br>2019 - Inovační strategie České republiky 2019-2030. [Innovation strategy of Czech Republic for years 2019-2030].[244] | | contributory organisation of foreign ministry.<br><br>Czech trade: founded in 1997 as organisation of ministry of industry and trade. Provides services for Czech exporters.<br><br>Czech invest: founded in 1992 as a government agency to support entrepreneurship and investment as part of ministry of industry and trade. Support of competitiveness of Czech entrepreneurs.<br><br>Czech tourism: founded in 1993. Part of the agenda is |

[244] Docplayer.



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| | | | Czech representation of private entities in the given country. It coordinates the promotion of travel and tourism in Czechia and all related activities. [245] |
| Hungary | 2004 – Some like it Hot.<br><br>2004-2005 – Talent for Entertaining.<br><br>2006 – Hungary as the essence of Europe.<br><br>2009 – Get engaged.[246] | | Branding is under the competence of the National Tourist Agency.[247] |
| Poland | | In 2013, the Council for the Promotion of | <u>Responsibility for branding:</u> |

[245] Docplayer.
[246] Kulcsár and Young-Ok, "One Nation, One Brands?," 193-213.
[247] Kulcsár and Young-Ok, "One Nation, One Brands?," 193-213.

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| | 2001 – Poland: Heart of Europe.<br><br>2004 – Creative Tension.<br><br>2014 – Polska Spring into the New. [248] | Poland publicised the policy guidelines, "Rules for Communicating the Polska Brand". [249] | Council for the Promotion of Poland is the state platform whilst Foundation for Polish Brand is the private platform.<br><br><u>Other information:</u><br><br>The brands resemble more campaigns tailored to the specific setting and audience than long-term strategies.<br><br>Unsuccessful attempt to write a long-term strategy occurred in years 2003-2008. [250] |

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[248] Surowiec, "Toward Corpo-Nationalism: Poland and the Brand," 124-147.
[249] Surowiec and Kania-Lundhold, "Branding Poland online: propagating and resisting nation branding on Facebook," 167.
[250] Surowiec and Kania-Lundhold, "Branding Poland online: propagating and resisting nation branding on Facebook," 167.