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Nation Branding as National Change Management: Facilitating Climate Protection by Green Nudging and Habit Stacking

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Abstract: Nation branding is much more than promoting holiday destinations with logos and colorful advertising campaigns. Brands have long been an instrument of political dialogue to develop and shape values and make them tangible. The prerequisite for this is that they function as economic alliances between politics and business. The example of "Green Destinations" is a certification initiative that shows how sustainable place, destination, or nation brand management can work at a local (e.g., Sagay City, Philippines), regional (e.g., Bhutan), or even international level (e.g., DACH region, i.e., Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and others). Against this backdrop, the aim of this article is to highlight the compatibility and usability of brands within (democratic) nations and their potential in the fight against climate change. In the face of dramatic global climate change, governments, businesses, and consumers are generally not acting sustainably enough. Therefore, the management of nation brands is presented as (1) values management (synchronizing values within economic societies), (2) glocal (i.e., "global" and at the same time "local") alliance management (brands as joint ventures of governments, corporations, customers, and other relevant stakeholders), (3) change management (sustainable national transformation), (4) agile competencies (ongoing value negotiation and education), (5) green nudging and habit stacking (influencing social developments), and (6) viral communication management (social media interaction as brand communication). In conclusion, brands integrate glocal leadership, change, and sustainability to contribute to national transformation.

Keywords: nation branding, climate protection, change management, agility, nudging, habit stacking

1. Introduction: Nation Branding to Contribute to Climate Protection

"Climate change is a global phenomenon that poses a serious threat to the survival of our planet" [1]. Carbon emissions from anthropogenic activities have been identified as the primary cause [1]. "Without a very rapid turnaround, humanity is heading for a genuine climate catastrophe by the end of the 21st century" [2]. It is widely acknowledged that politics and markets have failed to address climate change [3]. The commitment of governments is seen as too low. Public budgets are limited and subject to political uncertainties. Given limited resources and shifting political majorities, subsidies, tax policy, and other policy measures can only provide limited impetus. Corporate responsibility for sustainability is also developing too slowly. According to the Global Consumer Survey, 40% of the population feels responsible for solving global environmental problems [4]. Effective action on climate change requires relevant, rapid, and continuous action at the national and international levels. Nation brands may contribute to this. For some time now, consumers have been demanding more sustainability from products, companies, and politics. This positive climate for sustainability can be used for climate protection.

"Green brands" are understood as the manifestation of a green image resulting from environmentally friendly technologies that facilitate the reduction of negative environmental impacts [5]. A country's green image influences consumers' intentions to buy products from countries such as Vietnam and Korea [6], which suggests that sustainable nation branding can contribute to climate protection "glocally," that is, "globally" (international customer behavior) and "locally" (the sustainable production method on site) at the same time. The problem with human-induced climate change is that it is caused to a greater or lesser extent by virtually every country and therefore can only be stopped if virtually every country drastically reduces its greenhouse gas emissions. However, a single country can hardly do anything about climate change on its own. Germany's share of global greenhouse gas emissions is only about 2% [7]. This is where this contribution comes in:

> *Against this background, this article asks how nation branding, driven by public and/or corporately organized brand alliances, can contribute to the solution of climate protection.*

The method used is a conceptual reflection on brand management, global leadership, change management, behavioral economics, and sustainability literature. It is conceptual because it integrates brand management, leadership, change, and sustainability, as opposed to separate views of these areas of applied management.

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With this approach, this article makes the following research contributions: It ties in with the implementation debate and positions nation branding as a democracy-strengthening dialogue for revitalizing political climate management. Furthermore, it refers to the global leadership debate, since climate protection does not end at national political borders and is not the sole preserve of governments, but requires the involvement and initiative of economic and cultural society. Last but not least, it applies the still rather rare idea of "brands as change management" to nations, in which brands develop shared values and use nudging and habit stacking to influence behavior. Branding becomes an approach to climate policy and corporate/national reputation management.

2. Nation Branding: An Open Concept and Integral Part of Democracies

Nation branding has very different perspectives and applications – in theory and practice. A look at the theory reveals contributions to the definition of nation branding, the development of brands or country personalities, the measurement of nation brands and the development of rankings, and the implementation of nation brands [8].

Branding is often understood as a communication management approach aimed at influencing image or stakeholder relations [9]. This article joins the implementation debate that goes beyond communication. It takes up the critical discussion that asks whether nation branding and democracy are compatible. Sometimes, the compatibility of nation branding and democratic processes is viewed rather negatively. One concern is that they serve as engines of neoliberalism [10]. Here, on the other hand, a pro-democracy perspective is taken. Today, brands are strategic approaches to assert oneself as a supplier in markets, for example, as a company in sales markets or as a political party in electoral markets. With behavioral branding, brands aim primarily at brand-appropriate behavior, not just image building. This makes brands a compatible part of governance, that is, the corporate or political constitution [11]. Indeed, there is a congeniality between brand dialog and democracy as dialogic reputation management, which makes nation brands an instrument that strengthens rather than weakens politics in a democracy.

Every fashion brand, every tourist destination is liked, shared, and posted on social media every day. Brand-leading organizations operate negotiation platforms and thus have a fine radar to constantly align their market services with the needs of their stakeholders. In the digital age, brands have become educational, politico-economic negotiation platforms for the constant negotiation of relevant brand values. On the one hand, brands are stabilizing communication tools through visionary leadership with values. On the other hand, they are agile political management tools that constantly monitor the performance of their stakeholders. Thus, political parties or corporations are not the sole owners of a brand. Rather, successful brands are supported by their communities, for example, politically interested parties, fans, or influencers [12]. "A nation's 'brand' exists, with or without any conscious efforts in nation branding, as each country has a current image to its international audience, be it strong or weak, clear or vague... Many elements of nation branding are not under the control of the nation branding team, especially in the short run" [13]. In times of "green demand," when governments are criticized for doing too little to protect the climate, nation branding invites us to revitalize climate protection policies.

The "Green Destinations" initiative is just one example. "Green Destinations" is a certification program that pursues various sub-goals: For example, nature protection, waste avoidance, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and other programs can be certified. It serves distinct types of destinations: large or small, public or private initiatives, and new to or experienced in sustainable destination management. It can be applied to business, municipalities, cities, nations, or even across several nations, for example, neighboring countries such as Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.[1]

3. Sustainable Brand Management as Global Leadership

Climate protection depends on national and international commitment. Global leadership is often understood as corporate activities that extend beyond the national context. It involves processes and actions through which an individual influences a range of internal and external constituents from multiple national cultures and jurisdictions in a context characterized by significant levels of task and relationship complexity [14]. Here, the leadership approach is related to the management of nation brands, which primarily involve cross-cultural and (inter-) national coordination challenges.

1) Nation branding as applied marketing communication: Nation branding is the application of branding and marketing communication techniques to promote the image of a nation [15]. "A nation brand refers to a network of meanings in people's minds based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expressions of a nation" [16]. Originally, brands were product-related communication tools. Today, cities, regions, and nations are branded to compete for economic and political capital in the global marketplace [17]. Nation brands are made up of products, organizations, people, their cultures, regions, and news [16]. This means that brands are not just communication but knowledge transfer and also behavioral change.
2) Nation branding as behavioral global brand leadership: This behavioral view on branding is special as it lasts beyond communication and campaigning. It becomes an approach to political management and not just making advertising. The task of brands is to educate and attract stakeholders, as well as branding corporations and nations [12]. This is already a challenge at the corporate level and becomes even more problematic with nation brands. A look at the brand management of European nation brands shows that only a few nations have successful nation brand strategies. When nation branding is applied, governments play a central role, but not a specific party affiliation. They are research-based, organize governance models, and involve stakeholders. When nation brands are seen as a political tool, they suffer [18]. If nation brands want to become admired, they need to be relevant and take part in conversations [19]: at home and abroad. With the example of climate protection, they must strategically and operationally adapt to environmental requirements [20]. With the example of brands as a political management approach for climate protection, a global perspective is therefore important, as climate protection does not end at national political borders.
3) Nation branding as national identity management: "Nation brands" and "state" or "country brands" refer to the transfer of brand management to countries. When these terms are distinguished, the term "nation" emphasizes the cohesion and common identity of citizens, while the term "state" emphasizes

[1] Green Destinations Support 2023 Brochure. https://www.greendestinations.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/GD-Support-Brochure-2023.pdf

formal territoriality. This identity is an important conceptual element, as the success of nation brands depends on the (self-)motivation of their stakeholders. Hence, "nation brand" is the more appropriate term here. Nation branding typically seeks to improve the international competitiveness of a particular political economy. It involves values management, communication, relationship management, and network governance modes. Sustainable branding has multiple global leadership competencies: Sustainability is an open term. According to the United Nations,[2] sustainability is defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." It will be detailed below that sustainability includes a variety of green and social requirements that make sustainable brands a green governance approach for nations.

If this understanding is applied to brand management, the need for integrated management becomes necessary, which lasts beyond the communicative view of branding.

4. Nation Branding: Values Management, Glocal Alliance Management, Change Management, Agile Management, Nudging, and Habit Stacking

Branding and change management are largely separated, as are green nudging and agility. However, the implementation of sustainability as a contribution to climate protection implies a change in behavior: from conventional consumption to sustainable offerings, from conventional production to environmentally friendly processes. The following five edge polders of conceptual nation branding, supported by viral communication, are described in detail:

1) Brands as values management: Nation brands are always global brands because their values must be internationally attractive if they are to appeal to international target groups such as companies, investors, or tourists. The incentive to decide for or against a brand lies in its values. Today, the focus is on the need to synchronize the values of companies and their stakeholders. Value synchronization means more than just "updating values"; it also includes brand governance.
2) Brands as glocal alliance management: Brands are more than image building. Brands frame contemporary alliances in various types [21]. This applies to the value patterns they represent, their creation, and their promotion. But it also applies to institutions that participate in a nation brand. If nation brands like "Made in Germany" want to be successful, they are much more than a logo with a slogan and advertising campaign. Nation brands can be viewed as family brands driven by the outcomes of multiple actors. "Nation branding communication is typically planned in consultation with state-owned as well as private organizations, but is often based on government programs and steered by state bodies . . . " [22]. Global leadership is particularly in demand here in order to attract brand companies as partners to join the alliance.
3) Brands as change management and national transformation: Today, brands represent conceptual approaches to support change processes. Brands reach beyond corporate communication and also include behavioral change [23]. This applies to companies when brands are designed as internal change management approaches. They are appropriate to facilitate corporate sustainable transformation processes [24]. This also applies to nations when they are applied to nation branding. They are conceptualized to transform nations [25].
4) Brands as agile competences with ongoing value education: Branding is the mutual education of brand knowledge between branding organizations and their stakeholders, and vice versa [26]. Knowledge is a body of applied information and is therefore stable. On the other hand, it is agile because the attractiveness of brands depends on the constant updating of values. The continuous change of values and their agile evolution is not a contradiction to the positioning of brands, but a precondition for the attractiveness of brands and their suitability for corporate change.
5) Brands as green nudging and habit stacking: Nudge marketing has become a special field of social or macromarketing in order to influence social developments [27]. Derived from behavioral economics, it is also used in marketing and branding to influence consumers' decisions by designing decision alternatives. Nudging aims to impact micro habits to contribute by and by to social sustainability.
6) Brands as viral communication management: Social media now represent a key component of brand communication, especially when it comes to destinations and tourism. The presence on social media and the interaction with travel influencers have an impact on travel decisions [28].

The following Figure 1 summarizes the cornerstones of conceptual nation branding, which will be detailed below:

Of course, nation brands have their critics. They can symbolize nationalism, hard marketing strategies, or frivolous (public) spending, especially when they are politically motivated and instrumentalized by non-democratic states [28]. This can lead to eco-nationalism using the example of sustainable nation brands [29]. Beyond this, sustainable national brand management harbors the risk of gaps between communication and actual actions so that greenwashing is institutionalized. In other words, sustainability services are communicated but not practiced [30]. That is why it is important to synchronize national brand identity and action for demonstrably sustainable brands, as the Northern European countries tend to do [31]. In extreme cases, nation brands can be both a curse and a blessing. The nation brand of Jamaica, for example, includes a dialectical tension. It represents a vibrant lifestyle, is known for reggae music, and stands for vacation under palm trees. At the same time, the brand suffers from violent crime, poverty, and homophobia [32]. Nation branding therefore is all the more important to view nation brands as a field of action for global leadership applied as national social responsibility.

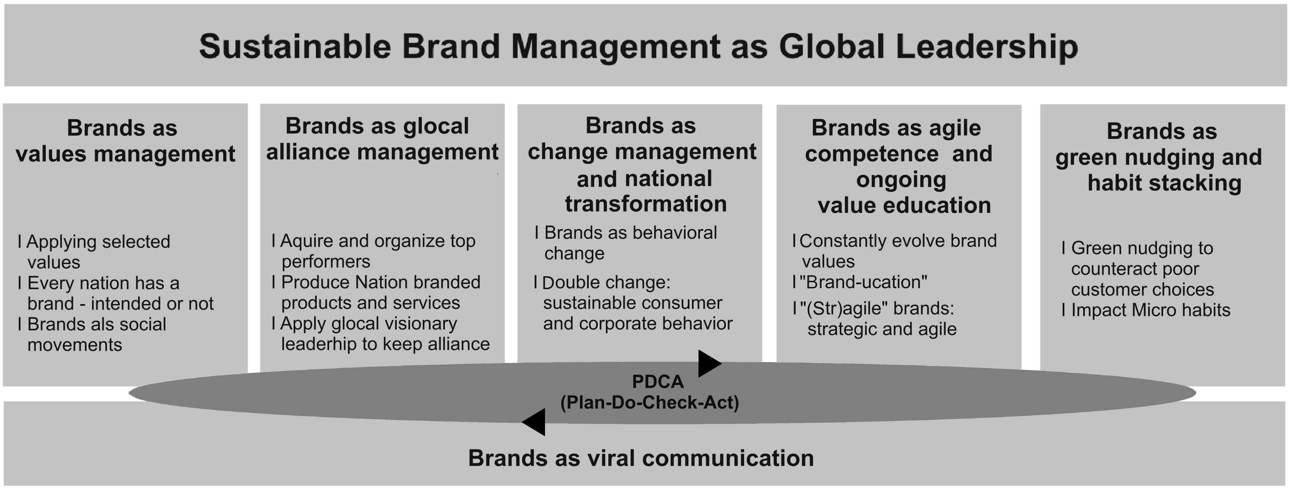
4.1. Brands as values management: sustainable nation branding as green governance

Nation branding helps persuade other actors to accept and adopt certain ideas and behaviors. Research examines which values are important for nation brands to be attractive [13]. Factors such as business and marketing, political, social and cultural, economic and labor, and international and environmental influence nation brands [33]. Probably the most popular are those of nation brand rankings. With the Ipsos Nation brand index,[3] for example, Germany, Japan, and Canada make up the top 3 (2022). Among other metrics, the index covers governance, culture, and people. These

[2]Sustainable Development Goals, available online https://www.un.org

[3]The Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index. https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2023-10/NBI_2023_Press_Release_Supplemental_Deck_WEB.pdf

Figure 1
Conceptual nation branding: sustainable brand management as global leadership



metrics emphasize the importance of a brand's values. Governance thus comprises the perceived competency and honesty of the government. The culture as "lived values" indicates the perceptions of a country's heritage and its contemporary cultural "vibes" accrued from music, films, art, and literature. The metric "people" assesses a nation's friendliness. It is measured by whether respondents would feel welcome when visiting the country. The World Competitiveness Yearbook is a comprehensive annual report and worldwide reference point on the competitiveness of countries (Top 1 2022: Denmark) [34]. The Soft Power Index of Brand Finance includes 11 metrics to measure nation brands. Soft power refers to the impact of brands. Strong brands mean power as stakeholders voluntarily bind themselves to them.

Table 1 summarizes selected items of nation branding, which represent the values of nation brands. Of course, there are many more that showcase the openness and multitude of nation brand approaches.

The main mechanism through which nation branding directly engages in sustainability governance is the framing of societal issues [22]. Brands are shaped by mutually shared values. Brands have the potential to operate as social movements. Social movements are often understood as deficit or problem-related. Generally viewed, social movements could be characterized as organized collective endeavors to solve social problems, which are facilitated by virality (see Section 4.6). At the same time, the connotation of social movements is positive as they possess the ability of institutional entrepreneurs/activists to bring about change [35].

Right here lies an opportunity to use nation brands as a driver of sustainability initiatives. A positive national image contributes to economic growth by building up a touristic national brand, attracting foreign investors, building trust in national companies and brands, encouraging exports, developing public diplomacy, and slowing down emigration [36].

Referring to the requirements of sustainability, branding includes a broad range of opportunities to derive an appropriate brand experience to contribute to climate protection. Since the 1980s, before the advent of the internet and social media, customers have been driving companies to green production methods. Since then, "green" products have been growing out of niches into the mass market. Customers began to demand not only green products and services but also "clean" and energy-saving production processes from their suppliers

Table 1
Nation brand values

Nation brand values	Selected items
Familiarity, Influence, and Reputation	International acceptance Political influence Diplomacy efforts Solidity of public finances
Economy	Exports Innovation Competitiveness Science and technology Employability Tourism
Governance	Perceived competency Honesty of government Treatment of citizens Respect for rights
Tourism	Natural beauty Historic buildings Urban life Attractions
People and Culture	Nation's friendliness Openness Cultural heritage Welcoming
Prominence	Popularity Admiration

[37]. Sustainable consumption has also increased during the coronavirus crisis. More than three-quarters of them (78%) consciously pay attention to these factors when shopping. More than half (51%) say they are generally spending more on sustainable products than they did before the pandemic.[4] Green investments are popular. At

[4]Consumers' sustainability sentiment and behavior before, during and after the COVID-19 crisis, Consumer research Germany. https://www.mckinsey.com/de/~/media/mckinsey/locations/europe%20and%20middle%20east/deutschland/news/presse/2021/2021%20pm%20nachhaltiger%20konsum/studie-nachhaltiger-konsum.pdf

times, green capital market indices beat conventional investments. This context makes sustainability a potential for nation branding.

Lyulyov et al. develop an approach to sustainable nation branding and apply it to the European Union. They record the following metrics for the Green Country Brand Strength Index with recourse to available indices and data in Table 2 [5].

The findings of the assessment of the Green Country Brand Strength show that the list of the top five countries did not change in 2020 compared to 2006. France, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, and Denmark occupied the first five places.

Another example is Bhutan. Its image has been traditionally perceived as backward [38]. Since the 1990s, Bhutan has been probably the most committed example of metrics-based national branding. At that time, the Gross National Product was replaced by the Gross National Happiness Index in order to promote and measure the qualitative growth of the nation. Ecological diversity is one of nine indicators used here and contributes to the sustainable nation brand. "Bhutan's impressive economic and environmental achievements are notable on their own terms" [39].

During the coronavirus pandemic, brands have also proven to be guardians of their values. Violations of pandemic-appropriate behavior have been punished by the digital brand community. Brand communities are powerful executors of brand values. When companies disappoint with their brand values, they experience pressure in the form of firestorms. This is how brand governance becomes visible. Brand governance means safeguarding the brand as an asset in a time when brand-appropriate behavior is fragile, such as in the case of poor climate protection. Against this, nation brands become a great opportunity to contribute to climate protection and sustainability. At the same time, they are appropriate to attract corporations, tourists, investors, and other stakeholders.

4.2. Branding as glocal alliance management

Brands as social movements already indicate a special approach to branding as alliance management. Successful nation branding is less a question of (non-)industrialized countries. Rather, nation brands depend on dual alliance management. On the one hand, nation brands require an organization of top performers who are constantly developing them and delivering products, services, or other attractions. On the other hand, brands are temporary communities of values with consumers.

Alliances are legally and economically independent partners who self-motivate to better achieve their goals. The organization of alliances is not standardized. They appear as cooperation, social networks, alliances, or partnerships [40]. Just one example of alliances is Green Innovation Networks, which cooperate to organize green buildings [41].

Contrary to expectations, most place branding projects struggle to succeed because they are funded and managed within one government institution alone. Their long-term strategic objectives often fail to survive in a world of political agendas planned for short terms [42]. Political leadership should therefore focus on the self-regulation of brand alliances that they provide a frame for. If it is assumed that the initiative for nation brands lies with the responsible policymakers, they should understand their role as a "steady nudger" and not as its owner.

The initiative for nation brands can come from government institutions, companies, or customers. Successful branding is driven by political institutions, corporations, customers, tourists, and all stakeholders who interact with these brands. If they are managed in this way, they are an applied example of the co-creation of brand values [43]. Brands of origin live from the fact that they can be experienced, in that flagship products such as cars or machines operate "glocally": Nation branding depends in a special way on co-creation with stakeholders. There is no clear roadmap to identify and include stakeholders in the branding process [44]. Ireland's success as the so-called "Celtic Tiger" in the 1990s is attributed to the "European style" industrial policy, social investment, and social partnership [45]. Nation brands depend on the continuity of attractiveness in many areas, as the table of brand values above indicates. This means that both business-to-business and business-to-consumer interactions are part of nation branding in order to trigger viral communication processes, that is, consumer-to-consumer engagement.

Hence, nation branding means double relationship management – relating to brand partners and consumers. Global leadership, in the sense of visionary leadership, becomes important here in

Table 2
Metrics and contribution to Green Country Brand Strength

Metrics	Contribution to Green Country Brand Strength
Green growth of the country	Green growth is a fundamental concept in sustainable development. It reflects a country's ability to achieve economic development while minimizing its negative impact on the environment.
Efficiency of governance	Effective governance directly impacts a country's reputation and appeal on the global platform. A nation known for robust governance is likely to have higher (green) investments because of enhanced stability, transparency, and reliability.
Immigration	The number of immigrants indicates a country's allure and standard of living, demonstrating its appeal as a destination for individuals seeking better prospects and security.
Tourism	Tourism offers a glimpse into a country's global appeal and cultural wealth. High tourist numbers reflect a nation's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and hospitality and also make significant contributions to its economy.
Green foreign direct investment	Investments and green initiatives bring capital, technology, and expertise into the country.
Human development	It evaluates vital dimensions such as life expectancy and education. This multifaceted indicator signifies a nation's commitment to enhancing the quality of life of its citizens.

order to hold partnership alliances together. The challenge of nation brands as alliances lies in the constant organization of attractive sustainability offerings that a nation has or is developing, for example, green destinations, sustainable produced food, alternative energy production, etc.: The key here is to identify value-added offerings and potentials that, together, create an attractive nation brand. If brand communities are understood as a community of values, alliance management starts with the common identification and conception of values. A value is an enduring belief. It only has value when others attach to it – and not only the producing company. This leads to the idea that values are actually joint ventures between companies and customers [46] and leads forward to the integration of existing sustainability initiatives, which are invited to be integrated into the nation brand and leads back to the values management mentioned above.

4.3. Brands as corporate change and national transformation

Originally, brands and changes had nothing to do with each other. On the contrary, brands with their positioning and identity approaches were rather rigid entities. That has changed with brands as behavioral management. Brands can't just limit themselves to communication. If they want to attract and to be taken seriously, they rely on on-brand behavior: Brands must prove daily that they uphold their brand promises [12].

Here, nation brands become corporate reputation management. As markets and customer expectations evolve, this also applies to brands – for product brands, corporate brands, and nation brands. Hence, they depend on constantly adapting to the requirements of stakeholders in a constant dialogue. If brands are understood as negotiation platforms with which brand-leading institutions constantly renegotiate their values, then they represent an important approach to profound change processes. If conventional brands aim to become accepted as sustainable alternatives, double changes are always necessary: concerning the behavior of corporations and their customers.

This opens the discussion on the ability of corporate brand control and market dynamics evolved [47], as shown in Table 3.

Brand building and brand renovation are located in classic branding. Brand building means to enrich the function of products with emotional attributes. Brand renovation becomes important in cases of repositioning. Brand building and renovation assume that corporations possess brand control. In contrast, brand emergence and brand evolution include the power of stakeholder communities and assume, thus, limited brand control of corporations. Brand evolution refers to images that evolve in consumer activities in consumption. Brand emergence emphasizes the importance of the co-creation of brands by corporations and (selected) customers.

In the following, the idea of brand evolution and brand emergence is utilized for nation branding. When the population, including businesses, residents, and business travelers or tourists, is continuously involved in the co-creation of brands, then nation brands need to evolve both in terms of the associated products and services, as well as culturally. This is also valid for sustainable brand emergence.

The differentiation between functional and emotional brand values [48] can also be found in change management and, thus, in the sustainable transformation of nations. This means nation brands include so-called "O-strategies" and "E-strategies" [49]. The "E-strategies" ("economic value") are based on financial indicators, which ultimately find expression in shareholder value. "O-strategies" ("organizational capability") aim to develop a culture with adequate human capital that is committed to change ("soft approach"). Brands are driven by brand cultures and require adequate "E-strategies" to make brands tangible. Brands are sometimes understood as democratized management of brand meaning with or without allowing the management [50]. Brands operate as "corporate catalysts that restructure organizations" [51]. This is valid for corporations as well as nations.

The diversity and multitude of brand concepts and their multifaceted application as a nation brand make it difficult to prove the evidence of nation branding for sustainable development. Nevertheless, research finds a significant relationship between a country's brand image and its economic well-being [52]. Nation branding is also used by countries with developing economies to develop more sustainably. With the United Arab Emirates's Green Building goals, the United Arab Emirates has set sustainability impulses such as saving electricity and water consumption in order to improve the United Arab Emirates's green footprint [53].

If "green consumption" is currently "in," then it has more transformative potential [54]. Just one example here is Sagay City, Philippines, participating in the already existing example "Green Destinations." Illegal fishers turned out to become sea guardians: a ground-up eco-tourism initiative to contribute to green tourism and sustain Sagay's protected seascape.[5] Taking advantage of this requires agile skills, as discussed in the following section.

[5]Illegal Fishers Turned Sea Guardians: A Ground-up Eco-Tourism Initiative to Sustain Sagay's Protected Seascape. https://www.greendestinations.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Top-100-2024-GPS-Sagay-Marine-Reserve-Illegal-Fishers-Turned-Sea-Guardians.pdf

Table 3
Viewpoints regarding corporate brand control and market dynamics

Brand renovation (dynamic brands/high corporate brand control)	Brand evolution (dynamic brands/low corporate brand control)
▪ Rebranding, repositioning ▪ Ability to change identities and images ▪ Branding especially within mergers and acquisitions	▪ Often unexpected, rapid changes of markets ▪ Stakeholder empowerment due to new technology ▪ Images evolve in consumer activities in consumption
Brand building (static brands/high corporate brand control)	Brand emergence (static brands/low corporate brand control)
▪ Brands as closed sources ▪ Traditional view ▪ Autonomous brand management	▪ Co-creation of brands by corporations and (selected) customers ▪ Branding as interaction processes ▪ Consumers as constructors of corporate brand images based on interactions

4.4. Brand as agile competencies, knowledge management, and education

At first glance, it seems contradictory that brands are understood as long-term image and reputation processes on the one hand and also stand for agility on the other. Brands are paradoxical because, on the one hand, they stabilize dynamic markets through the formation of brand alliances and their communities through identification. On the other hand, brands must constantly develop their values in order to remain attractive to their fans. To achieve this, brand management requires agile skills, as digital brands in particular have to demonstrate on social media every day [12].

The fact that they must also be agile is not a contradiction, but a prerequisite for their stabilizing role in dynamic markets. Agility means "strategic flexibility." If brands are to deliver on their brand promises, they must constantly adapt their values to the requirements of their stakeholders. In order to constantly synchronize values between companies and their stakeholders, brands are on the move on social media, events, and other dialogue platforms. Fashion brands represent brands as constantly updated knowledge. Every fashion show, every trade fair, or every games convention becomes a space in which brand values become negotiated and, thus, synchronized.

The promise of sustainability must be constantly reviewed in a brand alliance. New production standards or consumer behavior can be assessed at any time as environmentally harmful instead of sustainable economic behavior due to new technologies. Conventional planning methods such as the management cycle (current analysis, target analysis, deviation analysis) must therefore be made more agile in order to continuously improve alliance partners with any brand misconduct or to exclude them from the alliance. The PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act), for example, works in the tradition of Kaizen, that is, continuous improvement [55]. In this way, sustainable brand promises are stabilized. This constant process of updating knowledge is of particular importance for sustainable brands: "brand-ucation." Brands are therefore "(STR)agile" [56], that is, strategic (factor for success), static (positioning, orientation, identification), and agile (i.e., strategic flexibility) at the same time.

4.5. Sustainable nation branding as green nudging and habit stacking

Brand campaigning means more than just creative marketing gimmicks. This applies even more so when brands are used as change approaches with brand emergence or brand evolution. To lead such brand transformation processes, an approach for continuous adjustments must be found. This is where nudging comes into question. Interactive branding can be interpreted as nudging if brands are requested to contribute to behavioral change. Nudges have become known in behavioral economics. They are considered a suitable instrument for policymakers to intervene in the decision-making behavior of citizens [57]. Nudges are intended to counteract poor choices made by individuals. Pure nudges change the choice environment to guide behavior unobtrusively. Nudges aim to change small habits (micro habits). They have great power over our behavior. For example, waste is thrown in the trash every day and separated into materials such as paper or recyclables. Such activities are hardly noticed in detail, and their impact is therefore underestimated. Small habits dominate everyday work. The impact of small habits grows exponentially over time. If you get just 1% better every day, you'll be almost 40% better at the end of the year. Habits are the compound interest of self-optimization [58]. This is where nudging ties in with habit stacking to promote environmentally friendly behavior. Green nudges are designed to impact decisions of customers, corporations, and/or politicians to increase sustainability. They can have a significant impact on behavior and the environment but are highly context dependent [59]. Brushing the teeth every day is one of the micro habits. Turning off the tap while brushing saves a lot of water. Anyone who already separates waste can also pay attention to examples of artificial product aging. Identifying micro habits and shaming them on social media is just a simple idea to add interactivity to a nation brand.

Nudges include a lot of instruments: defaults, simplification, reminders, ease and convince, use of social norms, and many more [60]. A wide range of typical brand communication instruments fulfill the idea of nudging: green signal colors of logos or the creative culinary event that draws attention to regionally produced food can encourage citizens to become sustainable. Providing incentives opens a broad range of opportunities to nudge sustainable behaviors: inviting people to plant trees in their city, the award to the ecopreneur of the local Chamber of Commerce, the competition for sustainable tourism in the post-recreation area, the advertising campaigns for the opening of bicycle lanes with the donation of a company for each kilometer traveled by bicycle, and opts-in/opts-out system, for example, to round up at checkout for donations to specific sustainability projects, etc. Green nudging can trigger contagion effects. The connection between nudging and virality becomes apparent here.

4.6. Brands as viral communication management

Beyond habit stacking, virality on the web represents another the success of digital nudging. If brands want to be successful, they have to take part in the media. Social media are important for consumers, and almost every consumer brand is present there [61]. That is why it is also important for nation brands to be present here as soon as they are used as a destination brand.

Virality refers to self-dynamic social systems that are particularly attractive for brand campaigning with social media. This means that nation brands are located between the corporate and social levels. The virality of brand communication makes brands transformative – that is, they facilitate positive market and societal system change [62]. This is currently becoming particularly clear in tourism. Instagramability is currently being highlighted as a success factor in digital brand management. When travelers share their enthusiasm for a place, virally driven travel activity develops in the communities [63]. Instagram becomes a "networked or emplaced photograph" [64]. Every social media challenge is only successful when it goes viral.

Social media challenges, events, awards, rallies, viral marketing, and social gaming are typical instruments that intend to initiate virality. Also, Smart Mobs exemplify the power of social systems. They are the political variant of flash mobs, that is, spontaneous, digitally organized groups of people who, in Flash Mobs, organize themselves for fun and entertainment, and in smart mobs, they organize themselves on an often critical basis [65]. They can be so powerful that they drive the transformation even of dictatorships. The "Cyber Orient" showcases that "Digital dissidence and creative resistance went hand in hand with the rise and fall of Arab blogospheres, grassroot media centers and hacker's collectives that popped all over the MENA region, opposing authoritarian state structures and oppressive groups" [66]. That is, nation branding initiatives should be organized by sustainability networks: business alliances, civic associations, or universities are asked to be included in nation branding, which leads back to branding as global leadership.

5. Example: Sustainable Emergence of the Nation Brand "Made in Germany"

Looking back, nation branding presents itself as a concept that, in combination with "brand" and "change," can make a contribution to the sustainable further development of economic societies. "Made in Germany" could be a promising example of this. With Germany's development into one of the leading economic nations since the Second World War, one could argue that the quality brand "Made Germany" has developed from a "country of origin" into a nation brand, although this label was originally intended as a warning sign against products from Germany [67].

In fact, Germany has been at the top of international brand rankings for decades, even though the country has been in multiple crises since the 2000s at the latest after a phase of reform blockade in the 1990s and is now in recession as Europe's economic laggard [68].

"Made in Germany" became successful without a central authority. Rather, it became by and by one of the strongest economic nations through decentralized corporate performance within the framework of an economic system that relies on the social market economy and is therefore one of the "low dynamic and low control" brands (see Table 3). Hence, the success story of "Made in Germany" offers a "brand emergence" approach for "Sustainability Made in Germany" [69].

With the so-called "Wirtschaftswunder" ("economic miracle") – a phase of an unexpectedly long upswing after the Second World War – "Made in Germany" is a crisis-proven and, from today's perspective, a threefold visionary approach to nation branding: (1) First, because Germany has replaced its original model of a social market economy with a state social economy by increasing the state quota to currently around 50% [69]. (2) Second, Germany is in a recession [70]. (3) The path it has taken toward climate neutrality is characterized by inefficiency. The country has set itself clear targets: according to the Climate Protection Act of 2021, Germany should have achieved greenhouse gas neutrality by 2045 [71]. So far, climate policy has mainly consisted of a climate policy hodgepodge of subsidies and regulatory law (limits, quotas, bans, forced shutdowns of power plants, etc.). This climate policy is representative of the state social economy, that is, a state that intervenes instead of seeing itself as a framework provider and setting incentives. The track record of these climate protection instruments that Germany and the EU have adopted to date "is sobering at best" [72]. Nation branding can provide support here.

1) Values management: Thenation brand "Made in Germany" still stands for values like a quality badge today and once told the story of the "Wirtschaftswunder." The roots of this success story go back to the social market economy, which initially relied on the market economy with a restrained state. Today, the state is the biggest entrepreneur with unsound finances [73].
   From a brand perspective, this would revive the social market economy as the original brand essence, which would now be updated as a sustainable brand essence. Germany's leading position in the abovementioned Green Country Brand Strength offers great potential for this. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also emphasizes the positive interaction between economic growth and sustainability. "Green growth" is an approach of the OECD. Forty-seven nations have joined the 2009 OECD Declaration on Green Growth. The green growth strategy provides concrete recommendations and measurement tools to support countries' efforts to achieve economic growth and development, while at the same time ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the ecosystem services on which our well-being relies. The idea is that "green" and "growth" can go hand in hand [73].
   The market for "Green Tech Made in Germany" is estimated to be worth over 800 billion euros in 2030. Recycling, circular economy, sustainable mobility, and many more markets provide room for many initiatives that make "Sustainabilityle Mmade in Germany" attractive for corporations as well as customers.[6] For example, the Clima Tech development, which is said to have a boom potential comparable to that of digitalization and which Germany has largely missed out on, would be an opportunity to use the potential of the start-up scene as a contribution to sustainable nation branding [74]. Deregulation, for example, in approval procedures or the simplification of currently complex spin-off procedures, would be important steps in this regard.
2) Glocal alliance management: As introduced above, every nation brand is always globally active in terms of cross-border economic and political interactions. This applies in particular to sustainable brand management. In 2002, Germany's Federal Government presented its sustainable development strategy at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. Sustainable development is a guiding principle of the policies pursued by the Federal Government. It defines that this guiding principle should be observed as a goal and yardstick of any action the government takes at the national, European, and international levels in whatever policy field [75]. This prioritization and focus on political and governmental measures are typical of Germany today and, with the social market economy, should actually focus first on decentralization, export framework conditions, and incentives in order to form self-organized alliances between corporations but also between corporations and customer groups. This would be one of the values of the "Made in Germany" brand that could be revived.
3) Change management and national transformation: Germany is considered a case for restructuring because the government and administration are seen as "fossilized." Adapting them to the requirements of the current age does not work incrementally, but only disruptively [76]. Taking climate change as an example, Germany has so far fundamentally lacked the "sense of urgency" for sustainable management, as its effects are noticeable, but unlike the coronavirus crisis, they have not yet had such a drastic impact [72]. With the experience of the success story of "Made in Germany" within the social market economy, the country could become the world champion of sustainability if it were to establish framework principles such as the brand manual in constitutional law. Personal responsibility and incentives instead of regulations are important characteristics of this. These would be important anchor points to create a leverage point for their application and enforcement [77].
4) Agile competences with ongoing value education: In this way, the state would act less as a static regulator, entrepreneur, and subsidizer but would once again act as a framework provider in order to leverage the agile potential of sustainable markets. However, regulations have led to welfare losses so that incentives and deregulation must be provided for sustainable market performance [78].
   In fact, the core of the economic miracle lies in a state that focuses on agility and self-organization as a framework provider.

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[6] GreenTech Made in Germany. https://www.mhp.com/de/insights/was-wir-denken/greentech-made-in-germany-2023

In order to exploit this potential, education would also be fundamentally necessary to convey an understanding of the sustainability goals of climate agreements to all stakeholders, especially companies and their customers, in order to create a solid foundation for the sustainable development of the economy, cities, and digitalization [79].

5) Green nudging and habit stacking: This field of action has long been discovered by politicians as a quick, low-cost instrument of effective governance. In Germany, nudges are used as an instrument of the environmental law mix and thus as a supplement to regulation [80]. If the sustainable market economy is seen as a continuation of the "social market economy" success story, green nudging should always be given preference over regulation because this is how market-compliant mechanisms are used. One important step would be to restructure state revenues. The state would have to move away from the performance-unfriendly taxation of income toward CO_2 pricing for businesses and citizens. If CO_2 prices for heating, flights, cars, etc., were transparent and could be saved, all parties involved would always have incentives to replace them with CO_2-saving alternatives instead of slowing down economic and work performance with taxes [72]. This is just one example of a multitude of possibilities for nudging and habit stacking (see above).
6) Viral communication management: The fields of action mentioned above – from values, change, and agility to measures of green nudging – offer a great deal of potential and are also the prerequisite for viral sustainable campaigning that invites interaction. Sustainability is an "in" topic, as it is part of purpose-driven branding. Aiming for higher goals is "in" today [81]. However, this can only be successful in Germany if politicians remember the self-organizing forces of the social market economy. Then "Sustainability Made in Germany" can become a social movement.

6. Conclusion: Nation Branding as Changing Countries by Sustainable Nudging

This article asked how nation branding can contribute to the solution to climate protection. In times when green consumption is "in," nation brands have the potential to make rapid and lasting contributions to climate protection.

The dialogical character of nation brands goes beyond conventional image building and makes them compatible with the political processes in democracies. There are various climate protection initiatives whose impact could be increased as a combined and integrated nation brand.

Therefore, nation brands are designed here as open family brands to be managed as glocal alliances. Contemporary brand management lasts far beyond communications and campaigning. They

Table 4
Summary of key findings

	Key findings
Nation brands as global brands and values management	Nation brands are always global brands because their values must be internationally attractive in order to attract stakeholders. Sustainability describes a green set of values that is currently considered attractive in consumption and therefore offers an opportunity for climate protection.
Brands as glocal alliance management	Nation brands can be viewed as family brands driven by the outcomes of multiple actors. Successful branding is driven by political institutions, corporations, customers, tourists, and all stakeholders who interact with these brands.
Brands as change management and national transformation	Today, brands represent conceptual approaches to support change processes through behavioral change. If "green consumption" is currently "in," then national sustainable branding has transformative potential.
Brands as agile competences with ongoing value education	Branding is the mutual education of brand knowledge between branding organizations and their stakeholders, and vice versa. If brands are to deliver on their brand promises, they must constantly adapt their values to the requirements of their stakeholders, for example, to meet evolving requirements of sustainability and climate protection.
Brands as green nudging and habit stacking	Interactive branding can be interpreted as nudging if brands are requested to contribute to behavioral change. Nudges have become known in behavioral economics. Green nudges are designed to impact decisions of customers, corporations, and/or politicians to increase sustainability.
Viral communication management	The virality of brand communication makes brands become transformative – that is, they facilitate positive market and societal system change, that is, the shaping of sustainable national economic developments.
Revitalizing the nation brand "Made in Germany"	• Evolving the success story of "Made in Germany" to "Sustainability Made in Germany" • Green growth and Green Tech as updated social values • Alliance management with a focus on decentralization, export framework conditions, and incentives in order to form self-organized alliances • Using the potential for national change to make the country the world champion of sustainability, telling the sustainable story of a new "Wirtschaftswunder" • Agility driven by a state that would act less as a static regulator but would act as a framework provider in order to leverage the agile potential of sustainable markets • Green nudging and habit stacking are given preference over regulation

have become behavioral management. Brands integrate leadership, change, and sustainability to prove their promised brand values. Branding aims to nudge climate protection measures that companies and other organizations implement as part of their value creation. Nation brands provide a frame driven by corporations, governments, and/or other institutions to trigger sustainable initiatives. If governments or ministries take on the role of brand management, they should limit themselves to setting the framework and integrating companies and other attracting institutions into the alliance as key performers (see Table 4).

Nation brands as attractive, agile, educative social systems include win-win-win-win situations: They include (1) the compatibility with democratic processes, (2) the potential to protect the climate, (3) the economic potential of sustainable products, and (4) the motivation to inspiring attractive brands to facilitate corporate and social change. Strong brands also have an inherent power that protects their values as brand governance. Then climate protection becomes a tangible nation brand, for example, with the nation brand of Germany "Sustainability Made in Germany."

Ethical Statement

This study does not contain any studies with human or animal subjects performed by the author.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that he has no conflicts of interest to this work.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

Author Contribution Statement

Jan Lies: Conceptualization, Methodology, Resources, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Supervision.

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