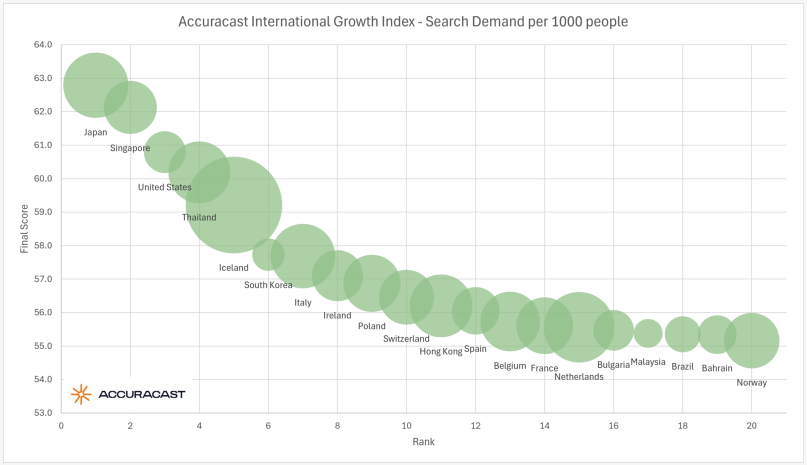
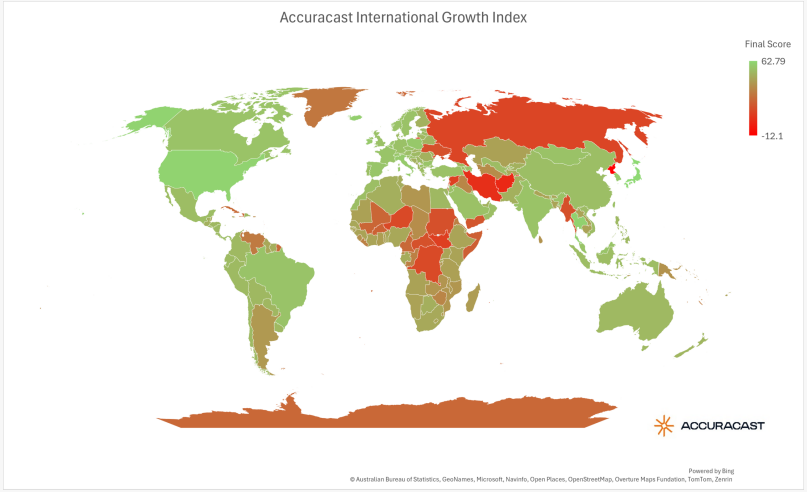
US market attractiveness rises despite wars and tariffs as UK trails Iceland: Accuracast International Growth Index

Japan leads Accuracast's 248-market index, ahead of Singapore and the US, combining World Bank data with Google search demand and advertising costs.



Accuracast International Growth Index - Search Demand per 1000 people



Accuracast International Growth Index - Heatmap of Market Attractiveness for business expansion

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, September 10, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- The United States is ranked the world's third most attractive market for international expansion in the Accuracast International Growth Index during a period marked by wars and tariff uncertainty.

The United Kingdom ranks 28th, despite placing third for financial infrastructure and recording strong digital readiness. The UK had the highest competition for online customers in the study, indicating a particularly crowded digital advertising market.

Compared to 2025 data, Japan remains first, Singapore climbs two places to second, Thailand ranks fourth and Iceland enters the top five. Their positions reflect consistently strong performance across all eight areas.

US demand comes at the index's highest advertising cost

The United States recorded 67 million searches a month across the study's benchmark terms,

the largest total recorded. China generated 52 million and India 34 million.

The US was the most expensive market for search advertising in the study. The estimated average cost each time someone clicked a search advert was 232% higher in the US than in Japan. Based on the estimated average costs per click in the study, the same budget could buy more than three times as many clicks in Japan as in the United States.

The US score improved from 2025 without a change in rank. Online demand, digital readiness and financial infrastructure contributed to its top-three position, as economic and political conditions shifted.

UK's strong foundations meet a crowded online market

The UK ranked third for financial infrastructure and recorded an estimated 13 million monthly searches across the study's benchmark keywords. Its weighted Google Ads competition score was higher than those recorded in the US, China and India.

Businesses considering the UK should test the cost of reaching customers before committing budget, particularly in crowded search categories.

Farhad Divecha, Group CEO of Accuracast, said:

"The rankings challenge conventional assumptions about cross-border business expansion. US held third place and improved its result during a year shaped by wars and tariff uncertainty. Britain ranked below a number of smaller economies in spite of the highly developed market. Japan wins overall despite its lower profile.

"The UK presents a sharp warning. It has the financial infrastructure and digital readiness businesses expect from a major international market, yet it ranks 28th as it records the study's highest competition for customer attention. Businesses should test the cost of reaching customers before assuming the UK's reputation guarantees success.

"The UK's ranking on the Accuracast International Growth Index doesn't imply the UK isn't an attractive market for business expansion. What it means, though, is the UK should not be the first market overseas businesses look at. Due to its hyper-competitive nature, it is much more important to get the product, positioning and pricing mix right, by first launching in smaller, less competitive markets, before trying to break into the UK"

Methodology: How the International Growth Index goes beyond World Bank's B-READY

The World Bank's Business Ready project, known as B-READY, assesses the regulations, public services and operating conditions businesses face in each country. The Accuracast International Growth Index draws on more than 382,000 data points across 34 composite measures.

Accuracast adds estimated Google search demand, search-advertising costs and advertiser competition. Together, the data covers formal business conditions, estimated online demand, and the cost of reaching potential customers. The cross-sector index analyses 75 core search terms covering financial services, software, technology, professional services, travel, hospitality, sport, fitness, ecommerce and retail. The terms were translated into 20 major languages.

The index uses eight pillars of measurement. Digital search demand accounts for 30% of the ranking and purchasing power for 25%. Market demand and digital readiness each account for 15%. Financial infrastructure, regulatory complexity, setup costs & friction and cross-border activity each account for 5%.

Sources include the World Bank's B-READY project, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Statistics Division, the International Telecommunication Union, the UNCTAD Global Cyberlaw Tracker, Google and ILOSTAT. Google Ads keyword data cover a rolling 12-month period ending in the latest quarter included in the index. They are platform estimates, covering Google searches, and may understate demand in languages outside the translated keyword set.

The index is designed for early market screening. Country-specific legal, regulatory and financial advice remains essential before entering a market. Full rankings, country profiles and the technical methodology are available at: accuracast.com/global-growth-lab/international-growth-index

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