



Nation Branding Strategy for Zimbabwe: Towards an Integrated Nation Branding Framework

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Abstract

This article examines the development of nation brand strategy framework for Zimbabwe. The submission is based on the analysis of factors perceived to impact on nation branding programmes. This research aim to contribute towards the development of effective nation branding discourse and practice in Zimbabwe. Specifically, the article was premised on the quest to 1) determine key determinants for the development of Brand Zimbabwe; 2) to ascertain the relative significance of the various facets of national branding practice; and 3) to propose an integrated conceptual framework for nation branding initiatives. The study was designed to follow a mixed approach; a combination of interpretivism and positivism. A total of 372 respondents was drawn from across the society. Respondents came from politicians, scholars, the media, civic organisations, government officials, church and international organisations. This research established that Brand Zimbabwe requires an independent body to integrate all key stakeholders for an effective branding process. The nation branding process should be managed from visioning, formulation through to deployment and monitoring and control of nation brand performance. Zimbabwe's quest for foreign direct investment, international visitation and export revenue requires that the country develops an integrated strategy to deal with its nation brand image question.

Keywords:

*Nation brand strategy
Strategic framework
Strategy deployment
Strategy monitoring and control.*

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Publisher:

Scientific Publishing Institute

Accepted: 31 July 2019

Published: 9 August 2019

Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

1. Introduction

Zimbabwe has experienced a disparaging phase spanning nearly twenty years since the turn of the millennium during which the country's once celebrated nation brand lost significant equity. This period saw the country suffer deteriorating global attractiveness, economic activity with subsequent loss in general quality of life. The country disengaged from the global community and endured economic and political isolation. The diplomatic fall-out of Zimbabwe and the Western world emanated from government endeavours to address the famous land question. A major turning point in the history of the nation brand was the peaceful collapse of Zimbabwe's former President, Robert Mugabe's administration in November 2017 and the ascendance of President Emmerson Mnangagwa (Chronicle, 2018). The whole period leading to the much-publicised inaugural harmonised presidential elections presented a peak opportunity for changing the fortunes of the nation brand. The Office of the President and Cabinet admitted that the country needed to develop a nation brand campaign to inform the world that Zimbabwe is "open for business" (Guzah, 2018). The campaign was to have an underlying message of a viable nation with working institutions,

tremendous opportunities in all sectors, vibrant culture and great places to visit and with a peaceful, resilient people and the most literate workforce in Africa. Branding Zimbabwe could be such a discouraging task given the adverse Brand association suffered by the country leading to its long association with such ill-reputed countries such as Burma, Iraq, South Sudan, Cuba, Belarus and North Korea (Gumpo, 2005). Researchers advise that proactiveness in nation rebranding and repositioning traverses beyond mere communication and commissioning cosmetics work on the nation brand to a comprehensive and cohesive reconfiguration of the brand (Gilmore, 2002).

2. Problem Statement

This research is on nation branding with a quest to contribute to the development of a viable strategic framework for managing brand equity for Brand Zimbabwe. Its foundations are within the context of competitiveness of nations in the global environment. Reflecting on the concept of designing assessable performance outcomes (Papadopoulos, 2004) and effectual nation branding being the primary dilemma in branding of nations, this research motivates and suggests the significance of performance management in nation brand equity management. To bolster the argument for nation brand equity management discourse, the increased push for a perception of a new dispensation by the administration led by His Excellency, President Emmerson Mnangagwa creates a new wave for nation branding in Zimbabwe. Critically important in this research is the determination of variables in nation branding activity that brings about competitiveness for Brand Zimbabwe.

3. Objectives of the Study

This article seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine key determinants for the development of Brand Zimbabwe.
2. To ascertain the relative significance of identified facets of nation branding practice.
3. To propose an integrated conceptual framework for nation branding initiatives.

4. Literature Review

In the literature review section and exploration into key themes on national branding will be explored. The discussion will begin with the purpose of nation branding.

4.1. Purpose of Nation Branding

Nation branding stems from the domain of marketing and corporate brand management (Ih-Prost & Bondaz, 2014). It entails the way through which countries motivate a defined perception pattern in the eyes of foreigners, particularly to generate positive opinion at the evocation of the said nation (Anholts, 2010). Nation branding has become a global phenomenon that requires countries to take control of their brand identities to overcome international economic, social, cultural, and political competition (Tecmen, 2018). The overall aim of nation branding is to produce a differentiated image which can drum up attention to competitiveness and comparative advantages of the nation. As eluded earlier, nation branding discourse borders on boosting export performance, mobilisation of foreign direct investment, drawing talent, elevation of tourist activity (Zeineddine, 2017). Positive brand equity is expected to marshal real commercial, social, and political returns for a country (Dinnie, Melewar, Seidenfuss, & Musa, 2010). Additionally, when a nation holds positive brand equity, it wields capacity and strength to combat foreign threats, since powerful brands can safeguard the nation from negative publicity (Dinnie, 2015). Nation branding is viewed as a concept in sync with the escalating international competition and pressure facing nations equally in local and external spheres (De Chernatony, 2006). Nation branding is attracting a lot of interest from academics, professional consultants, governments and non-state actors. The notion of nation branding is presented by branding experts as a strategic imperative useful to deal with the dynamics of geo-politics, international economics and the influence of international media (Bolin & Miazhevich, 2018).

Nations are getting more business-orientated in their socio-economic programming in response to pressure from global competition and increasing domestic socio-political sentiment (Alvarez & Campo, 2014). Progressive nations realise the need to proactively manage and control their brand reputation to distinguish and enhance their attractiveness (Lee, 2009). The way a nation is viewed by other nations is a function of collective opinion about that country's attractiveness and their lived experiences of such a nation (Dinnie, 2015). It is believed that nation branding presents a platform to cultivate the attractiveness profile for a country Konecnik and Go (2008) and Lee (2009). Each nation has its own identity, which if not prudently managed, potentially gets subjugated by (adverse) stereotype. Stereotypes are known to potentially impact a country's strategic objectives (Skinner & Kubacki, 2007) and Dinnie (2008a). Nearly all countries face both positive and negative generalisations and stereotypes (Avraham, 2018). Notwithstanding the fact that stereotypes pose a serious barrier against tourism and investment, studies have been done to suggest possible nation brand repair strategies.

Experts and researchers accept that brands evolve over time and at worst suffer damage from internal and external risk factors. It remains the responsibility of the country to, at best, proactively deal with the threats

before they manifest by influencing negative behaviour towards the brand. The author observes that international images of most nations are hounded by negative stereotype (Avraham, 2018). Such emergent perceptions, however, and negative stereotypes can be corrected over time through conscious and coordinated nation branding activity (Dinnie, 2015). It usually takes some time to alter and correct the negative nation image, thus nations should adopt a long-range perspective, to attain conscious awareness and acceptance of desired national identity (Quelch & Jocz, 2009). Only through concerted and long-term engagement can nations restore impaired nation brand images in targeted audiences, as quick short-gun publicity and public relations campaigns are of no consequence. The challenges around the 'Canada is back!' campaign highlight the importance of dealing with the real issues affecting the nation brand rather than dwelling on propaganda (Nimijean, 2018). Nation branding strategy was not successful owing to basic challenges around political management and public administration under which brand threats were manifest. It is very essential to focus more on doing than on communicating intentions in the face of real issues around the brand (Nimijean, 2018). Therefore, it is paramount for nation branding strategy to go far beyond graphical identity to integrate broader facets such as national development strategy, consumer and stakeholder engagement, messaging harmonisation for internal and external audiences among others (Lee, 2009).

Nation branding provides an opportunity to identify and articulate a country's competitive and comparative advantages as a value proposition to the world (Anholt, 2007). Observers believe that destinations cannot overcome global competition simply on the basis of their comparative advantages embodied in the landscape, natural or human-made features because such advantages are found in other places (Bregoli, 2016). What remains essential is for nations to construct and align their brand image and reputation to support their long-term nation brand equity. Findings from a study on Haiti and Dominican Republic confirm the positive nexus between a country's level of stability and tourism (Ludmilla, 2018). The study also affirmed that the level and quality of infrastructure influences a country's reputation and global competitiveness. Attentive nation brand positioning affords a nation a competitive position over others and successful repositioning can unlock great potential, in instances where a nation's image lags behind its reality (Reibstein, 2017). Nations are attempting to create and portray meaningful differentiation ahead of their counterparties. It has been emphasised that nation branding be taken as long-term undertakings done beyond paying lip service to issues facing the country. Caution should be taken against the incidence of the 'Dallas experiment' in which the then New Zealand Market Development Board inundated Dallas City with the New Zealand campaign. The campaign was run for a period and witnessed an exponential growth in export sales. A significant slump in sales was, however, experienced 12 months later after the campaign was terminated. As such, tactical short term promotional exercises must not be seen as a substitute for strategic nation branding (De Chernatony, 2006). Nation branding rides on truthfulness. One needs to have a good product to compete effectively. Good national policy is fundamental in dealing with nation branding challenges. The Winner is Georgia Campaign failed because of the facts on the ground conflicting with the new branding narrative (Dinnie et al., 2010).

Nation branding effort has a tough time to overcome poor national policy and government behaviour. It has been noted that "just a good name on its own cannot make a brand" but a sustained building of market-leading brand capacities does (Abimbola, 2010). This, however, is more than a brand communications strategy. Legacy nation brands are advantaged compared to emerging nations because they enjoy established historical positive associations. Such destinations with legacies include America, Germany, Britain, Italy, France, London, New York, Munich, Rome, and Dubai among others. On the contrary, are also the little countries that people struggle to differentiate; thus, "who knows the difference between Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and other stains?" (Olins, 2013). There is no substitute for nation branding and as such it is a real issue that requires government attention. It has been observed that nation branding needs to be consciously pursued otherwise lack of a resolute drive to brand a nation invites image drift as other people do it on behalf of the government - albeit, for their selfish reasons! (Nation Branding, 2016).

In the discussion that follows the imperative of nation branding will be highlighted.

4.2. The Imperative of Nation Branding

There is an unequivocal proposition for nation branding across countries. Nations compete daily for resources, tourism, investment and markets. In that context, countries with unfamiliar or adverse reputation are marginalised (Spio, Frimpong, & Austin, 2011). They fail to feature in the minds of global audiences, which impact their commercial performance. The emphasis of public opinion and attitude towards other nations is gaining eminence in global geopolitics and commerce. International public diplomacy influences state and non-state activity to sustain and elevate a country's soft power (Kemming, 2009). Traditional diplomatic missions are unquestionably ineffectual in the absence of complementary involvement of supportive stakeholders at the global arena. Contemporary submissions suggest the launching of public diplomatic effort beyond the purview of consulates, ambassadors, and departments of international affairs. Governments are expected to facilitate collaborative engagement of multiple stakeholders outside their administrative realm inclusive of business, academia, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), media and political institutions. Public diplomacy has soared beyond conventional propaganda to promoting the much-needed sturdy advocacy towards positive public sentiment (Tecmen, 2018).

The discussion that follows will expand on nation branding as a currency.

4.3. Nation Branding Currency

The international image and reputation of a country significantly influences and affects a nation's global prospects (Kapferer, 2008). Researchers on Zimbabwe have observed that low level of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows into the country continues to be explained in the context of an underlying negative image faced by the country (Sikwila, 2015). Countries relentlessly jostle for the limited foreign direct investment hence the need for nations to craft strategies to salvage a reasonable share of the global resources. Zimbabwe has performed badly against its regional counterparts over time according to the World Economic Forum report (Klaus, 2016). A positive nation brand image thus, of necessity can be an essential global negotiation instrument for the country. Governments cannot wish away negative stereotypes but should earnestly ascertain the world's view on their countries and develop appropriate image management strategies (Anholt, 2007; Haig, 2005; Jaffe, 2015). It is the role of governments to proactively manage their countries' reputation and image to meaningfully support their economic, political and social objectives. This enormous task has become one among other primary preoccupations of modern governments inclusive of Zimbabwe. This is so as the country has witnessed a severe fall in international tourism, international trade, foreign investment and deterioration in social welfare since independence (Masango & Naidoo, 2018). Generally, academics, businesspersons, tourism players, politicians, diplomats and the public agree that Zimbabwe needs to reclaim its former regional and global status.

With respect to performance in nation branding, this research submits to the need to adopt a strategic brand equity management model to promote nation brand value (Odia & Isibor, 2014). In view of brand alignment to the country management, emphasis is on the nation leadership role in nation branding to ensure an organised approach to the management of nation brands. It is observed however that, devoid of an integrated system for managing the nation brand, it may be hard to achieve reasonable brand performance. To usher more consolidated nation brands and enhance the quality of citizenship, there is need for a logical framework for strategically building nation brand equity (De Chernatony, 2006). Previous research has proffered models in the context of nation branding (Dinnie, 2008a; Lee, 2009). It remains important to realise that each situation and country is unique implying an adequate framework for Zimbabwe is only derived from the investigation of issues around the Brand Zimbabwe. An appropriate model should provide a satisfactory explanation of how a nation brands' elements should be integrated and managed in a complete system and define the role of nation leadership in the nation branding and management of brand equity for sustainable competitiveness of nations.

The discussion that follows will explore the research methodology employed in the study.

5. Research Methodology

This study was thus based on a mixed approach methodology; a combination of interpretivist and positivist paradigm consistent with Rolfe (2006) and Kato (2002) who accept that methodological triangulation produces better results and a complete picture of social phenomena. Mixed methodology enhances the breadth and depth of the research as it combines measurement of extent of occurrence with the explanations and narratives about phenomena. It can be argued that by combining both types of research, the limitations of each individual method can be offset and gaps of data can be filled or predicted especially perceptions, opinions, meanings, attitudes and beliefs. The research was based on a survey on stakeholders around brand Zimbabwe where a sample of 384 computed through the sample size statistical formula (Cochran, 1977). A total of 372 respondents however, participated in the survey. In this enquiry, an internal constancy method was employed to ascertain the consistency of the data collection tool. Computed results for the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the instrument was 0.883. It drew respondents from politicians, scholars, the media, the civic organisations, the government, local community and traditional leadership, the church and international organisations. The study targeted adult respondents above 18 years given the complexity of the subject under study. The study consciously considered respondents who related with Brand Zimbabwe from a political, economic, social angle, or who could offer valuable opinions and insights based on their professional exposure. The sampling approach was consistent with the stakeholder theory given the multiple stakeholders who consume the nation brand. The selection of respondents was based on competence, perspective and experience dimensions.

5.1. Data Collection

The research utilised questionnaires and in-depth interviews to collect primary data. A set of five-point Likert Scale type of questions were used to gather primary data from Brand Zimbabwe stakeholders whilst open ended questions were used to collect data from key informants. A Likert Scale uses an ordinal psychometric measurement of views, attitudes, beliefs and opinions. Each question in the instrument was presented as a statement or claim where research subjects would show the extent of agreement or otherwise in a structured response type format. The Likert Scale questions were used because they are universally used for survey data collection and are easily understood by respondents. In-depth interviews were carried out with the

aid of an interview guide. The interview guide carried a list of open-ended questions to allow key informants the leeway to freely and fully express themselves on issues under investigation. Participation was drawn from the public, government, business, and non-governmental institutions. The use of self-administered questionnaires together with personal interviews brought the advantages of triangulation to the research (Sudman, Greeley, & Pinto, 1965).

5.2. Data Analysis

Survey data was analysed using SPSS version 21. Frequency analysis was used to analyse questions asked using a five-point Likert Scale, and these were presented in percentage format. In addition, factor analysis was used using a dimension reduction methodology. Factor Analysis remains applicable in social sciences to measure the strengths of relationships across observed and latent scores of variables. The more correlated the variables are, the better (Schmitt & Sass, 2011). Correlation Matrix was conducted to assess the relative significance of the identified factors considered critical for nation brand strategy alignment. Principal Component Matrix using the reduction method was applied to assess the significance of the various factors in influencing nation branding. The statistical operation was used to check multi-collinearity and relationships across the variables. As for qualitative data set, thematic analysis was used where emerging themes were presented and analysed keeping with the research objectives.

6. Data Analysis and Presentation on Major Study Findings

In the section below the discussion will focus on the descriptive characteristics of respondents, nation branding statistic issues will be explored.

6.1. Characteristics of Respondents

In the descriptive statistics the characteristics of respondents will be explored. The respondents in this study were drawn from across nine sectors of the economy, the country, age groups; a reflection of views from people of diverse backgrounds. Respondents to the quantitative research were from Harare (70.2%) followed by Bulawayo with 8.6%, Mutare with 7.5%, Masvingo (4.8%) and then Gweru with 3.8%. Bindura had 1.6%, Diaspora had 1.6%, Chinhoyi, and Hwange had 0.8% each and Kwekwe with the least number of respondents (0.3%). More males participated in the research with a frequency of 222 (59.7%) as compared to their female counterparts with a frequency of 150 (40.3%). In terms of age, the age range 26 to 45 had the highest frequency of 238 (64%) with the 45 to 55 range following with a frequency of 63 (16.9%) then the 18 to 25 whose frequency was 58 (15.6%). People who are older than 55 years had the least frequency (13) with the percentage (3.5). In addition to the above, interviews were conducted with participants across the society. A total of 10 respondents were drawn from Zimbabwe Investment Authority (ZIA), ZimTrade, Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC), Ministry of Macroeconomic Planning and Investment Promotion, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC), Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality, banking sector, development partners, civic society, the tourism and hospitality sector, academics and economists.

6.2. Nation Branding Strategic Issues

The research examined sixteen strategic subjects generally considered in nation branding as follows:

1. That it is critical to establish collaboration between government and key stakeholders in nation branding.
2. That the nation brand should support the vision of national competitiveness.
3. That the nation brand should be managed by an independent arm of government.
4. That the nation brand requires strong sub-brands to support it.
5. That the nation brand should have clearly defined target markets.
6. That the nation brand should have nationally (and universally) compelling attributes.
7. That the nation brand should not be based on rhetoric (should be based on real issues).
8. That the nation brand should be publicised globally.
9. That the nation brand should be understood and embraced by all stakeholders.
10. That the nation brand should be based on a frank and holistic situational analysis (realities assessment).
11. That meaningful stakeholder engagement should anchor the nation branding strategy.
12. That current and prospective visitor (and investor) perceptions should be considered.
13. That key stakeholders must contributing in defining nation brand competitiveness.
14. That the nation brand performance should be monitored and evaluated.
15. That nation brand communication to be done also to the citizens and local communities.
16. That the whole country should support the nation branding effort (positive national sentiment).

The research established that successful national branding required a comprehensive alignment of a host of the issues. Generally, the respondents strongly agreed with most of the nation branding strategic aspects as suggested in the research instrument. The strategic issues which were viewed as significant for nation branding were; that the nation brand should support the vision of national competitiveness (62%), the brand should be applied and publicised globally at special events (59%), there should be collaboration between the

Government and key stakeholders in the branding exercise (57.3%), a frank and holistic brand situational analysis must support the branding process (56.7%), it is essential that key stakeholders understand and embrace Brand Zimbabwe strategy to support it (55.4%), the country should support the nation branding with a public diplomacy strategy. (54.6%), Zimbabwe brand requires strong sub-brands such as the cultural, tourism, investment and export brand (53.8%), stakeholder involvement should anchor branding strategy (53.8%) and Brand Zimbabwe should not be based on rhetoric common with catchy slogans, images and or symbols but substance (52%). Those who agreed with the nation branding issues had also higher percentages ranging from 30.6% to 47.6 %. Very few of the respondents disagreed with the nation branding strategic aspects.

Respondents asserted the significance of stakeholder engagement and collaboration with the government (95.2%) followed by the need for strong sub brands to support the nation brand and the need to engage in international publicity and participation on global events both scoring (94.1%). The statistics also show respondents believe that success in nation branding rests on clearly defined target markets (91.6%) and requires careful consideration of current and prospective visitor perceptions in brand strategy formulation (91.2%). The respondents largely accept that nation branding should be based on explicit nationally compelling attributes to gain the much-needed support from everyone, the branding should be sincere and not rhetorical (only slogans, images and/or symbols without substance), the country should support the nation branding effort with a public diplomacy strategy all with a score of 87.4%. Respondents to a significant extent believe that frankness and inclusive situational analysis must support the branding process recording a cumulative support score of 87.3%. There was significant support for the need to set up a nation branding office whose activities are managed by an independent arm of government reporting to the president's office (77.7%).

Factor analysis was conducted to assess the relative significance of the identified factors considered critical for nation brand strategy alignment. The findings are presented in [Tables 1 and 2](#).

The correlation matrix above shows that caution should characterise the nation brand strategy building and equity management. There are strong correlations across various variables which may make it difficult to come up with a holistic matrix of constructs for nation brand equity building for Brand Zimbabwe. A number of very connected and significant variables including leadership, multiple stakeholders, determination of multiple sub-brands and their strategies, nation brand vision and national vision alignment should be considered. The correlation matrix suggests multiple cause and effect relationships across multiple variables. [Table 2](#) shows that most variables have significant correlations. Only that the nation brand should support the vision of national competitiveness and that the nation brand should be managed by an independent arm of government had no significant correlations ($r < 0.4$) as suggested by the analysis see [Table 2](#).

Table-1. Correlation Matrix: Factors in Influencing Nation Brand Strategy.

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
Correlation	sq411	1.00	.175	.176	.339	.393	.263	.318	.497	.494	.488	.510	.358	.366	.382	.380	.339
	sq412		1.00	.145	.117	.122	.099	.137	.185	.213	.200	.124	.145	.197	.200	.148	.154
	sq413			1.00	.232	.229	.249	.261	.215	.216	.227	.196	.287	.243	.257	.207	.126
	sq414				1.00	.494	.464	.442	.467	.445	.452	.330	.310	.291	.427	.351	.309
	sq415					1.00	.415	.351	.450	.414	.361	.366	.316	.393	.407	.396	.302
	sq416						1.00	.402	.426	.386	.419	.392	.434	.354	.546	.534	.330
	sq417							1.00	.410	.463	.394	.401	.363	.409	.473	.370	.339
	sq418								1.00	.511	.606	.453	.403	.335	.440	.437	.475
	sq419									1.00	.570	.567	.471	.345	.545	.469	.375
	sq4110										1.00	.583	.444	.327	.500	.420	.391
	sq4111											1.00	.502	.444	.395	.363	.415
	sq4112												1.00	.479	.513	.388	.453
	sq4113													1.00	.372	.301	.460
	sq4114														1.00	.568	.362
	sq4115															1.00	.426
	sq4116																1.00

Key:

1. That it is critical to establish collaboration between government and key stakeholders in nation branding.
2. That the nation brand should support the vision of national competitiveness.
3. That the nation brand should be managed by an independent arm of government.
4. That the nation brand requires strong sub-brands to support it.
5. That the nation brand should have clearly defined target markets.
6. That the nation brand should have nationally (and universally) compelling attributes.
7. That the nation brand should not be based on rhetoric (should be based on real issues).
8. That the nation brand should be publicised globally.
9. That the nation brand should be understood and embraced by all stakeholders.
10. That the nation brand should be based on a frank and holistic situational analysis (reality assessment).
11. That meaningful stakeholder engagement should anchor the nation branding strategy.
12. That current and prospective visitor (and investor) perceptions should be considered.
13. That key stakeholders must contributing in defining nation brand competitiveness.
14. That the nation brand performance should be monitored and evaluated.
15. That nation brand communication to be done also to the citizens and local communities.
16. That the whole country should support the nation branding effort (positive national sentiment).

Source: Calculated from survey results.

Table-2. Principal Component Matrix: Significance of Various Factors in Influencing Nation Branding.

Principal Component Matrix ^a	Component		
	1	2	3
1. That there should be collaboration between government and key stakeholders.	.642		
2. That the nation brand should support the vision of national competitiveness.			.625
3. That the nation brand should be managed by an independent arm of government.		.581	
4. That the nation brand requires strong sub-brands.	.640		
5. That the nation brand should have clearly defined target markets.	.631		
6. That the nation brand should have nationally compelling attributes.	.667		
7. That the nation brand should not be based on rhetoric.	.644		
8. That the nation brand should be publicised globally.	.730		
9. That the nation brand should be understood and embraced by stakeholders.	.749		
10. That the nation brand should have a frank and holistic situational analysis.	.740		
11. That stakeholder engagement should anchor branding strategy.	.706		
12. That current and prospective visitor (investor) perceptions be considered.	.680		
13. That the nation's brand competitiveness must be defined by key stakeholders.	.612		
14. That nation brand performance should be monitored and evaluated.	.736		
15. That nation brand communication to citizens and local communities.	.672		
16. That the entire country should support the nation branding.	.617		
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.			
a. 3 components extracted.			

Source: Computed from survey results.

Table 2 above shows that nearly all the factors under investigation were all significantly important as most of the factors are major constituents of component one. It was established that a ‘national brand should be managed by an independent arm of government’ and ‘nation brand should support the vision of national competitiveness’ were important though, to a lesser extent, since they were in component 2 and 3 respectively. Nation brands should be understood and embraced by all stakeholders, nation brand strategy according to the research findings, should be supported by a frank and holistic situational analysis with stakeholder engagement anchoring the branding strategy and brand performance should be monitored and evaluated were the most significant determinants of nation branding strategy. These elements had loading factors of 0.730, 0.749, 0.740 and 0.706 respectively, greater than most other variables which were within the 0.6 and 0.7 range.

7. Discussion on Data Analysis

The research identified strategic issues which play a significant role in nation branding for Zimbabwe. They were as follows: there should be collaboration between the Government and key stakeholders in nation branding activity (95.2%), the nation brand requires strong sub-brands such as the cultural tourism, investment and export brand (94.1%) applied global publicity taking advantage of special events (94.1%), and the necessity of stakeholder understanding, acceptance and support of Brand Zimbabwe strategy (94.1%). The research thus emphasises stakeholder involvement in anchoring nation branding strategy (93.6%). The nation brand should support the vision of national strategy and competitiveness (93.3%).

Nation brand performance and competitive positioning should be monitored and evaluated (91.7%) based on clearly defined target markets (91.6%). Nation brand communication targeting a country’s citizens and local communities is a priority for success (91.4%). Attention to and reflection on held perceptions by foreign visitors and investors is very important in nation brand strategy formulation (91.2%). Respondents believe that nation branding undertakings should be sincere and tangible and not based on rhetoric popular with catchy slogans, images and symbols but substance (90.4%), The nation brand should have definite nationally compelling attributes upon which all branding activities are to be done (87.4%). It is also incumbent upon the national administration to support the nation branding initiative with a public diplomacy strategy (87.4%). Other key issues raised were the need to a frank and holistic brand situational analysis must support the branding process (87.3%), that the nation brand’s competitiveness must be collectively and similarly understood by all key stakeholders (86.7%) and that the brand should be managed by an independent arm of government reporting to the national president’s office (77.7%).

Consistent with literature, a key issue of nation branding strategy is achieving stakeholder buy-in. The biggest challenge, as highlighted earlier, is to coordinate activities of all stakeholders. In line with the FIST-Approach to nation branding the civic sector, the business, and the citizens participate in the nation branding strategy formulation process (Dinnie, 2008a). Successful nation brands are created in an environment of consistent vision and stakeholder motivation, which can be very difficult to achieve given the diversity of interests across the stakeholder profile (Tecmen, 2018).

It remains very important to create an all-inclusive nation brand. Achieving a strong and appealing brand identity is important to help achieve consistent internal and external image for the brand (Anholt, 2007). Equally important is that the nation brand should be understood and accepted by all the stakeholders. The research confirms literature on nation branding that branding projects attain better success if they manage to bring all key stakeholders in strategy building and in driving the nation branding process. This finding confirms literature on nation branding. The management and coordination of all of stakeholder groups is paramount to leverage full capabilities and resources of the country (Lee, 2009).

7.1. Nation Branding Strategy Framework for Zimbabwe

The research proposes a framework in Figure 1 below to deal with the nation branding strategy for Zimbabwe. The formulation of the conceptual framework is informed by empirical findings, lessons drawn from cross country nation branding experiences and review of nation branding by Anholts (2010), Dinnie (2008a), and Lee (2009) models. Researchers submit that nation branding frameworks should embed sustainability of nation brands. In consolidating multidimensional concepts into a cohesive concept, they have argued that nation branding requires an all-inclusive and methodical approach (Papadopoulos, 2004; Szondi, 2007) that focuses both on brand realities and strategic management of the nation brand (Anholt, 2007; Lee, 2009) observes that regardless of the hypothetical and applied significance of nation branding, the growing body of knowledge bears little consideration on nation brand management and how the branding initiative can be handled holistically yet systematically.

A conceptual framework on nation brand strategy in Figure 1 below, suggests a relationship matrix of six broad constructs as follows; visioning, current realities assessment, stakeholder analysis and engagement, brand strategy formulation, strategy deployment and strategy monitoring and evaluation.

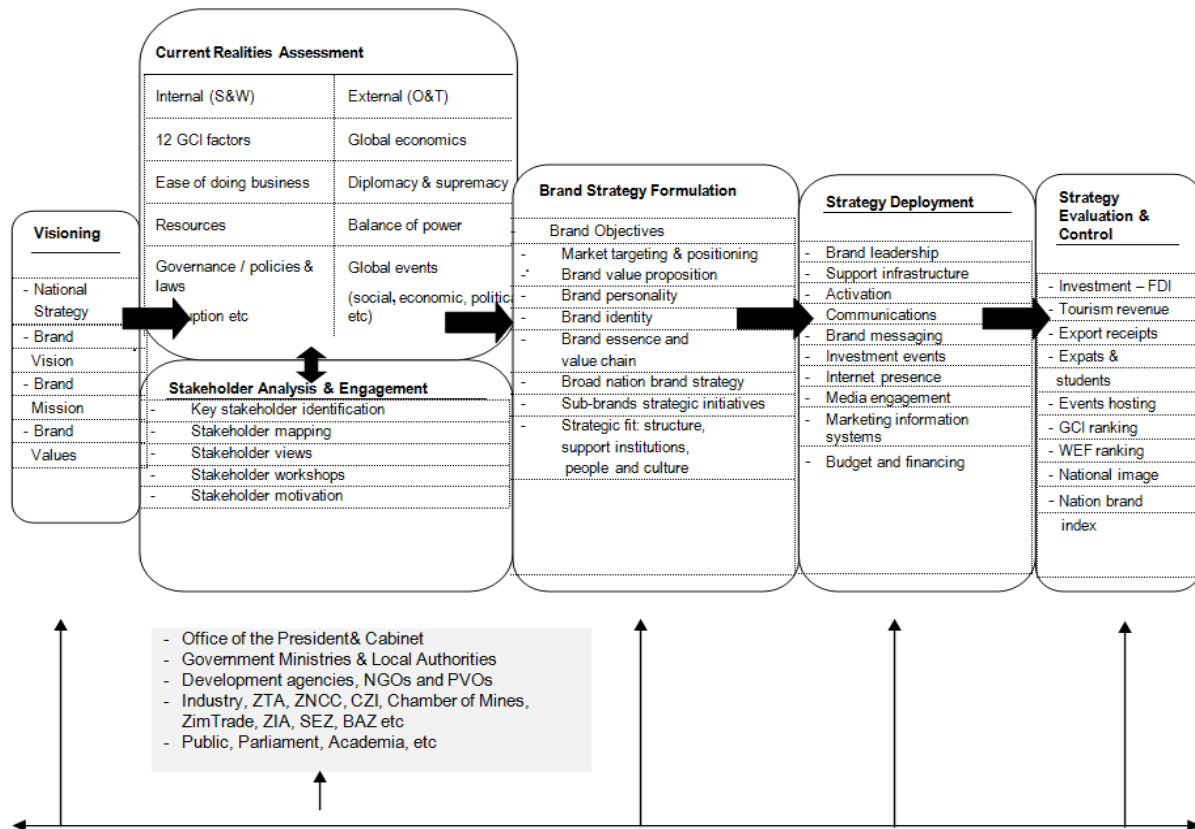


Figure-1. Proposed Nation Branding Strategy Conceptual Framework.

7.2. Visioning

Every strategy formulation process should start with visioning; a process entailing painting of an ideal future outlook for the nation brand. This process needs to be set upon the national strategy which essentially is the superordinate and overarching blueprint upon which the nation brand strategy is derived. According to Dinnie (2015), the first step in nation branding is coming up with a nation brand vision and mission. The mission is the nations’ philosophy, an enduring statement of nation intent. The vision is the future direction for the brand, its future roles and status (Žugić & Konatar, 2018). A country’s brand vision may be to improve its perceptual position or image; support a nations’ economic performance with regards to exports, inbound investment, and tourism including growing the nation into an excellent source of literary content. Essentially,

as discussed in literature, the nation brand visioning has to be consistent with the overall national strategic agenda. At the time of this study the national strategy blueprint for Zimbabwe was the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP). This implies that nation brand visioning is done in the context of ideal strategic outlook derived from the stabilisation programme. A brand vision according to [Dinnie \(2008a\)](#) is a strategy document determined by the various members of the nation-brand development team, a team whose composition ideally includes representatives from government, public and private sectors and civil society. Nation brands' vision is captured in three main facets namely; the desired long-term future, purpose and values. Collective involvement of the key stakeholders in determining the brand vision can be such a daunting task as divergent views often emerge due to different orientations. A consensus vision can be formulated using the Delphic brand visioning technique. Unlike corporate strategy visioning which requires the executive to determine corporate vision (dream), the nation brand belongs to the all the citizens, as such they need to determine where they want to take their country. They are the true custodians of the brand whose franchise towards the brand must be voluntary. Key at this stage is the revalidation of the values (derived from the country's constitution and founding principles) and determination of brand objectives. This stage of the process answers the question who are we? After visioning, stakeholder analysis and engagement are considered.

7.3. Stakeholder Analysis & Engagement

Effective stakeholder identification, analysis and engagement are crucial in nation brand strategy determination and management of brand equity. Stakeholders have the capacity to derail the nation branding initiative when they feel their legitimate interests are alienated. The infinite scope of nation branding activity is sufficiently conducted through an inclusive stakeholder approach in pursuit of overarching goals of the nation ([Dinnie, 2008a](#)). The ultimate success of a nation brand strategy lies on how effectively the brand mirrors the reality through effective commitment and relationships with key stakeholders. [Lee \(2009\)](#) noted that nation branding is characterised by extremely complex multidimensional facets and unpredictable tasks - with multiple outputs, multiple stakeholders and multiple target nations. [Lee \(2009\)](#) is of the view that public diplomacy is a key dimension of nation branding whose multi-dimensional form requires multiple stakeholders' involvement. To be effective, a nation brand strategy must be able to leverage disparate stakeholder participation aligning it to advance the brand. State and non-state actors need to be mobilised. These include: Office of the President; government ministries and local authorities; industry and chambers, development agencies and professional groups; civic activists and NGOs; politicians and political parties; journalists and media groups; business people, enterprises and producers; academics and universities; religious leaders and groups have a domino effect on nation brand perception thus need harnessing. Different stakeholders have different interests and wants and are affected differently by activities around the nation brand. They too have different levels of power and influence on other stakeholders. Critical issue is to identify all and determine key stakeholders for the nation branding initiative. Strategies to engage and manage different stakeholders must be a result of informed decisions derived from a careful stakeholder analysis.

[Tuchman \(1984\)](#) in her touching narrative *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam* recounts a sequence of devastating misadventures that emanated from disregarding the interests of, and information held by, key stakeholders. She remarks 'Three outstanding attitudes - obliviousness to the growing disaffection of constituents, primacy of self-aggrandizement, and the illusion of invulnerable status - are unrelenting aspects of folly'. Based on the implicit theory this framework proposes genuine stakeholder engagement to help create an 'authorising environment' ([Moore, 1995](#)) under which everyone feels compelled to support the branding initiatives. With the assurance of stakeholder participation and support, a current realities assessment becomes an absolute imperative.

7.4. Current Realities Assessment

This is a process that involves the determination of the current nation brand environment. This stage typically answers the question where are we now? There are internal to external factors affecting the brand that need to be appreciated as a precursor to strategy determination. This is a typical Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threat (SWOT) analysis comprehensively undertaken. The importance of this stage cannot be over-emphasised for effective nation branding. It includes extensive desk research, in-depth interviews with the country's political and opinion leaders, entrepreneurs and journalists, a comprehensive audit of a nation's existing visual identity, focus-group sessions with a country's and non-country's business people, further interviews with tourists, investors and importers in target countries. There is also a need for input from artists, designers, marketing professionals, researchers and public and private officials, civil society in a nation. The main focus of the internal factor analysis is to determine the capabilities across a range of sector-based indicators. The thrust is to assess the country's competitive status with regards its tourism, foreign investment attraction, export promotion and talent attraction. On the other hand, external factor analysis aims at the nation brand's competitors (other countries) and also on the broader environmental factors that potentially impact on the brand activities.

The framework considers paying attention to the following issues under the internal strengths and weaknesses realm: the 12 Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) factors largely because branding is a market competitiveness issue namely; institutions, infrastructure, health and primary education, macroeconomics (key for factor driven economies); higher education and training, product and market efficiency, financial market development, labour market efficiency, new technology adoption, market size (key for efficiency driven economies); business sophistication and innovation (key for innovation driven economies). Ease of doing business factors, resources, governance, policies and laws; brand perceptions. The current realities assessment analyses the external factors in the context of such issues as; global economies, international diplomatic relationships, political supremacy, balance of power, competitor market activity and major global events among other factors. The current process also involves performing a critical discourse analysis addressing the following questions:

1. What has been reported about Zimbabwe?
2. What has been the response by Zimbabwe to the reports?
3. How has Zimbabwe reacted to the reports?
4. How have tourists, investors and foreign buyers responded to the messages?

The next stage is nation brand strategy formulation.

7.5. Nation Brand Strategy Formulation

This stage typically addresses the question where do we want to go? The stage should see the setting up of visionary goals and SMART objectives to underpin the strategy formulation process. Visionary goals are overarching and broad very long-range intentions whilst objectives are derived from the goals. Objectives are envisaged for each of the nation brand areas of focus namely, tourism, FDI, exports, nationhood and immigration. For a nation, the following long-term goals may be set to be achieved from 5 years and above. The goals could be to improve a nation brand image; international relations; national gross income Figure (financial brand value); and quality of made-in-a nation products. Other goals could be to provide peaceful atmosphere for tourists, create a most sought-after investment destination and a resourceful place for study (especially for foreign scholars); achieve international recognition in sports; promote local foods and fashion in the international market and reduce incidence of corruption among public office bearers. This stage requires the determination of the target markets because brands that attempt to be everything to everyone often fail on the basis of mediocrity. Market entry strategy should be based on a defined nation brand value proposition for the chosen markets. [Dinnie \(2008a\)](#) cites the application of the Ansoff Matrix in determining the directions of development of product or market strategy. By defining its brand scope and segmentation strategies, that is, investment sub-brand strategy, exports sub-brand strategy, tourism sub-brand strategy, education and talent attraction sub-brand strategy, arts and culture sub-brand strategy, and the people sub-brand strategy.

7.6. Strategy Deployment

After the analysis and determination of strategic initiatives to be adopted, the next and important stage is the implementation or deployment of the adopted strategy. Key issues in strategy implementation include brand leadership, design of appropriate support structure, managing knowledge, coping with change, activation of all the sub-brands and stakeholders, managing of internal relationships and national sentiment, development of unified messaging and media engagement. [Dinnie \(2008a\)](#) observes that perhaps this is the most difficult stage of nation branding owing to the multiplicity of stakeholders who are often not easily structured as compared to a commercial entity. In the absence of a coordinating body such as Brand South Africa, Presence Switzerland or Brand Spain, nation brand strategy deployment can be such a difficult exercise. The media plays an important role in setting a nation's agenda. People get information about events from the media. According to [Bolin and Miazhevich \(2018\)](#) the stories from the media, especially the 'front-page' reports and the news headlines influence the behaviour of people. A simple issue can be reported on the front page and in news' headlines and this would make it a big issue. Therefore, the media controls discussions in a community through their choices on what to report. As such, an important issue that goes unreported fails to attract public attention and would not influence perceptions as compared to deliberate agenda-setting effects of the media.

7.7. Strategic Control and Evaluation

Strategic control tools can be used by nation brand management to monitor on-going activities of the nation and its sub-brands to evaluate whether activities are being performed efficiently and effectively to influence performance decision-making. This framework suggests a holistic approach to performance monitoring and control. A nation brand, performance standards could be set in the following areas: quality of made-in-a nation, number of tourists; level of foreign direct investments, number of foreign university graduates and expatriates, international events hosting and attendance, export receipts, tourism revenue, rankings such as World Economic Forum's global competitiveness and risk indices, and Nation Brand Index (NBI).

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The implications of this study are that Zimbabwe needs to be highly proactive in nation branding. Positive nation brand equity does not just happen; there is need for clarity in visioning the end before the nation branding process begins. While there is need for all Zimbabweans, government institutions, private sector, and civil society to be collectively engaged in nation branding, there is need for an institution that plays a coordination role. The nation brand strategy formulation process must be backed by a frank and thorough current realities assessment. There are strong arguments for making the institution independent and authoritative as compared to delegating the responsibility to a wholly controlled state enterprise. In addition, the political, socio-cultural and macroeconomic environments, the rule of law and policy environments have a major bearing on the perceptions about a nations' brand and should therefore be harmonised. These environments affect the deployment of the nation brand strategy inclusive of on the commitment of national leadership in the process. The research observes that the nation brand strategy implementation should be supported by a robust monitoring and control environment as what happens with corporate strategy monitoring and evaluation. The country should invest not only in development and deployment of the nation brand strategy but also in monitoring the performance of the strategy against the set performance metrics.

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