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     STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

     OBJECTIVES

     HYPOTHESES

     RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

     RESULTS & DISCUSSION

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     RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

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BOOKS

- Bowersox, Donald J., Closs, David J., (1996), "Logistical Management." Tata McGraw, Hill, New Delhi.
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CONTRIBUTIONS TO BOOKS

- Sharma T., Kwatra, G. (2008) Effectiveness of Social Advertising: A Study of Selected Campaigns, Corporate Social Responsibility, Edited by David Crowther & Nicholas Capaldi, Ashgate Research Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility, Chapter 15, pp 287-303.

JOURNAL AND OTHER ARTICLES

- Schemenner, R.W., Huber, J.C. and Cook, R.L. (1987), "Geographic Differences and the Location of New Manufacturing Facilities," Journal of Urban Economics, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 83-104.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

- Garg, Sambhav (2011): "Business Ethics" Paper presented at the Annual International Conference for the All India Management Association, New Delhi, India, 19–22 June.

UNPUBLISHED DISSERTATIONS AND THESES

- Kumar S. (2011): "Customer Value: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Customers," Thesis, KurukshetraUniversity, Kurukshetra.

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THE BRANDING OF A COUNTRY AND THE NIGERIAN BRAND PROJECT

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ABSTRACT
Country branding is about using strategic marketing to promote a country's image, products, and attractiveness for tourism and foreign direct investment. Country branding implies that countries behave, in many ways, just like brand. They are perceived in certain ways by large groups of people both at home and abroad; they are also associated with certain qualities and characteristics. Country branding is therefore a vital tool with the aim of positioning the country internally and internationally as a good destination for trade, tourism and investments. This paper discusses the concept of country branding, the relevant of country's branding and how to build a country's brand. It examines the role of country of origin, culture and brand auditing in country's branding. It also take a look at the four dimension of state branding and the country brand project of three countries; Spain, South Africa and Nigeria. Finally, it made suggestions on how Nigeria could achieve a successful branding.

KEYWORDS
Branding, Re-Branding, Country Branding, National Project, National Image.

INTRODUCTION

T he branding of a country is a complex and difficult undertaking; we need to consider the separation of components while still recognizing their interdependence. In branding a country, the number of target groups is vast, and reaching them necessitates adapting the messaging without becoming contradictory. The core statement must remain clear and unique, unifying the country as a destination.

Creating a better image for a country is often far cheaper and always infinitely harder than people imagine. It's about creating a feasible yet inspirational long-term vision for the development of the country and pursuing that aim through good leadership, economic and social reform, imaginative and effective cultural, political and trading relations, transparency and integrity, infrastructure, education, taxation and so forth: in other words, substance. The substance is then expressed, over many years, through a series of symbolic actions which bring it memorably, effectively and lastingly to the world's attention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on county branding is not new. For the past 40 years, numerous studies have been carried out on the so-called 'country of origin effect': the effect of national image on products and country as a brand, product, and beyond (Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002; Olins, 2002 and Gilmore, 2002)

During the 90s, Philip Kotler dealt with the topic of place branding and marketing in four books: The Marketing of Nations (actually a book on economic development and government policy rather than on marketing), Marketing Places Europe (on how to attract investments, industries, residents and visitors to cities, communities, regions and nations in Europe), Marketing Asian Places, and Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism (Simon Anholt, 2003:229)

Another significant contribution to the field is National Image and Competitive Advantage by Eugene and Israel, (2001). In addition to reviewing the theoretical underpinning of country image for products, they provide useful insight as to how it can be managed by countries, industries and firms. One of their central points is that country image is product specific. What's much more recent, however, is the coining of the term "brand state" or "state branding." (Jaffe and Nebenzhal, 2OO1).

The September 2001 publication in Foreign Affairs of the article "The Rise of the Brand State" by Peter Van Ham was a turning point, attracting a great deal of attention both from the academic community and the world of practitioners, and bringing about further research on the multidimensional nature of state branding (van Ham, Peter 2001).

In April 2002, The Journal of Brand Management devoted a special issue to the topic of 'Branding the Nation" bringing together contributions from the leading experts in the field, including scholars (Kotler, Papadoupulos), consultants (Anholt, Ollins) and practitioners. It is to this day the most comprehensive and up-to-date set of papers on state branding (*http://www.imc.org.za/main/resources.stm*)

Simon Anholt, one of the leading international marketing thinkers, has written about state branding in the collective work "Destination Branding", and more recently authored the book Brand New Justice, in which he argues that developing countries can increase their competitiveness and therefore reduce economic disparity through effective branding (Simon Anholt, 2003)

Equally important is the work of Wally Ollins, whose book Trading Identities establishes a linkage between state branding and companies going global. (Wally Olins, 2002).

Finally, the International Marketing Council of South Africa (IMC) has put together a number of case studies of how countries around the world (of India, Britain, Brazil, Thailand, Spain, Germany and others) have approached the promotion of their national image (http://www.imc.org.za/documents/brandingsa.stm).

WHAT IS COUNTRY BRANDING?

Country branding according to (Zaharia, 2003) is an international political marketing, practiced by the public and associative organisations of a certain country, with the purpose of promoting its image abroad.

Country branding is about using strategic marketing to promote a country's image, products, and attractiveness for tourism and foreign direct investment (FDI). It also implies that countries "behave, in many ways, just like brands; they are perceived in certain ways by large groups of people both at home and abroad; they are also associated with certain qualities and characteristics." (Anholt, 2003).

A country brand is therefore, consider to be a sum of abstract symbols, that generate common perceptions, and images that combine a large number of products and services, which, despite their diversity, have a number of common attributes, desired or not. (Dinnie, 2002)

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Marketing a country is not entirely new; in fact, numerous countries have traditionally promoted their image for tourism. However, the current process of globalization has underlined the need for countries to brand themselves on four different dimensions (public diplomacy, tourism, exports, foreign direct investment) and in an integrated manner (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2003:310).

Compared to products and services branding, country branding is the process whereby a country actively seeks to create a unique and competitive identity for itself, with the aim of positioning the country internally and internationally as a good destination for trade, tourism and investments. In this regard, countries such as South Africa, Wales, Spain, Colombia, Ireland have succeeded in attracting FDIs and tourists to their countries as a result of carefully managed country branding programmes (Nworah, 2005)

With the rising trend of globalisation and the breaking down of international barriers of trade, country branding is no longer a choice but a necessity, it is no longer conceived as a function to be performed individually by the state, associations or individual private companies, but as an integrative and concerted effort by all interested stakeholders.

THE RELEVANT OF COUNTRY BRANDING

State branding is relevant because consumers and investors continue to rely heavily on country images to make their economic decisions. Brands or images have become a shortcut to a purchasing decision. Effective state branding not only serves to reinforce positives images but also helps to fight negative ones by shaping new images and associations.

Equally important, branding has become a central tool of country competitiveness because having a bad reputation or none at all seriously affects a country's ability to compete. Thus, effective branding of a country can give it a competitive advantage in world markets and this, opens many opportunities for developing countries.

BUILDING THE COUNTRY BRAND

A largely used definition of national branding is "the way a country or a nation is perceived by the audience ("Nation branding", www.disinfopedia.org). We can add that this particular audience is formed by two categories. The foreigners represent often the side that receives the most efforts, while the other one is composed by the nation's own people.

Any marketing strategy, to be applied in building a nation brand has to take into account its costumers, setting its target, and it should search not only for international recognition, but as well, a consistency that would involve appreciation on a national scale. Thus, an important amount of influence might be placed equally on all the segments involved in this process: the participants, the emitters and the consumers.

Creation and promotion of brand image is a task that lasts ten to twenty years (thus, it should occur regardless of political change and focus on significant aspects that differentiate and create the competitive advantage).

Country brand building and management is not a finite process, but a perpetual one. This is probably the most important aspect that must be acknowledged by all those involved, in spite of ubiquitous pressure for immediate results. The branding effort is efficient if its results are evaluated regularly and the promoting strategy adapted permanently to the reality of life.

Brymer (2003) noted that factors that influences the country image such as tourism, foreign investment, governmental policy, participation in international bodies, exports, local companies and publicity, economic development, immigration and Diaspora, work force recruitment, public figures, cultural and artistic representations, language, religion, culture, sporting performance, movies and documentaries, as well citizen interaction with visitors, critical events etc. are only partially controllable by the authorities.

Olins, a specialist in country marketing and country branding states that a governmental program for the country brand launch should comprise of a number of stages (Olins, 2002). Anholt, another well-known expert in country marketing states another series of stages (Anholt, 2002), also (Domeisen, 2003).

Even if a country does not consciously use its name as a brand, people still link images with it, images that can be activated by simply mentioning the country's name. It's very likely that a country's image influences people's decisions regarding purchasing, investment, relocation and travelling amongst other things.

More and more governments start to understand that no country will be able to ignore the way other countries see it. A strong brand is viewed as a highly valuable national asset. In a time of uncertainties, an efficient nation brand creation and promotion process is like an antidote to negative publicity.

All countries communicate in the same time. They send millions of messages daily through political actions or through the lack of them, through popular culture, through products, services, sport, behaviour, art, architecture and others. Gathered together they become a nation's image, what it feels, what it wants, what it believes in (Fosher, 2003).

In order to create an attractive image for a country, a certain balance is kept, between different elements. Strong brands, that have good awareness, have made sure that other channels of communication (cultural, politic) filled the spaces around commercial brands (products or companies).

Because countries are very different in brand functionality (utility), experts concluded that it is best for it to concentrate on the brand's emotional dimension (Dinnie, 2002).

The country brand must rely on reality, not only perceptions, it must be distinctive, centered, easy to recognize, coherent and attractive.

Most successful brands aren't born over night, they rely on reality, on a state of spirit, which they include and promote. Thus, the brand is organic and can develop on its own. Still, in order to reach maximum potential, it must be guided.

A country brand promotion strategy can not be based on lies or the visible distortion of reality (e.g. promoting Germans as passionate, emotional and flexible will have little success) Gilmore, (2002).

Country marketing should be an augmentation of what already exists in the country, not a figure of one's imagination. People can feel quite clearly the spirit and values of a certain place; they develop certain spiritual and emotional links towards it. Thus, if the correct "nerve" is touched, the created link can prove to be quite strong.

A country that has problems, but presents itself publicly as a country where those problems don't exist or are insignificant, has all the chances in letting people down, as the target audience (tourists, investors) will probably face those exact problems.

Most of the time it's not enough to take into account what exists in a country. One must also see the potential of its competitive advantages. Practically, the branding process can occur while the country develops, as certain initiatives can make the country differentiate itself even more.

The country brand, if appropriately build, relies on target audiences, on relevant macro tendencies, on central components and on its competitive position. Thus, the brand could be a guide in what the country should promote.

A well structured and implemented building of a country's brand will lead to a national identity of the brand and if it is well promoted as well as has the desired outcome, leads to the global success of the brand, that will, on its turn, develop the" effect" of "resettling" of the brand ingredients (people, culture, history, present state of being etc.) Dinnie, (2002)

To be efficient, the country brand has to be accepted by the nation, and it has to be inspiring. The country brand represents more than images and symbols. It is the proof of collective will to offer and deliver that attractive and competitive "selling proposition".

The nation brand used as an anchor, can help build the loyalty of the people. Every citizen must live the brand, must follow the brand values. The behaviour and actions of the citizens, both at home and when going abroad will always have a powerful impact on the country image. Obtaining and maintaining peoples' loyalty is an important challenge for every country. It can be seen as a migration of peoples' minds from the skeptical and uninformed stage to the informed, confident and proud stage.

SIMILARITY BETWEEN COUNTRY BRANDING AND PRODUCT BRANDING

The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a "name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition." (Kotler, and Gertner, 2002:249). It follows that just as a

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brand name may be the only common element linking otherwise unrelated products together, a country name is a symbol that joins together a broader range of products and services.

A country resembles more to a company than to a product; in other words, a company may not be a primary brand, but a manager of a group of sub-brands. The country brand is more like an umbrella, ensuring that the customers they are purchasing are from a reliable source, which guarantees quality. Exactly as corporate brands, country brands stand on certain values, qualifications and emotional levers within the consumers' minds.

Branding a country differs subtly from branding a corporation and substantially from branding a product. Country branding is starting to develop a world of its own. As field practitioners gain experience, the similarities with corporate marketing fade away.

We define a country's image as the collection of convictions, ideas and impressions that people have regarding that country. Nonetheless, one must also consider the image elements from a marketing perspective: awareness, content, intensity, clarity, history.

Most country brands are actually stereotypes, extreme reductions of reality, which aren't always that accurate, as they are based more on exceptions rather than models (patterns), on impressions rather than facts. Stereotyping grows stronger, aided by companies that try to convince local consumers to purchase local products.

Similar with products and services, the country image has more facets and can contain large amounts of information, both factual and affective.

THE ROLE OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN IN THE PERCEPTION OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

As products and services have increasingly standardized core features, marketers often turn to country associations to differentiate their brand. Country of origin has therefore become central to product evaluation, along with price, brand name, packaging and seller.

Country of origin can be defined as the country that a consumer associates with a certain product or brand as being the 'home country' of the brand (Honda identified as a Japanese product), regardless of where the product is actually produced (for example Honda assembled in the US). Products bearing a 'made in Germany', 'made in Switzerland' or 'made in Japan' labels are commonly regarded as high quality, due to the reputation of these countries as top world manufacturers and exporters. This nuance is important 'because of the increased sourcing of production by multinational firms and their use of global, standardized advertising for their products (Eugene D. Jaffe and Israel D. Nebenzhal, 2OO1).. In fact, one can argue that the only time we really stop to separate country of origin, country of manufacture, country of assembly is when we are buying expensive items or products that fall under the category of "fair-trade."

Consumers continue to associate and evaluate given product lines (e.g. cosmetics, furniture, cars and fashion articles) with specific countries. French perfumes, German cars, Japanese electronics, are just some of the examples where national image is synonymous with quality, workmanship, durability, style or taste. In fact, research has shown that the country of origin effect is product specific- the importance of country of origin is greater in the purchase of cars, clothing and Electronics (Eugene D. Jaffe and Israel D. Nebenzhal, 2OO1).

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN PROMOTING A COUNTRY'S IMAGE

The role of culture in promoting and sustaining a country's brand image has been eloquently emphasized by Simon Anholt, who argues that culture is 'uniquely linked to the country, and dignifying'. Equally, important, culture can be an important revenue earner through national and international cultural events like concerts, exhibitions, competitions and festivals, but most importantly, through language (Anholt, 2003),

Cultural and language organizations like the British Council, the Goethe Institute, Alliance Francaise, and more recently Instituto Cervantes play a central role in enriching a country's brand image and making that image sustainable over time. The tools they can use include film festivals, presentations, concerts, art exhibits, and student exchanges, among others.

"Adding culture and heritage to the mix is simply one way to ensure that all conversations between countries do not descend into mere advertising, and that there is still cultural exchange on a global scale, intelligent dialogue, sharing of insights and learning" (Anholt, 2002: 49).

THE ROLE OF COUNTRY BRAND AUDITING

Brand auditing involves continuous monitoring of perceptions and images of a country based on information gathering through opinion polls, research and analysis. Measuring the existing country image and using this knowledge to improve it seems vital.

Since successful country branding requires long-term planning and multi-stakeholder participation, it seems only natural for country brand auditing to be under the responsibility of the same body in charge of the overall country branding effort.

An important issue in country branding is evaluating and tracking the effect of critical events on national image: Health crisis (i.e. SARS and AIDS), Natural disasters (i.e. floods and earthquake) and wars (i.e. Balkan countries, Rwanda, Somali and DR Congo) and Terrorism (Skuba, 2002).

In this respect, both politicians and academic worldwide agree that the US led war in Iraq has had a very negative impact on its image worldwide, especially in Arab and Muslim countries, a view backed by the latest study on global attitudes from the Pew Research Center. Despite the fact that the large majority of the Spanish population opposed the war in Irag but strongly support the fight against terrorism, Spain's image has also been weakened by the support of the Aznar government for the war in Irag and close alignment with the Bush administration. (http://peoplepress.org/reports/display.php3)

COUNTRY BRANDING STRATEGIES

We will examine the strategies otherwise called 'branding project' adopted by three countries; Spain, South Africa and Nigeria, in the process of branding their respective countries.

SPAIN'S BRANDING PROJECT (PROYECTO MARCA ESPANA)

Most experts agree that post-Franco Spain is one of the most successful examples of national branding, especially as a tourist destination. As the nation took off economically and democracy strengthened, Spain was able to convey this image of change on the international scene. The key to this success was a tourism marketing campaign launched in 1982 on the occasion of the World Soccer Cup held in Spain. The campaign used Joan Miro's sun design to symbolize the modernization of Spain. This logo has since become Spain's tourism logo.

Also in the late 1980s, the government launched Tour Espana to brand and market Spain. The renowned Spanish artist Juan Miro Painted the sun logo used in all of Spain's advertisements and travel posters, twinned up with the slogan "Everything Under the Sun". "The advertisements could be for anything; monuments, national parks, beaches, our cities-but they all had the 'Everything Under the Sun' logo, "And thus the brand was created". (http://www.tourspain.es/TourSpain/Home?Language=en)

Three years into the campaign, Spain began to make in more tourists every year than there were Spaniards living in their own country: in 1990, Spain (population: 40 million) welcomed just over 40 million tourists. Today, around 60 million visitors stop by every year.

Through the initiative "Proyecto Marca Espana" public and private stakeholders have come together to articulate an overall branding strategy to align image of the country abroad with its current economic, social and cultural reality. This involved prominent institutions such as Real Instituto Elcano (Spain's major international relations think tank), the Spanish Association of renowned brands, the Spanish Association of Communication Executives (DIRCOM), the Spanish Agency for Export Promotion (ICEX-Ministry of Economy), and the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Noya, 2004).

The aim of this initiative was to gather all existing information and data on the image of Spain abroad; carry out series of roundtables discussions featuring public/private institutions and individuals most directly concerned with the brand Spain to reflect on the problems of Spain's image and based on the conclusions reached, put forth a number of recommendations to better position and communicate brand Spain to the rest of the world.

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Major Recommendations reached was to set up a government agency or entity to lead this effort, or alternatively a 'Brand Spain Committee" which would include not only the original task-force participants but also the Spanish Tourism Agency, Instituto Cervantes, all cultural agencies charged with promoting Spanish culture abroad, Spanish National TV, Chambers of Commerce.

Secondly, that government should create a permanent Auditing office to monitor and track Spain's image abroad and lastly, that government should provide public diplomacy training to the Spanish Foreign Service.

Today, Spain is seen as one of the most successful branded country in the world. (http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/analisis/388.asp)

SOUTH AFRICA BRANDING PROJECT (PROUDLY SOUTH AFRICA)

The South African story is an interesting one, after the peaceful fall of the apartheid regime in 1994; the new South African government was caught in a dilemma: Emotionally, the entire world wanted to support it. Economically, corporations' skepticism of black Africans' ability to manage their own economies spoke against new investment, particularly given the success of the country's white Afikaaner business community in building a solid economy despite sanctions against their regime.

While many credits the South African government (first of President Nelson Mandela, then of Thabo Mbeki) with the turnaround, the business community was in the driver's seat from day one, helping formulate, fund and launch a comprehensive branding campaign that has revitalized South Africa at home and upgraded its image abroad. (http://www.imc.org.za/documenta/brandingsa.stm)

In 2001, the government formed the international Marketing Council of South Africa (IMC) for the sole purpose of addressing the gap that existed between the reality of South Africa and the way the world perceived the country; The IMC rolled out the campaign "South Africa: Alive with Possibility" to widespread acclaim and gas only improved in the past three and a half years. (www.safrica.info)

According to Yvonne Johnson, chief executive of IMC, her organization is an independent body with a government mandate to carry out its mission, not just another arm of the state bureaucracy. We are given free reign to carry out our job as we see fit, the government does not dictate to us in any way. We do not have ministers calling up and telling us to say this and that. This freedom to act has been the key to our success. To properly brand a country, you need an independent body of marketers working round the clock. "In building the new brand, we had to consider all the aspects of our society before we came up with the brand. Although our history has caused us to be divided, we found core values that are common to all South Africans. We all wanted our country to move forward so that we could provide a better life for our children," (Johnston, 2002).

The IMC's initial round of funding came from the government, but the council has since set up a private funding arm to allow South African businesses to contribute to the effort as well. According of Johnston (2002), the support of the South Africa people (and business leaders in particular) has been an essential element in the campaign's success. The message has to be targeted inward before it is taken outside. The campaign focus was on the country first.

The IMC has also given birth to or inspired a number of complimentary campaigns, including, "Proudly South African," which promotes SA companies, products and services. Companies that meet the standards set by Proudly South African can use the logo to identify themselves, their products and services. Similarly, South Africa: The Good News is a private organization dedicated to spreading good news about the country over the internet and in print publications. Today we have seen a distinct shift within South Africans who believe in their country and the possibilities for the future. (http://www.dfa.gov.za/department/stratplan03-05/stratplan03.pdf)

THE NIGERIA BRANDING PROJECT

Nigeria, the self styled giant of Africa, with an estimated population of over 200 million people and also a privileged position as the 6th largest producer and exporter of crude oil in the world. Such large abundance of human and material resources in the country have been variously described as a curse by certain commentators, their reason being that the proceeds from the sales of the natural resources only sponsors the corrupt and lavish lifestyles of successive regimes in the country, these regimes have consistently failed to invest such proceeds back into the country, and have also failed to improve existing social systems and infrastructures, factors necessary to attract foreign investors.

Also in 2004, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) at a public forum in Lagos Nigeria concluded that Nigeria's poor external image is denying it much needed foreign investment (FDI) to accelerate its economic growth. Also in 2004, Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Nigeria as the 3rd most corrupt country in the world in a survey of 146 countries, coming only ahead of Haiti (the most corrupt country) and Bangladesh (the 2nd most corrupt country). Nigeria's current position is only a slight improvement from its previous positions as the 2nd most corrupt and the most corrupt country in the world in 2003 and 2002 respectively. According to Peter Eigens, the Chairman of Transparency International… "Corruption robs countries of their potentials… Corruption in large-scale public projects is a daunting obstacle to sustainable development, and results in a major loss of public funds needed for education, health care and poverty alleviation, both in developed and developing countries" (Nworah, 2005).

Nworah, (2004) identified other problems facing Nigeria nation as bribery and corruption, Unemployment, poor infrastructural development, over dependence in the oil sector for federal income and revenue, inordinate desire for imported goods, poor work ethics and maintenance culture, increasing citizens dissatisfaction and disaffection with the government, political structures and politicians, corporate and large scale organizational irresponsibility, inadequate funding of the educational, health and other key sectors, neglect of the agricultural and other non-oil productive/manufacturing sectors, continued manufacture of poor quality, fake and substandard goods and services, poorly regulated capital and financial market, tribal, ethnic and religious squabbles, homelessness, poverty and hunger, poor maintenance culture, poor planning, lack of security and disregard for human life and property, armed and pen robbery and others.

EFFORTS MADE TO RE-BRAND NIGERIA

In an attempt to address the multifarious problems which have created a bad image for Nigeria, each successive administration has one time or the other instituted a corrective plan aimed at solving some of the identified social menace. For example, in 1976 the Muritala administration enacted the "Investigation of Assets" decree while the shagari administration launched a similar version known as "Ethic Revolution". Also in 1983, the Buhari-Idaigbon administration launched the war against indiscipline while the Babangida administration in 1986 lunched a reformation plan known as the Mass Mobilization, Social and Economic Reconstruction (MAMSER).

In his quest to attract foreign investors and also to re-integrate Nigeria into the global community, after years in the cold as a pariah caused by the economic policies and the human rights violations of past military juntas.

President, Olusegun Obasanjo during his tenure as the president of Nigeria, in recognition of the failure recorded with the previous measures by past administrations, embark on public and economic diplomac tour all over the world as soon as he was sworn-in in May, 1999. In 2002, he established the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). The president also inaugurated an International Investment Advisory Council, headed by Nigeria's case is also made more difficult because of its mult-ethnic composition, the cultural, language and religious differences make any wholesale agreement impossible as the citizens still have primordial attachments to their immediate and core ethnic regions, long years of political and religious bickering between the 3 major ethnic groups (Yoruba, Hausa and the Igbos) have made reaching a national consensus in major issues (including the image project) almost impossible.

THE WAY FORWARD

In line with Brymer (2003) steps in the country branding process, the Nigeria image could be rebranded with the following process;

1. The cooperation and involvement of representatives of governments, business, the arts, education and the media. This does not yet seem to be happening in Nigeria's case, because all the relevant stakeholders are still not singing with one voice.

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2. Determining and carrying out an image perception audit both nationally and internationally. There wasn't any reported image audit carried out by the Nigerian government before the launching of the image project. The government's decisions had been loosely based on the several negative media reports both locally and internationally.

3. Consultation with opinion leaders and carrying out of a country SWOT analysis. Again, the Nigeria government is managing the image project top down, a large majority of the country's opinion leaders still have not heard of the project and do not believe in it.

4. Creating a strategy using known professional models. Most importantly, involvement the citizens in the project, through carefully crafted communication messages that will sell the image project first to the citizens, who would then sell the country to the outside world, this is a huge error on the part of the government because it should have tried to sell the image project to the millions of Nigerians in the Diaspora who are in better positions to represent Nigeria in their different countries of residence.

5. Designing a program to make the strategy tangible through improvement programs and campaigns and series of testimonial advertisements in the international media. So far, this has not yet been done and the effectiveness of such testimonials is also doubtful.

6. Creating a system to link together the different organizations and departments that can be part of the brand. This is not the case with the Nigeria image Project. More so, the project is being perceived as 'another government white elephant project' and so has continued to create dissentients and cynicism amongst the citizens.

7. Finally, letting actions count. Although the Nigeria government has carried out some political and economic reforms, these may still not be enough to restore the confidence and faith of both its citizens and the potentials investors, as the facts on the ground still leaves much to be desired.

It must be said however, that putting all these steps into practice, and hiring professional branding experts to manage such a program may still not guarantee that the country will attract investors, nor will the country experience the desired image change. This is because of the existence of other extenuating factors in the environment; these factors may include global economic downturn like we are presently experiencing all over the world.

CONCLUSION

Country as a brand affords us a useful metaphor to express that many of the techniques of product marketing are applicable to marketing a country. Even more helpful, as Anholt argues, is to think of 'country as a corporate brands', more like a holding company which manages a group of interrelated sub-brands.

Knowing your relative competitive position is critical to national branding. This means countries must choose the markets and the segments in which to compete prior to designing their brand strategy. Successful country branding does not stop with the launching of a successful campaign.

It requires constant tracking of your brand image, flexibility to adapt to the unexpected and careful monitoring of your competitors. Moreover, for a country brand to be sustainable overtime, the country must deliver on its promises.

Finally, country branding presents developing countries especially Africa to distinct themselves from the continent brand effect and a unique opportunity to reverse the brain drain that has hampered so much of their development.

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