NATION BRAND ARCHITECTURE- A REALITY OR REVERIE FOR AFRICAN NATIONS: THE CASE OF BOTSWANA

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ABSTRACT

Nation brand architecture gives a 'sense of mission' which can help unify key players, concentrate resources, increase efficiency, and create synergies in customer attraction Joao (2018). However, what seemingly works for product/ corporate brands appears to be more of a brown study for nation branding. Adoption of nation brand architecture is gaining traction in Western nations. Many countries in Africa such as Botswana seem not to be consciously employing this seemingly beneficial concept.

This paper therefore explores the extent to which Botswana; an African nation has adopted this concept. It also focuses on how the nation embeds and applies the existing national identities such as national colours (reflected in the nation flag), symbols, animals, and plants in the brand architecture.

The study employs a content analysis approach that investigates the nation against four overarching themes of brand architecture. Using the Dinnie (2008) Nation Brand Architecture Model (NBAR), the paper draws valuable insights from an analysis of brand architecture concepts as well as the current adopted or default brand architecture for the nation of Botswana. The paper forms the initial sequel of papers on Botswana nation brand architecture model. The initial findings present a tenuous understanding of the adopted architecture reflective of both the endorsed and branded house architecture.

Keywords: Brand Architecture, Nation Brand, Nation Branding, Nation Brand Architecture

1. INTRODUCTION

Why Nation Brand Architecture?

Nations continue to downplay the importance of adopting appropriate brand architecture despite the strategic benefits accrued from such a practice. The concept of brand architecture has widely been applied in management of product and service portfolios Harish (2010). Brand architecture is ultimately about managing consumer perceptions. It is thus gradually getting the attention of place (location) or nation branding scholars and practitioners alike Keller (2008), Dinnie (2008). According to Hankinson (2009) and Zelenskaya and Elkanova (2021), places (locations) are complex constructs that are believed to require a special approach

in branding which is different from that of products and services. Places thus need to be looked at through the prism of the tourism industry, since they are destinations that attract visitors. Brand architecture is the building plan for creating a strong brand. It entails an integrated brand building process that establishes brand relationships among branding options Kleppe et al. (2002).

Brand architecture allows a firm to make decisions on the number and nature of shared and unique brand elements to be applied to the different products on sale Glynn and Woodside (2009). Brand architecture spells out the structure as well how brand elements such as names are assigned to its portfolio of brands Mooij (2010). It provides a relational framework on which customers conceptualize your business and its portfolio offerings, and how each offering satisfies their needs. It equally offers a clear articulation of a single identity, point of differentiation, thereby enabling achievement of communication goals Keller (2008), Dinnie (2008). Although the concept is largely applied to companies and products, scholars of nation branding have applied the same to nations.

Location as a destination brand may be seen to be more closely aligned to a product brand defining the "tourism product", and a nation being a location brand should be more aligned to the corporate brand model. A positive nation image is an essential ingredient for destination promotion, tourism, and export development concept as well as for investment promotion Domeisen (2003). Nation brand architecture facilitates integration of nation brand messages as well as consistent nation brand image portrayal and upkeep. Western nations such as Spain, New Zealand, Iceland, Estonia, Costa Rico, and Australia Dinnie (2008) have successfully defined their brand architecture. Such effort or action has facilitated a consistent image and cohesive message transmission to the world. This has resulted into adequately positioning the nations as preferred places to do business with, visit, work, and live in, unlike most African nations such as Botswana.

This paper therefore investigates the Brand architecture adopted by Brand Botswana. It equally assesses the extent to which it facilitates or hinders nation brand building efforts. More specifically, the study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To ascertain the brand architecture adopted by Brand Botswana.
- 2) To find out what constitutes the brand portfolio and hierarchy.
- 3) To determine how and which nation identity elements are applied across the brand.

2. BOTSWANA AND NATION BRANDING

During the first quarter of 2021, Botswana's Gross Domestic Product stood at 18.73 billion US dollars, an increase of 13% from the last quarter of 2020 stats Botswana (2020). The landlocked nation remains heavily dependent on mining with diamonds being the largest contributor to Gross Domestic Product. Like many developing countries aspiring to diversify the economy such as Brazil and Estonia, Botswana invests efforts in growing foreign direct investments, attraction of tourists and international labour force. This is facilitated by various marketing and branding activities. To this end, Botswana has invested efforts in setting up a nation branding coordinating unit, Brand Botswana. The unit is overseen by the nation's investment agency Botswana Investment Trade Center (BITC), which is charged with amongst other things, creating a competitive stance through differentiation and positioning for the nation. The establishment of the brand coordinating office was necessitated by the need to coordinate Botswana's marketing, communication,

and branding efforts to both external and internal audiences. The office devised the pride mark as a national identity and marketing symbol also aimed at unifying Batswana around a single identity.

It is envisaged that findings from this study will assist Brand Botswana to gain insights on how to effectively design and sustain brand architecture that will ensure visibility and contribute to the nation's competitiveness.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Key to the success of nation brand management is deciding on the brand architecture. Brand architecture allows for the establishment of a hierarchical structure, linkages and affinity between the overarching brand and extensions or supporting brands. Similarly, through brand architecture, a nation establishes the relationship between the nation brand and its host of sub-brands Domeisen (2003). Brand architecture establishment and management for nations is more complicated than for companies Hankinson (2009). In his paper, Fan (2006) makes a comparison between a nation brand and a product brand and points to the reasons making up for the complications. Some of the differences he alludes to include the fact that; a nation brand has uncleared, and multiple stakeholders and a diverse audience as opposed to a product that belongs to a sole owner and has a defined target audience. The diverse stakeholder group that defines an audience of a nation calls for effective coordination and makes communication a daunting task. This, therefore, demands effective management. Fan (2006) also advances arguments that nations have always existed as brands as they have assigned names, national flags, animals and other symbols of identification and differentiation. Botswana has thus been historically identified as such coupled with associations to the blue, black, and white colours reflected in the national flag; the coat of arms which has generally been used as an identity symbol for the government including all official correspondence; the zebra as the national animal; sengaparile (devil's claws) and motshikiri as the national flower and plant respectively. In 2010 the government through a brand coordinating unit, further adopted a marketing symbol that would facilitate identification of all Botswana products as well as unify Batswana around a single identity namely, the pride mark.

However, just like nations, challenges do exist for companies with multiple products/brands as the different brands will call for coordination. The coordination calls for defining the brand architecture. According to Dinnie (2008), in nation branding, the corporate brand becomes the nation as a whole; the product brands are its cities, regions, landmarks, product brands, tourism, FDI and export promotion agencies, sporting teams, political and cultural figures Zelenskaya and Elkanova (2021). The purpose of the nation brand architecture concept therefore is to instil some order and structure on these otherwise expansive and disjointed subbrands to achieve synergistic benefits and advance the parent or overarching nation brand Dinnie (2008). This includes making decisions regarding visibility, dominance as well as what becomes the driver of brand value. In nation branding, brand dominance should emphasise on the visibility of the nation as a corporate brand which then becomes a global driver of brand value and product dominance where individual brands are developed for every product or a combination of both corporate and individual brands are used Laforet and Saunders (1994), Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000), Zelenskaya and Elkanova (2021). For example, Bramwell and Benur (2015) in their study titled, "Tourism Product Development and Product Diversification in Destinations" consider primary tourism products as the key draw cards which attract tourists to destinations. The authors assert that while spatial and thematic tourism product links and synergies are often developed in destinations, the diversification, intensification, and linkage of these products can be crucial for the competitiveness and sustainable development of tourism attraction destinations. Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) conclude that brand linkages and drivers are critical dimensions of brand architecture, and they view brand architecture in five dimensions. These dimensions include: -

- 1) brand portfolio that specifies the number of brands,
- 2) portfolio roles that explains relationships between the different brands in the portfolio,
- 3) product market roles that that explains the structure for a particular market such as sub- brand or endorsed brand,
- 4) portfolio structure that explains the brand range and
- 5) portfolio graphics that specifies colour and size of identity or logo.

Endzina and Luneva (2004) attribute challenges for developing nation brands to uncoordinated efforts including a lack of collaboration among all institutions involved in nation branding. They further cite a lack of financial resources as well as a lack of buy in and active involvement including political will of experts in the field of nation branding. Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000), and Zelenskaya and Elkanova (2021) emphasise the importance of coordinating the branding efforts by devising the brand relationship spectrum model in which they identified four strategies to nation branding including branded house, sub brand strategy, house of brands and endorsed brands. Keller (2008) provides a link between the brand relationship spectrum and the driver role that brands play. For instance, a brand generally drives the purchase decision and experience of the consumers on the usage of the product. To guide nations regarding the best strategic choice to make, consideration of the driver role that each brand plays in influencing the purchase intentions of consumers is to be made Keller (2008).

House of Brands Strategy emphasises on a strong driver role of individual subbrands. Firms opting for this strategy have a choice over the independent brand and the shadow endorser strategy Koschmann (2019). For the independent brand strategy, the house of brands architecture consists of a set of stand-alone brands that operate independent of one another including the parent brand. Through this strategic option, a firm can adequately position its brands based on functional benefits as well as gain dominance in niche markets. Sub-brands can effectively reach out to these niche markets and remain attractive. Koschmann (2019). This strategy has enabled a nation such as Spain; with 17 autonomous regions, to successfully allow for independent branding and marketing of various sectors and places. The regions are branded and promoted separately from the tourism board of Spain Dinnie (2008). The house of brands strategy allows for greater flexibility in terms of messaging and positioning, high levels of differentiation, lowers market entry barriers and increases chances of acceptance. The downside to the strategy is the cost in terms of requisite resources for creation, maintenance, and promotion of the various brands Koschmann (2019).

In the Branded House Strategy, the parent brand is universally applied for all the products with only a descriptive name attached for the individual products Zenker and Braun (2017). The parent brand's primary driver role is endorsed to a dominant driver role across multiple product offerings. Here the parent brand gives an umbrella branding under which most of the company businesses operates. This strategy is risky as is like putting lots of eggs in one basket. New Zealand has

successfully adopted this strategy and uses the silver fern which is the nation symbol in all its branding Dinnie (2008).

The Shadow Endorser Option offers a non-visible yet strong linkage and association to the parent brand by the sub-brand. The parent brand is not visibly connected to the endorsed brand, but many consumers know about the link Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000). Benefits to this type include the backing of a known brand and least association contamination. Although making a totally different market and product segments as well as operating differently from the mother brand, the shadow brands generate impact from associations with the parent brand.

4. ENDORSED BRAND STRATEGY

In the Endorsed brand architecture, the parent brand is linked to mutually exclusive sub-brands. The parent brand supports and links these otherwise independent and unique brands Muller (1998). The endorsing parent brand only plays a supportive and connecting role. The endorsed brand architecture can be seen as an inversion of sub-brand architecture (www.distility.com). In endorsed brand strategy, parent brand and its sub-brands are perceptually linked. The brands are still independent but are validated by another brand. Although playing a somewhat inconsequential driver role, the endorsement provides credibility to the endorsed brand. Brands under this strategy maintain their independence, each with their distinguishing features that differentiate a brand from one another. Much as credit can be given to this strategy that maintains brand uniqueness, a critical factor to successful endorsement includes linkages between the higher-level brand promise of the endorsing parent brand and the product brand. This link is what provides the assurance to the customer that if they like one product in the family of the endorsing brand, then a sibling brand is also worthy of consideration (www.distility.com). This arrangement works in the same way as the franchise tying contracts whereby the endorsing parent brand becomes the tying product and the sibling brand a tied product Blair and Lafontaine (2005). Perfect applications for this strategy would include Supranation units, like; Britain, Scandinavia, and Europe because they are generally considered as umbrellas for the individual countries Dooley and Bowie (2005).

5. SUB-BRAND STRATEGY

In this strategy the parent brand has dominance over the sub brands which only serve as a re- emphasis of the parent. The parent brand assumer the driver role in consumer purchase decisions Rahman and Areni (2009). The sub-brands emphasise on the distinctiveness of the individual brands under a given portfolio. The tourism sector exemplifies this strategy through the "brand Western Australia" where a template of brand Western Australia is used for all its sub brands. The template is applied to several sub regions 'tourism organizations of Western Australia, like Perth, Northwest, Kimberley, Coral Coast, The Wheat Belt and Pilbara use logos with the same template depicting a brush stroke of the blue sky with a yellow sun and with little bit of their own appropriate versions Dinnie (2008).

In her attempts to simplify and apply brand architecture to nations, Dinnie (2008) uses assertions by Olins (2002) and simplified the brand relationship spectrum developed by Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) by summing it up into three structures namely, the branded house, endorsed and the monolithic structures. In the monolithic structure, there exists a single main identity through an umbrella brand whilst in the endorsed structure, individual brands retain their

identity but are clearly endorsed by the parent brand. The branded approach allows for retention of

individual identities but allows no visibility or linkage to the parent brand. It permits individual brands to establish their own identity as well as leverage equity from the parent brand.

Dinnie (2008) proposed a Nation Brand Architecture Model, (NBAR) model. The model allows nations to strategically coordinate their sub-brands. In the NBAR model, the nation represents the parent brand, and the second level represents endorsed brands such as the nation's tourism, exports, inward investment, talent attraction and sports whilst the last level comprises of a mix of standalone brands. The strategic purpose of the NBAR model is to fully leverage the overarching, parent brand, which is "Brand Botswana", and all sub-brands of the nation (e.g., tourism, exports, talents attraction, sports, and inward investment) to achieve synergy on a long-term basis. While corporations need to foster cross functional collaborations between marketing, research and development, finance and operations, nations must similarly address a similar challenge by facilitating fertile collaboration between distinct bodies such as tourism boards, inward investment agencies, tertiary education providers, export promotion agencies etc. Dinnie (2005).

As already mentioned above, the NBAR model proposes a brand architecture that encompasses the parent or umbrella, endorsed and branded structures. The idea behind is to stimulate creative development of synergistic linkages between different sub-brands e.g., tourism and talent attraction or sports and exports. It is also designed to prevent proliferation of uncoordinated visual branding systems that could lead to confusion on the target audiences and reduce potential synergies.

According to Pathak (2014), Nation Brand Architecture Model incorporates key elements necessary for the development and competitiveness of any nation and these elements have been emphasised in Anholt (2010) Hexagon Model of Global Competitiveness Pathak (2014). Anholt accentuates that the way a nation is perceived determines its success in key areas such as trade, tourism, business, and diplomatic and cultural relations with other nations. Having worked with several companies, the author devised a nation brand index (refer to Figure 1 - The Brand Hexagon Model Anholt (2008), which enables nations to measure their image and reputation. The NBI measures the image and reputation of nations using six dimensions namely:

- 1) Exports (public image of products and services and patronage of COO products).
- 2) Governance (measures public opinion on governments' competencies and fairness levels).
- 3) Commitment to global issues such as democracy, justice, poverty, and the environment), and people, (e.g., population measures on competence, education, openness and friendliness, potential hostility and discrimination).
- 4) Culture and heritage (perceptions on nations 'heritage and contemporary culture include film, art, sport, and literature).
- 5) Tourism (level of interest in visiting and attention drawn to natural and manmade tourist attraction sites).
- 6) Investment and immigration (power to attract people to live, work or study in a nation including general perceptions of a nation's economic and social situation).

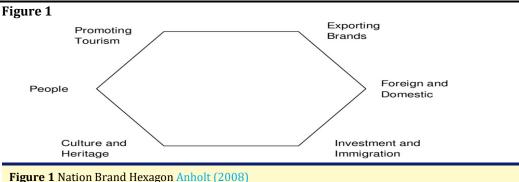


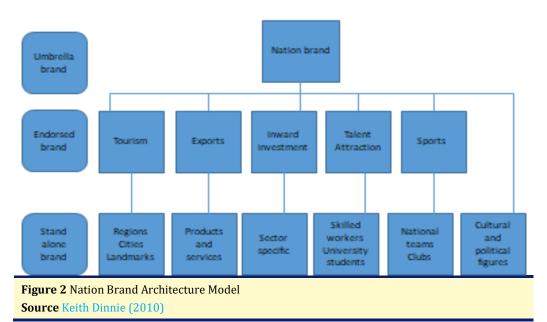
Figure 1 Nation Brand Hexagon Anholt (2008)

Countries such as South Africa have successfully applied the NBAR and have developed identities to enhance visibility and differentiation.

6. METHODOLOGY

Using the NBAR, the authors conduct an appraisal of Botswana's brand architecture. They begin by assessing the Botswana portfolio i.e., identifying all brands offered by Botswana in tourism, exports, investment, talent attractions, sports, regions and cities, products and services, specific sectors, national teams and clubs and cultural and political figures as explained by Dinnie (2010).

Figure 2 Nation Brand Architecture Model (Dinnie,2010)



An assessment of the parent or umbrella brand is also done to ascertain the extent to which it incorporates the national colours, symbols, animal, and flower. Then an evaluation of sub- brands and their application of the umbrella brand identities is done. Lastly the authors analyse each sub-brand and respective identity in terms of how representative the brand is of national colours, symbols, and animals. An analysis of the sub-brands according to Dinnie (2008) is done to ascertain the brand portfolio and assess their ability to contribute to Botswana brand equity.

Table 1 Table 1 An Analysis of Applied Identities Umbrella brand National symbols **Talent Attraction** Tourism Exports Inward Sports investment DEBSWANA BOTSWANA INVESTMENT botswana 1大大 Regions/Cities/ **Products** Sector Specific Skilled Cultural/political Landmarks manpower/ agencies Universities GC LIMKOKWING UNIVERSITY

7. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of the brand in Table 1 above, it is evident that Botswana has a diversified product portfolio consisting of governmental organisations, quasi-government, NGOs, private organisations, cities, landmarks, and products. All these entities use distinguished and yet different identities. We noted that in its efforts to brand the nation and coordinate branding efforts, the Brand Botswana office has adopted the pride mark. Further probing is needed to establish the true purpose of the pride mark. Whether it serves as a marketing symbol to be used by all entities including Botswana government, private companies, parastatals, local

manufacturers, products, and services or whether it serves as an overarching national symbol meant to organise the internal audiences around a single identity.

Botswana Government through her Communications Unit, on the other hand, has adopted the use of national symbols such as the coat of arms, the official national colours (blue, black, and white), coat of arms, zebra and flower. These are elements that have always been used on all official correspondence and communique to identify Botswana as a nation. However, we noted that there were uncoordinated identities across the government section including the unstandardized use of the national symbols and the pride mark. Government ministries and departments, in a bid to identify themselves and clearly stipulate or communicate their various mandates, have overtime developed their own unique separate identities. This has not only resulted in a departure from the adopted national symbols being the coat of arms, colours, animal, and bird but has compromised the adoption of the pride mark as presumably a national identity and marketing symbol.

Parastatals, NGOs, and private companies have remained largely divorced from the national symbols, applying completely different identities. Although, majority of sporting codes have aligned their identities to the national symbols especially the colours and animal, incorporation of the pride mark, however, seems to be non-existent. These inconsistencies have been observed in the key competitive areas highlighted by the Anholt (2010) competitive dimensions. The key questions are, "Do these observations represent a deliberate effort? Has Botswana really defined the architecture, or the current is by default? Is the current the best architecture? Does it allow for synergies, as well as clear, consistent, and coherent communication? Has enough stakeholder engagement been done?"

These questions may be answered differently depending on the perspectives of different stakeholders. One answer could suggest ineffective stakeholder engagement to facilitate easy uptake and adoption of the pride mark. Because an engagement of all stakeholders involved in brand building efforts would have resulted in a more coordinated and uniform theme in the nation brand, which is lacking in this case. Varied and inconsistent brand messages encapsulated by different slogans (Brand Botswana office, Botswana Investment Trade Centre, Botswana Tourism Organisation, Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture, Ministry of Trade and Investment, Diamond Trade Centre, Botswana Meat Commission etc.) were also noted, which also may suggest ineffective coordination.

Botswana is yet to realise potential in what has been and or what is to be branded. This is notwithstanding success that has been garnered in terms of reaching international audiences with sports and tourism. There is no doubt that improvements need to be made in terms of products, talent attraction, landmarks, skilled manpower and universities. Furthermore, it is equally important to state that Botswana has not realised synergistic effects of the various sub brands necessary for effective branding and marketing.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Brand Botswana office has adopted the pride mark as an overarching national symbol to be used as a national identity as well as a marketing symbol, however, there still exists immense potential that can be tapped through cohesion and coordination in branding and marketing efforts. More can be achieved through a coordinated approach as there remains a host of untapped brands to be sold to foreign markets such as cities, landmarks, products and services, skilled workers, and university students.

The authors remain unclear as to whether Botswana adopts an endorsed or branded strategy including why. There seem not to have been enough stakeholder engagement to facilitate easy uptake and adoption of the pride mark and resultant branding strategies as observed by Endzina and Luneva (2004). These authors cited lack of coordination and collaboration among involved institutions, lack of financial resources, and lack of political will and inadequate involvement of experts as some of the problems that hinder the development of a national brand. A buy-in as well as active participation in brand building efforts would ensure a uniform message and coordinated nation brand activities.

9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH AREAS

This conceptual review draws insights from a content analysis of website information. An empirical review will bear more fruits. Through key informant interviews or in-depth discussions with the brand Botswana team, the researchers will establish the current architecture adopted and evaluate the brand against the national brand architecture model, which is by far the most comprehensive and inclusive model of brand architecture modelling. The research will make recommendations for the possible architecture to adopt for the brand Botswana.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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