

## BRANDING AFRICA: THE WAY FORWARD

Osei, Collins  
Edinburgh Napier University  
The Business School  
Craiglockhart Campus  
Edinburgh  
EH14 1DJ  
Phone: +44 (0) 131 455 4524  
Email: [c.osei@napier.ac.uk](mailto:c.osei@napier.ac.uk)

Nathalia Tjandra  
Edinburgh Napier University  
The Business School  
Craiglockhart Campus  
Edinburgh  
EH14 1DJ  
Phone: +44 (0) 7784886432  
Email: [N.Tjandra@napier.ac.uk](mailto:N.Tjandra@napier.ac.uk)

Dr. Maktoba Omar  
Reader in Marketing Strategy  
Edinburgh Napier University  
The Business School  
Craiglockhart Campus  
Edinburgh  
EH14 1DJ  
Phone: +44 (0) 131 455 4404  
[m.omar@napier.ac.uk](mailto:m.omar@napier.ac.uk)

Professor John Ensor  
Head of School of Marketing, Tourism and Languages  
Edinburgh Napier University  
The Business School  
Craiglockhart Campus  
Edinburgh  
EH14 1DJ  
Phone: +44 (0) 131 455 4385  
[J.ENSOR@napier.ac.uk](mailto:J.ENSOR@napier.ac.uk)

### **Correspondent address**

Professor John Ensor  
Head of School of Marketing, Tourism and Languages  
Edinburgh Napier University  
The Business School  
Craiglockhart Campus  
Edinburgh  
EH14 1DJ  
Phone: +44 (0) 131 455 4385  
[J.ENSOR@napier.ac.uk](mailto:J.ENSOR@napier.ac.uk)

# BRANDING AFRICA: THE WAY FORWARD

## **Abstract**

**Purpose** - The purpose of this paper is to investigate how Africa has been branded, and to propose strategies to re-brand Africa as an attractive destination for both foreign and domestic investment.

**Design/Methodology/Approach** – A detailed review of literature on branding, nation branding, place branding, destination branding, foreign direct investment, and doing business in Africa in general, was conducted in order to establish how Africa has been branded and could be re-branded.

**Findings** – This research confirms that the overwhelming literature is full of publications that disproportionately associate the African continent with doom, political instability, poverty, underdevelopment, corruption, mismanagement, hunger and several other negative features. However, this research also reveals that there are several favourable conditions especially in the form of investment opportunities in several sectors that could be communicated better to give Africa an attractive identity. Some of these sectors are general retail, agriculture, tourism, real estate, sports and manufacturing. A number of foreign and domestic investors are already involved in these sectors and are experiencing tremendous growth. Therefore, the need for Africa to be re-branded as a viable business partner rather than aid receiver is strongly highlighted in this research.

**Practical Implications** – This paper offers practical strategies for stakeholders involved in nation/state branding to adopt in order to emphatically communicate the virtues and the success stories of the continent to both current and potential investors both within and outside the continent.

**Originality/Value:** This paper contributes to the debate on the brand equity of Africa as a continent and proposes strategies to effectively communicate the virtues of the continent in order to compete more favourably with other continents for desirable investment.

**Keywords:** Branding, Re-branding, Africa, Perception, Business opportunities, FDI, VFBOP

**Paper Type:** Conceptual

## **Introduction**

Africa, as a continent, has been experiencing tremendous economic transformation which is conducive for foreign investment but this remains concealed to the rest of the world (Kapstein, 2009). This may be either because Africa is perceived as incapable of achieving those results, or because African countries have not adopted the right strategies to espouse and communicate these potentials. This view is also emphasised by Anholt (2007) who states that Botswana, which is relatively successful, shares the same brand with countries like Rwanda and Sudan. He is of the view that international organisations, aid agencies, donor governments and celebrities like Bob Geldof and Paul David Hewson, popularly known as Bono have been successful in using the media to portray the continent as nations heading for disaster, if they do not receive salvation from other people.

UN Millennium Project (2005) which compares efforts made by most Sub-Saharan countries in reaching the Millennium Development Goals with the progress made by other countries. This comparison emphasises that Africa is falling behind in meeting poverty reduction targets. The report also indicates that Africa is either stagnant or regressing as far as quality of life, economic and technological developments were concerned, as compared to countries in Asia and other parts of the world. It is also believed that the dismal performance of one country in Africa may have negative political and economic effects on neighbouring countries. For example, Nevin (2009) stated in *African Business*, that the images of hunger and suffering on the faces of a good number of Zimbabweans may threaten South Africa's successful running of the 2010 FIFA world cup, despite millions of rands spent on building brand '*South Africa*'. This therefore explains why some nations would not only want to present themselves as attractive destinations but also set themselves apart from other countries that may be involved in activities that could be perceived as ethically unacceptable. This is what Anholt (2007) refers to as the creation of a competitive identity. It is believed

that countries can, and should be branded to compete with other countries, just as companies brand their products and services (Balakrishnan, 2008). This is because, whether or not a country consciously brands itself, it will be perceived in a certain way by people within and outside the country (Pitt *et al.*, 2007). Unfortunately, in some cases, the perception held about places - cities, countries, and continents may not be accurate, especially as such places go through various changes with time. Hence, the need for proactive branding and re-branding cannot be trivialised in order to be able to maintain the needed relevance in the global marketplace.

The purpose of this paper is therefore to conceptually explore and analyse the various ways the continent is currently perceived and could be re-branded, by examining both practitioner and academic publications. The rest of the paper is organised as follows. The next section is subtitled the theoretical background and covers branding, nation and destination branding, and the situation audit of issues related to how Africa is being branded. This is followed by the section which highlights the way forward on re-branding Africa and the summary and conclusion section in respective order.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### *BRANDING AND PLACE BRANDING: A CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW*

A brand may be defined as ‘a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers’ (AMA, 2010). It has also been defined as ‘an asset that does not have physical existence and the values of which cannot be determined exactly unless it becomes the subject of a specific business transaction of sale and acquisition’ (Seetharaman, *et al.*, 2001: p. 243). It is clear from these viewpoints

that a brand is of value to the owner, and can assist consumers to perceive equity and differentiation among competing products and firms (Omar, Williams and Lingelbach, 2009; O’Cass and Lim 2002). Similarly, a rich body of literature (Keller, 1993; Calderón *et al.* 1997; Prendergast and Marr, 1997; Ataman and Ülengin, 2003; Kotler *et al.*, 2008; Armstrong and Kotler, 2009) point to the usefulness of brands as a valuable asset to marketers and an enhancer to their offerings. Hence, it is logical to argue that branding provides the basis for a consumer franchise which, if managed effectively could allow for greater marketing flexibility and a higher degree of consumer loyalty (Wilson and Gilligan, 1997). Although these views appear to be emphasising the usefulness of branding for transactions involving the sale of goods and services; the relevance of branding could also be extended to marketing of places -cities, locations, countries and continents such as Africa.

According to Pike (2009), academic publications on branding in general appeared in the marketing literature in the 1940s. He adds that over 766 publications were made before the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the idea of branding and nation branding had been in existence much earlier. It is believed, for example, that France has been going through the process of branding and rebranding since the reign of Louis XIV which was between 1643 and 1715 (van Ham, 2008). Another example of nation branding could be noted as the changing of a country’s name, such as from Gold Coast to Ghana in 1957 and Southern Rhodesia to Zimbabwe (van Ham, 2008). As the concept of nation branding gains popularity in recent times, it has equally attracted the attention of researchers (Opoku and Hinson, 2006; Roy, 2007). An example is an examination of the use of reality television to enhance America’s image, especially following the bombing of the World Trade Centre in 2001 in New York City (Roy, 2007). Closely related to research on nation branding is research on branding cities. An example is the use of the Olympic Games to brand Beijing (Zhang and Zhao, 2009). Vanolo (2008) also examines the various efforts and policies to brand the Italian

city of Turin. There is also another strand of research on destination branding, which essentially focuses on branding a geographical area as an important tourist destination. Pike (2009) falls into this category and lists a number of publications that could be considered in this strand as well. Obviously, given the close relationship that exists between these viewpoints, they have the potential to provide the underpinning for the thorough discussion of re-branding Africa which constitutes the focus of this paper.

### **BRANDING AFRICA: A SITUATION AUDIT**

Although nation branding is not new, research that primarily focuses on branding African countries is almost non-existent. Wanjiru (2006) looks at the need for African countries to brand themselves using the Customer Relations Management model. She interviews five people, who she identifies as experts in country branding, including Simon Anholt (an author and country branding consultant) and Yvonne Johnston (Chief Executive Officer of Brand South Africa). Indeed, Wanjiru (2006) has laid a very good foundation with this research; however, due to the complexities of the economy of African countries, more than five sources may be needed to fully explore the subject.

Opoku and Hinson (2006) and Pitt *et. al.* (2007) also essentially look at the effectiveness of how African countries have communicated their brand personalities. However, the former admit in their methodology that not all African countries have official websites. Therefore, to establish how those countries without official websites communicate their brand personalities will be problematic. Besides, their aim was to establish common themes in the sample identified, and not for Africa as a whole. The main purpose of the research conducted by the latter was also to emphasise the effectiveness of using content analysis of online communication as a viable research approach. Anholt, (2007) states the need for African countries to create an individual and unique identity. This will help countries with effective

strategies and healthy locational advantages (Dunning, 1977, 1988) to attract both internal and external investment. One African country that is at the forefront of making conscious efforts to do this is South Africa. This effort to develop Brand South Africa is being spearheaded by the International Marketing Council of South Africa. Younde (2009) looks at the role branding has played in helping South Africa achieve some foreign policy objectives, such as being given the responsibility of mediating during conflicts involving countries within and outside Africa. Obviously, this evidently indicates the relevance of branding in another African country; nonetheless it will as well be useful to explore this issue holistically such that Africa as a continent could reap the benefits associated with branding and re-branding in the world market.

From the foregoing, it is evident that certain good attempts have been made to document things about branding activities in some African nations, but based on the available information so far, none has been done to robustly and exclusively explore how Africa as a whole has been branded or could be re-branded. This is a palpable gap that this conceptual study sets to address, hence make a contribution to the existing academic literature in this domain.

### **Common Characterisation of Africa and its impacts on the Brand Equity**

One of the key subjects of interest associated with the use of branding commonly discussed in the parlance of marketing is brand equity. According to Brodie and Glynn (2010), the concept emerged in marketing in the 1980. Quoting Aaker (1996: 7), Brodie and Glynn (2010: p380) define brand equity as ‘the assets and liabilities linked to brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service and/or to the

firm's customers'. While this definition relates more to products and services, it is logical to state that the principle of brand equity is also applicable to branding activities associated with places such as continents like Africa. Accordingly, it is important to examine the characterisation of Africa in the extant literature that has been affecting her brand equity and inhibiting the continent's marketing potential in the world.

### **Poverty**

The poverty situation in Africa has been described as desperate in the literature (Maiello, 2009). An IMF Factsheet for 2009 lists 78 countries that are considered poor and qualify for IMF poverty reduction assistance. 38 out of the total 53 countries in Africa appear on the poverty risk, including countries endowed with natural resources like Nigeria, Angola and Ghana (<http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/prgf.htm>, 22/12/09). African has been branded the poorest continent. This supports the claim that Sub-Saharan Africa is the poorest and worst-performing region, even amongst the developing world (Bowden, *et al.*, 2008). Similarly, it is shown that more than 48 per cent of people in Sub-Saharan Africa live on less than \$1 a day (Luiz, 2006). Luiz continues in this article that this figure is twice the proportion of people who also live on less than \$1 a day from the average less developed countries outside Africa. In other words, sub Saharan Africa has the highest rate of poverty in the world (Chen and Ravallion, 2008; Lloyd and Hewett, 2009; Ahmed and Cleve, 2004), and according to Transparency International (2009) and Collier (2007) it is the only region in the world where poverty has actually increased over the past 25 years. In fact, It is believed that just as Rio de Janeiro is synonymous with carnival and football, Japan with technology,



Paris with style and Switzerland with wealth and precision, what comes to people's minds when Africa is mentioned are poverty, corruption, war, famine and disease (Brand Strategy, 2007, p.50). Africa's poverty level and famine are perceived to have been as a result of natural and circumstantial determinants (VSO, 2001; Scott, 2009). Therefore African countries are perceived as not capable of liberating themselves. Perhaps, that was why in 2005, Gordon Brown, who was the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time proposed a ten-year "Marshall Plan for Africa" to double aid distribution to Africa and cancel some of the debt burden the continent faces (Maiello, 2009). African countries are seen as caught in poverty trap (Sieff, 2008) as their inhabitants can neither invest nor save (Karabegovic and McMahon, 2006). These characteristics are typical of what is described in the poverty trap state (Neuman, 2003). This view appears to be somewhat supported by the UNCTAD. According to the report on least developed countries, 'gross fixed capital formation has been continuously lowest among the African LDC' (UNCTAD, 2009, p.1).

Closely related to the theme of poverty in Africa is the issue of famine and food insecurity. It is reported that about 40 percent of all Africans go hungry, and African countries which were self-sufficient at the time of their independence, now have to rely on imports to supplement food supply (Kuyvenhoven, 2008). A substantial amount of the extant literature brands Africa as a continent or sometimes 'a country' ridden with poverty. Given the significance of branding, the impact of this line of argument about Africa is expected to be very weighty in relation to foreign direct investment or other forms of international transactions in the continent.

## **Corruption**

The level of crime and corruption in Africa has also featured prominently in the literature. Transparency International which was founded in 1993 is currently one of the best sources of information on the level of corruption in a country or region. It has consistently labelled Africa as the most corrupt region in the world year after year (Fofack, 2009). Fofack highlights in this article that corruption permeates the entire spectrum of societies in Africa, as about 40% of the wealth of Africa is held outside the continent. He continues that the former Head of State for Nigeria, the late General Sani Abacha drained the country of billions of dollars into foreign banks. As a result, it's perceived that taking an office of responsibility such as presidency and minister is a road to accumulation of private wealth. The level of corruption has been described as pervasive and blamed for the failure of most of the initiatives and institutions to achieve market reform, economic development, poverty alleviation and inflow of foreign direct investment (Richards, *et al.* 2003, Richards and Nwankwo, 2005). Corruption and capital flight is believed to be the norm rather than the exception in most countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Emerson, 2009), and this has eroded the public trust and responsibility in that part of the world. Ironically, however, military leaders who embark on takeovers in African countries state corruption as one of the major reasons for their actions. However, successive governments end up being overthrown by other military regimes as a result of corruption. Richards, *et al.* (2003) cited the ascension and overthrow of the regimes of Sergeant Samuel Doe and General Charles Taylor of Liberia, and Laurent Kabila of the Republic of Congo as examples. It is also believed that fraud is gradually eating away Africa's brand equity, as internet fraud escalates in the continent (Viosca Jr, *et al.*, 2004). Nwankwo (2003) alludes to the claim of the Central Bank of Nigeria that economic crime is affecting the international image of Nigeria negatively, and it is believed that this image also has the potential of presenting Africa-based companies as not viable partners for investment. From the foregoing, Africa is generally perceived to be ruled by what Maiello

(2009) describes as under-the-table markets and bribery. Such perception, especially at a time when countries are competing for trade, could be detrimental for foreign direct investment, as investors would be concerned about how their resources would be managed to achieve efficiency. Consequently, the negative impact of this on brand equity of Africa can be far-reaching

### **Underdevelopment**

The African continent is currently perceived as underdeveloped and lagging behind in every development indicator. This is believed to go as far back as the colonial period, when Africans were perceived as ‘not only racially inferior but were sub-human and dispensable’ (Njoh, 2009, p. 10), which also supports the claim that Africa was considered as the dark continent (Emerson, 2009). This view was also highlighted by the industrialisation which took place in Europe and America, whilst Africans generally held on to their culture and ideologies. It is believed that Africa is the only area where the percentage of GDP from industry has not been increasing (UNCTAD, 2009). Sub-Saharan has been noted to be the only region where food production, per capita income and industrialised production have either stagnated or even declined, in spite of efforts by governments, NGOs and other donors (Ahmed and Cleeve, 2004). In the literature, African countries, especially south of the Sahara, are described not only as developing countries but also Less Performing Developing Countries (LPDC). In fact, Ibeh (2004) uses the terms LPDC and SSA (sub-Saharan Africa) interchangeably in his article, and according to UNCTAD (2009), although capital markets are developing very rapidly in other areas, they are generally underdeveloped especially in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in sub-Saharan Africa. Kuyvenhoven (2008) summarises brand Africa as it is generally perceived by stating that the continent in many circles has an image of doom and failure. This indeed appears striking.

## **Business Opportunities in Africa: The Leverage for Re-branding**

Despite the gloomy picture in the above literature review, there are a lot of opportunities for viable investment in the region. This view is enforced by the concept of Value Flame at the Base of the Pyramid or VFBOP (Williams, Omar and Ensor, 2010). This concept emphasises that there could be excellent opportunities for value creation in untapped markets, including Africa, in terms of creation and satisfaction of demands. In the process of innovatively satisfying demands in Africa, regarded as part of the base of the pyramid, local and foreign companies could experience tremendously profitable growth. It is therefore necessary for African countries to highlight the existing flourishing business activities and opportunities in the continent. This effort has the potential to provide a rather balanced position in relation to the existing plethora of literature on Africa as a brand. Studies have shown that some parts of Africa are experiencing accelerated growth (Kuyvenhoven, 2008). Kasanganayi (2009) in a reference to a statement attributable to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa states that generally African countries have the highest return on investment in the world. It is therefore not surprising that, for example, trade between China and Africa increased tenfold between 1999 and 2006 (Gbadamosi and Oniku, 2009; Doriye, 2010). Foreign investment in African natural resources is well documented. Examples of foreign organisations in this sector include Total, Royal Dutch Shell and ExxonMobil. However there are other business segments that are performing excellently but have not been fully documented in the literature. These include agriculture, energy, manufacturing, banking, telecommunications, tourism and general retail (Nevin, 2010). For example, Ecobank, which provides banking and financial services in about 27 countries ([www.ecobank.com/aboutus.aspx](http://www.ecobank.com/aboutus.aspx)) started with all the initial capital from West Africa in 1985. There are also some South African companies that are

doing well in South Africa and other countries within the continent. Examples are MTN and SABMiller and Sappi which have even expanded beyond Africa. Besides, it has been shown that the African market has been making significant contributions towards the creation of value for PZ Cussons with the African market contributing about 46 percent of the group's revenues and 34 of its operating profits (Wiggins, 11 June, 2009). There is evidence to show that the organisation is developing the Nigerian market for retailing of its electronic products like refrigerators, televisions and air conditioners, and fast moving consumer goods (Wiggins, 11 June, 2009). It is therefore not surprising that the company is committing more resources into their businesses in Africa. An example is the milk factory that is being built in a joint venture with Glanbia, an Irish cheese and nutritional ingredients group.

Apart from revealing the performance of these organisations in Africa, the foregoing also indicates the increasing purchasing power of Africans, which is a departure from the image of failure, doom and gloom normally reported in the media, and various publications.

### **Agricultural Sector**

The significance of Africa to the world economy through agriculture is noteworthy and it is also an important area of international business collaboration that could strengthen African brand equity. This can be in several forms including land cultivation and demand for products needed to boost the increasingly relevant agricultural sector such as fertilizers. For example it is noted that much of the African land is still uncultivated (Doriye, 2010). There is therefore a good potential for investment in land acquisition and food production by both the indigenous and foreign investors as developed countries could form partnerships with local communities and farmers to provide the needed technological know-how while the people of Africa can provide the needed land.

## **Real Estate**

The vibrant and diversified opportunity for investment in the real estate industry throughout Africa is well acknowledged (Olaleye, Aluko and Ajayi, 2007). This also emphasises the increasing purchasing power of the people of Africa. In South Africa alone, for example, it is noted that as far back as 1999, that housing needs were estimated at 2.8 million units (Nxumalo, 2002). This considerable demand has continued to be the case in the country and the need to satisfy this demand has attracted investors from both within and outside the country (Ramabodu, Kotze and Verster, 2007). Matipa and Barham (2007) also state that the free market strategy currently in operation in Zambia has resulted in creating a vibrant property market in the country. This is particularly evident in the residential property market, and investors could exploit this potential in this country. In fact Matipa and Barham's (2007) research above reports that councils in the country are struggling to cope with the demand.

## **Tourism**

The investment potential in tourism-related business in Africa are noteworthy. Pitt, et al (2007) list official websites for twenty-seven African countries. The websites list some of the tourist attractions within each country. These attractions include beaches, forts and castles which were used for the slave trade and colonisation, an exposition to the country's culture and traditions as captured in various arts and performances (see [www.tourismghana.com](http://www.tourismghana.com), for example). Kenya is also a well-known tourist destination, especially for wildlife, but it trails behind Egypt and South Africa (Mburu, 2010). The country still requires investment to

develop the various attractions, infrastructure and provide accommodation facilities which, in Mburu's opinion, is in short supply for the increasing number of tourists. Victoria Falls, located between Zambia and Zimbabwe is noted to be the largest curtain of water in the world, but has not been marketed properly due to the problem of image (Gertner, 2007). These are clear indicators of elements that could be explored to rebrand Africa as places endowed with rich and attractive heritage that could attract not only investors but also tourists.

### **Miscellaneous Investment Opportunities**

Investment opportunities exist throughout the African continent in several other sectors. For example, Barclays Bank, Standard Chartered Bank and Citibank and HSBC are among the strong foreign names in the banking and finance sector in Africa (Nevin, 2010; Human Resource International Digest, 2006). Jackson, Amaeshi and Yavuz (2008) list various sectors including manufacturing, which have experienced success over the years in Kenya. However, they acknowledge that larger companies are sometimes reluctant to invest in the sub-Saharan region. This is due to the unfavourable African brand and the portrayal of Africa as poor (The Economist, 11 May 2000). These are pointers to the urgent need to re-brand Africa.

### **Branding Strategy for Africa**

There are opportunities for investment in Africa. However, just as corporate reputation is a powerful tool for the firm (Omar, Williams, Lingelbach, 2009), the image of poverty, disease, hardship and desperation created in the western media and academia (Rundell, 2010; Maiello, 2009; Powell, Ford and Nowrasteh, 2008; Nissanke and Thorbecke, 2008; Pitt, et al, 2007) has overshadowed this potential. It is therefore the responsibility of each African country to

create a unique competitive identity for itself (Anholt, 2007), and clearly communicate to investors that the benefits to be derived from investment in Africa far outweigh the perceived risks (Kasanganayi, 2009). Very often, potential investors ignore Africa, because the continent's negative image has concealed the successes achieved and excellent opportunities in individual African countries (Nevin, 2010). With reference to the literature about countries that have experienced success in nation branding, this section suggests strategies that African countries could adopt to improve the image of the continent.

#### *Assessment of Current Brand Perception*

Before countries start developing a strategy for branding, there should be a diagnosis period (Herstein and Jaffe, 2008), where each country identifies the target market to find out how it is perceived. This will neither be expensive nor difficult to do because there are various publications in newspapers, journals, books and on the internet about how Africa is perceived. A practical guide will be Anholt's Nation Brand Hexagon (Anhot, 2006). The earlier section on the situation audit addresses this in this article. Such efforts will enable each African country to measure their customers' perception about the country's governance, investment and immigration, culture and heritage and the human capital. And if such perceptions are inaccurate the onus is on the country to correct the perceptual bias. An example in the literature is the case of Thailand accepting its negative association with sex tourism and taking measures to correct such image (Nuttavuthisit, 2007). The nature of the image created in the consumers' mind helps brand owners in their strategy development. In the case of Thailand, emphasis was laid on both penal and preventive measures enforced by both governmental and non-governmental organisations to correct the negative image.



### *Institutionalisation of the Branding Function*

The next step is to set up an institution or organisation responsible for the management of a nation's brand as a whole. Membership of this organisation should include experienced marketing and branding managers, academics and consultants (Gertner, 2007). The International Marketing Council of South Africa was established in 2002 for this purpose ([www.brandsouthafrica.com](http://www.brandsouthafrica.com)). In Ireland, the Industrial Development Agency was formed in 1949 with the responsibility of correcting the image of violence, decadence, conflict and unemployment to attract foreign investment (Gertner, 2007). It is also indicated that with this organisation, the country set up 13 offices around the world, and by 2006, they had been able to attract 1050 companies, and the country is currently regarded as one of the important investment destinations in Europe (Gertner, 2007). The establishment of such organisations will demonstrate the political will and the sense of leadership needed for brand development. The organisation also needs to clearly and consistently decide on the image that needs to be created and such images should be embedded in a country's slogan. The initial strategy of such an organisation is selling the brand to the inhabitant of the country. Just as implementation of rebranding of organisations rests with members of the organisation (Hankinson, Lomax and Hand, 2007), the implementation of changes needed for rebranding is the responsibility of the populace. There is also a strong possibility of resistance if the people in the country do not find the branding strategy credible, and if they find their individual and collective positions threatened (Pryor and Grossbart, 2007). This appears to be the case with the strategy being adopted by Nigeria, as they try to sell the 'Good People, Great Nation', slogan to the people of Nigeria (Rundell, 2010).

It is essential that Africans exhibit nationalism in creating nation branding, as suggested by Avraham and Ketter (2008) in their discussion of strategies to alter images of places previously branded as unsafe. An example is the ambassador networks created in Liverpool (Andersson and Ekman, 2009). While this can take place at the individual nation country, taking such step at the continent level will be extremely beneficial to Africa as ideas from each country could be pooled together to enhance the image of Africa as a whole. Africans can adopt this strategy by creating a network of African volunteers who will be prepared to talk to others about their countries wherever they are. Such initiatives could be strengthened by African celebrities, sportsmen and sportswomen and other professionals all over the world such as the international Academy of African Business Development (IAABD) which is a body of academic and practitioners that have interest in businesses and the associated research that relate to Africa. The effects of such a network will depend on the number of people who will be committed to achieving the goals.

#### *Creation and Maintenance of Partnership with Multinational Companies*

African countries host a good number of top brands in the world. These include Coca Cola, Toyota, HSBC, Vodafone, BP, Unilever and Shell ([www.fame.bvdep.com](http://www.fame.bvdep.com), accessed on June 11 2009). Each African country could identify companies with investment within the country and learn from them on how to improve their brand personality and perception. This relationship is what Andersson and Ekman (2009) describe as business oriented networks. They believe this strategy can be employed at the county level as used by Northamptonshire in England, and at the national level as used by Scotland. In the African context, countries should gather advice as well as the success stories from top brands operating in Africa, and include the relevant information in their marketing communications. According to Omar, Williams and Lingelbach (2009), trust and credibility are essential in creating and

maintaining reputation. Therefore the importance of branding strategies involving reputable multinational companies which have already achieved successes in the continent cannot be overemphasised. This strategy could form part of the companies' corporate social responsibilities (CSR). A visit to a multinational company's CSR page normally has information about how they are assisting the impoverished African in solving varied problems ([www.unilever-esa.com](http://www.unilever-esa.com), for example, accessed May 1, 2010). In as much as these images on such CSR websites help in improving the companies branding strategy, they do not help in branding Africa. An initiative from African government agencies could help in the rebranding process.

#### *Celebrating and Emphasising African Success Stories*

One of the strategies should be the need to emphasise the unique selling point (USP) of each country in the media. Each country has a unique selling point. For example, South Africa is noted to be in the top ten countries globally for the protection of investors' interest, Mauritius is ranked eighth in terms of the relative ease to start new businesses, Botswana ranks fourth globally in terms of the ease to pay taxes, and North African countries have the cheapest global tax rates (Kasanganayi, 2009). Ghana is also noted for peace, security and democracy, which were reportedly the main reasons why Barak Obama chose Ghana as the first country to visit in Africa in his capacity as the president of the United States of America (Rundell, 2010; Financial Times Special Report on Ghana, Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2009). As Nevin (2010) puts it, Africans need to make noise about the numerous opportunities in the continent and successes achieved not just in Africa but also by Africans throughout the world. This is known as generating brand awareness (Aaker, 1998).

### *Exploring sporting opportunities*

Clearly, there is a great sense of optimism for Africa due to South Africa's hosting of the FIFA World Cup. For example, this event has been regarded Africa's World Cup rather than South Africa's World Cup (Nevin, 2009). As a result, some countries like Botswana and Lesotho are already assessing the impact of the event on their economies, especially in the area of tourism. This is not surprising because there has been research on the effects of events such as the Olympic Games and their effects on branding (Berkowitz, et al, 2007). Zhang and Zhao (2009) have also examined the effects of the Olympic Games on Beijing. According to Rein and Shields (2007), sports generate strong emotions, and can attract investors, tourists and the populace at a low cost, due to the free media coverage. With the anticipated western Media attention on Africa and expected arrival of people from various backgrounds during international sports events, it is important to communicate to these customers what the Africans want them to hear. This is in line with what Avraham and Ketter (2008: 198) refer to as 'Come See for Yourself' strategy which they believe had also been used by India and the UK after the outbreak of epidemics.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

A review of the existing literature indicates that the image of Africa as a continent is constantly being negatively portrayed with characterisation that revolves around issues like poverty, underdevelopment, famine and corruption. This negative reputation has not been very helpful for the brand 'Africa' in relation to attracting foreign investments in the continent. However, a meticulous review of issues on Africa reveals that there are several business opportunities in the continent in various sectors such as agriculture, real estate, banking, and tourism but they are not adequately publicised. Therefore, there is a need to

espouse these potentials by re-branding Africa such that these virtues would be widely communicated to the international community to enhance the brand equity of the continent.

In conclusion it will be highly useful if all stakeholders - governments, citizens including celebrities, multinationals and professional bodies could work interactively towards promoting the continent. To implement these highlighted recommendations, it is imperative for governments and the people of Africa to take measures to achieve transparency in politics and demonstrate the political will to tackle the economic crisis and corruption in each country. Besides, issues of famine and poverty need be tackled decisively. These will represent the key performance indicators when foreign investors decide to take a closer look at the investment opportunities in various competing continents for investments.

## References

Aaker, D. A. (1996), 'Building Strong Brands, New York: The Free Press

Aaker, D. A. (1998), 'Strategic Market Management', New York: John Wiley & sons, Inc

Ahmed, A. And Cleeve, E. (2004), "Tracking the Millennium Development Goals in sub-Saharan Africa", *International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 12-29

American Marketing Association (2010), 'Marketing Power: Dictionary', [http://www.marketingpower.com/\\_layouts/Dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B](http://www.marketingpower.com/_layouts/Dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B), Accessed on 27/02/2010

Andersson, M. and Ekman, P (2009), "Ambassador Networks and Place Branding", *Journal of Place Management and Development*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp.41-45.

- Anholt, S. (2007), *Competitive Identity: the new Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York
- Anholt, S. (2007), "The Anholt Nation Brand Index: Special Report on Europe's International Image, Q2 2006, plus an Update on the Status of Brand Denmark", *Place Branding*, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 263-270
- Armstrong, G. and Kotler, P. (2009), "Principles of Marketing, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc
- Ataman, B. and Ülengin, B. (2003), 'A note on the effect of brand image on sales', *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, vol. 12, No.4, pp.237-250
- Avraham, E. and Ketter, E. (2008), "Will we be Safe there? Analysing Strategies for Altering Unsafe Place Images, *Place Branding and Diplomacy*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 196-204
- Balakrishnan, M. S. (2008), "Dubai, a Star in the East: a Case Study in Strategic Destination Branding", *Journal of Place Management and Development*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 62-91
- Berkowitz, P., et al, (2007), "Brand China: Using the 2008 Olympic Games to enhance China's image", *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp.164-178.
- Bowden, S., Chiripanhura, B. and Mosley, P. (2008), "Measuring and Explaining Poverty in Six African Countries: a Long-Period Approach", *Journal of International Development*, Vol. 20, pp. 1049-1079
- Brodie, R. J. and Glynn, M. S. (2010), 'Brand Equity and the Value of marketing Assets' in Baker, M. J. and Saren M. (Eds), 'Marketing Theory: A Student Text', London: Sage Publications Ltd, pp. 379-395

- Calderón, H. Cervera, A., and Mollá, A. (1997), 'Brand assessment: a key element of marketing strategy, *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, vol.6, No.5, pp.293-304
- Collier, P. (2007) "Poverty reduction in Africa", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* , Vol. 104, No. 43, pp. 16763-16768
- Doriye, E. (2010), "The Next Stage of Sovereign Wealth Investment: China buys Africa"  
*Journal of Financial Regulation and Compliance*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 23-31.
- Dunning, J. H., (1977), "Trade, location and economic activity and the multinational enterprise:  
A search for an eclectic approach", In B. Ohlin, P. Hesselborn, & P. Wijkman (Eds.),  
*The international allocation of economic activity*, MacMillan, London
- Dunning, J. H. (1988), "The Eclectic Paradigm of International Production: a Restatement and some possible Extensions", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 1-31
- Fofack, H (2009), "The Shame of plenty in the mist of Poverty", *African Business*, Vol. 358, p.50
- Gbadamosi, A. and Oniku, C. A. (2009), The Strategic Implications of China's Economic Pacts with Sub-Sahara African Countries: The Case of Nigeria, *International Journal of Arts and Sciences Conference*, Bad Hofgastein, Austria, June 1-4
- Gertner, D. (2007), "Place branding: Dilemma or reconciliation between political ideology and economic pragmatism?", *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 3-7.
- Hanna, S. and Rowley, J. (2008), "An analysis of terminology use in place branding",

*Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 61-75.

Herstein, R. and Jaffe, E. D. (2008), "The Children's City: the Transition from a Negative to a Positive City Image", *Place Branding and Diplomacy*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 76-84

Ibeh, K. I.N. (2004), "Furthering Export Participation in Less Performing Developing Countries: the Effects of Entrepreneurial Orientation and Managerial Capacity Factors", *International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 94-110.

Jackson, T., Amaeshi, K. and Yavuz, s (2008), "Untangling African Indigenous Management: Multiple Influences on the Success of SMEs in Kenya", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 45, pp. 400-416.

Kasanganayi, F.M. (2009), "Africa: Challenge or Opportunity", *Journal of International Taxation*, Vol. 20, No. 12, pp. 52-59.

Keller, K. L. (1993), 'Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity', *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 57, January, pp 1-22,

Kemming, J. D. and Sandikci, O. (2007), "Turkey's EU accession as a question of nation brand image", *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 31-41.

Kolo, J. (2009) "Striving for Results: Prescriptions for Broadening the Sustainable Development Principles for Policy making and Planning in Africa", *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 78-97.

Kotler, P. and Armstrong, P. (2008), 'Principles of Marketing, 12<sup>th</sup> ed., New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc

Kotler, P. Armstrong, G., Wong, V., and Saunders, J. (2008), *Principles of Marketing*, 5<sup>th</sup> European Edition, Harlow: Pearson Education Limited

Kuyvenhoven, A. (2008), "Africa, Agriculture, Aid", *NJAS*, Vol. 55, No. 2, pp. 93-112



Luiz, J. M. (2006), "The Wealth of Some and the Poverty of Sub Saharan Africa",  
*International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 33. No.9, pp. 625-648.

Maiello, M. (2009), "The Business of Africa", Forbes Magazine, dated 5<sup>th</sup> October.

Matipa, W.M, and Barham, R (2007), "Nurturing Property Investment by Reengineered Systems for Land Pricing by Local Authorities", *Journal of Property Investment and Finance*, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 77-94

Mburu, S. (2010), "Capitalising on a new Global Tourism Trend", *African Business*, Vol. 363, pp. 84-85

Nevin, T. (2010), "FDI into Africa: the Iron is Hot", *African Business*, Vol. 363, pp. 54-57

Nevin, T. (2009), "After the Ball", *African Business*, Vol. 357, pp. 90-91

Njoh, A. J., (2009), "Ideology and Public Health Elements of Human Settlement Policies in sub-Sharan Africa", *Cities*, Vol. 26, pp. 9-18

Nuttavuthisit, K. (2007), "Branding Thailand: Correcting the negative image of sex tourism", *Place Branding and Diplomacy*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 21-30.

O'Cass, A., and Lim, K. (2002), 'Understanding the Younger Singaporean consumers' View of

Western and Eastern Brands', *Asia Pacific Journal of marketing and Logistics*, vol.14, Number 4, pp 54-79

Olaleye, A., Aluko, B. T. and Ajayi, C. A. (2007), "Factors influencing the choice of Property Portfolio Diversification Evaluation Techniques in Nigeria", *Journal of Property Investment and Finance*, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 23-42

- Omar, M., Williams, R. and Lingelbach, D. (2009), "Global Brand Market-entry to manage Corporate Reputation", *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 177-187
- Opoku, R. and Hinson, R. (2006) "Online Brand Personalities: An Exploratory Analysis of Selected African Countries", *Place Branding*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 118-129
- Pike, S., (2009), "Destination Brand Positions of a Competitive Near-home Destinations", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 30, pp. 857-866
- Pitt, L. F., et al, (2007), "What I say about myself: Communication of Brand Personality by African Countries", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 28, pp. 835-844.
- Powell, B. Ford, R. and Nowrasteh, A. (2008), "Somalia after State Collapse: Chaos or Improvement?", *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organisation*, Vol. 67, pp. 657-670
- Prendergast, G. P. and Marr, N. E. (1997), 'Generic products: who buys them and how do they perform relative to each other?' *European Journal of Marketing*, vol.31, No.2, pp.94-109
- Pryor, S. and Grossbart, S. (2007), "Creating Meaning on Main Street: Towards a model of Place Branding", *Place Branding and Diplomacy*, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 291-304
- Ramabodu, M. S., Kotze, B. G. and Verster, J. J. P. (2007), "Diversity and Value in Africa's Real estate: Challenges facing Property Development in South Africa", *Journal of Property Investment and Finance*, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 7-22
- Rein, I. and Shields, B. (2007), "Place branding sports: Strategies for differentiating emerging, transitional, negatively viewed and newly industrialised nations", *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 73-85.

- Richards, D., Nwana, G and Nwankwo, S. (2003), "Debt Burden and Corruption Impact: African Market Dynamism", *Management Decision*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 304-310
- Roy, I. S. (2007), "Worlds Apart: Nation-branding on the National Geographic Channel", *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 29, No. 4, pp. 569-592
- Rundell, S. (2010), "Rebranding Nigeria – what really Counts, Packaging or Product?" *African Business*, Vol. 363, pp. 64-6
- Scott, M. (2009), "Marginalised, Negative or Trivial? Coverage of Africa in the UK Press", *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 533-557
- Seetharaman, A., Nadzir, Z. A. B. M. and Gunalan, S. (2001), 'A conceptual study on brand valuation', *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, vol. 10, No.4, pp.243-256
- Sieff, M. (2008), "Africa: Many Hills to Climb", *World Policy Journal*, Fall, pp. 185-195
- Szondi, G. (2007), "The role and challenges of country branding in transition countries: The Central and Eastern European experience", *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 8-20.
- UNCTAD, (2009) "The Lest Developed Countries Report 2009"
- UNCTAD, (2007)
- Van Ham, P. (2008), "Place Branding: the State of the Art", *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 616, No. 1, pp. 126-149
- Vanolo, A. (2008), "The Image of the Creative City: some Reflections in Turin", *Cities*, Vol. 25, pp. 370-382
- Wanjiru, E. (2006) "Branding African Countries: a Prospect for the Future", *Place Branding*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 84-95

Wiggins, J. (2009), "PZ Cussons looks to clean up in Nigeria", Financial Times, London, p.

18

Williams, R., Omar, M and Ensor, J (2010), Pending

Wilson, R.M.S. and Gilligan, C. (1997), 'Strategic Marketing Management: Planning, implementation and control, Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 396-401

Younde, J. (2009), "Selling the Sate: State Branding as a Political Resource in South Africa", *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp.126-140

Zerrillo, P. C. And Thomas, G. M. (2007), "Developing brands and emerging markets: An empirical application", *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 86-99.

Zhang, L. and Zhao, S. X. (2009), "City Branding and the Olympic Effect: a Case Study of Beijing", *Cities*, Vol. 26, pp. 245-254

[www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org) 28/12/09