

Brand Identity of Tourist Destination and the Impact on Patronage

Rowland Edward Worlu

Department of Business Management, Covenant University,
Ota, Nigeria.

Tiwaladeogo Oluwadetan Adekanbi

Department of Business Management, Covenant University,
Ota, Nigeria

***Musibau Akintunde Ajagbe**

Center for Entrepreneurship Development Studies, Department of Business Management,
Covenant University,
Ota, Nigeria

David T. Isiauwe

Internal Audit Department Union Bank of Nigeria Plc
Marina, Nigeria

Adunola Oluremi Oke

Department of Business Management, Covenant University,
Ota, Nigeria

*Corresponding Authors Email: akintunde.ajagbe@cu.edu.ng

Abstract

This study tries to understand brand identity of tourist destinations from the supply side perspective and how it enhances the patronage of the Nigeria tourist industry. The study adopts a quantitative approach to data collection through the distribution of a total of 120 questionnaires with a response rate of about 83%. The data analysis for this study was carried out with the use of tables, frequency and simple percentages. The research hypotheses were tested using Pearson correlation and Linear Regression methods. The findings of the study show that the creation and continuous development of brand identity would have a positive effect on tourists' view and choice of Nigeria as a tourist destination. The study recommends that overall marketing approach for tourism in Nigeria should be customer oriented which would include activities such as to provide proper security facilities to reinforce safety in the mind of tourists. In addition, to improve on the road networks, to improve the quality of accommodation, create a range of holiday packages and market these packages directly to international tour operators and regional travel agents. Above all, there is need for an intensive public image campaign geared towards improving the negative image of Nigeria as a country.

Keywords: Tourist Destination, Tourism Industry, Brand Identity, Patronage, Nigeria.

Background of Study

Ojo et al. (2012) argued that tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their original vicinity for not more than one consecutive year for the purpose of holiday, business and other purposes not connected to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited. Curtis (2001) added that the tourism industry consists of certain facilities and services that are indispensable to a proper tourism development in any country. Aaker et al. (2004) contributed that these facilities provided by some businesses and organizations cater to the needs of tourists from the time of their arrival to and their departure from their destination. Researchers argued that the travel industry can be perceived as being comprised of five component sectors. They listed accommodation, attraction, transportation, travel organizers and destination organization as among the identified sector. These sectors can each be further broken down into several sub-divisions. The sectors are all linked and depend on each other' i.e. there is an interdependence between them (Aaker, 1997; Arnould et al., 2002). The destination organizers depend on the use of travel agents to help in creating awareness of their destinations and they bridge the gap between organizers and the tourists by providing easy access to information about the intended destination. The accommodation sector relies on the transportation sector in moving tourist from one location to another. Due to their interdependence, failure by one sector reflects negatively on the others.

Nigerian independence ushered in some kind of global recognition which invariably opened doors to foreign investors and holiday enthusiasts. Even though independence was given in 1960, the tourism activity of Nigeria has been going on as far back as 1472 when Nigeria hosted her first European tourist. They were the first batch of Portuguese who arrived in Lagos (Aaker et al., 2004; Ojo et al., 2012). Initial effort of the British colonial masters to manage the national wealth of the country, particularly the cultural areas was made through the creation of the Colonial Antiquities Commission in 1953. The purpose of setting up the commission was to identify and preserve national monuments and antiquities. Subsequent upgrading of the roles and status of the commission was carried out over time and until date (Curtis, 2001; Clarke, 2003). The current agency has the mandate to promote healthy domestic and international tourism geared towards generating revenue for the country (Aaker, 1997; Hunt, 1975; Hall, 2002).

Ajagbe et al. (2011) defined a brand as a differentiating designation and/or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or design of a package) which is geared towards identifying the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to distinguish those goods from those of other sellers. The American Marketing Association (AMA) viewed the term as "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of all intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to distinguish them from those of other rivals (Anholt, 2000; 2002; Hall, 2002; Kapferer, 2003). Branding is endowing products and services with the power of a brand (Ind, 1997; Konecnik, 2004). In addition, brands involves creating mental structures and helping consumers organize their knowledge about products and services in a manner that clarifies their decision making and, in the process provides value to the firm. Ajagbe et al. (2013)

opined that the key to branding is that consumers must not think that all brands in that category are the same.

However, brand identity is a combination of visual, auditory, and other sensory components that create recognition, represent the brand promise, provide differentiation, create communications synergy, and are proprietary (Kapferer, 1998; Aaker et al., 2004; Ajagbe et al., 2015b). Researchers have been unable to take a unanimous stand on the definition of the concept called brand identity, however, they share a common opinion, that brand identity development is a theoretical philosophy best understood from the supply side viewpoint (de Chernatony and McDonald, 1997; Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). The most simple and clear description that was provided by Kapferer (1998) of brand identity underscores the importance of the supply-side viewpoint of the brand concept. This entails that “before knowing how we are perceived, we must know who we are”. This further means that the tourist destination, rather than the consumers should define both its brand and content. Brand identity clearly specifies what the brand aspires to stand for and has multiple roles. First it is a set of associations that the brand strategist seeks to create and maintain. Second, it represents a vision of how a brand should be perceived by its target audience (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000; de Chernatony and McDonald, 2001). Third, upon its projection, the brand identity should help establish a relationship between a particular brand and its clientele by generating a value proposition potentially either involving benefits or providing credibility which endorses the brand in question. Kapferer (1998) concluded that the multiple roles of the brand identity concept are reflected in the hexagonal model called the brand identity prism. It is based on six central components: physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection or image and self image.

Gartner (1993) put forward that social scientists who investigated tourism have somewhat ignored the concept of brand identity. The author contributed that emphasis has been placed on studying the tourism destination from a perceived image viewpoint. Though earlier researchers have succeeded in illuminating our knowledge of the tourism destination from a tourist-centric perspective, they have ‘left us somewhat in the dark’ with regard to the impact of the supply-side viewpoint on brand identity development, particularly in the tourism destination branding context (Gartner, 1989; Echtner and Ritchie 1993; Baloglu and McCleary 1999; Gallarza et al., 2002; Konecnik, 2002). What this means is that past studies which combines the marketing literature with the tourism literature is still evolving (Gartner, 1986; CAI 2002; Ajagbe et al., 2011; Ajagbe et al., 2013; Ajagbe et al., 2015b). However, the most detailed and current study clearly illuminates the variation between the image-formation process and branding (CAI 2002). This observation is significant because image formation is not synonymous with branding, albeit that the former constitutes the core of the latter. Image-building comes one step closer but it lacks a critical link with brand identity. By underscoring the significance of the brand identity concept at the destination level, CAI’s work has identified the main weaknesses of previous studies which examined destination branding from a customer-centric perspective. Figure 1 shows the study’s research conceptual framework.

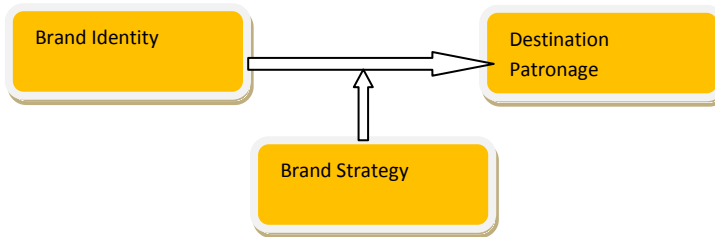


Figure 1: Research Conceptual Framework

Operationalization of Variables

For the purpose of operationalization, the topic “sustaining the brand identity of a tourist destination: evidence from a selected tourist destination in Nigeria” is broken down into dependent variable(Y) and an independent variable (X).

Y= f(X), where: Y =tourist destination
 X= Brand Identity

Hence, Y-variables: Y₁--- Accommodation services

- Y₂---tourist site
- Y₃---transportation services
- Y₄---travel organizers service
- Y₅---tourism regulatory agencies

Tourism destination= Y₁+ Y₂+ Y₃+Y₄.....+Y_n.

- X-variables: X₁---brand image
 X₂---brand character
 X₃---brand essence
 X₄---brand culture
 X₅---brand equity

Brand identity= X₁+X₂ +X₃+ X₄+.....+ X_n

Study Methodology

This study used the quantitative data collection approach through the distribution of questionnaires to relevant participants to find out the relationship between brand identity of tourist destination and the impact on destination patronage used both probability and non-probability sampling technique to carry out the survey. In addition, this study adopted convenience, stratified and judgmental sampling as suggested by Yin (2003). The stratified sampling method was adopted because of the nature of the population and the several organizations used in this study for an effective sampling process and to reduce sampling problems because the population was divided into five strata. Creswell (2012) argued that the principle of random sampling, i.e. randomness, could be applied in all probability sampling methods. Random sampling uses the principle of randomization which is a procedure of giving every subject in a population equal chance of appearing in the selection. For this study, five

organizations were randomly selected, they are Air France, Lagos Airport Hotel, National Museum Nigeria, Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation and Royal Trips. Trochim and James (2006) opined that an instrument with high reliability will have a coefficient value close to 1 as possible whereas a score that is very close to 0 is a sign that the instrument has a very low or no reliability. Hence, it is universally accepted that a score of 0.7 and below is an indication that the instrument is reliable (Ajagbe et al., 2015a). The population of this study is the total number of staffs in the tourism industry who engage in creating and sustaining the brand identity of a tourist destination in Nigeria. Ajagbe et al. (2015a) posit that a sample is a part of population and thus consists of any subgroup drawn from the target population, and sample size for this study was chosen among employees of selected tour organizations in Lagos, Nigeria. As a result of the difficulty encountered in securing consent from participants, the researcher employed the formula suggested by Moses and Kalton where sample size is not known. This has been supported through a method of calculus. Thus the formula for calculating population when sample size is not known is;

$$n = \frac{1}{4e^2}$$

Where n = sample size

e = margin of sampling error

$$\text{Sample frame} = \frac{1}{4e^2} = \frac{1}{4(0.05)^2} = \frac{1}{4(0.0025)} = \frac{1}{0.01} = 100$$

Therefore the sample size is 100.

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha Coefficient

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.803	27

Display of Demographic Data

The analysis of the demographic data indicate that respondents are distributed across the tourism industry. In addition, there is an equal distribution of about 20% of respondents across the five selected tourist organizations surveyed for this study. However, more Nigerians were found to participate in this study, than any other nationals. However, the number of foreign personnel that participated in this study is an indication of the diverse nature of the staff structure in the industry. About 91% of those who participated in this study are of Nigerian origin while the remaining 9% of the respondents are foreigners. In terms of the qualifications of the participants, 67% are BSc/HND graduates, while 23% are MBA/MSc graduates, 8% of the participants possess high school certificates and finally just a paltry 2% are PhD graduates. In terms of age dispersion, about 42% of the participants are above 30 years old, 29% are more than 21 years old, 22% are more than 41 years old, 7% are above 50 years old. For the gender distribution, 54% of the total respondents are male as against 46% female.

Hypothesis Testing

Test of Hypothesis 1

H₀: Brand Image does not play any role in Tourist Destination Choice.

H₁: Brand Image plays a role in Tourist Destination Choice

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

		brand image	destination choice
Brand Image	Pearson Correlation	1	.777(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Destination Choice	Pearson Correlation	.777(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In using the correlation analysis, the following should be noted. The value of the Pearson can range from -1.00 to +1.00. This value indicates the strength of relationships between two variables.

r= .10 to .29 indicates a small relationship, r = -.10 to -.29 indicates a small negative relationship.

r= .30 to .49 indicates a medium relationship, r = -.30 to -.49 indicates a medium negative relationship

r= .50 to 1.00 indicates a large relationship, r = -.50 to -1.00 indicates a large negative relationship.

The coefficient of determination is given by the formula $r = \text{Pearson Co-efficient} = 0.777$ C.O.D = $r^2 * 100$

$$= (0.777)^2 * 100$$

$$= 0.6037 * 100$$

$$= 60.37\%$$

However, in table 2 above, the correlation $r = 0.777$ means that 77.7% shared variance between brand image and tourist destination choice. This implies that the research helps to explain 77.7% variance of the respondent scores. The relationship between brand image and tourist destination choice was investigated using Pearson’s correlation coefficient. There was a positive correlation between the two variable ($r = 0.777$, $n = 100$, p less than 0.0005), with significance level of brand image being associated with tourist destination choice. This means that the correlation ($r = 0.777$), between brand image and tourist destination choice is highly significant at 0.01 level therefore we reject H₀ and accept H₁. This implies that brand image has a positive effect on tourist destination choice.

Test of Hypothesis 2

H₀ There is no correlation between Brand Equity and Tourist Choice of Service.

H₁ There is a correlation between Brand Equity and Tourist Choice of Service.

Table 3: Correlations Analysis

		Brand equity	Tourism services
Brand Equity	Pearson	1	.713(**)

Tourism Services	Correlation		.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	100	100
	Pearson	.713(**)	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The coefficient of determination is given by the formula $r = \text{Pearson Co-efficient} = 0.713$ C.O.D = $r^2 * 100$

$$= (0.713)^2 * 100$$

$$= 0.5084 * 100$$

$$= 50.8\%$$

Hence, in table 3 above, the correlation $r = 0.713$ means that 71.3% shared variance between brand equity and tourist choice of service. This implies that the research helps to explain 71.3% variance of the respondent scores. Thus, the relationship between brand equity and tourist choice of service was investigated using Pearson’s correlation coefficient. There was a positive correlation between the two variable ($r = 0.713$, $n = 100$, p less than 0.0005), with significance level of brand equity being associated with tourist choice of service. This means that the correlation ($r = 0.713$), between brand equity and tourist choice of service is highly significant at 0.01 level therefore we reject H_0 and accept H_1 . This implies that brand equity has a positive effect on tourist choice of service.

Test of Hypothesis 3

H_0 : There are no Branding Strategies for influencing the Choice of Tourism Products.

H_1 : There are Branding Strategies used for influencing the Choice of Tourism Products.

Table 4: Regression Analysis Model Summary (b)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.744(a)	.553	.548	.42997

Predictors: (Constant), branding strategies

Dependent Variable: tourism products

From the regression model summary in table 4 above, the R value is 0.744, R square is 0.553 while adjusted R square is 0.548. This implies that brand strategy has a positive effect on product choice, and is accounted for by 54.8% of the product choice value. This means there are other intervening variables apart from brand strategy that affect product choice.

Table 5: ANOVA (b)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	22.410	1	22.410	121.218	.000(a)
	Residual	18.118	98	.185		

Total	40.528	99			
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Predictors: (Constant), branding strategies
 Dependent Variable: tourism products

There is an F value of 121.218. Statistically the level of effect of brand strategy on product choice is significant at 0.00 as shown in table 5 above. Based on this, hypothesis three Ho is hereby rejected, meaning that, there are no branding strategies for influencing the choice of tourism products and H1 is accepted, meaning that, there are branding strategies for influencing the choice of tourism products.

Test of Hypothesis 4

H₀: Branding strategies do not enhance the patronage of tourism products.

H₁: Branding strategies enhance the patronage of tourism products.

Table 6: Regression analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.815(a)	.665	.661	.43255

Predictors: (Constant), strategies used
 Dependent Variable: product services

From the regression model summary in table 6 above the R value is 0.815, R square is 0.665 while adjusted R square is 0.661. This implies that a 66.1% effect on the brand strategies used is accounted for by the patronage of tourism products and a 33.9% effect occurs as a result of the other variables not stated.

Table 7: ANOVA (b)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	36.351	1	36.351	194.285	.000(a)
	Residual	18.336	98	.187		
	Total	54.688	99			

Predictors: (Constant), strategies used
 Dependent Variable: patronage

There is an F value of 194.285. Statistically the level of effect of brand strategy on product choice is significant at 0.00 as shown in table 7 above. Based on this, hypothesis four, Ho is hereby rejected as branding strategies do not enhance the patronage of tourism products and H1 is accepted that branding strategies enhance the patronage of tourism products. Regression was used because it is the most appropriate instrument for the type of data collected and the type of analysis required.

Discussion of Results

Hypotheses 1 indicates that brand image plays an important role in the choice of tourist destination. Konecnik (2004) link brand image to satisfaction in a retail setting, asserting that

positive image and customer satisfaction are related. In view of previous academic research into satisfaction and loyalty, it can be postulated that brand image when related to satisfaction may also be related to loyalty. Furthermore, if congruence between brand identity and brand image is linked to satisfaction, as found by the past author, this may also lead to loyalty. In fact, it has been asserted that a firm can enhance its brand loyalty by ensuring that there is congruence between brand identity and brand image. This study proposed that brand identity will have a positive relationship with brand image, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Hence, increased demand and popularity of a tour destination is connected with strong brand and positive image among vacation seekers.

Hypotheses 2 reveals that there is a correlation between brand equity and tourist choice of service. Kapferer (2003) believes that brands have higher brand equity to the extent that they have higher brand loyalty, name awareness, strong brand associations, and other assets. Previous research on brand equity has shown that different processes are required to determine brand strength. These encompass brand satisfaction, perceptions about the brand, preference of the brand over competitors', willingness to pay a price premium, and several other consumer-based, measures. As more travelers are satisfied and see a positive price-value relationship, more of them prefer the brand and more of them return, hence, brand equity perceived to be associated with what can be referred to as strength of a brand. However, Kapferer (2003) concluded that brand equity is considered to be the brand's ability to compete with other brands.

Hypotheses 3 shows that branding strategies are used for influencing the choice of tourism products. As found by de Chernatony and McDonald (2001), managers of tourist firms require to commit themselves in developing values and personality traits relevant to their target consumers. Anholt (2002) distinguished the people from consumers, experience from product, trust from honesty, preference from quality, aspiration from notoriety, personality from identity, feel from function, presence from ubiquity, dialogue from communication, and the relationship from the service. The author added that a successful brand is the one which daily stays connected to its target audience. In addition, the unique brand values, associations, and identity should be communicated and developed both inside and outside the organization, through a process involving all employees interacting with the brand (de Chernatony and McDonald, 1997).

Hypotheses 4 indicates that branding strategies enhance patronage of tourism products. Tourism destination manages to implement customization, provision of experiences, mind for its communication, and win the trusts of guests. In addition, Aaker et al. (2004) added that word of mouth and previous experience perceptions would result to repeat business patronage, customer loyalty and emotional bond, this in turn positions the firm as more competitive in the market.

Research Findings and Conclusion

This study finds that it is essential for tourist destinations to be innovative and continuously make effort to improve itself since consumers taste are dynamic. The ability of destination managers to improve tourist experience will surely contribute to an increase in destinations market share, improve customer loyalty and brand equity. In addition, this study finds that the importance of the brand identity concept is commonly accepted in the branding literature, whereas the tourism research literature has so far mostly neglected this important perspective on brand investigation. Therefore, this study underpins the tourism destination brand from the owner's perspective and thereby contributes to existing studies concerning research on tourism destination. Considering past research on marketing and tourism, this study introduced a theoretical framework for a tourism destination's brand identity which provides the authors with

a base orientation for investigating this area of study in Nigeria. However, this study suggest that the overall marketing approach for tourism in Nigeria should be customer oriented which would include activities such as providing adequate security to reinforce safety in the mind of tourists, improve on the road networks, enhance standard of lodging infrastructure for holiday seekers, to create a range of holiday packages and market these packages directly to international tour operators and regional travel agents for inclusion in their holiday schemes. Hence, in trying to understand the relationship between brand equity and tourist choice of service or product, this study finds that the value add to services provided to tourists will attract tourists to a destination. This study further contributes that tour professionals and public policy makers should take required steps to add value to the tourist experience. This could be done by adopting effective brand strategies that is adequately defined and geared towards boosting Nigerian tourist experience.

Acknowledgement: The researchers wish to thank Covenant University, Canaan Land, Ota, Nigeria for making available some of the resources that encouraged this research.

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Musibau Akintunde Ajagbe (ajagbetun@yahoo.com or akintunde.ajagbe@cu.edu.ng) is from the Center for Entrepreneurship Development Studies (CEDs), Covenant University, Canaan Land, Ota, Nigeria.

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