

CONTRIBUTION OF BRANDING IN ENHANCING PERFORMANCE OF TOURISM SECTOR IN RWANDA

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ABSTRACT: *Strong branding has become a very important factor that influences consumer's perceptions of a brand. Success in branding can enhance the performance of Tourism. This arises from understanding and managing the brand correctly to produce strong attributes that influence consumers when making their choices. Considering the increasing competition in the tourism industry, more governments have realized that branding can enhance Tourism and become a powerful tool to differentiate their countries and obtain competitive advantages by improving their image in tourism. The results have shown that the branding campaign in tourism is generally well developed and the image promoted corresponds in great measure with the one perceived by consumers. The value of this research concentrates on the fact that branding can enhance the performance of tourism in any Country. As a relatively new concept, branding still lacks empirical academic research. This study offers an original insight into branding as a tool in enhancing Tourism performance through image analysis. This research focuses on the importance of these dimensions (brand awareness, Tourism brand loyalty, Tourism brand image and perceived quality in enhancing the performance of the tourism sector in Rwanda) of customer-based brand equity on consumer's perceptions of a Tourism brand. This is based on the assumption that all these dimensions of customer based-Tourism brand equity have had influence on consumer's perceptions of the Tourism brand. However, this project aimed to find out which among these three dimensions (brand image, brand loyalty and perceived quality) appears to have the least brand equity in Tourism with respect to Tourism brand awareness, Tourism brand image, and perceived quality and Tourism brand loyalty. A structured questionnaire was constructed to provide answers to research questions. In this study, over fifty questionnaires were distributed, and all of the questionnaires were realized. Despite the academic attention to branding in Tourism, there seems to be no clear path for authorities to follow in establishing their destinations as distinctive and strategic brands, A comprehensive research framework with both qualitative and quantitative methods was used to suggest and assess these brand elements, meanings, and assets for both supply and demand sides of the market.*

KEYWORDS: Branding, Tourism, Performance, Marketing, Development.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the world's largest civilian industry and accounts for nearly fourteen percent of the world's GDP. David J. Saunders (2002). The World Trade and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2010) assert that Travel and tourism has become a global industry, widely considered one of the fastest growing sectors. For example: In 2009, the industry generated 9.4% of the world GDP and employed over 235 million people worldwide (8.2% of all employment) (WTTC, 2010). The WTTC (2010) has projected that the industry has a very high potential of generating revenue that will increase the rate of growth by 4.4% per annum. World Tourism Organization's (WTO) (2010) also projects that the tourism industry will continue to grow and by 2020 international arrivals are expected to increase by 200% to reach over 1.56 billion. WTO (2010) further projects that of these worldwide arrivals, 1.2 billion are expected to be intraregional while 0.4 billion covering long-haul travellers.

WTUs' (2010) projections indicate that Europe will receive 717 million tourists, East Asia and the Pacific will receive 397 million and the Americas will receive 282 million tourists. Africa the Middle East and South Asia will record growth-rates of over 5 percent per year, compared to the world average of 4.1 per cent. Jevons (2005) attributes the growth and success of tourism to branding. Brands represent one of the areas of implementation of marketing communication of the organization whose importance has significantly grown in the recent years. If their value has initially been seen especially in connection to the trade name of organizations' products and services and primarily in the legal context, brands and their employment are nowadays considered key factors to the success of the organization in the market. Thus, the creation, development and employment of brands have become activities that have exceeded the area of marketing communication and whose effects are visible in the results of the marketing and overall activities of the organization. Brands tend to be used in an increasingly diversified context more and more separated from the field of consumer goods which it has provided the support for their current development .Jevons, (2005).

Anholt (2004) also notes that consumers gets ever easier, countries' ability to compete against each other for share of mind, share of income, share of talent and share of voice, is significantly determined by the power of their brand image. Unless a country "stands for" something special and different, there is little chance that this country will be able to compete successfully for any of the precious attention.

According to Anholt (2005a), countries have always been brands, in the truest sense of the word. Like any brand, nations have individual identities which are unique unto themselves. Jaworski & Fosher, (2003); no two nations are alike. Based on their unique identities, many countries have been branding themselves deliberately and systematically for centuries, even if the respective vocabulary has only recently been adopted. Whereas the idea of branding nations is still

questioned by most people (Olins, 2002), the notion of brand management for countries has been established as one of the key tools for attaining nation-wide competitiveness.

Govers, R., F.M. Go, and K. Kumar (2007) in *Promoting Tourism Destination Image* published in the *Journal of Travel Research* emphasise that branding brings the tourism sector to the forefront and to international attention. A case in point is the fact that Rwanda particularly is well known for its mountain gorillas. First brought to international attention by the conservation efforts of Dian Fossey in the 1960s and 70s, Rwanda's gorillas have featured in numerous documentaries and have in the recent past been visited, for example, by Bill Gates, Natalie Portman and Ted Turner, who have all participated in the annual gorilla naming ceremony. Rwanda and Uganda are the only two countries in the world where mountain gorillas can be visited safely at the moment. In 2008, about 17,000 people visited the Volcanoes National Park (VNP) to see the gorillas, a large increase from the late 1980s and an impressive recovery from only 417 tourists in 1999 after the reopening of the park. Rwanda has also seen gorilla tourism as a valuable conservation tool, enforcing strict rules for the habituation and trekking of gorilla families. Tourists are willing to pay high fees for a limited number of permits, which are usually sold out. The revenues from gorilla tourism provide funds to the national parks and facilitate conservation activities. Five percent of park revenues are disbursed for community projects.

According to the Rwanda Tourism Policy (2009) Rwanda is in the process of implementing a brand development policy will lead to the creation of a distinctive image and present a new tourism positioning for Rwanda. The brand will be designed to highlight Rwanda's competitive advantages in the areas of wildlife/eco-tourism, activity and adventure travel, and conference and business tourism. The main scope of the study is therefore to present an analysis on the contribution of branding in enhancing performance of the tourism sector in Rwanda.

Statement of the Problem

World over, growth in tourism has been significant. According to Song H, Dwyer L, Li G, CAO Z. (2012). The dynamics of tourism, as an activity and as an industry, call for continuous efforts in seeking new approaches, tools, and perspectives in order to acquire new knowledge and a greater understanding of the discipline. Therefore, it is both necessary and useful to comprehensively review the development of the research field in terms of where we were, where we are, and where we should be. Very few such endeavours have been made in this regard. Rwanda Development Board (RDB) reported that the country received \$200 million in tourism revenue and brought in a total of 666,000 tourists in 2010 alone. This is indeed a promising sign for the small, landlocked country that regards its tourism industry as one of its most important economic assets. According to the Rwanda Tourism Policy (2009), in 2008, the number of foreign visitors to Rwanda reached just under one million from about 826,000 in 2007, an increase of 30 per cent. Estimates indicate that tourism revenues significantly increased between 2007 and 2008, from \$138 million to \$209 million therefore showing that tourism has become the largest foreign earner, contributing \$290M in 2013. This has been a result of several

initiatives such as aggressive marketing campaigns and the good security the country enjoys. “Just as companies have learned to ‘live the brand,’ countries should consider their reputations carefully—because in the interconnected world, that’s what statecraft is all about” Risen (2005) Although Rwanda has made considerable effort in improving the competitiveness of the tourism sector, the sector is still shadowed by Rwanda’s past, which was characterized by the devastating genocide of 1994, which cast a dark shadow to the industry. As a tool to create a positive image, branding has been one of such initiatives aimed at improving the performance of the industry. Although Anholt, (2009) argues that branding creates a positive image, and in the long run improves sector performance, the impact of branding on tourism in Rwanda has not been fully explored. This argument is in line with (Grosspietsch, 2006) who noted that although Rwanda’s image has evolved from being primarily associated with the genocide a lot has to be done as a market research conducted in 2012 in the neighboring countries showed that more than half of the international visitors believed that Rwanda was an unsafe destination. Therefore, this study will attempt to examine the contribution of branding in enhancing the performance of the tourism sector in Rwanda.

Research Objective

General Objective

The general objective of this research was to investigate the contribution of branding in enhancing the performance of the tourism sector in Rwanda.

Specific Objectives

- i. To analyze how components of branding (brand promise, brand commitment, brand position and brand personality) enhance the performance of the tourism sector in Rwanda

Research Question

- i. How do the components of branding (brand promise, commitment, position, personality) enhance the performance of the tourism sector in Rwanda?

Research Design

The research design employed self-administration of questionnaires to a sample of individuals. The questionnaires were aimed at finding peoples’ attitudes, and opinion about how branding contributes to performance of tourism in Rwanda. The researcher used both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained using questionnaires while secondary data was gathered from the documents available at the washing stations and journals.

Target Population

The target population was Tour operators who are members of the umbrella body RTTA (37), Hoteliers (10), Airline staff (10), and RDB officials (10).

The Research was concentrated in Kigali since it has the largest number of tour operators and other stakeholders in the tourism sector.

The researcher also believes this target population provided diversity, representation, was really accessible and very knowledgeable.

Sample Design

The sample size of this study was 50 respondents calculated on the base of Solvin's method.

Sampling Techniques

The researcher used Purposive sampling. With this technique, the researcher purposely targeted a group of people believed to be reliable for the study. There are a wide range of purposive sampling techniques that could be used (Patton, 1990, 2002; Kuzel, 1999 have a complete list) but the researcher zeroed in on homogeneous sampling which picks up a small sample with similar characteristics to describe some particular subgroup in depth. After purposively sampling larger numbers of elements for the study, the researcher used simple random techniques to sample specific elements for the study. Therefore, the researcher sampled respondents as follows: Tour operators who are members of the umbrella body RTTA (30), Hoteliers (10), Airline staff (5), and RDB officials (5).

In selecting the specific elements to be interviewed among the several purposively selected samples the researcher used a simple random sampling technique. Moore, David S. and George P. McCabe (2006) note that a simple random sample of size n consists of n individuals from the population chosen in such a way that every set of n individuals has an equal chance to be the sample actually selected.

Due to the fact that the total populations of the purposively sampled elements were small, the researcher used the lottery method among many other simple random sampling techniques. During this procedure the researcher assigned each member of the population a unique number. Each number was placed in a bowl and mixed thoroughly. The researcher with closed eyes then randomly picked numbers from the bowl. All the individuals bearing the numbers picked by the researcher formed the subjects for the study. This procedure was applied to all the different populations of interest and ultimately (30) Tour operators who are members of the umbrella body RTTA were sampled, (10) Hoteliers were sampled, (5) Airline staff were sampled as well as (5) RDB officials.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection Instruments

Primary Data

The primary data was collected through questionnaires to gather information on the contribution of branding in enhancing performance of tourism sector in Rwanda.

The researcher distributed questionnaires to selected sample and administer them to the respondents. Questionnaire is an instrument that consists of a set of questions to be responded by a group of people who are asked to answer in order to provide information on their own free will and time helped the researcher to get the level of knowledge, attitude, and perceptions of respondent on the research topic.

Secondary data

This refers to written material that may be used as a source of information related subjects to this research topic. This involves secondary analysis of documents which have been prepared approved and filed for future reference. Here the researcher used journals, research papers, textbooks and website.

Data analysis

The data collected was processed and analyzed. This involved data coding, editing and tabulation especially quantitative data. The purpose of all these is to make the information clear and understandable for other people. Qualitative analysis techniques were used. The Qualitative analysis techniques were complemented with some statistics that were mainly obtained from the secondary data that was obtained through documentary analysis from the target sector.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Components of Branding and How They Enhance the Performance of the Tourism Sector in Rwanda

a) Clients recognise the brand (brand awareness)

Evidence from the analysis shows that 14 percent of respondents strongly agree that clients recognise their brand while 42 percent agree that clients recognise their brand. On the other hand 26 percent are not sure on whether clients recognise their brand or not, 12 percent disagree and 06 percent strongly disagree that clients recognise their brand.

Table 1 below illustrates the distribution.

Table 1: clients' recognition of the brand

Clients recognise the brand	Responses in numbers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	7	14
Agree	23	42
Not sure	13	26
Disagree	06	12
Strongly disagree	03	06

Does brand awareness enhance performance?

As seen in table 2 below, brand awareness enhances performance of the tourism sector. 32 percent strongly agree as 48 percent agree to the fact that brand awareness enhances performance. Only 10 percent are not sure as 2 percent disagree.

Table 2: Brand awareness enhances performance

Clients recognise the brand	Responses in numbers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	16	32
Agree	24	48
Not sure	5	10
Disagree	4	8
Strongly disagree	1	2

There are clear Commitment the Company makes to the clients (Brand promise)

Findings on brand promise reveal that there are clear promises the companies make to the clients and these promises are here called brand promise. 54 percent of the respondents agree that there are clear promises made to the clients against only 8 percent that disagree.

Table 3 below elaborates the percentage distribution of brand promise.

Table 3: clear commitments company makes to clients

Clients recognise the brand	Responses in numbers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	16	12
Agree	24	54
Not sure	5	24
Disagree	4	8
Strongly disagree	1	2

Brand promise enhances performance

It is right to say that brand promise enhances performance. Findings from the study reveal that 52 percent of respondents strongly agree that a clear brand promise will enhance performance. This is against only 2 percent that strongly disagree.

The detailed percentage distribution is illustrated in table 4 below.

Table 4: Brand promise enhances performance

Clients recognise the brand	Responses in numbers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	26	52
Agree	20	40
Not sure	2	4
Disagree	1	2
Strongly disagree	1	2

Clients come for the same services to the company repeatedly (brand commitment)

From the findings as revealed in the table 5 below, it is revealed that 40 percent agree that clients repeatedly come for the same service. On the other hand however 32 percent of the respondents are not sure that clients repeatedly come for the same service at their company. Only 12 percent disagree that clients come back for the same service.

Table 5: Clients repeatedly come for the same service

Clients recognise the brand	Responses in numbers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	5	10
Agree	20	40
Not sure	16	32
Disagree	6	12
Strongly disagree	3	6

Does brand commitment enhance performance?

Evidence from the study observes that brand commitment substantially enhances sector performance. As noted in table 6 below, 54 percent strongly agree that brand commitment enhances sector performance. On the other hand zero percent strongly disagree.

Table 6: Brand commitment enhances performance

Clients recognise the brand	Responses in numbers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	27	54
Agree	16	32
Not sure	4	8
Disagree	3	6
Strongly disagree	0	0

What makes one company differ from others (brand positioning)

As can be observed in the percentage distribution below, substantially 40 percent of respondents are not sure that service providers differ from each other with regard to their branding. This

means that brand positioning is still a grey area in the tourism sector. 24 percent also disagree that service providers differ substantially. Only 20 percent agree that service providers differ.

Table 7: Service providers differ from each other substantially

Clients recognise the brand	Responses in numbers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	4	8
Agree	10	20
Not sure	20	40
Disagree	12	24
Strongly disagree	4	8

Does brand positioning enhances performance

Generally respondents do not think that brand positioning enhances performance of the tourism sector so much. Only 16 percent agree and 4 percent strongly agree that brand positioning enhances performance. This is against the 48 percent who are not sure that brand positioning enhances performance as another 24 percent disagree to brand positioning enhancing performance.

Table 8 below shows the percentage distribution related to this aspect.

Table 8: Brand positioning enhances performance

Clients recognise the brand	Responses in numbers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	2	4
Agree	8	16
Not sure	24	48
Disagree	12	24
Strongly disagree	4	8

Something clients relate to in the company (brand personality)

Respondents also are not sure whether clients relate to the services they provide. 52 percent felt they were not sure if their clients related to their services. This closely implies that the tourism sector does not portray the branding component of brand personality because it relates to clients feeling part of the service offered. On the other hand we also see that 18 percent agree while a similar percentage of 18 also disagree that clients relate with their company services.

From the table 9 below, we see the percentage distribution.

Table 9: Clients relate with company services

Clients recognise the brand	Responses in numbers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	4	8
Agree	9	18
Not sure	26	52
Disagree	9	18
Strongly disagree	2	4

Does brand personality enhance performance?

Evidence as documented in table 10 below demonstrates that brand personality enhances productivity. Statistics reveal that 46 percent agree to brand personality enhancing performance as another 42 percent strongly agree. Only 4 percent disagree.

It is also clear that although respondents felt there was minimal brand personality in their companies, they suggested that it can enhance performance.

Table 10: Brand personality enhances performance

Clients recognise the brand	Responses in numbers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	21	42
Agree	23	46
Not sure	3	6
Disagree	2	4
Strongly disagree	1	2

Aspect of performance that brand components enhance

Respondents believe that the major aspect of performance that is influenced by branding is profitability of the sector. With proper branding strategies, companies can enhance their performance with regards to mainly profitability. This view is supported by the 64 percent of the respondents while another 24 percent felt productivity is also enhanced.

Table 11 shows percentage distribution of aspects of performance that branding enhances.

Table 11: Aspects of performance that brand components enhance

Aspects	Responses in numbers	Percentage (%)
Productivity	12	24
Profitability	32	64
Quality	6	12

Table 14: comparison of business before and after branding initiatives

Aspects to compare	Before branding				After branding			
	High	Medium	Low	Normal	High	Medium	Low	Normal
Income	16%	44%	24%	00	42%	8%	00	00
Customer satisfaction	13%	22%	24%	7%	94%	36%	00	48%
Business growth	22%	24%	48%	00	72%	42%	00	00
Business expansion	4%	10%	72%	00	68%	22%	36%	26%
New customers	14%	24%	46%	00	32%	36%	4%	00
Old customers	29%	12%	40%	00	60%	26%	2%	00

Relationship between Branding and Tourism Performance in Rwanda

The table below is giving the relationship between branding and tourism performance

Correlations

		Brand promise	Brand commitment	Brand positioning	Brand personality	Brand association
Relationship between branding and performance of tourism sector	Pearson Correlation	.309**	.245*	.325**	.015	.375**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.021	.002	.889	.000
	N	89	89	90	88	90
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

A test for the relationship between brand promise, brand commitment, brand positioning, brand personality, and brand awareness with performance of the tourism sector was done using Pearson correlation test statistics. The findings revealed statistical significant relationships between brand promise of 0.309 and p-value = 0.003; brand commitment with correlation coefficient = 0.245 and p-value = 0.021; brand positioning = 0.325 and p-value = 0.002; brand personality = 0.015 and p-value = 0.889 and brand association of 0.375 with strong significance p-value of 0.000. This means that there is a significant relationship between branding and tourism performance in Rwanda. As conclusion branding has a significant positive effect on Tourism Performance in Rwanda as this research project shows.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Tourism like any other trade flourishes with proper marketing and proper marketing strategies. From this study it is true that marketing managers were the lead persons in marketing and were sometimes supported by the executive directors. The team involved in marketing was indeed limited based on the need and importance that marketing holds to the sector. The main focus is put on wildlife tours as a tourism product which has limited the potential to venture into promoting many other potential tourism products like birding, village walks, cultural tours and many others.

While analysing Rwanda as a destination, it was established that a lot of work and public relations has to be done on the international scene to get it past the Genocide era although now Rwanda has positioned itself as a progressive country that is developing faster than all the other East African countries. However, still in comparison with other East African countries, Rwanda is a more expensive destination where the local population still believes that tourism is only for the foreigners so a lot has to be done to get rid of this perception through brand awareness especially as it brings the tourism sector to the forefront and to international attention (Govers,

R., F.M. Go, and K. Kumar 2007). The current level of success of the tourism sector in Rwanda has linkages to branding and this has brought Rwanda to the global fore front.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to enhance the brands and effectively market the tourism sector, the task of marketing and branding should not be left for only the marketing managers. All members of the sector should play an active role on marketing and promoting the brand. Several creative ways can be developed to popularise the brand and all the team should be active participants in this process. Budgets should be increased for the marketing and branding ideas to flourish.

Tour operators need not stick to only wildlife safaris because this is what every other tour operator is doing. This in fact explains the poor performance in brand positioning. A company needs to come out and market a specific service that will be attributed to it so that it will be well positioned in that particular service. For example a company may position itself as one that provides village walking services. That means such a company becomes a king in this service.

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