

# Chapter 11

## Nation Branding and Tourism Development in Nigeria

**Floribert Patrick C. Endong**  
*University of Calabar, Nigeria*

### ABSTRACT

*The Nigerian image crisis is a colossal problem that has caught the attention of successive Nigerian governments since independence. Since the country's return to democratic rule in 1999, various nation-branding campaigns have been initiated by the Nigerian administration to redress the situation. Some of these campaigns include the "Nigerian Image Project," the "Heart of Africa Project," the "Rebranding Nigeria" campaign, the "Nigeria: Our Heritage Project," and the "Fascinating Nigeria" concept, which, despite their enormous budgets and activities, have yielded only patchy fruits, leaving the country's image crisis to persist and warrant more efficacious solutions. This chapter reviews some of these nation branding initiatives examining the extent to which they have included tourism branding and development. The chapter specifically seeks answers to the following research questions: How does nation branding affect tourism? To what extent have nation branding campaigns tackled the Nigerian image crisis? and To what extent have these campaigns given attention to tourism development in Nigeria?*

### INTRODUCTION

In today's globalised world, a positive international image is an extremely valuable asset for any nation which seeks to encourage inward investments; add value to its exports and attract tourists and skilled migrants to its territory. Appropriate brand management techniques and a favorable national image have thus come to have

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a serious impact on the success of domestic companies, trade organizations and national economies. In view of these prospects, almost all world nations have been scarifying enormous resources and time to launder their image in the international scene. The surge of nation branding as a panacea for economic success and tourism development is documented by Brand Finance (2016) which, among other things, observes that the integration of issues such as culinary diplomacy to nation brand campaigns by various countries has the prospect of attracting tourists to specific destinations. This international observer actually concedes that cuisine in particular is an integral part of nation brands with serious implications for tourism and national economy. The variable (culinary culture) may be the main touristic attraction for various classes of tourists. It may actually prove a deciding factor for travelers when weighing up competing destinations. It may, as well, be a potential differentiator for expatriate workers, business travelers and important financiers whose investments are likely to bring them to a specific country. As put by Brand Finance (2016), cuisine “helps to sure up the ‘People and Skill’ and ‘Investment’ pillars of a nation brand as well as that of Tourism” (p.5). Its most direct impact is on the ‘Export’ pillar of a nation brand (p.5).

Like its counterparts from other parts of the world, the Nigerian government has, these last decades, multiplied nation branding initiatives to systematically launder Nigeria’s image in the international scene. This, of course, has partly been ultimately aimed at attracting foreign investors and tourists to the country. From the “Nigeria Image project” and the “Heart of Africa” (HOA) project to the “Nigeria: Great Nation, Good People” and the “Fascinating Nigeria” scheme to “Nigeria Our Heritage” (NOH) projects, the Nigerian government’s efforts towards nation branding have virtually been immense and sorts of socio-political razzmatazz.

These immense efforts made by Nigeria towards nation branding have so far yielded very little – or not too visible – dividends. Indeed, in spite of the huge financial sacrifices and the heavy human resources mobilized in the course of these nation branding initiatives, the international perception of Nigeria is still dominantly negative (Ademola, Talabi & Lamidi, 2012; Egwemi, 2010; Endong, 2018). There continue to be gloomy stories about Nigeria and Nigerians as well as a host of terrible stereotypes associated with Nigerians. To put it in concrete terms, the Nigerian nationality continues dominantly to be associated with corruption, poverty, illiteracy, drug trafficking, repugnant customs and traditions (backwardness), voodooism, fake or sub-standard products, inter-religious conflicts, radical Islamism and terrorism among other negativisms (Brand Finance 2017; Endong 2017; Idowu 1999). The country has even been likened by some skeptical observers to the proverbial city of Nazareth from which nothing good can come. In view of all these indexes, Nigeria has veritably proven to be a brand which is extremely difficult to market in the international scene.

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