The Art of Nation Branding in Meeting Future Challenges: A Strategic Perspective

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Abstract

Egypt as a brand is a work in progress. It has been developed considerably in the last few decades in tourism, education, health care, movie industry and entertainment. However, there are critical elements to brand, because the Country is more complex than a traditional product or service, that influence its equity and future success.

The positive aspect of Egypt Branding is its ability of adopting strategic thinking and strategic planning which are crucial to any brand's success, as well as dedicated individuals who are willing to invest in the success of Egypt to become one of the leading Countries in the Global Branding Index, i.e. from ranking 61 to the top ten.

There are some challenges, however, as a country instead of a brand, Egypt has long history of tradition, socio-cultural, and political images that impact the consumer's perception of it. These can be challenging for marketers to manage, however, not impossible to reinforce positive attributes and reposition the negative aspects.

This research aims to achieve the following:
1. Identifying international and local perception of Egypt (What ought to be done?)
2. Building strategic scenarios for the future of Egypt (What can be done?)
3. Implementing and controlling the best chosen strategy (What will be done?)

In addition, the research will apply strategic brand management which is a continual process. The brand must be developed, implemented, measured and evaluated. This process is repeated to varying degrees through the life of the brand.

1.1 Preliminary Thoughts

Globalization has contributed to diminishing the national borders between countries in order to facilitate the flow of goods and services, because of that, the world is now considered as one small village. Up till recently, many thought that this flow is simply governed by facilities, natural and human resources. Simon Anholt on the other hand has added a new element which seems to have the word to say in determining the flow of these goods, services and investors.

Not only has globalization contributed towards diminishing the national borders, it also has contributed towards establishing competition between countries for global investments, goods and services. Countries are perceived as brands of their own, their image plays a vital role in determining whether investments, tourism and other sources of international income should pour into this country or other. This also plays a significant
role in growing export since the brand exported carries the name of the country of origin which adds a great value to the product itself.

The concept of measuring the global perception of a country in several spheres has been developed by Simon Anholt. A subsequent ranking of nations following his surveys was first released in 2005 known as the Anholt Nation Brands Index and was initially published four times a year \(^1\). This index has several elements that play a role in determining the NBI for a country, let's take this opportunity to properly define each of these elements.

**Figure 1: Nation Branding**

1.2 Narrowing Down The Focus

People play a significant role in reflecting the brand of the country; many dimensions are measured such as education, openness and friendliness towards visitors, potential hostility and discrimination. Again we should stress that each one of these elements have a different weighted average when it comes to comparing different point of views for different countries and from different aspects, for example, if the ultimate flagship of the country brand would be tourism; a considerable weight should be given to People, Culture and heritage when promoting the country. Culture and heritage on the other hand also have an important factor of the Nation branding process, many countries have effectively used a lot of effective tools to communicate its culture and heritage. Through movies, music, arts, sports and literature, all of these can have their own special identity, and that's what should be capitalized upon in defining country's competitive edge when it comes to communicating the culture and heritage.

That is also related to creating a quality environment which supports quality of life for people living there, encouraging talented people from other countries to immigrate to that environment, this also encourages investors to invest in these markets which gives a very good idea about the social and economic status of the country and include brands to export and public policy.
Brands to export are ultimately influenced by the country of origin, that’s why people like to buy machineries and electronic devices from Japan rather than from china, watches from Switzerland rather than Singapore, lamb meat from New Zealand rather than India and fashion products from France rather than Germany, so the country does an extra effort for its products to be sold in an efficient manner. That’s why, we advise export departments to have strict quality control when it comes to exporting these to other countries since it will have a big impact on the image of the country.

Attraction for man-made and traditional places is one of the most important national income resources that backup the economy and provides a strong viral marketing to advertise that place or that environment. This attraction has attributes and primary elements upon which it is defined, like the rich and authentic experience it provides the visitors.

These are the basics upon which focus should be narrowed down to achieve maximum results when it comes to achieving high Nation Branding Index positions. But first we need to properly study and analyze the environment “Environmental Analysis” of the country in order to be able to apply these tools to serve the ultimate brand and image of the country.

1.3 Synthetic Internal Segmentation

The concept or the main objective behind the Synthetic internal segmentation is to try and search for unique selling propositions in each area, region, state or governness that will contribute to one unified image this country will be known by and advertised as. Another thing we have to bear into consideration is that every region within the country have a specialty in which it can be recognized as a unique feature. This can reflect a rich image of a country in which tourists can have a rich experience, rich culture and heritage and a rich social environment.

The concept of Synthetic Internal Segmentation is similar to Synthetic Market segmentation, in which people with homogenous psychographics and thinking patterns are grouped into a segment; this will allow more focused approach to take place. Getting more accurate results with very rich output, but the most important question is how to segment the country according to psychographics, and how to define whether this is considered a homogenous segment or not.

Populations and societies living in same geographically related areas tend to have the same perceptions about their country, since they come across the same places, spots, traditions and culture. On the other hand. Segmenting the nation according to geography can be misleading, the best way to segment the nation is by using the pillars of the Nation Branding index (reverse integration), by identifying the points of parity of the country as previously mentioned this step will create multiple segments to manage a “Country Portfolio” would be the output for this process, as per figure 2; local branding frame work.
1.4 Discovering Segments Unique Selling Propositions

Identifying the points of parity or the unique selling propositions is the core issue when it comes to enriching country’s portfolio; but we have to bear into consideration that we will have an internal competition between segments to win a single point of parity of one sort. That is as we mentioned, people, export brand, culture and heritage, tourism, etc.. For example, imagine you have two or more segments that have similar points of parity, or as we will be calling them later on, NBI Primary Pillars. This was demonstrated in Britain of the united kingdom, where the highly educated people tend to live in the capital of the cities, London, where it’s a highly competitive and demanding environment. People with lesser education tend to be living in suburbs, so we can say that London has people point of parity. For the suburbs, it’s the heritage and culture, so a balanced score card would show the following to justify our segmentation and the point of parity for London:

1. People are more open towards other nationalities since they work in multinational companies and are being exposed to the rest of the world, so we tick on the openness factor.
2. People, as stated before are more educated than people living in the suburbs.
3. They lived with a lot of nationalities. What makes the hostility potential quite low and rates of cross cultural friendships quite high, all of which will build the path for the following:

Using that factor as an example would support the following with regards to Tourism
   a. Cross Cultural Tourism.
   b. Educational Tourism.
   c. Medical Tourism.

For the suburbs, on the contrary of what has been mentioned before, people are not open for new nationalities, and the openness is much lesser if compared to that in capitals, so we can expect high levels of hostility and resistance. This from the other point of view, can be considered as a plus for the culture and heritage, since openness levels are quite low, we can consider the following Branding paths
d. Heritage and cultural tours.

e. Religious Tours.

f. Wine Tourism.

So as we have noted before, the main pillar on which our communication strategy relies on would be the people (in most of the cases, people will be the main pillar to stand and launch campaign from, but we will not have the competitive edge considering that other countries may have far more rich diversity in cultures and people), but the beautiful thing about the Synthetic Internal Segmentation is that the country will be able to communicate a different message even if it doesn’t have a competitive edge because of the different set and theme of activities that can enrich the visitors. This can only be judged upon carrying the environmental studies to compare independent research with what people really think of their societies. Other than that, the independent research would enable us to have a strategic focused Approach rather than scattered ones.

1.4 The Road Toward Accumulating A National Capital

So first of all, we must carry out an inner environmental analysis, independent of people’s opinion to narrow down the focus upon which questions should be asked, for us to create a layout for our questions, discover the pillar of that segment in that nation and building upon it, like that of the case in London and the UK. Identifying the primary pillar is the most important issue when it comes to identifying the overall communication strategy, the primary pillar should have the following features:

1. Differs in a great manner from one segment to another, while all of other elements of the branding index are relatively of constant.

2. Possesses a considerable weight compared to the six elements of the Nation Branding Index (People have influence on Tourism, Culture and heritage in the case of UK).

After going through the main pillar of that country or nation, we start building other factors of the Nation Branding Index depending on the main pillar, so actually speaking; the primary pillar will direct all of the other elements towards one way, in the case of London, People will direct investments, tourism, Culture and heritage. For the suburbs, all will be driven by the culture and heritage, in some other countries, tourism will drive investments, people, culture and heritage, even the brands to export, once this primary pillar is extracted. We will go on to identify the special features that this pillar in this country for every segment and thus building our communication strategy.

Figure 3: Comprehensive Internal Segmentation
Before we get to the output from the overall system and how it should be integrated into the national frame of the nation, we should consider. And for more precision, to direct questions about the specifics of unique selling propositions of each of these segments and ask them what they think with this regard.
In order to make it easier for the people to understand and feel the question, we can dissolve the unique selling proposition into its basics. As shown in Chart 3: How China Sees Herself, we can note that the author got 8 descriptions which he used to describe and measure how china sees herself.

Chart 3: How China Sees Herself

As for our methodology, we suggest for it to be more precise in identifying which measures rhymes with what element of the nation branding index as shown in table 1.1, after identifying the pillar element and mentioned before from an independent study, we take a sample out of each of the segments and start our survey ending up with a similar shape of how China sees herself, this would help us to narrow down the focus to make sure that our independent study matches with our surveys for the segments.
Every segment will have a web survey of how local society perceive themselves and other societies in locally, after that all of the results acquired from segments will be matched with our independent environment study and gathered into one web graph, after that we have to start filling up the local gaps among different segments in order to fortify the brand image locally, establishing a path to unify the way the globe thinks of all of the country.
In order to make this process easier, as we have mentioned before, the Pillar will help us identify the backbone for each of the segments, a balanced scorecard should be created in order to help us put these measures in numbers for each of the segments. These gaps can be filled using various local communications strategies that have been built upon the USPs for each of the segments, the ones we have mentioned before, the beautiful thing about this concept is that the Pillar Element will change from one segment to another, so what you don’t have in one segment is available at the other. So this can help in creating local awareness and rather entice it to increase local brand recognition and integration which would definitely help out in creating a solid local brand for the outer world, the most important objective would be to fill up the local gaps for the country, be the change you want to see in the world.
Now we have noted that there is an internal gap between one segment and another, hereby we do the following:

1. Identify the pillars on which the gap is situated.
2. Create an internal communication strategy to fill the gap up using the best ranked pillar as a ground base to promote for the others.
3. This will be the first stage of a wholesome Nation Branding.

1.5 Identifying And Filling Global Gaps

The second stage would be to fill the global gap of how the country is perceived, but this time we have to take into consideration that question asked would be directed towards the same measures recognized by the table 1.1,
In the chart demonstrated above (Chart 5: How China sees herself is diverging from the world’s view on average), we can spot the gap spreading too wide for most of the measures. Happens most of the time in most of the cases, were countries think of themselves in a different way than do people from other countries, even when we compare how country’s own segments diverge, the gaps are less obvious, this were lies the extreme challenge, the process of branding people.

Every segment unique selling proposition should contribute to the overall unique selling proposition of the nation brand; from the previously mentioned system we will get a lot of unique selling proposition from each of the segments, every USP have its own way to be communicated by, as demonstrated in chart 5, we can note a wide divergence upon the pleasurable pillar between what people think globally and what people think locally.

So the way to solve this problem is to have more precise results for countries that generated the overall global point of view, and of course, targeted countries have priority in this international segmentation, for example, to properly investigate the problem and identify the main source, we go to the areas where we have maximum divergence on the web graph, and begin solving the problems thusly.
International segmentation is the concept by which we segment the targeted audiences to have a unique communication strategy that would be communicated independently to narrow down the focus and be more precise to have sound results and achievements, the output from the above system would be several communication strategies that must be targeted to cross at some point (National Framework), to be able to close the global and local gaps, and then there would be an aggressive unified communication plan to achieve the ultimate brand for the nation.
1.7 Delivering The Brand Promise, The Process Of Branding People

After the targeted countries are segmented and grouped into homogenous clusters, the homogeneity can be measured by either having the same primary pillars or having similar ranking percentages, these will have particular communication strategy that measures the powerful aspect or pillar of the perspective of other countries, enhance it and then using it as a leverage point to enhance other pillars. The main objective of this strategy is to use measure strengths and weaknesses of a nation by checking out other countries clusters perception of it, comparing it to the local attributes and thus help to adjust, we have to stress that the strengths and weaknesses are relative to local perceptions, for example, a weakness in the global perception can be considered because the gap off the local perception is wide, also, a strength lies where the global perceptions match with the local ones, after spotting the relative strength and weaknesses, we will have the opportunity to create a strategic frame work through which we can solve and fill the gaps up.

Uniqueness is the key towards achieving successful branding for a nation, unique sports, music, literature, movies and festivals have an outstanding effect on the overall image of the country, all and every single aspect of your communication strategy should match the expectation of the targeted audience as a start, thanks to the local segmentation strategy, every country is unique by what it has of USPs that can be mixed up in a unique way to enrich the experience of the global opinion.

Figure 7: Wholesome
1.8 Strategic Frame Work; Delivering The Brand Promise

The nation brand book is a very advanced stage through which we have to insure commitment towards the Nation Brand from all different aspects, the nation brand book will have the vision, mission, objectives and strategies and the way towards proper control and evaluation, prospected results and achievements like communications, overall buildings themes, colors, mascots, and accordingly to environmental study, the age of this brand book will last as long as the image of the brand is positioned at desired level on the Nation Branding Index.

It also should be designed to monitor changes which happen to local and global perceptions on a regular basis, monitoring them in order to make sure that the country’s brand is aligned and updated with the global and local perceptions; monitoring and evaluation is the key to sustain a proper country image, to be flexible enough to move with the changes that might take place with time and new trends, the evaluation tool when used on a regular basis would also help us to forecast the upcoming major trends that needs to be dealt with, will also enable us to forecast the

Let’s say that the red line represents the local perspective for a country at the beginning of the year, the green line represents the perceptions for the same people midyear, and this has to be corrected by investigating why this has taken place throughout the period, in order for us to sustain current positioning.
The nation book also provides standards of performance and achievement for the country, acts as a monitoring system, provides insights about initiating corrective actions to insure continued commitment towards achieving and fulfilling the mission, and thusly the vision.

1.9 Summary and Conclusion

There is an increasing interest in the concept of nation branding from countries around the world. The poorest countries are now trying to utilize this tool to enhance their image. From their point of view, this might create more favorable conditions for foreign investors, trade and tourism to take place and be revitalized.

Many scholars have conceptualized nation brands as a form of national effective power, this point of view has to be supported by government, public and private sectors at all levels. Populations have to undergo serious education of the brand the country is seeking and heading toward achieving. That is why, continuous adjusting systems and practical strategic models have to be applied to maintain and rather replenish the country as a brand in the mind of the international community.
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