

## **NATION BRANDING: TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY BRANDING DYNAMICS IMPACTING EMERGING ECONOMIES IN THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the extent to which nation branding antecedents can be leveraged to create a strong nation brand for emerging economies. The Anholt (2002) nation branding model was quantitatively applied to develop a hexagon of factors which can affect developing economies. The Republic of Zimbabwe was targeted for analysis due to its national brand challenges and the negative brand equity. Data for the study was collected using structured questionnaires. Structural equation modelling (SEM) using Amos Graphics was the main tool for analysis. Findings suggest that government regulatory framework is the single most important key nation brand element which influences emerging economies' brands today. This is followed by tourism, natural resources, sport and entertainment, diasporic citizenry, and religion. The study concluded that if these affordances are capitalised, nation branding for emerging economies can be greatly improved by 58%. The study recommends government and private sector stakeholders to take active roles in capitalising these affordances in order to achieve the nation brand equity.*

**Keywords:** *Brand equity, nation branding, national competence, Zimbabwe, global marketplace.*

## Introduction

Zimbabwe is a developing country whose economic fortunes have been plummeting unabated in the last two decades owing to a motley of factors. One of the factors whose effect is the focus of this study is the disdain with which everything Zimbabwean seems to attract on the global market. Lately, local Zimbabwean exporters have been finding it very difficult to gain foothold on global markets owing to the negative image the country that is currently suffering in areas of politics, economics and even sports. In today's globalised world, countries have to compete for basically everything from foreign direct investment (FDI) to tourism (Zeineddine, 2017; Tecmen, 2018). Here, image is everything, and branding has an essential role to play in moulding perceptions about any product. While it has largely been seen as an indispensable element of the marketing strategy of goods or services, branding is an aspect whose full impact in contributing to a national brand equity has only been recently acknowledged. The primary objective of this study therefore is to examine the extent to which nation branding's key areas of national competence can be leveraged to create a strong nation brand for emerging economies, with evidence from Zimbabwe. The Nation Brand Hexagon model, originally developed by Anholt (2002) is deductively applied as an analytical framework.

## Background of study

Countries have wittingly or unwittingly been branding themselves for centuries. Kimberley in South Africa has for over a century successfully branded itself as the mecca of diamond mining (Mangwana, 2016). Rome, with its imposing ancient coliseums, has always mystified tourists from all over the world, while Egypt, with

its awe-inspiring pyramids has for millennia been viewed as the cradle of civilisation (Holt, 2004). Recently, Japan has been an exciting case study of how a country with a negatively-perceived nation brand can successfully rebrand itself. Largely perceived as a jingoistic, militaristic country pre-1945, Japan had by the dawn of the twenty-first century successfully rebranded itself to being a competitive exporter of globally-renowned brands such as Sony, Toyota, and Mitsubishi (Dinnie, 2008a; Anholt, 2003a). European countries such as Spain, New Zealand and Ireland are other examples of how successful nation branding can be leveraged for competitive advantage (Dinnie, 2008b).

African countries are not an exception. Nation branding is increasingly being viewed as a way to gain competitive edge by Rwanda, Botswana, and South Africa which have all been outstanding in this regard (Osei and Gbadamosi, 2011). These countries have projected a positive global image that has attracted FDI in their respective economies. Rwanda has taken the centre stage by successfully rebranding as the 'gateway to Africa', a shining beacon in investment and competitiveness (Rwanda ICT Chamber, 2017). Meanwhile, Zimbabwe's negative brand image has now spanned upwards of two decades. The country is mired in a web of international controversies ranging from non-adherence to property rights to human rights abuses. These have negatively affected the image the world holds of the country across all sectors of economic activity.

The mass media play a very crucial role in building a nation's brand identity. The negative media coverage Zimbabwe has been receiving has crystallised the negative way the country is being viewed by investors and tourists around the world. For Machadu (2016) as well as Masango

and Naidoo (2019), an unstable economy, political instability, corruption, and hyper-inflation are among other key issues that affect Zimbabwe's nation brand. According to Dinnie (2008b), though perception may not always represent the true reality on the ground, it is a powerful tool in influencing a nation's brand image. Zimbabwe has failed to attract any meaningful FDI over the last two decades due to its negative image (Masango & Naidoo, 2019; Sikwila, 2015).

Despite being home to one of the Seven Wonders of the World such as the majestic Victoria Falls, the country struggles to attract foreign tourists who still perceive Zimbabwe as somewhat unsafe and politically-unstable (Ndlovu & Heath, 2013; Avraham, 2018). While a lot of the negative perceptions feeding into an unattractive global brand could have been beyond the country's control, some have local origins and can thus be corrected through a conscious and co-ordinated nation branding effort (Dinnie, 2015). While the country could benefit from its populace spread across the globe, Zimbabweans conceivably lack a national identity so much so that they have complicitly helped project an image of their country which is neither flattering nor attractive (Machadu, 2016).

While attempts at rebranding the country and promoting local value addition have recently been made by the Zimbabwean government under the twin auspices of the Ministry of Environment Tourism and Hospitality, as well as the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Zimbabweans have too late discovered, to their discomfiture, that it is difficult to grow an economy while a negative country of origin is hanging over their head (Zimbabwe - A World of Wonders, 2011; Ministry of Industry and Commerce, 2019). This is because, at the moment,

there is a gap between the perception the world holds, and the reality of the country in the global market. How that gap between perception and reality may be bridged is the purpose of this study.

## Literature review

### The concept of nation branding

In 2006, De Chernatony observed that the application of branding techniques to nations was a relatively new practice, but one which had been growing in frequency given the increasingly global nature of competition that nations had to contend with. Two decades into the new millennium, the consequence of globalisation is increasingly making it imperative that all countries must compete with each other for the attention, respect, and trust of investors, tourists, consumers, donors, immigrants, the media, and the governments of other nations (Bolin & Miazhevich, 2018).

There is no doubt that a powerful and positive nation brand, therefore, could provide a crucial competitive advantage (Anholt, 2002). Anholt (2002) further argues that when we, for example, express a preference for French holidays, German cars or Italian opera, we are responding to brand images in exactly the same way as when we were shopping for clothing or food. However, nation brands are far bigger than Nike or Nestlé. Makudza, Mugarisanwa and Siziba (2020) introduced the aspect of social media which can be incorporated in the branding of nations. This follows the dictates of brand globalisation and the fusion of social commerce in communicating brand attributes.

Temporal (2002) found that nations are thus increasingly making conscious efforts to leverage nation branding in recognition of the need to achieve three

major objectives: (1) to attract tourists; (2) to stimulate FDI, and (3) to boost exports. A further objective is talent attraction whereby nations compete to attract higher education students and skilled workers. Temporal (2002) further posits that, in addition to these objectives, nation branding can also increase currency stability, help restore international credibility and investor confidence, reverse international rating downgrades, increase international political influence, stimulate stronger international partnerships, and enhance nation-building.

### **Nation branding and the global market**

According to Gosling (2021), a nation brand should not be viewed as a luxury that only wealthy and powerful states can afford. It is something that even middle-sized and small countries can also take advantage of owing to the rapid globalisation and eradication of national boundaries in commerce and trade. Gosling (2021) stated that more and more countries around the world are embracing nation branding for the global market through social media in order to differentiate themselves on the world stage and to strengthen their economic performance in such key areas as exporting, inward investment, and tourism (Makudza, Mugarisanwa and Siziba, 2020).

Well branded nations can be very competitive on the global market regardless of the history of the country (Ammar, 2021). Typical examples of countries that enhanced the performance of their nation brands on the global market space include South Africa, New Zealand, Egypt and South Korea (Knott, Fyall & Jones, 2017; Mikolajczyk, 2017; Ammar, 2021). As Rowala (2021) puts it, the beauty of a nation's brand lies in the beauty of the products and brands that it

produces for the global market. This suggests a close association between nation branding and the products that a nation produces for the global market space (Frig & Sorsa, 2020).

Prior researches highlighted that commercial brands produced by a country are an important facet of nation brand identity. They augment the visibility of the manufacturing countries on the global market space. Certain scholars also reiterate this by highlighting how the nation-brand identity of Germany has been largely built upon the global success of brands such as BMW, Mercedes Benz-Daimler, and Volkswagen among others.

To illustrate the above opinions, Rowala (2021) argues that if Coca-Cola and Marlboro or Nike were not American, if Ferrari or Gucci or Barilla were not Italian, if Chanel or Dior were not French, and if Burberry or Rolls-Royce were not (originally) English, they would probably be half the brands they are today on a global scale. This implies that a nation's exporters have a significant role to play in the export brand facet of a nation's brand identity (Li & Feng, 2021).

### **Twenty-first century branding dynamics impacting emerging economies**

According to Dinnie (2008b), nations need to put significant effort in identity brand development. An identity-building narrative can be constructed, encapsulating the nation's rich historical and cultural heritage by incorporating a nation's creative industry (Rowala, 2021). For example, brand South Africa has benefited immensely from the role that South African artists, performers, and the film industry has played in shaping awareness and contributing to a vibrant 'Proudly South African' nation brand (De

Kock, 2016). Their creative industry has helped South Africans tell their own story and greatly influence the world in viewing them in a manner devoid of stereotypes and clichés.

Emerging economies need to understand very well that how they communicate their nation brand identity is just as important as building a nation brand identity itself (Papadopoulos and Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2015). A nation's brand image is its brand identity made robust, tangible, communicable and useful (Anholt, 2002). In order to develop targeted communications to counter negative perceptions, emerging economies must segment their audiences (Rowala, 2021). For example, in influencing its country's global image, the Egyptian government divided its country's corporate image into three: firstly, institutional and political image, second, image of Egyptian products and, third, image of Egyptian business contacts (Dinnie, 2008b).

Tourism has a significant potential for enhancing nation branding in most emerging economies. According to Osei and Gbadamosi (2011), tourism offers a significant potential for both domestic and foreign investment and it has been the starting point of nation branding for many countries in Africa. For example, Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania, and Botswana represent successful examples of how to position a place brand to attract high-end travellers (Papadopoulos and Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2015). Taking a holistic approach to branding enhances likability of the brand (Makudza, Tasara & Muridzi, 2021).

### **The power of country of origin (COO)**

Kumara and Canhua (2010) defined the country of origin (COO) effect as the

relation between place and product. Freire further argues that certain feelings and values attached to a brand are a direct result of the COO of the brand, implying that consumers use countries' names as intrinsic cues to help evaluate products and to make appropriate purchasing decisions. Anholt (2002) asserts that a country's image can either benefit or harm a product depending on whether there is a match or mismatch between the country image and the brand's desired features. A good example is evident in how quickly South African brands such as Ingrams Camphor Cream, Jungle Oats, Crosse and Blackwell Mayonnaise among others have successfully penetrated the African market largely on the back of an attractive 'Proudly South African' nation brand (Dinnie, 2008b).

Popular Zimbabwean brands such as Nestlé Cerevita, Mazoe Orange Crush, Gloria Flour, Mahatma Rice, though enjoying marginal success in a few regional markets are struggling in foreign markets owing largely to a negative COO effect (Machadu, 2016). Anholt (2003a) argues that a powerful and appealing nation brand is the most valuable gift that any government can bestow to its exporters since it imparts an 'unfair' advantage in the global marketplace.

Makudza (2020) further adds the aspect of customer experience which drives likability of brands. For local or imported products, customers need more than just a core product but an experience which is augmented by the benefits and attributes of renowned brands from countries with a positive nation brand equity. This helps explain why the most desirable brands always seem to come from America, England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Scandinavia, Scotland, Switzerland, or South Korea (Dinnie, 2008b). China is

currently not far behind. With the massive investment it is making in nation brand-building, China may soon be at par with the most competitive countries in the global marketplace (Anholt, 2003b).

The foregoing highlights important lessons that the government of Zimbabwe can learn in its quest to boost its export potential, starting with the need to invest in nation brand-building. The incremental benefits deriving from this are not limited to the economic sphere, but may also be cultural and political.

### **Key determinants of nation branding**

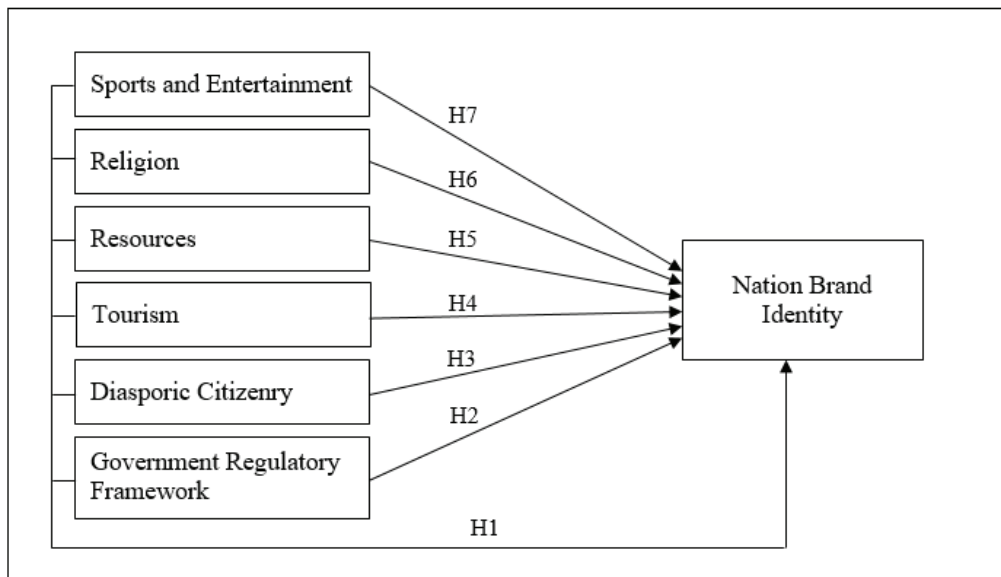
Anholt (2002) posits that a nation brand is the sum of people's perceptions of a country across six key areas of national competence. Brand Hexagon model identifies six national competence areas namely tourism, exports, governance, people, culture and heritage, as well as investment and immigration. Anholt (2002) indicates that for a positive nation brand equity to occur, there is need to enhance all the six competencies. While Anholt (2002)'s supposition is plausible and easy to follow, it has faced criticism from contemporary studies. Jones (2016) argues that the Anholt (2002) nation branding determinants are not exhaustive as there are other elements, such as sport and entertainment. Yousaf and Huaibin (2014) contend that nation brand-building is more affected by religion as opposed to general culture, hence some nations have been branded as either Christian, Islamic or circular. Masango and Naidoo (2019) thus suggest that nation branding determinants should be country or region-specific rather than universal. As with human personality, each country is a unique entity. While some countries have a strong brand awareness on the basis of

their natural resources, others are landlocked with hardly any natural resources to boast of, and others are known for their autocratic systems of governance.

In light of the foregoing discussion on the antecedents of nation branding, there appears to be a convergence on Masango and Naidoo's (2019) conceptualisation of a nation brand. Be that as it may, this study applied Anholt's (2002) model as it relates particularly to the prevailing unique nation branding areas of competence in developing economies. For the purposes of this study, the brand hexagon was thus adapted to include the following: sport and entertainment (Li & Feng, 2021; Rookwood, 2019), diaspora community (Hedge, 2017; Dinnie, 2008b; Baser & Ozturk, 2020), resources other than just people (Frig & Sorsa, 2020; Kimmo, Pappel & Draheim, 2018), governance, including the regulatory framework (Anholt, 2002; Frig & Sorsa, 2020), and religion (Yousaf & Huaibi, 2014; Panajoti, 2018; Anholt, 2002). Figure 1 presents the adapted model of study. These are the antecedents which constitute a conceptual framework (Figure 1) guiding this study.

Through a deductive reasoning, it is the researchers' opinion that the conceptual framework's independent variables have captured most of the key drivers of nation branding in emerging economies. In light of the framework presented in Figure 1, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: *National competence attributes have a positive impact on the nation branding of emerging economies;*
- H2: *Government regulatory framework has a positive effect on nation branding;*
- H3: *Diasporic Citizenry has a positive effect on nation branding;*
- H4: *Tourism has a positive effect on nation branding;*



**FIGURE 1. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

H5: *Resources have a positive effect on nation branding;*

H6: *Religion has a positive effect on nation branding;*

H7: *Sports and entertainment positively impact on nation branding.*

Most developing economies, as with Zimbabwe, are home to a vocal diaspora community whose invaluable role in contributing to the nation's brand is widely acknowledged (Mangwana, 2016). Coupled with the regulatory framework on ease of doing business in the country, as well as tourism, these are all key nation branding competence aspects that influence the brand equity of a developing economy as an investment and tourist destination of choice. It is unarguable that the conceptual framework's independent variables encapsulate most of the key drivers of nation branding in developing economies.

### **Methodology**

The study employed a quantitative approach that is aligned to a positivist paradigm. Using an explanatory research design, a cause-and-effect relationship was measured between the key areas of national competence (independent variable) and Zimbabwe's nation brand (dependent variable). The target population for the study constituted key stakeholders to a nation branding exercise namely the media, business community and policy formulators (government). The study could not quantify the numerical target population because it was infinitive in nature. Using a survey, a stratified random sampling technique was applied in order to arrive at a fair distribution of all the target groups in the sample. Guided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, a minimum sample size of 384 was applied.

Data was collected through an online self-administered survey using structured questionnaires. The questionnaire had several scales which were adopted and adapted from previous studies. Sport and entertainment had four items adapted from Li and Feng (2021) and Rookwood (2019); whilst tourism and governance scales had four items adopted from Anholt (2002). Diasporic citizenry had four items adapted from Hedge (2017); whilst four religion scales were developed from studies done by Yousaf and Huaibi (2014). The measurement scale for resources was based on a study by Frig and Sorsa (2020), whereupon four items were developed.

High levels of good ethical conduct were maintained throughout the study. Respondents were assured of their confidentiality and anonymity, including the fact that participation in the study was purely on voluntary basis with the right to withdraw at any given time. Data analysis was done using AMOS graphics.

## **Findings**

### **Sample characteristics**

The study attracted 340 respondents, with 32% of them being females and the remainder (68%) are males. In terms of representation, responses from the business community were the highest with 62%, with almost a third of these having business activities in the diaspora. The media had 21% representation whilst government had 17%. Only respondents who passed the screening question on awareness of nation branding were considered for participation. This was done to enhance the validity and reliability of results. A fair representation of respondents had degrees as their highest academic qualification (46%), whilst 21% had postgraduate qualifications.

### **Perceptions of Zimbabwe's brand identity**

Respondents perceive Zimbabwe as possessing a poor brand identity. The major areas of concern identified relate to weak tourism drive (31%), poor governance regulations (24%), poor resource allocation (17%), as well as weak sporting and entertainment aspects (13%). Religion had the least negative effect, followed by citizens in the diaspora, with 10% and 13% respectively. This suggests that respondents feel that the country largely possesses a weak nation brand identity and that the political turmoil in the country for the last two decades may well have impacted negatively on its nation brand.

Respondents were required to rank the key nation branding determinants in the order of their importance in influencing Zimbabwe's nation brand. About 40.6% of respondents ranked governance first, followed by tourism (27.6%), and natural resources (14.1%). The bottom rung was made up of religion (1.8%), the effect of the diaspora community (6.5%), and sport and entertainment (9.4%). Given the drastic impact that governance issues have had on Zimbabwe's nation brand within the last two decades, it perhaps is understandable why respondents ranked it first.

### **The measurement model**

A confirmatory factor analysis was applied on the results for the measurement model. The divergent validity, convergent validity and reliability were also examined. The results showed an acceptable model fit (CMIN = 107.821, DF = 94, P = 0.091, CMIN/DF = 1.231, GFI = 0.948, AGFI = 0.917, CFI = 0.979, RMSEA = 0.034). All model fit statistics were within the acceptable ranges for a good model fit as supported by Hair et al.,



(2010). Table 1 shows the convergent validity and reliability statistics.

The study passed the convergent validity test as evidenced by factor loadings in Table 1. The instrument items loaded highly on their latent variables with the lowest of standardised loading being 0.678. According to Hair et al. (2010), when factor loadings are higher than 0.5, then there is evidence of discriminant validity. The findings therefore confirm that the indicators were converging on

their respective latent variables. Reliability of the study was measured using the Cronbach Alpha and the Composite Reliability test. The Cronbach Alpha score range was from 0.811 to 0.932, whilst the score range for the composite reliability was from 0.825 to 0.937.

Reliability tests recorded results which were higher than the minimum threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was 0.54 and higher. According to Hair et al. (2010),

**TABLE 1. CONVERGENT VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY STATISTICS**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Standard Loading</b>	<b>Cronbach Alpha</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>AVE</b>
Sports and Entertainment	0.693	0.861	0.886	0.662
	0.864			
	0.828			
	0.858			
Religion	0.853	0.917	0.932	0.774
	0.878			
	0.911			
	0.877			
Resources	0.992	0.921	0.937	0.786
	0.885			
	0.874			
	0.887			
Tourism	0.678	0.811	0.825	0.543
	0.814			
	0.764			
	0.685			
Diasporic Citizenry	0.984	0.932	0.951	0.830
	0.889			
	0.912			
	0.9			
Government Regulatory Framework	0.906	0.887	0.906	0.707
	0.862			
	0.777			
	0.814			

the minimum threshold for explanatory studies is 0.5 thereby making the study values acceptable.

### Discriminant validity

The discriminant validity statistics calculated as the square root of the AVE are shown in Table 2.

validity test results which were calculated as the square root of the AVE. The square roots of AVE were higher than the correlations between other study variables, thereby testifying evidence of discriminant validity (Byrne, 2004). The study therefore concludes that the latent variables of the independent variable category

Table 2 is a presentation of discriminant

**TABLE 2. DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY STATISTICS**

	Sport & Entertainment	Religion	Resources	Tourism	Diaspora	Regulatory Framework
Sport & Entertainment	<b>0.845</b>					
Religion	0.121	<b>0.777</b>				
Resources	0.435	0.092	<b>0.865</b>			
Tourism	0.594	0.208	0.314	<b>0.776</b>		
Diasporic Citizenry	0.157	0.191	0.221	0.443	<b>0.846</b>	
Regulatory Framework	0.211	0.061	0.112	0.397	0.149	<b>0.780</b>

were distinctly measuring unique elements from each other.

The model in figure 2 had a good overall model fit (CMIN = 756.380, DF = 344, P = 0.00, CMIN/DF = 2.199, GFI = 0.931, AGF = 0.905, CFI = 0.951, RMSEA = 0.051). The Chi square goodness of fit was statistically significant. This for Hair et al. (2010) is common since the test is affected by large sample sizes. Guided by Hair et al. (2017), all other tests were within acceptable ranges. Hair et al. (2017) stated the following acceptable model fit values CMIN/DF < 3, GFI >

0.90, AGFI > 0.90, RMSEA < 0.08 and CFI > 0.90. Table 3 indicates the significance levels of the hypothesised associations as shown below. The first hypothesis tested whether nation brand competence attributes have a positive impact on the nation brand of emerging economies. That notion was supported with a strong R2 of 0.58. This means that if the six nation brand competence elements of the conceptual model are enhanced, Zimbabwe's brand identity footprints can also be significantly enhanced by 58%.

### Structural model

Data was further subjected to structural equation analysis. Results of this analysis are presented in Figure 2.

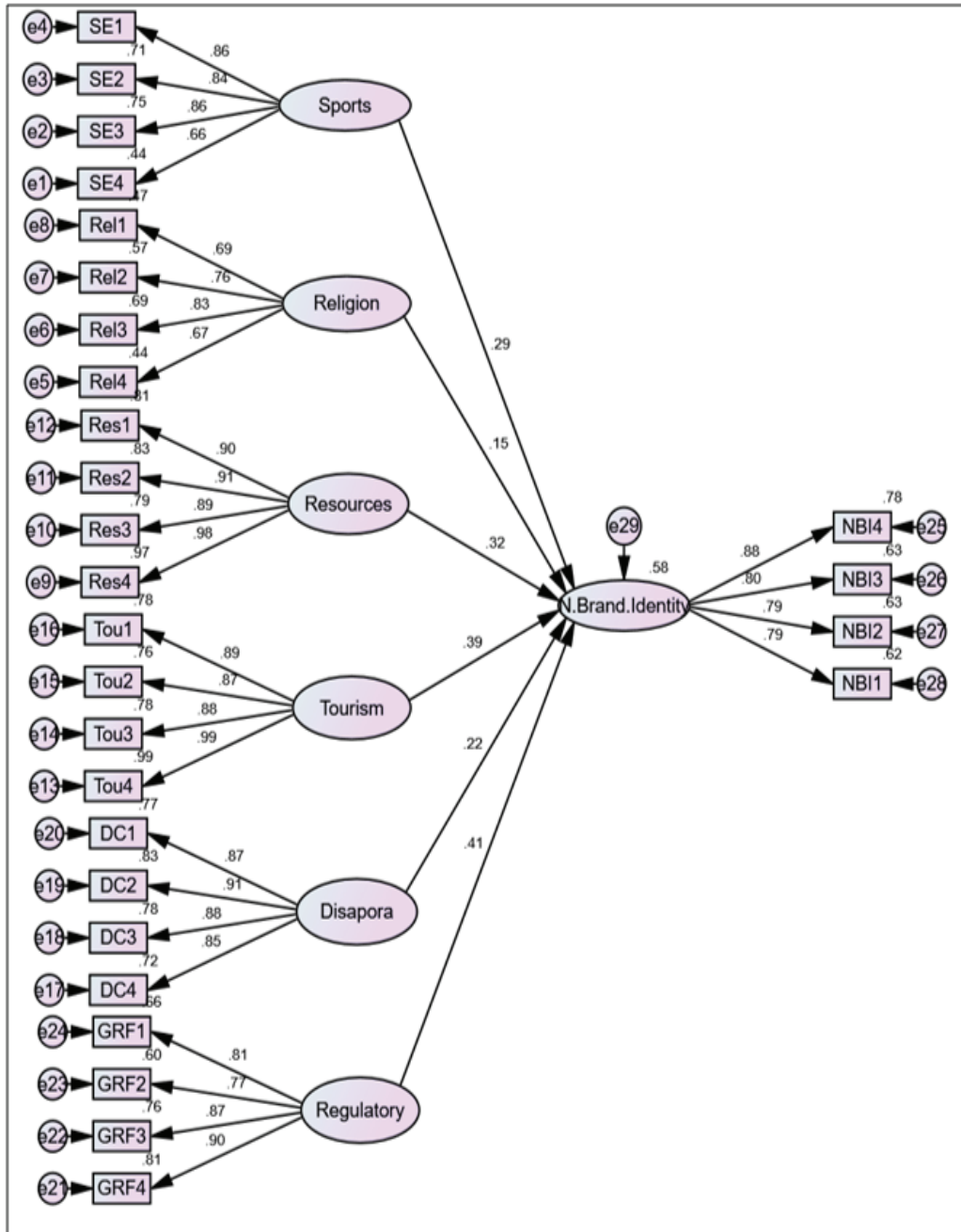


FIGURE 2. PATH COEFFICIENCY

**TABLE 3. STANDARDISED ESTIMATES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF INTERACTIONS**

			<b>Standardised Estimate</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>C.R.</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Nation Brand Identity	←	Sports and Entertainment	.294	.035	6.698	***	Supported
Nation Brand Identity	←	Religion	.154	.031	3.619	***	Supported
Nation Brand Identity	←	Resources	.322	.023	8.240	***	Supported
Nation Brand Identity	←	Tourism	.392	.020	9.776	***	Supported
Nation Brand Identity	←	Diasporic Citizenry	.217	.024	5.424	***	Supported
Nation Brand Identity	←	Regulatory	.408	.021	9.995	***	Supported

The study therefore builds on Anholt (2002) and develop a country/region-specific model of nation branding. For Zimbabwe, as with other emerging economies, there is need to augment government regulatory framework, engage its diasporic citizenry, boost tourism, explore use of natural resources, uphold religious diversity, and promote the growth of sports and entertainment. Table 3 indicates that all other hypotheses were supported ( $P = 0.00 < 0.05$ ). This means that all of the stated associations of the conceptual model were statistically significant. A closer examination of the standardised regression weights indicates that not all nation brand competencies impacted on nation branding at the same wavelength. The highest impactor was governance and regulatory framework ( $\beta = 0.408$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ), followed by tourism ( $\beta = 0.392$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ), natural resources ( $\beta = 0.322$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ), sports and

entertainment ( $\beta = 0.294$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ), and citizens in the diaspora ( $\beta = 0.217$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ). The least impact factor was religion which only recorded a significant impact of 15%.

The study results validate Anholt's (2002) nation brand hexagon model, which justifies the relevance of this model in this analysis. Although the researchers adapted the Anholt (2002) model, the results vindicated the supremacy of that move. The same notion is shared by Dinnie (2008b) who also confirmed the significance of sport and entertainment, and mobilisation of the diaspora in nation branding.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which nation branding's key areas of national competence can be

leveraged to create a strong nation brand for emerging economies. In this regard, research data revealed that emerging economies, and specifically Zimbabwe, regard governance as the single most important area of national competence influencing nation branding. This suggests that any developing nation's branding exercise that ignores this key area may not succeed in projecting a favourable nation brand identity to global audiences.

There was also sufficient evidence gathered from research data to indicate that tourism is another key area of national competence. While the government of Zimbabwe has worked hard, especially since 2011 to brand the country as a tourist and investment destination of choice using the brand mantra, 'Zimbabwe - A World of Wonders,' and more recently 'Zimbabwe - Open for Business,' not much else seems to have been done to get a buy-in from local stakeholders. Resources, the diaspora, as well as sport and entertainment, are other key areas that governments in emerging economies need to leverage in order to create strong nation brands.

### **Country-specific Implications**

Zimbabwean exporters have in the past complained that the government of Zimbabwe has not been offering them much incentives to assist in venturing into lucrative export markets. With a weak nation brand and a negative country of origin hanging over their heads, it is a tall order to expect local producers to come up with branded exports of choice, let alone take the global market by storm. This needs to be looked into. The government of Zimbabwe also needs to quickly clean up its political act and international image that has seen the country carrying along a 'bad boy' brand tag for many years now. It is the single biggest factor

that has tarnished Zimbabwe's global brand image as a trade and investment destination of choice.

While 'Zimbabwe - A World of Wonders' has been marginally successful in positioning Zimbabwe as a safe and unspoilt tourist destination, as evidenced lately by the visits of some high-profile individuals from across the world, in future a more bottom-up, inclusive approach that incorporates all key stakeholders in nation brand-building needs to be adopted as opposed to what is perceived as a top-down, elitist approach, which is how most Zimbabweans view current efforts at branding the country.

As part of a process to leverage the mining and trade in diamonds and other valuable minerals to enhance not only the economic fortunes but also the nation brand, government needs to legislate policy that will help plug all loopholes that have lately been encouraging the smuggling out of the country of precious minerals by the politically-connected and elite, as well as promote the local value-addition, in terms of cutting and polishing, for example, of gems. While this is currently articulated in the Zimbabwe National Industrial Development Policy (ZNIDP 2019-2023), the government of Zimbabwe needs to move swiftly from mere rhetoric to action if this is to help attract much needed investment into creating the much-vaunted US\$12 billion-mining sector by 2023.

The government of Zimbabwe may also need to start communicating with well-placed Zimbabwean diaspora who have the potential to act as de-facto brand ambassadors in encouraging international investors to invest in Zimbabwe. The country has been blessed with a highly educated human resource base which, unfortunately, has largely left for 'greener' pastures in other countries. A

good relationship with this vocal but well-resourced constituency would be a good starting point in helping create a brand identity that resonates with all Zimbabweans.

Finally, the role that sport can play in projecting a positive nation brand identity to the outside world need not be overemphasised. Hosting the 1995 All-Africa Games and co-hosting the 2003 ICC Cricket World Cup with South Africa both had tremendous political and economic spin-off benefits for the country, something that remains to be replicated on the country's most popular sport, football. By hosting a football continental showpiece, for example, the government of Zimbabwe would be communicating to the entire world that it is indeed 'open for business'.

### **Contribution of the Study**

The study contributes significantly to practice and theory. Practically, the study informs the need for nations to rebrand themselves towards the creation of country-of-origin brand identity which attracts investment, tourism and economic development. Specifically for Zimbabwe, the study aids the creation of a positive nation-brand which will not only help change attitudes and improve the way Brand Zimbabwe is viewed, but would also influence the government of Zimbabwe to live up to the tone and vision set by the nation-brand, thereby positively influencing the country's global brand image. Therefore, the study informs the development of Zimbabwe's positive global identity, through the augmentation of six factors presented in this study (sports, governance, religion, tourism, resources and diasporic citizenry).

The study further contributes towards the extension of theory of nation brand

identity. The development of the conceptual model of the study was a brainchild of the synthesis of previous scholarly work and primarily the extension of the Anholt (2002) model. The tested model is more applicable to emerging economies, hence complimenting the Anholt (2002) model which was tested in more affluent economies.

### **Conclusion**

In light of the foregoing, nation brands can be easily affected by a negative brand image and poor country of origin. Amid the woes of negative goodwill within the community nations, the study further concludes that emerging economies can revamp the image of their nations through an active and proactive branding process. The key significant areas to address towards branding of emerging economies were found to be government regulatory framework, tourism, natural resources, sport and entertainment, diasporic citizenry, and religion.

The study therefore concludes that emerging economies should brand and rebrand their countries so as to augment the country-of-origin brand identity. In doing so, branding efforts should be backed up by regulatory framework and a formalised nation branding policy. Natural attraction sites and other tourist destinations should be conspicuous artefacts for nation branding. Sport and entertainment should have a nation identity, one which can be traced backwards to the country of origin. The study reiterates emerging economies to value religious identity and diversity and complement nation branding efforts through embracing the voice of citizens in the diaspora.

The study has some limitations. Firstly, the adapted conceptual model has never been tested beforehand, hence its relia-

bility and credibility in light of the study variables in different aspects and situations cannot be guaranteed. However, at local level the study passed validity and reliability tests. Secondly, to test the model, the study focused on only one emerging economy, Zimbabwe. Although the approach was time and cost effective, that also introduced a limitation of scope and breadth to the study.

Looking beyond the study, current efforts at branding emerging economies, while commendable, are certainly not novel (Guzah, 2018). While destination branding has been done before, these efforts do not seem to have had much impact in the past in terms of changing perceptions the world has of emerging economies. Perhaps where the government of Zimbabwe has failed in the past has been in the communication, monitoring, and evaluation aspect of its nation brand equity, a view also shared by Masango and Naidoo (2019). Therefore, research in future could focus on how best to keep track of the equity of emerging nations' brands and manage them more effectively. In addition, testing and retesting of the model presented in this study is recommended in different countries so as to guarantee its predictive strength in different nation branding and global market situations.

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