BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE & SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION BRAND

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Destination branding stands at the intersection of marketing, leadership, and national identity.

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Destination branding requires identifying and capturing the essence of a destination, crafting a differentiating promise around it, and delivering same through strategically crafted narratives to create and manage a perception that guides what people think, feel, and believe about the destination.

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It starts with a consensus by the people on what they want to be known for. It requires a commitment to live the ideals expounded by the narratives.

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An attractive destination brand can be rewarding:

- Attracting tourists, Conferences, Exhibitions
- Attracting FDI
- Respect and influence amongst nations
- Pride amongst citizens
- National unity
- Advantage in commercial transactions (Premium pricing of goods & services)
- Greater Resilience in times of crisis

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Africa’s three most attractive Destinations are Johannesburg, Marrakesh, and Hurghada(in Egypt).

- **Johannesburg**: Attracted 4.12million visitors in 2024. Visitors spent $303 million in December alone.

- **Marrakesh, Morocco**: Attracted 2.8 million visitors in 2024 who spent $11.3 billion.

- **Nigeria**: Tourism revenue in 2023 $1.8 billion. In 2024 $2 billion.

Tourism projection by Lagos State Government predicts significant growth in Nigerian tourism revenues in 2025 to 2027.

- 2025 Projection: $3.45 billion
- 2027 Projection: $3.75 billion

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World Trade Tourism Council (WTTC) projections for Africa.

- 8% year on year growth.
- Revenues projected to hit N90 billion by 2027.

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Nigeria has all it takes to benefit from this growth in tourism.

All we need is the will to do the right thing.
Nigerian creative industry has once again embarked on self-help.
Government needs to provide critical infrastructure to boost the brand experience.

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IMPERATIVES FOR BUILDING A STRONG DESTINATION BRAND

- Visionary and Committed Leadership is the most critical factor.

Leadership sets the agenda, engages stakeholders, and drives the agenda.

- There needs to be very strong ownership at the highest levels of government.

- Leadership involves direction, continuity and conviction.

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IMPERATIVES FOR BUILDING A STRONG DESTINATION BRAND

- In both Dakka Da and Destination Cross River State, the Governors were Chief marketing and Sales officers of the initiatives.

- Also they were Creative Consultants for the projects.

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DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF TARGET AUDIENCE

Two critical audiences:

- The citizens who must contribute to building the brand.
- The external audience to which the brand will be sold.

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DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF TARGET AUDIENCE CONT'D.

Imagery and storytelling must be authentic and connect to the history, culture attributes, and experiences of the people.

The narratives must be relevant to the aspirations of the target audience and create an attraction for the location.

"People don't visit places, they visit stories."

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Define Clear Purpose

The product offering must be clearly defined and the narratives need to state what the audience can expect from the destination.

“Come And Live And Be At Rest.”

“Africa’s warmest welcome”

“The biggest street party in Africa.”

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CONSISTENCY OF NARRATIVE

- Fun, colour, excitement, variety, culture, glamour, great food that can only be found in Calabar.

- Every communication stressed fun and enjoyment like no other.

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LEVERAGE LOCAL IDENTITY

Deploy positive and relevant imagery already associated with the destination that will evoke the right emotions.

- Colourful masquerades and traditional dances were always associated with Calabar.

- Calabar has always been known as the home of good food, hospitality, security and cleanliness.

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LEVERAGE LOCAL IDENTITY CONT'D

- Efiks always had a great dress style and neatness.
- Nigerians were familiar with "Ojuju Calabar."
- Akwa Ibom people are super sensitive to church matters. A lot the narratives were linked to scriptural injunctions.

CROSS SECTORAL COLLABORATION

- Everyone must be on boarded to build the brand.
- It is a collective effort that ensures consistency of narrative and experience.
- Policy makers, business leaders, creative industry, media, market women, youths, and community leaders must all weigh in.

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CROSS SECTORAL COLLABORATION CONT'D

- Dakka Da was launched to a packed stadium with representatives of all levels of Akwa Ibom society in attendance.
- Everyone was made to recite the Dakka Da creed.

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EXPERIENCE DELIVERY

Reality must match the promise.

- Citizens must model the brand promise.
- Government must provide the infrastructure and support with policies that will scale up the brand experience.

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MEASUREMENT AND ADAPTATION

- Whatever can be measured, can be managed and improved upon.

- Performance metrics need to be set as measures of delivery.

- Campaign audit for Dakka Da revealed 70% awareness three weeks into launch of program.

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CONTINUITY

- Brand building takes time with consistent messaging and investment in the brand.
- Sufficient stakeholder buy-in should enable the initiative survive regime change.
- A new branding program each time there is a change in government means perpetually resetting the dial.

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CONCLUSION

- Destination branding is not jingles or glamourous advertising campaigns. It is about a long term strategy for perception building and management that weaves together infrastructure, policy, culture, history, and communication.

- When done right, it can transform the image of a country, engender greater respect for it among nations, boost national pride, and support economic transformation by attracting investments.

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CONCLUSION CONT'D

- Detty December offers Nigeria an opportunity for destination branding that is intrinsic to Nigeria as the culture capital of the world.

- Our music, film, fashion, arts, and culture beyond defining us, can be the magnet that draws the world to us.

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“If you build a place where people want to visit, you’ll build a place where people want to live. If you build a place where people want to live, you will build a place where people have to work. If you build a place where people want to work, you will build a place where business has to be. And if you build a place where business wants to be, you’ll be back to building a place where people want to visit.”

-Bill Baker, Place Branding for Small Cities, Regions and Downtowns: The essentials for successful Destinations.

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Thank You!

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