



A critical analysis of Namibia's nation brand



Mini-dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree **Master of Commerce in Strategic Brand Leadership** at The Independent Institute of Education, Vega School.

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Abstract

Nation branding refers to the strategic promotion of a country to enhance its international reputation, attract foreign investment, and support economic growth, ultimately strengthening global competitiveness. Due to the significance of national competitiveness and increasing market intricacies, nation branding strategies have gained research interest. When effectively managed, sustainable nation brand development can attract investors and tourists, stimulating economic growth.

Nation brand building starts with understanding the country's current perception and position. Developing a strong nation brand requires government support, substantial time, and financial resources, as it is an ongoing process rather than a one-time project. It also demands a long-term perspective and alignment among all stakeholders for a cohesive and lasting impact.

The lack of research on the current perceptions of Namibia and its nation branding hinders its efforts to create a compelling nation brand. This study explored current perceptions of Namibia and how building a positive brand image and reputation can create a compelling nation brand to attract tourism and foreign direct investment, ultimately strengthening the country's global competitiveness. The research employed a qualitative approach, using semi-structured virtual interviews with twelve participants from diverse fields, such as tourism, foreign investment, green energy, business, media, transport infrastructure, government, and cultural heritage, representing dimensions within Simon Anholt's nation brand hexagon framework.

The findings highlight the need to improve Namibia's image and reputation through a robust nation branding strategy targeting various stakeholders. Key insights include the importance of public-private partnerships, sectoral collaboration, and tailored branding efforts to attract tourism and investment. Additionally, the study identified challenges, such as limited international awareness and bureaucratic barriers, which hinder Namibia's nation brand growth.

This study contributes to the literature on Namibia's nation branding by providing practical recommendations and serves as a valuable resource for policymakers and interested stakeholders aiming to elevate Namibia's global presence.

Keywords:

Nation branding, Nation brand hexagon, Tourism promotion, Foreign investment, Nation brand strategy, Brand Namibia, Global competitiveness

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Background to the Study

The term "brand" encompasses numerous definitions. A brand comprises associations tied to a name, logo, or symbol representing a product or service. It includes everything that comes to mind when encountering that name, logo, or symbol (Tybout & Calkins, 2019). The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines a brand as a distinctive attribute, such as a symbol, term, name or design, that distinguishes a product or service (AMA, 2023). According to Cunningham (2021:3), a brand serves as a means to communicate a unique narrative to customers, foster trust, shape perceptions, and cultivate relationships with them. This makes branding imperative, as it elevates the product or service, presenting an opportunity to differentiate the organisation from its rivals.

Abdalmajid, Papasolomou, Vrontis, Melanthiou, Thrassou, and Uzunboyly (2023:993) argue that akin to the creation of a brand for products or services, which strives to be distinctive, competitive, and valuable to the consumer, nation branding seeks identical objectives. Dinnie (2015, cited in Abdalmajid et al., 2023:993) alluded that in today's globalised economy, a strong and compelling nation brand can offer a pivotal competitive edge, known as "nation branding".

The notion of nation branding is essentially a concept designed to portray a unified image and message of a country to both domestic and international audiences (Brand South Africa Annual Report 2022/ 2023, 2023:30). The annual report also indicated that nation branding encompasses all facets of a nation's characteristics, strengths, and innovations across diverse sectors including governance, tourism, investment and immigration, exports, people, culture and heritage, and business.

1.1.2 Rationale

In the realm of nation branding, it is imperative not only for the developed economies to apply it, but also for less economically developed economies to utilise it to enhance their reputation (Abdalmajid et al., 2023:993). Chen (2014:1381) asserted that nation branding has surfaced as both a concept and a practice that has garnered government attention and required financial investment in established economies as well as emerging economies. Currently, increased competition prevails not only among corporate and consumer brands, industries, and markets but also among nations. Hence, there is a crucial need to build the right image and reputation for countries (Gupta, 2010:223).

Subsequently, nation branding has gained increasing significance in recent years, and this is evident in Namibia's recent efforts. Led by the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB), Namibia has recently embarked on a nation branding journey that is currently ongoing, to strategically manage its perception among both local and international communities (NIPDB, 2024). Namibia, a country located on the southern coast of Africa, boasts a diverse tapestry of landscapes, cultures, and wildlife and presents a variety of experiences that captivate the imagination and beckon exploration (Namibia Tourism Board, 2023).

While gaining importance over the last decade, nation branding remains a relatively new concept in Namibia, currently in its early stages of development. Namibia needs to develop a national identity that not only strategically sets it apart from other nations, but also does it

in a pertinent and compelling manner to cut through the "noise" and establish itself as a preferred destination for tourism and investment (Movirongo, 2023). The overarching strategic vision aims to position Namibia as a desirable location for investment, residence, tourism and education. According to Movirongo (2023), besides nationally acknowledged symbols such as the coat of arms or the country's national flag, Namibia currently lacks a widely recognised brand and a comprehensive brand strategy.

A review of the available literature on nation branding revealed a very limited number of original research papers and projects on Namibia's nation branding. This indicates that the topic is insufficiently explored and particularly intriguing for further research, making an exploratory approach appropriate. This study aims to contribute to the literature and serve as a resource for practitioners in the branding and communication industry, particularly regarding Namibia's brand image and reputation. It delves into the intricacies of nation branding to provide a deeper understanding.

1.1.3 Problem Statement

According to Movirongo (2023), although Namibia possesses the enchanting ability to captivate the hearts of all who experience its wonders, it currently grapples with the absence of a well-defined nation branding strategy. The lack of research on the current perceptions of Namibia and its nation branding hinders its efforts to strategically manage perceptions of the country among both the local and international community, and to create a compelling nation brand to attract tourism and foreign direct investment.

Being a developing market, Namibia regularly faces competition from other countries to draw in investors, travellers, and possible business partners, among other things. The prevailing view of Namibia as "Africa's best-kept secret" is improbable to boost tourism or foreign direct investment inflows, crucial elements for fostering economic growth and activity within the nation (Movirongo, 2023). The author stressed that while this may generate some curiosity and interest among travellers and investors, Namibia needs comprehensive strategies to leverage this reputation effectively.

Therefore, it is crucial to address challenges that could hinder Namibia's ability to convert "curiosity" into sustainable tourism growth and foreign investment inflows, as the image created by nation branding strategies significantly influences consumer behaviour (Miyamoto, Shimizu, Hayashi & Cheah, 2023:2256). Additionally, there is a lack of research on the current perceptions of Namibia and its nation branding.

1.1.4 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore current perceptions of Namibia and how building a positive brand image and reputation can create a compelling nation brand to attract tourism and foreign direct investment, ultimately strengthening the country's global competitiveness. This study aims to contribute to the literature and serve as a resource for practitioners in the branding, marketing and communication industry, particularly regarding Namibia's brand image and reputation. It delves into the intricacies of nation branding to provide a deeper understanding.

Moreover, this study aims to contribute to the limited research on Namibia's perceptions and nation branding. Finally, it seeks to provide insights to Namibian private and public stakeholders, by offering valuable research on the topic.

1.1.5 Research Questions

Research questions are often used when there is insufficient knowledge about a problem to

formulate or convincingly argue a thesis (Hofstee, 2006:85). In such cases, research questions are employed to precisely identify what the study aims to discover. Due to the limited literature on Namibia's nation branding, this study aims to address the following questions:

1. What are the current perceptions of Namibia as a nation brand?
2. What strategies can Namibia implement to build a compelling brand image and reputation?
3. What strategies can be employed to promote Namibia for both investment and travel, targeting both domestic and international audiences?
4. How can Namibia leverage tourism and investment from Simon Anholt's brand hexagon to enhance its global competitiveness in developing its nation brand?

1.2 Preliminary Literature Review

This literature review will cover six main topics: nation branding, brand reputation, brand hexagon, global competitiveness, tourism and foreign investment . These concepts will be examined in depth to identify existing literature and its relevance to Namibia's nation branding, and any knowledge gaps that may exist.

1.2.1 Conceptualisation

The following key concepts and terms are defined below, as they will be explored further in the next section of this proposal.

Nation branding: Nation branding involves promoting a nation or country to attract foreign businesses, thereby supporting the country's economic development and enhancing its global competitiveness (Mohib & Carroll: 2024:1).

Brand reputation: Brand reputation is defined as the overall perception of how stakeholders talk, feel, and think about a brand (Rust, Rand, Huang, Stephen, Brooks & Chabuk, 2021:22).

Nation brand hexagon: The nation brand hexagon is a model featuring a hexagon formulated by Simon Anholt in the late 1990s to represent the six factors he deemed influential in shaping a nation brand image. The six dimensions (sometimes referred to as pillars) , namely exports, governance, culture and heritage, people, tourism, investment, and immigration allow for the measurement of a nation's image and reputation, with a specific focus on evaluating and ranking the reputation and image of nations (Valcheva, 2024:96).

Global competitiveness: Global competition or competitiveness can be described as contesting to sell products on an international scale. In a global competitive landscape, nations strive to identify their unique characteristics to position themselves effectively in the international economic arena and bolster their competitive standing (Mazaraki et al., 2018:1).

Tourism: Tourism refers to the phenomenon of people travelling to places or countries outside their usual environment for professional, business or personal purposes. People's experiences as tourists or business travellers and the country's tourism promotion play a significant role in nation branding (Anholt & Hildreth, 2005:167).

Foreign investment and immigration: This is how the country attracts foreign talent, international companies and inward investment (Anholt & Hildreth, 2005:167).

1.2.2 Nation Branding

Nation branding has become a prevalent practice, with nations dedicating substantial resources to attract investment, allure tourists, and exert influence on the international stage (Boughton, 2023:536). Nation branding serves as a tool through which countries can shape their international reputation positively. Goda (2021:52) stressed that destinations functioning as brands must adhere to essential criteria and meet the demands of travellers because they select countries based on their preferences for distinctive characteristics such as the country's climate, amenities, or cultural traits. The author alluded that how a country is perceived by people of another country can also be considered as part of nation branding.

Nation branding has led to the development of subsidiary concepts, such as place branding (Zeineddine & Nicolescu, 2018:170). It was stressed that place branding primarily emphasises the attractions within a location or destination that have the potential to attract tourists, draw in investors and skilled workers, and promote events. City or place branding has evolved from the concept of corporate branding, which entails crafting an image aimed at enhancing a city's competitiveness and appeal to potential investors, businesses, and tourists (Aly, 2019:101).

Developing a nation brand demands a collective country-wide effort, where the reputation of the nation brand is shaped by a myriad of activities propelled by government institutions, citizens, universities, businesses and civil society (Brand South Africa Annual Report 2022/2023, 2023:31). Each country possesses its unique characteristics. The key is to recognise this uniqueness and present it appealingly to global audiences through effective branding and promotional strategies. This allows the country to establish a distinct identity separate from other countries (Gupta, 2010:240).

Gupta further alluded that factors that should be emphasised include showcasing uniqueness, conducting thorough market research, employing niche marketing strategies, implementing long-term branding campaigns, engaging experts in brand building activities for the respective country, and delivering the promise to build trust among the international stakeholders. Gupta (2010:227) argued that unbranded nations may struggle to attract political and economic attention. In embarking on the creation of a nation brand, it is imperative to initially determine the current perception of the nation and evaluate its starting position. (Korać, Bradić-Martinović & Miletić, 2020:314).

The Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB) is Namibia's lead investment promotion agency. Strategically located in the Office of the President, it commenced operations in January 2021 with the sole mandate to promote investment and development in the country (NIPDB, 2024). Despite its efforts, the NIPDB acknowledged that Namibia's existing marketing strategy is unlikely to draw an influx of foreign investments or bolster tourism, both of which are crucial for encouraging economic activities and growth unless immediate measures are taken to develop a national brand (Nashama, 2023).

Despite commendable efforts and progress by the NIPDB, its key stakeholders, and strategic partners in promoting Namibia to the world for investment attraction, there is still much work ahead. It is imperative to build a positive and robust brand image and reputation, making Namibia more appealing for foreign investment, positioning it as an attractive tourist destination in comparison to other global destinations, and ensuring its competitiveness on the global stage. The enduring strategic vision is to establish Namibia as a desirable location for residence, tourism, and investment. Nashama (2023) asserted that establishing a sustainable and reputable national brand will elevate the overall appeal and economic viability for potential tourists and investors, motivating them to choose Namibia as their

preferred destination for both travel and investment.

1.2.3 Brand Reputation

Rust et al. (2021:22) defined brand reputation as the overall perception of how stakeholders feel, talk and think, about a brand. They stressed that this definition includes the following characteristics: (1) it encompasses all stakeholders—current and potential customers, partners, investors and employees; (2) it involves emotional, communicative and cognitive components, not just knowledge about the brand; (3) it can reflect actual brand events; and (4) it is linked to an organisation's financial performance.

Similar to corporations, nations actively work to shape their public image and reputation on a global scale (Valcheva, 2024:91). Nation branding aims to alter or enhance a country's reputation and image among diverse audiences, provide a source of differentiation, and improve its social, business, political, economic, and international competitiveness. Country reputation, sometimes referred to as nation reputation, relies on a broader range of factors to assess nation brands. It is understood as the perceptions of a country over time, shaped by indirect and direct experiences with the country, in comparison to its competitors (Lahrech, Aldabbas & Juusola, 2023:1209).

1.2.4 Simon Anholt's Nation Brand Hexagon

In the late 1990s, Simon Anholt formulated a model featuring a hexagon to represent the six factors he deemed influential in shaping a nation brand image, Figure 1.1. The six dimensions, namely exports, governance, culture and heritage, people, investment and tourism measure the strength and quality of a country's brand image. It allows for the measurement of a nation's image and reputation across these dimensions, with a specific focus on evaluating and ranking the reputation and image of nations (Valcheva, 2024:96).

Simon Anholt, the originator of the concept of nation branding, considers the nation brand to be a state's most vital resource. He believes it contributes significantly to gaining a competitive advantage and securing a strong position in the international marketplace (Zeineddine & Nicolescu, 2018:167). For this research, the study will primarily focus on two dimensions of the brand hexagon: tourism and investment, while briefly addressing the remaining dimensions. The rationale behind this selection stems from the substantial impact that tourism and investment have on the creation of a strong nation brand (Pathak, 2014:19).



Figure 1.1: The Brand Hexagon Model

Source: (Pathak, 2014:18)

1.2.5 Global Competitiveness

A strong nation brand directly impacts economic competitiveness, political influence, tourism, and investment potential (Valcheva, 2024:91). Nation branding involves leveraging

a nation's cultural, economic, political, and social assets to create a unique brand identity. Nations recognise the importance of strategically positioning themselves to attract international attention, support, and talent (Valcheva, 2024:92).

1.2.6 Tourism and Investment

According to Sari and Meydan (2023:129), attracting tourism and foreign investment are amongst the main reasons why countries manage their nations as brands, and regardless of whether or not a country consciously manages its name as a brand, when people form judgments upon hearing a nation's name shows that they have an image. Investment reveals a nation's perceptions of its economic and social conditions while tourism, on the hand, measures the degree of interest in visiting a country and the appeal of its natural and man-made tourist attractions (Pathak, 2014:19). Subsequently, tourism plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of a country, and its direct support actively contributes to developing a positive nation brand image (Goda, 2021:51).

1.3 Research Design and Methodology

1.3.1 Introduction

Methodology outlines the rationale behind selecting and employing specific methods in the research process, detailing how you approach acquiring the desired knowledge. This section of the study delineates the research design and methodology that will be employed in this study.

1.3.2 Research Design

A research design is a blueprint or plan for collecting, measuring, and analysing data, crafted to address your empirical research questions (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:103). Exploratory research is undertaken when there is limited research on a topic or insufficient understanding of specific aspects of it (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:374).

Paradigms can be defined as research worldviews or traditions (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:23). Every research field is characterised by a common understanding of the phenomena being studied, the types of questions that are valuable to ask, how researchers should structure their approach to addressing these questions, and how the outcomes should be interpreted. These shared characteristics form a paradigm (Kuada, 2012:72). Kuada further explained that most scholars in the philosophy of science define paradigms based on four sets of assumptions: epistemological, methodological, ontological and assumptions about human nature.

According to Kuada (2012:72), discussions of paradigms in social science are influenced by a fundamental distinction between subjective and objective research approaches, viewed as two polar perspectives. These are identified as the interpretive and positivistic paradigm, respectively (Kuada, 2012:72). Methodology delineates the rationale behind selecting and employing specific methods in the research process, essentially detailing how one may proceed to acquire the desired knowledge (Kuada, 2012:59).

An interpretivist paradigm aims to gain a deeper understanding of multiple realities, relying on qualitative research to achieve this goal. Interpretivism emphasises the importance of understanding how individuals define the situations they are involved in and the meanings they derive from their experiences (Kuada, 2012:77). An interpretive paradigm necessitates researchers to view participants as continuously engaged in interpreting, creating meaning, and making sense of events and their contexts. Consequently, researchers focus on

understanding instead of explaining (Kuada, 2012:77). This research will adopt the interpretivist paradigm, which is appropriate for exploring the current perceptions of Namibia. Moreover, this approach will also allow the researcher to investigate how nation branding can help Namibia develop a compelling brand image, thereby enhancing its global competitiveness.

Inductive research is an approach where specific observations of phenomena are used to draw general conclusions (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:375). According to Soiferman (2010:7), qualitative research is often described as employing inductive reasoning, as it progresses from specific observations of individual occurrences to broader generalisations and theories. Using this inductive approach, the researcher starts with specific observations and measurements, followed by identifying themes and patterns within the data. Arguments based on experience or observation are best expressed through inductive reasoning (Soiferman, 2010:3), hence, this study will employ the inductive approach.

Ontology, a term used in philosophy of science, describes the nature of what the researcher seeks to know, often referred to as the "knowable" or "reality" (Kuada, 2012:58). It also relates to how researchers perceive the relationship between people and their environment. In essence, the assumptions one makes about people and their environment shapes one's perception of reality. This perception determines what should be considered to be truth and how knowledge about this truth should be acquired (Kuada, 2012:59). The ontological stance of this research seeks to explore whether building a compelling nation brand strategy for Namibia will enhance its global competitiveness.

The term epistemology describes the nature of knowledge and the methods of understanding it, essentially addressing "how we know what we know" or what we consider to be truth (Kuada, 2012:59). The epistemology of this research is that Namibia currently lacks a well-defined and compelling brand image and reputation that can enhance the country's global competitiveness.

Qualitative research focuses more on words than numbers in both data collection and analysis. Interpretivist researchers study reality subjectively and therefore use methods sensitive to context, such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, ethnography, and narrative inquiry, to gain comprehensive insights (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:37-38). This study will employ the qualitative approach because it seeks to explore the current general perceptions of Namibia as a nation brand.

1.3.3 Research Methodology

This study will make use of the qualitative research methodology as it wishes to explore the current perceptions of Namibia, and how developing a compelling brand image can lead to its global competitiveness as a nation brand. Qualitative research involves collecting words, artefacts, images, stories, phrases, and various symbols that will aid in creating a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:331).

1.3.4 Data Collection Method

Bougie and Sekaran (2020:119) describe an in-depth interview as a guided, intentional conversation between two or more people. These interviews can be either group sessions or individual and may be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. Semi-structured interviews are conducted when the specific information needed is known from the outset (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:119).

Although in-depth interviews can be conducted virtually or face-to-face, this study will utilise

individual in-depth interviews that are semi-structured using the Microsoft Teams or Zoom application to collect data. This method of data collection is the most effective for this study, as it will enable the researcher to ask precise questions that will address the research questions. Additionally, the study will provide a deeper understanding of current perceptions of Namibia and gather insights and opinions on how the country can build a compelling brand image and reputation to enhance its global competitiveness.

Participants will be requested to sign a consent form to confirm their willingness to participate in the study. With their permission, the interviews will be recorded and transcribed which will assist the researcher in the analysis stage of the study. Each interview will last between 45 and 60 minutes.

The data for this study will be analysed using thematic analysis. This method will enable the researcher to identify common patterns and themes within the data collected from the participants. By recognising these patterns, the researcher will prioritise them to draw out the most crucial information from the interviews, thereby aiding in answering the study's research questions.

After data collection, analysis will be conducted. Data analysis involves sifting through, sorting, selecting, and organising information to enhance the understanding of the phenomenon under research (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:333). The authors stressed that throughout the years, various approaches for analysing qualitative data were developed. Typically, qualitative data analysis involves three key steps: data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:307).

According to Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2021:269), qualitative content analysis is employed to identify and explore both covert and overt patterns and themes within a text. This process involves reducing the data and deriving meaningful interpretations by systematically coding and categorising themes (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:269).

Data reduction entails selecting, coding, and categorising the data. Data display refers to presenting the data in a way that aids both the researcher and the reader in understanding it. Finally, conclusions are drawn based on the patterns observed in the reduced data set (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:307). Bougie and Sekaran, (2020:308) describe coding as the process that entails reducing, rearranging, and integrating the qualitative data you have gathered. The overarching goal of coding is to help draw meaningful conclusions and develop theories based on the data.

1.3.5 Population and Sampling

In research, the population represents events, a group of people or things that the study aims to investigate (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:222). The authors defined sampling as the practice of selecting applicable individuals to represent the entire population (2020:221). Two types of sampling designs exist non-probability sampling and probability. Probability sampling involves elements in the population having a known, non-zero chance of selection as sample subjects. Conversely, in non-probability sampling, elements lack a known or predetermined chance of selection as subjects (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:226). This study will utilise the non-probability sampling method.

Non-probability sampling designs fall into the broad categories of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. This study will utilise judgment sampling, a form of purposive sampling

method. Judgment sampling entails selecting subjects who are optimally positioned to provide the required information (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:233). This method is apt for this study as it directly addresses how enhancing Namibia's brand image and reputation as a nation can boost global competitiveness through tourism and foreign investment attraction. The sample size will be twelve participants.

1.3.6 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis denotes the level of aggregation used for analysing information and drawing conclusions (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:110). Essentially, it represents the "what" or "who" the researcher aims to study. In this study, the unit of analysis will be the perceptions of individuals or stakeholders who have an influence or interest in Namibia's nation brand. This will be suitable because the researcher's aim is to explore the perceptions of Namibia and how developing a compelling brand image could enhance its global competitiveness as a nation brand. Therefore, the study will focus on the perceptions of Namibian professionals from diverse fields and backgrounds as its unit of analysis.

1.3.7 Time Horizon

This study will be cross-sectional, meaning data will be gathered all at once, over a few weeks to address research questions. These types of studies are known as cross-sectional studies (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:112).

1.3.8 Delimitations

Delimitations arise from the specific and deliberate choices researchers make regarding the scope of a study. According to du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2021:315), these decisions, often referred to as parameters or boundaries, are crucial for focusing on literature, concepts, methods, theories, and more. This ensures that the research has a well-defined direction, focus, and emphasis.

Although Simon Anholt's nation branding hexagon comprises six influential dimensions, this research will focus on only two: tourism and investment, while briefly addressing the remaining dimensions. The rationale behind this choice is twofold: exploring all six dimensions would be too broad for this mini-dissertation, and the researcher is particularly interested in examining how developing a compelling and lucrative nation brand for Namibia can attract foreign direct investment and tourism, ultimately boosting the country's global competitiveness.

1.3.9 Limitations

- Access to a sufficiently large sample group may be challenging due to the in-depth interview data collection method, which could be time-consuming.
- Limited prior research on the nation branding of Namibia could have enriched the study's theoretical framework.
- The focus of the research is specifically on how enhancing Namibia's brand image and reputation can attract tourism and foreign investment to boost its global competitiveness, thus limiting automatic generalisation as other crucial factors may also influence Namibia's global competitiveness as a nation brand.
- Conducting the research virtually will restrict the researchers' physical access to the sample group.
- The sample for this study will exclusively consist of Namibian participants, which will limit the scope of insights to local perspectives. The absence of non-Namibians in the sample will restrict the opportunity to gain valuable insights from an external, international viewpoint.

1.4 Ethical Considerations

Most institutions require adherence to specific ethical principles when conducting research, particularly when human beings are involved. Ethics provide guidelines that delineate acceptable and unacceptable behavior (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:333). This section will address potential ethical implications of the researcher's work and outline the measures that will be implemented to ensure this study adheres to the IIE Vega School's ethical guidelines (Hofstee, 2006:118).

1.4.1 Considerations

Ethical considerations that will be undertaken by the researcher include securing consent from respondents, upholding confidentiality, and managing any potential conflicts of interest. Below are the considerations that will be undertaken to ensure credibility, integrity and social responsibility:

Informed Consent: The researcher will seek informed consent from participants to partake in the study and have their responses recorded during the interview. Participants will be informed of the study's aim, their role, and any potential risks and benefits. Participants will also be informed that their participation is entirely voluntary.

Confidentiality: The researcher will safeguard participants' privacy by keeping their personal information and responses confidential.

Respect for Respondents: Participants will be treated with respect, dignity and sensitivity, acknowledging their principles and cultural values.

Compliance with Regulations: The researcher will be required to obtain ethical clearance from the IIE Vega School's Postgraduate Higher Degree Committee after successfully defending the research proposal.

1.4.2 Foreseen Obstacles

This study may encounter the following obstacles:

Literature gap: There is a lack of existing literature on Namibia's current perceptions and its nation branding.

Secondary data availability: Limited availability of secondary data for analysis.

Independent research: This study will be conducted by an independent researcher without funding support.

Time constraints: Research is time-consuming, and there may be pressure to produce results within a specific timeframe. Balancing research with other personal and professional commitments can be challenging.

Ethical considerations: Adhering to ethical guidelines is essential, especially when the research involves human subjects. Navigating these ethical considerations can be complex and time-consuming.

Data quality and relevance: Obtaining relevant and high-quality data can be difficult, particularly in fields where data is scarce, proprietary, or challenging to collect.

1.5 Proposed Chapter Outline

The following will serve as the chapter outline for this study.

Table 1.1: Chapter outline

Abstract:	The abstract will outline the research problem, review relevant literature, present a clear and concise methodology, and summarise the major findings and contributions.
Chapter 1: Introduction	This chapter will serve as a comprehensive introduction to the study. It will include contextualisation, a preliminary literature review, the rationale, problem statement, research aim, research questions, delimitations, limitations, the proposed research design and methodology, ethical considerations, and a chapter outline.
Chapter 2: Literature review	This section will be part of the secondary research conducted during this study. It will review literature on nation branding, brand image and reputation, Simon Anholt's brand hexagon, and global competitiveness. These topics will form the theoretical framework for the study. The literature review will also be linked to the research problem, title, and research questions.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology	This section will outline the methodology and design used in this study, including details about the population, sample and data collection instruments.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis	This section, a compelling rationale and description for the sampling selection criteria will be provided. The collected data will be analysed using a thematic analysis. Additionally, this section will include an interpretation of the analysis and findings.
Chapter 5: Findings, Recommendations and Conclusions	This section will summarise, interpret, present and describe the data and findings in a manner that is easily accessible and clearly understandable. Finally, this section will provide a summary of the entire study, including its findings, along with recommendations for further research and implications for practitioners.

1.6 Conclusion

In summary, the purpose of this study is to explore current perceptions of Namibia and how building a positive brand image and reputation can create a compelling nation brand to attract tourism and foreign direct investment, ultimately strengthening the country's global competitiveness. Addressing the gaps in current literature and overcoming anticipated challenges, the study seeks to provide valuable insights for both academic and practical applications.

By adhering to ethical guidelines and employing a rigorous methodological framework, the research will contribute to a deeper understanding of how effective nation branding can attract foreign direct investment and tourism for brand Namibia, ultimately boosting the country's global competitiveness.

The next chapter considers relevant literature from both seminal and contemporary authors aligned with the study's purpose and questions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section introduces the concepts of nation branding, brand image, and reputation. Simon Anholt's brand hexagon will be discussed, and topics such as tourism, foreign investment, along with related studies are covered.

2.1 Branding and Concepts

2.1.1 Branding Defined

Branding carries a significant responsibility in the evolving world, particularly in its role of promoting cities, regions and nation-states (Anholt, 2005:133). The American Marketing Association (AMA) describes a brand as a unique attribute such as a symbol, name, term or design—that differentiates a service or product (AMA, 2023). Branding involves the process of crafting and delineating the distinctive, unique, and defining features of a destination (Tien, Dung & Tien, 2020:63) and can communicate up to six levels of meaning: values, attributes, personality, culture, benefits and user (Tinne, 2013:31).

A brand can effectively tell a unique story, build trust, shape perceptions, and strengthen relationships with customers. Branding involves creating distinct differences between products and services. Effective branding establishes mental structures that help buyers organise their knowledge about services or products, clarifying their decision-making process and adding value to the firm (Kotler, Keller & Chernev, 2022:236). This is why branding is crucial; it elevates a product or service, helping to distinguish the organisation from its competitors (Cunningham, 2021:16).

2.1.2 Brand Awareness

Cunningham (2021:70-71) suggested that the initial phase of brand building involves establishing brand awareness, which is universally recognised as the cornerstone of brand equity.

Brand awareness refers to a buyer's capacity, when seeking to fulfil a need, to identify (after encountering brand elements such as packaging, name, logo, etc., on a shelf, website, or in a public space) or recall (in a similar situation but without visual or auditory cues of brand elements) brand attributes to a degree that enables an informed decision-making process (Kall, 2022:4). Hassan and Mahrous, (2019:146) described brand awareness as the recognition and familiarity that individuals have with a brand.

Cunningham (2021:70-71) suggested that brand awareness significantly influences consumers' brand choices and purchasing decisions. Moreover, high brand awareness can offer a substantial competitive advantage (Rosenbaum-Elliott, Percy & Pervan, 2018:106). The presence or absence of brand awareness can impact the brand's competitiveness. Therefore, it's essential for a brand to be "visible" where its target audience seeks solutions to their problems. Likewise, the nation's brand needs to be known to the buyer (Kall, 2022:1).

2.1.3 Brand Image

Brand image refers to the perceptions of a brand formed by the associations stored in a consumer's memory. (Keller, Aperia & Georgson, 2012:58). A brand image is established through benefit claims typically communicated through marketing efforts (Rosenbaum-Elliott, Percy & Pervan, 2018:180). Additionally, a brand image is a crucial component of brand knowledge when it comes to branding (Hien, Phuong, Tran, & Thang: 2019:1206). Expanding upon this, Cunningham (2021:14-15) emphasises the crucial role of a brand's

image in determining its success. This is because a brand's image has the power to influence how consumers perceive the brand.

As Cunningham (2021:14) highlights, effectively managing a brand's image and position in the customer's mind is crucial to its success. Without a positive image and appealing identity, consumers are unlikely to support the brand. A brand's identity encompasses how the brand desires to be perceived through various touchpoints such as the logo, culture, and personality, representing the brand's desired self-perception. Conversely, the brand image focuses on the perceptions held by customers, utilising both visible elements and brand associations to shape these perceptions.

It is worth noting that establishing a brand's image is crucial because it leaves an impression, fosters recognition, and enhances credibility (and equity). Creating a favourable brand image begins with defining the brand identity. The brand's image is shaped by how its elements (such as its identity) are perceived, underscoring the importance of understanding these elements. When all elements are utilised effectively, a positive brand image is likely to be formed. Hence, these elements should be developed with the desired consumer perception in mind (Cunningham, 2021:16).

2.1.4 Nation's Brand Reputation

Image and reputation are crucial factors in the strategic development of a nation (Gupta, 2010:227). Similar to any reputation, a nation's image requires maintenance and care to ensure that the intended message is effectively communicated to the world (Anholt, (2005:105).

The governments of many economically developed countries and several developing nations, acknowledged the significance of nation branding. They have successfully established sustainable positive images of their countries and are actively working to manage their state reputation (Mazaraki et al., 2018:17). From Fakhry's (2022:234) perspective, nation branding serves as a tool through which states can enhance their international reputation and image positively. Therefore, nation branding involves improving a country's reputation by effectively communicating its strengths to an international audience.

2.1.5 The Branding Challenge

The challenge in branding lies in developing a set of positive associations for the brand (Tinne, 2013:31). Likewise, Dinnie (2008:6) stressed that one of the primary challenges in nation branding is effectively balancing the diverse range of attributes that most nations possess.

2.2 Nation Branding

Just like companies or products, countries can be branded as well. Any nation can be perceived as a brand, as it embodies a combination of historical and contemporary associations that hold significance for marketing (Hao, Paul, Trott, Guo & Wu, 2019:46). Nation branding, also referred to as country or state branding (as both terms are used interchangeably in the literature) involves using marketing communication and branding approaches to reshape international perceptions of a country (Güneş, 2018:257). Anholt (2005) eloquently describes the notion of nation branding as "the systematic process of aligning the actions, behaviours, investments, innovations and communications of a country around a clear strategy for achieving a strengthened competitive identity. It can be as modest as linking the promotions, or it can be a decades-long policy of coordinating all internal and external national strategies into a coherent, planned process."

Pathak (2014:15) emphasised that for many, country branding is often misunderstood as merely creating a new logo and perhaps adding a slogan beneath it. However, nation branding is more than that. Anholt (2005) argues that nation branding extends beyond visual design elements such as slogans, logos, corporate images and brand names. It encompasses broader strategic aspects including internal and external communications, corporate strategy, ethics, consumer and stakeholder behaviour and purpose. He further emphasised the need for a harmonised and consistent approach to place branding.

As the world grows, nations strive to uphold their unique identity by highlighting their distinct characteristics, encompassing both tangible and intangible elements. These attributes often reflect the nation's uniqueness, contributing to its sense of place identity (Ali & Rehman, 2015:35). Nation branding encompasses all aspects of a country, including its people, exports, culture, heritage, investment opportunities, governance, immigration policies and tourism (Tinne, 2013:32). A nation brand comprises the collective perceptions of a nation held by international stakeholders, which may encompass various elements such as history, geography, its people, fashion, notable personalities (celebrities), culture/language, global brands, cuisines and more (Hassan & Mahrous, 2019:146).

Anholt (2005:105) emphasised that countries, like cities and regions, function like brands. Nations are perceived, wrongly or rightly, in particular ways by a great number of people both domestically and internationally and are associated with specific characteristics and qualities. These perceptions significantly influence how foreign consumers view their products and impact behaviour towards these countries in sports, politics, cultural matters and trade. As a result, this affects the likelihood of visiting, relocating, or investing there, the willingness to partner in international affairs, and whether their actions are interpreted positively or negatively (Anholt, 2005:105).

Nation branding also involves creating a sustainable competitive advantage that challenges past or existing regional or national stereotypes. In this framework, the nation's brand identity is strategically crafted to communicate effectively with diverse target audiences and stakeholder groups, fostering positive perceptions (Hassan & Mahrous, 2019:146). Expanding on this idea, nation branding involves the positioning and promotion of a country, serving as a vital asset that allows nations to distinguish their economic activities, people, and tourism on a global scale. Countries worldwide are recognising the significance of their nation brand as a valuable asset. Assessing the value of a nation brand requires both perception research and financial analysis (Shanmuganathan, 2023).

Transitioning to another perspective, nation branding also involves creating a deliberate culture of patriotism. Anholt (2005:1119) emphasised that the overarching aim of nation branding should be to instil a sense of purpose and pride so profound that every citizen promotes the country naturally, as part of their daily lives.

Nation branding is not a single event but rather a continuous process. It cannot be undertaken in isolation; it requires a long-term perspective and ensuring alignment among all stakeholders (Ali & Rehman, 2015:42). Ali & Rehman (2015:52) emphasised that nation branding should not be perceived merely as applying branding techniques to a nation or simply expanding the scope. Without considering ideology and core values of a country, and effectively communicating them to the world, successful nation branding is unlikely to occur. To enhance a country's competitiveness in the global economy, nations should employ brand management techniques. However, it is worth noting that not all branding practices can be replicated or directly applied for nation branding. This is why Anholt emphasised that nation branding activities should not be carried out without thorough and comprehensive research (Ali & Rehman, 2015:38).

2.2.1 Crafting a Nation Brand Image

Gupta (2010:226) asserts that branding can be used to shape a country's image, reflecting the widespread recognition of an international village where a rise in competition has emerged among nations. He further alluded that foreign policies and markets now compete on a global stage, meaning a country's economic and political development cannot occur in isolation from the global community. A country's economic, political, legal and cultural environments collectively contribute to its image and identity. Of particular importance, Gupta (2010:236) stressed that the media is a powerful tool that can play a significant role in communicating and projecting a country's desired image to the world. According to Hao, Paul, Trott, Guo and Wu (2019:49), nations should actively manage their images for several key reasons: first, to enhance their overall reputation and foster a positive perception; second, to attract tourists; third, to increase the value of locally produced goods; fourth, to draw foreign investment; and fifth, to appeal to skilled and talented individuals.

Every country possesses unique qualities. Identifying this uniqueness and making it appealing to global customers through proper branding and promotional tools is essential for creating a distinct image that stands out from other countries in the same league. Gupta further emphasised that building the right image for a country is a challenge for both the government and private sector players. Key factors worth emphasising include highlighting the country's unique attributes, conducting market research, niche marketing, executing long-term branding campaigns, hiring experts for brand-building activities, and delivering on promises to build trust among international stakeholders (Gupta, 2010:240).

Building a country's image is not a one-time activity; it is a continuous process that must evolve with changing needs, preferences, and attitudes of international markets. Consequently, image uplifts and makeovers are necessary after a certain period to maintain the country's effectiveness and competitive position (Gupta, 2010:240). According to Aly (2029:101), studies by some scholars have questioned the process of creating a nation brand, arguing that it is not democratic. They contend that this process often produces an image detached from the everyday lives of citizens, instead reflecting the economic and political interests of investors and decision-makers.

As noted by Anholt (2005:105), a country's image significantly influences how it is perceived and treated globally. However, a nation's image may not always be positive. While it may accurately reflect reality and be entirely justified, it can also be partly untrue and unfair, influenced by misunderstandings, cultural differences, prejudices, and historical occurrences that have been partially forgotten.

Chen (2014:1383) argued that when a nation's brand image improves, a perpetual cycle emerges: the nation promotes its brands, and the brands, in turn, promote the country. Chen posits that foreign policy attracts foreign investment, enhancing the environment for branded exports, which subsequently sustains the nation's image. Nation branding reflects the governmental efforts aimed at enhancing a state's national image, to foster a positive reputation for the country among the international public. This reputation shapes the overall perception of the nation. A positive image in the eyes of the international community can attract tourists and stimulate economic and investment activities (Fakhry, 2022:244).

The effectiveness of nation branding activities aimed at building a positive image for a country can be evaluated after a specified period by determining whether there has been an increase in (a) foreign investments, (b) the number of tourists visiting the country, and (c) the demand for its products in the global market (Gupta, 2010:236).

2.2.2 Building a Nation Brand

To begin developing a nation brand, it is crucial to determine the nation's current perception and assess its initial position (Korać, Bradić-Martinović & Miletić, 2020:314). Building a nation brand requires substantial time and financial investment (Chen, 2024: 1396). Nearly all governments worldwide are involved, to varying extents, in nation branding efforts. A holistic nation branding strategy needs to include programs and initiatives aimed at mobilising the diaspora, improving coordination among the nation's key institutions and organisations, and ensuring a reasonable level of consistency in the country's official communications and actions (Dinnie, 2008:5).

Zeineddine and Nicolescu (2023:168) asserted that findings illustrate that the key indicators in a brand's formation include national elements (such as perception, inhabitants, geostrategic location, names, traditions and culture) and infrastructure (including economic stability, advertising and promotion, technological advancement, security and safety, and tourism market). Rojas-Méndez and Khoshnevis (2022:108) stressed that without a unified approach, nation branding may lead to uncoordinated or fragmented efforts. Effective nation branding involves crafting a core message that represents the country and can be utilized across various industry sectors, creating a cohesive and compelling image for international audiences.

2.2.3 Nation Brand Strategies

According to Hassan and Mahrous (2019:146) nation branding strategies are becoming a research priority due to rising market intricacies and the growing importance of national competitiveness rankings. When effectively managed, sustainable nation brand development can attract investors and tourists, providing economic benefits and generating income for local communities.

A nation branding strategy establishes the most competitive, realistic, and compelling vision for the country, ensuring that every communication act between it and the world supports, reinforces, and enriches this vision (Anholt, 2005:11). Moreover, Anholt stressed that these communication acts encompass how the country promotes itself for inward investment, recruitment and trade; its behaviour in domestic and foreign policy and how it communicates these actions; the conduct of its citizens abroad and their treatment of strangers at home; its portrayal in global media; its affiliations with organisations and other countries; its competitive strategies against other nations; its contributions to the world and what it gains in return. When executed effectively, such a strategy can significantly boost the external performance and internal confidence of the country (Anholt, 2005:11).

Anholt (2005:13) states that most astute observers of global affairs recognise that the influence and success of nations are often a delicate balance between what political scientist Joseph Nye terms as 'soft' and 'hard' power. There are instances where achieving governmental aims necessitates coercion, known as hard power, while other objectives require cultural, intellectual, or spiritual influence. Soft power, according to Nye, involves persuading people to willingly align with one's objectives. National branding aims to capture people's attention toward a nation's accomplishments and instil belief in its attributes.

As noted by the seminal work of Anholt (2005:15), developing a nation branding strategy requires several prerequisites: robust political commitment to collaborate openly with the private sector; a viable plan for social and economic development that can serve as the foundation for the place-brand strategy; trust and strong goodwill among various stakeholders, including companies, organisations, local and regional governments, city authorities, civil service, trade unions, tourism boards, and the general population, to ensure broad acceptance of the strategy; and a certain level of financial stability. Moreover, the

project must have the personal endorsement of the country's 'Chief Executive'; otherwise, it is unlikely to yield lasting results.

Undoubtedly, the significance and influence of nation brands and soft power cannot be overlooked. Governments and corporations can leverage their knowledge of their nation's perception to maximise its potential and enhance the outcomes of policies and strategies. Recognising a nation's strengths and weaknesses enables improvements in infrastructure, frameworks, and policies, as well as addressing misconceptions. This approach empowers nations, corporations, and citizens to realise their full potential and seize otherwise overlooked opportunities (The Place Brand Observer, 2020).

In the view of Ali and Rehman (2015:43), nation branding is not a novel concept anymore. Researchers and practitioners often argue that to compete for scarce opportunities such as foreign investments, valuable human resources, tourists and multinational companies, and to enhance exports beyond traditional target countries, nations must make conscious efforts to understand and implement strategic marketing management and branding tools.

According to City Nation Place (2020), four fundamental elements are crucial for a successful nation brand strategy:

1. **Central idea-based brand strategy:** A central idea forms the cornerstone of a consistent, realistic and coherent strategy, guiding the entire brand framework. All activities, measures, actions, and policies are aligned with this concept, enabling the reshaping of perceptions and effective reputation management.
2. **Appropriate organisational structure:** Establishing an organisational structure dedicated to managing the nation brand is essential. These structures consist of official, resilient, non-partisan, and independent teams capable of navigating political and governmental changes while maintaining the strategy's continuity. Collaboration with key stakeholders and all involved entities is paramount.
3. **Clear key performing indicators (KPI's) and measurement processes:** Monitoring the actions and policies of the country brand and measuring their outcomes is crucial for the success of strategies. Therefore, utilising nation brand tools to establish key indicators and measure the strategy's effectiveness in meeting predefined goals is necessary.
4. **Management of digital Identity:** Recognising the interconnectedness of offline and online realms is vital, where actions in one domain influence the other. Hence, managing the digital identity of a nation brand becomes imperative to ensure a comprehensive brand presence.

2.2.4 Building Nation Brand Equity

The concept refers to the emotional value evoked by elements associated with a nation's brand from the perspective of foreign audiences, reflecting both the reality and perception of the country. The essence of a nation brand is to establish an appealing image. Differentiation is crucial to give the brand value; without it, the brand fails to stand out (Fakhry, 2022: 254).

Anholt (2005) elucidates on the concept by suggesting that nation branding can enhance national competitiveness by developing and boosting nation brand equity. This can be achieved by aligning efforts to enhance the image and identity of the country through strategic and deliberate management practices.

2.2.5 Literature on Other Country's Nation Brands

Countries are associated with certain elements. In Taiwan, they found that the most effective strategy for developing their nation brand is to promote the country's festivals (Chen, 2024:1382). When we think of Japan, high-tech products come to mind; for Germany, it's automobiles; for Saudi Arabia, oil; and for Ireland, whiskey. Conversely, if you ask an American manager about Egypt, they are likely to envision pyramids, vacations, and the sea. If a country excels in producing a particular product, invests in research, and delivers high-quality goods, it will soon become associated with that product whenever the country is mentioned or its flag is seen (Goda, 2021:52). Austria provides tourists with a wide array of relaxation opportunities, including lakes, skiing, hiking, and the chance to visit major cities to explore their culture and history.

According to Anholt and Hildreth (2005:167), most countries communicate about themselves through a 'hexagon' of actions, channels and behaviours (see Figure 1.1 in the preliminary literature review section). The collective effect of these communications throughout the years shapes their national brands. Several countries have successfully enhanced their images and reputation, including Ireland, Spain, New Zealand, South Africa, and Scotland. This improvement has significantly impacted their economic health and self-esteem (Anholt & Hildreth, 2005:167).

Some countries and places employ nation branding campaigns to capture attention, such as Singapore's "Amazing Singapore", Rwanda's "Visit Rwanda" and New York's "I Love New York". These slogans arouse positive images or emotions of these places, aiming to encourage actions like purchasing their services, products or planning to travel there (Miyamoto, Shimizu, Hayashi & Cheah, 2023:2256). While the United States of America is synonymous with the "American Dream," and the United Arab Emirates, notably Dubai, is renowned for its luxury, it is equally important for Namibia to develop and implement nation branding strategies to build a compelling brand image and reputation to enhance its global competitiveness.

South Africa, often referred to as "the rainbow nation," stands out as a diverse country within Africa, boasting one of the continent's leading economies. Despite facing challenges such as political corruption, a sluggish economy, inequality, poor infrastructure, and power outages, South Africa presents numerous opportunities for businesses and brands to thrive. Rankings indicate that there are growth opportunities for businesses and brands in South Africa (Cunningham, 2021:250).

Brand South Africa is the official marketing and reputation management agency of South Africa, with a mandate to manage South Africa's nation brand reputation and to improve its global competitiveness (Brand South Africa, 2024). South Africa has been positioned and is widely recognised as the "Gateway of Southern Africa." This nation branding strategy was developed to establish Johannesburg as the entry point into South Africa and the rest of the continent. The "Gateway into Southern Africa" place brand also aimed to reassure the international community that Johannesburg and South Africa were governable and open for business (Zenzile, 2023:3). Other employed strategies include "The Golden Heartbeat of Africa", "Alive with Possibilities", and "A World-Class African City," among others.

In 2022, Brand South Africa unveiled the findings of the Global Reputation Study, which assessed the nation's performance across various competitiveness, reputation, and governance indicators. According to the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (2023:15), key insights from Bloom's 2022 Nation Branding Research revealed that investors view South Africa as either a developing or developed country, often recognising it as the leading economy in Africa. Furthermore, although South Africa primarily competes with Turkey and

Brazil for investment, it offers a superior investor experience (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2023:20), attributed to its effective nation branding strategies.

Compared to its peers, Namibia has significant work to do in building its nation brand. Abdalmajid et al. (2022:996) argued that despite the increased focus on nation branding, the existing literature is quite limited in proposing models for developing a nation brand. Namibia lacks a well-defined and cohesive nation branding strategy to effectively shape and manage its image both locally and internationally. Without a strategic approach to nation branding, Namibia risks missing opportunities to enhance its global competitiveness, attract foreign direct investment, and boost tourism. This underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive nation branding strategy to position Namibia as a distinctive and appealing destination on the world stage. Namibia as a developing country, can enhance its global image through nation branding to better compete with other nations (Chen, 2024:1382).

2.3 Simon Anholt's Brand Hexagon

In the late 1990s, Simon Anholt developed a model featuring six factors (sometimes referred to as pillars or dimensions) that he believed influence a country's brand image, represented in the form of a hexagon. Anholt summarises the significance of each channel of natural communication represented in the hexagon (Anholt, 2005:118).

Table 2.1: Simon Anholt's Brand Hexagon

Tourism	Captures the level of interest in visiting a country and the appeal of its natural and man-made tourist attractions. It reveals whether people are inclined to visit that country and highlights the various attractions that can draw tourists' attention.
Exports	Determines the public's perception of products and services from each country and the extent to which consumers actively seek or avoid products based on their country of origin. This helps understand the image of products and services in consumer's minds and their willingness to purchase or avoid them.
Governance	Measure public opinion on the competency and fairness of national governments and assesses beliefs about each country's government, including its perceived commitment to global issues such as democracy, justice, poverty, and the environment. This gauges the general public's trust in their government's policies, competencies, and stance on various international issues.
Investment and Immigration	Assesses the ability to attract people to live, work, or study in each country and reveals perceptions of its economic and social conditions. It measures a country's attractiveness to investors, students, professionals, and businesspeople.
Culture and Heritage	Reveals global perceptions of each nation's heritage and appreciation for its contemporary culture, including films, music, art, sports, and literature.
People	This parameter assess the global reputation of a country's citizens regarding their education, competence, friendliness, and openness, while also verifying the levels of hostility and discrimination within the population.

Branding an area can a significant advantage in the global economy. The perception of a

country can significantly impact the success of its tourism efforts, trade, business as well as its cultural and diplomatic relations with other countries (Anholt- GfK Roper Nation Brands Index Report, 2008:4). The report further stipulated that in 2005, Anholt developed the Nation Brands Index® to assess the image and reputation of nations worldwide and to track changes in their profiles over time.

2.3.1 Tourism

Tourism has emerged as a widespread phenomenon and one of the world's largest industries. With its significant socio-economic contributions, tourism has evolved into a pivotal economic sector for numerous countries globally. It stands as a crucial economic endeavour, not only generating substantial income and employment opportunities but also fostering the development of services and infrastructure. Moreover, tourism catalyses promoting harmony, peace, and cultural exchange, thereby fostering intangible yet enduring values (Tien, Dung &Tien, 2020:63).

Tourism plays a crucial role in shaping a nation's brand by directly contributing to the creation of a positive image of the country, its history, and its capabilities. It serves as a form of entertainment, promotion, and activity with cultural, social, and economic dimensions in people (Fakhry, 2022:234). According to Chen (2014:1383), a country can enhance its brand by developing its tourism sector. Travel and tourism remained strong despite the uncertain global economic outlook in 2012 and the COVID-19 pandemic, and competition among tourism destinations continues to intensify.

From a tourism standpoint and in shaping a country's brand, raising awareness of the country's brand is essential. Travel and tourism are becoming the fastest-growing global industry. For many countries, tourism plays a crucial role in their economic stability, largely driven by their geographical location. Destination branding is therefore gaining prominence as countries strive to enhance their image and brand through positive promotion and presentation (Goda, 2021:51).

Developing and promoting a brand to shape a country's tourism identity for the global audience is a crucial endeavour in destination marketing. To attract tourists, countries seeking tourism growth must prioritise the creation and promotion of national tourism brands in both global and regional tourism markets (Tien, Dung &Tien, 2020:63).

Abdalmajid et al. (2022:1004) stressed that the tourism sector, both private and public, plays a crucial role in nation branding, with the overarching objective of brand building being to create numerous opportunities for the tourism industry. Stakeholders in the tourism industry are seen as key players in promoting the nation brand both internationally and locally. This sector includes various sub-stakeholders, such as tour operators, restaurants, and hoteliers, whose roles are considered vital in nation branding (Abdalmajid et al., 2022:1004).

While tourism plays a vital role in nation branding, Anholt (2005:126) emphasised that branding a country is fundamentally different from promoting tourism as tourism is just one component of the whole. As a matter of fact, the image presented by the tourism sector can often be insignificant, ineffective, or even detrimental to the country's other global initiatives, particularly in trade or inward investment promotion. Tourism is frequently seen as the primary stakeholder in promoting the nation brand, leading to confusion between the two. This is because promoting tourism is often the sole avenue through which countries consciously market themselves internationally (Anholt, 2005:161).

According to GfK Roper Public Affairs and Media (2008:31), the tourism component of the hexagon comprises four components that gauge various concepts indicating the strength of a nation's brand as a tourist destination:

1. Desire to visit the country if cost was not a consideration
2. Perception of the country as abundant in natural beauty
3. Perception of the country as rich in monuments and historic buildings
4. Perception of the country as having urban attractions and vibrant city life

2.3.2 Investment

With the rise of globalisation, there is fierce competition among nations to attract tourism and foreign direct investment. Consequently, the focus on nation branding has become imperative for governmental organisations and institutions to differentiate themselves from competitors and establish a unique position (Fakhry, 2022:244). The primary commercial goals of nation branding include enhancing export promotion, attracting inward investment, and promoting tourism (Dinnie, 2008:6).

Nation branding is essential for attracting foreign businesses, thereby supporting the economic development and global competitiveness of countries (Mohib & Carrol, 2024:2). Various contextual factors influence foreign direct investment (FDI) decisions. Infrastructure availability, including energy, technology, efficient domestic transportation, logistics and telecommunication facilities, is among the major factors attracting FDI. Taxation, often seen as another FDI driver, is actively promoted by governments worldwide through favourable policies. Moreover, countries abundant in natural resources and implementing liberal fiscal reforms are attractive to FDI, as are those strategically positioned along major trade routes or in close geographical proximity to markets (Mohib & Carrol, 2024:3). The success of an FDI attraction strategy ultimately depends on the mobilisation and involvement of all domestic stakeholders, including national authorities, local agencies, and citizens (Mohib & Carrol, 2024:4).

Strategic nation branding can enhance a nation's investment appeal and attract external resources for socio-economic development. This process entails more than mere state advertising through traditional media. It involves building an integrated communication program that highlights the synergy across all aspects of life. This includes leveraging traditional media channels like newspapers and television alongside modern media platforms such as social media, content marketing, blogging, and digital marketing, working together in an integrated approach (Mazaraki et al., 2018:22).

According to the GfK Roper Public Affairs and Media (2008:31), the investment aspect of the hexagon assesses a country's potential as a place to invest. This dimension includes four components regarding a country's potential for immigration and investment:

1. Willingness to reside and work for a long period in the country
2. The quality of life
3. Suitability as a place to pursue educational qualifications
4. Presence of businesses that one would like to invest in
5. Equal opportunity

Enhancing trade policies or investing in infrastructure to strengthen the nation brand can positively influence perceptions, generating soft power. This can lead to higher foreign direct investment inflows and increased economic activity, thereby driving overall performance (Shanmuganathan, 2023).

2.3.3 Benefits of a Strong Nation Brand

A strong nation brand offers numerous advantages. According to Anholt (2005:141), Paul Temporal, in an article emphasising the importance of branding for Asian nations, outlines the following benefits arising from a strong and positive nation brand image:

1. Strengthen the stability of the country's currency
2. Restore investor confidence and international credibility
3. Reverse global ratings downgrades
4. Increase international political influence
5. Drive export growth of branded services and products
6. Boost inward investment and tourism
7. Foster stronger global partnerships
8. Promote national branding (pride, ambition, harmony, confidence and national resolve)
9. Counter adverse perceptions regarding human rights and environmental issues
10. Aid mitigate allegations of cronyism and corruption
11. Provide greater access to international markets
12. Improve the ability to compete against global and regional business competitors and protect domestic markets.

A strong nation brand holds significant benefits not only on the international stage but also domestically (The Place Brand Observer, 2020). Brand Finance's Nation Brand Impact Framework identifies four key areas where a country's nation brand can have substantial benefits:

1. **Investment:** A strong nation brand encourages local businesses to invest domestically rather than overseas. It also attracts Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), including business relocation, by representing the country as an attractive place for business.
2. **Talent:** Citizens are encouraged to pursue education and career opportunities within the country to prevent brain drain. Simultaneously, a strong nation brand attracts foreign students and skilled workers, contributing to the domestic economy.
3. **Goods and Services:** Locally made services and products are promoted both domestically and internationally, fostering increased consumption of local products, boosting exports, and lessening imports.
4. **Tourism:** A robust nation brand promotes local destinations to domestic tourists, encouraging domestic travel, as well as attracting international tourists.

Moreover, a robust nation brand fosters national pride and engagement domestically, serving as the face nations use to leverage and exert their soft power on the global stage, leading to greater prosperity and growth for their citizens. The perception of soft power significantly influences the strength of a nation brand, and developing a nation's soft power contributes to bringing economic benefits, thereby enhancing its nation brand value (Shanmuganathan, 2023).

A strong nation brand can attract tourists, increase a country's exports, investments, and immigrants, and create a compelling image and perception of the country. Lahrech, Aldabbas, and Juusola (2023:12110) stressed that since nation branding entails shaping or altering people's perceptions of a country's image and reputation, the role of the government is crucial. To leverage its governance system as a strategic external resource, a nation must establish effective conditions that attract investments, tourists and immigration, thereby enhancing its nation brand strength. This can be achieved through policies and practices that control corruption, enhance public safety, and ensure clear laws and regulations that

protect the rights of citizens and businesses (Lahrech, Aldabbas, & Juusola, 2023:12110). The authors further stressed that nation-branding initiatives should integrate strategies for leveraging strategic resources across different time horizons (short, intermediate-, and long-term) to capitalise on brand value and potential. This approach can aid to develop a more dynamic, competitive, diverse and balanced nation brand.

Effective branding makes the country recognisable and associated with positive qualities (Tien, Dung & Tien, 2020:64). In a globalised world, nations must regulate and manage their branding to compete effectively with others.

2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature review highlights the vital importance of developing a strong nation brand to enhance its global competitiveness. The literature also highlights the importance of brand image and reputation in nation branding, emphasising how these elements influence perceptions and drive economic benefits. Simon Anholt's brand hexagon provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of nation branding, highlighting key factors such as tourism and foreign direct investment (FDI) that contribute to a nation's economic success.

Brand image and reputation are foundational to nation branding, as they shape how countries are perceived internationally. A compelling and positive brand image can enhance a country's attractiveness, making it more appealing for investment and tourism. Tourism not only promotes a positive image of a country's history, culture, heritage and capabilities but also acts as a significant economic driver by attracting international visitors. On the other hand, FDI brings substantial economic benefits by injecting capital, creating jobs, and stimulating growth.

Compared to its peers, Namibia faces the challenge of establishing a strong and appealing nation brand to attract tourism, foreign direct investment (FDI), and enhance its international reputation, which is important for Namibia to leverage its unique attributes effectively and compete internationally. By improving its brand image and reputation, Namibia can attract more international visitors and investors, ultimately boosting its economic development and global standing. As the literature suggests, Namibia's path to becoming globally competitive lies in its ability to develop and manage a compelling nation brand that highlights its strengths and unique attributes.

The next chapter will delve into the research design and methodology of this study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Methodology refers to the principles and rationale behind selecting and employing particular methods in the research process (Kauda, 2012:59). This section of the dissertation outlines the research design, research plan, population and sampling, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques used in this study. It also cites the work of other researchers in the field and details the planned course of the study.

3.2 Research Philosophy

According to Phair and Warren (2021), the research philosophy serves as the foundation of any study, outlining the beliefs upon which the research is based. It can be approached from either an ontological or epistemological perspective. Formal research relies on the available information, existing knowledge from previous studies, and new data gathered through ongoing research projects. The type of information to be collected is influenced by various assumptions, which in turn shape the subsequent decision-making process in research. These assumptions can vary from broad beliefs to more specific actions (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2021:10). The authors further explained that philosophical assumptions are centered on epistemology, ontology, and axiology.

3.2.1 Research Paradigms

Paradigms can be defined as research worldviews or traditions (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:23). Each research field is characterised by a common understanding of the phenomena being studied, the types of questions considered valuable, the methods researchers should use to address these questions, and how the results should be interpreted. These shared characteristics form a paradigm (Kuada, 2012:72).

Discussions of paradigms in social science are influenced by a fundamental distinction between objective and subjective research approaches, viewed as two polar perspectives. These are identified as the positivistic paradigm and the interpretive paradigm, respectively (Kuada, 2012:72). In interpretivist research, the goal is to study reality subjectively. Consequently, researchers use approaches that are sensitive to the context and aid them gain an in-depth understanding (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:38).

An interpretivist paradigm aims to gain an in-depth understanding of multiple realities by relying on qualitative research. Interpretivism emphasises the importance of understanding how individuals define their situations and the meanings they derive from their experiences (Kuada, 2012:77).

This paradigm requires researchers to see participants as continuously interpreting, creating meaning, and making sense of occurrences and their contexts. Consequently, researchers focus on understanding rather than explaining (Kuada, 2012:77). This research adopted the interpretivist paradigm, which was suitable for exploring current perceptions of Namibia as a nation brand, its strengths and weaknesses, as well as assess perceptions of national pride, active citizenship and social cohesion. This approach also allowed the researcher to investigate how nation branding can help Namibia develop a compelling brand image and reputation, thereby attracting direct foreign investment and tourism and subsequently enhancing its global competitiveness.

Kuada (2012:72) define paradigms based on four sets of assumptions: epistemological, methodological, ontological and assumptions about human nature.

3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is a term that describes the nature of knowledge and the methods of understanding it, essentially addressing 'how we know what we know' or what we consider to be truth (Kuada, 2012:59). The epistemology of this research is that Namibia currently lacks a well-defined and compelling brand reputation that can enhance the country's global competitiveness due to the absence of a nation branding strategy.

3.2.3 Ontology

Ontology, a term used by philosophy of science scholars, describes the nature of what the researcher seeks to know, often referred to as the 'knowable' or 'reality' (Kuada, 2012:58). It also relates to how researchers perceive the relationship between people and their environment. In essence, the assumptions you make about people and their environment shape your perception of reality. This perception, subsequently, determines what you consider to be truth and how knowledge about this truth should be acquired (Kuada, 2012:59). The ontological stance of this research seeks to explore whether building a compelling brand reputation strategy for Namibia as a nation brand will enhance its global competitiveness.

3.2.4 Axiology

Axiology focuses on values and value judgments. Interpretivists prioritize a deep understanding of complex, unique realities. They don't aim to conduct value-free research; rather, they openly acknowledge the values that influence their work, including their own interpretations and those of the participants (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2021:38).

3.3 Research Design

A research design is a blueprint or plan for collecting, measuring, and analysing data, crafted to address empirical research questions (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:103). Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2021:202) state that a research design is a comprehensive plan that integrates the various components of a research study. The authors further explained that there are various types of research, including descriptive, exploratory, pure, applied, correlation, explanatory, predictive, and pragmatic research- with each type of research having its distinct aim.

Research aimed at exploration typically involves studying an unfamiliar field. In exploratory studies, data replication (reliability) and accuracy (validity) are not the primary scientific criteria because the research design must be flexible to understand the unknown area better (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2021:86). These studies often use qualitative methods such as focus group and personal interviews but may also include quantitative methods like surveys or case studies.

Exploratory research is conducted when there is limited research on a topic or inadequate understanding of specific aspects of it (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:374). A review of the available literature on nation branding revealed a scarcity of original research papers and projects on Namibia's nation branding. This indicates that the topic is underexplored and particularly intriguing for further investigation. Therefore, this study employed a qualitative research approach.

3.3.1 Research Approach

Inductive research is an approach where specific observations of phenomena are used to draw general conclusions (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:375). According to Soiferman (2010:7), qualitative research is often described as employing inductive reasoning, as it progresses from specific observations of individual occurrences to broader generalisations and theories. Using this inductive approach, the researcher starts with specific observations and measurements, and then identifies themes and patterns within the data. Arguments based

on experience or observation are best expressed through inductive reasoning (Soiferman, 2010:3), hence, this study employed the inductive approach.

3.3.2 Conceptual Approaches

In the context of research, there are three primary conceptual approaches: mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative. This study employed a qualitative research methodology to explore current perceptions of Namibia, and how developing a compelling brand image and reputation can enhance its global competitiveness as a nation brand. Qualitative research entails collecting stories, images, words, artefacts, phrases, and various symbols to create a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:331).

Quantitative research offers a valuable set of techniques for addressing research questions in the area of literacy that require the collection, analysis, and interpretation of numeric data. It is particularly effective for defending, explaining, and predicting human phenomena (Mallette & Duke, 2021:264). The authors further explained that conversely, qualitative research provides a useful set of techniques for addressing research questions that require the collection, analysis, and interpretation of non-numeric data, such as words, observations, drawings, and images. Qualitative research is highly effective for discovering, exploring, describing, and constructing human phenomena. This study will adopt a qualitative research methodology to explore current perceptions of Namibia and how developing a compelling brand image and reputation can enhance its global competitiveness as a nation brand.

This study involved conducting both secondary and primary research. Primary research was conducted with participants to allow the researcher to gather firsthand data tailored to the specific purpose of the study (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:49). To complement this, secondary research was utilised in the early stages of the research process. This helped gain a greater contextual understanding of the topic of Namibia's nation brand. Secondary research methods used included online resources, databases, newspaper articles, published journals, and books. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted as the primary data collection method.

Soiferman (2010:3) highlights that in the context of research, there are two main approaches to reasoning: inductive and deductive. In deductive reasoning, if the premises are true, the conclusion must also be true, making deductive arguments either valid or invalid. Conversely, in inductive reasoning, the premises support the conclusion but do not guarantee it (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:373-375). The authors further explained that the deductive research approach aims to test a theory, whereas inductive research works in the opposite direction: it involves observing specific phenomena and based on these observations, arriving at general conclusions (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:21-22).

Arguments based on experience or observation are best expressed through inductive reasoning (Soiferman, 2010:3); therefore, this study employed the inductive approach. Considering that this study is qualitative in design and aimed to examine current perceptions of Namibia and explore how building a positive brand image and reputation can create a compelling nation brand to attract tourism and foreign direct investment, ultimately strengthening the country's global competitiveness, the researcher employed an inductive approach. This method aided the researcher in identifying commonalities in building a strong nation brand, brand image, and reputation, thereby gathering generalisations on the topic and ultimately addressing the research questions of this research.

Research Strategy

A strategy is a plan designed to achieve a specific goal. In the view of research, Bougie and Sekaran (2020:104) state that a strategy helps to meet the study's objectives. The authors further argued that the choice of a particular research strategy depends on the research questions, the perspective on what constitutes good research, and practical considerations such as access to data sources and time constraints. Common research strategies include surveys, ethnography, experiments, case studies, grounded theory, and action research. According to Bougie and Sekaran (2020:105), a survey is a method for collecting information from or about people to describe, compare, or explain their attitudes, behaviour and knowledge. This strategy enables the researcher to gather both quantitative and qualitative data on a variety of research questions. This research will use interviews to collect information about their perceptions of Namibia's nation branding.

Time Horizon

A study can be conducted where data is gathered only once, possibly over days, weeks, or months, to answer research questions. These studies are called cross-sectional or one-shot studies. In contrast, longitudinal studies involve examining people or phenomena at multiple points in time to answer the research questions (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:112). Moreover, the authors state that when data on the dependent variable is collected at two or more points in time, these studies are referred to as longitudinal studies. Since longitudinal studies require more time and are more expensive, this was a cross-sectional study due to time and budget constraints.

3.4 Research Methodology

3.4.1 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis indicates the level at which information is analysed and conclusions are drawn (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:112). Essentially, it represents the "what" or "who" that the researcher aims to study. In this study, the unit of analysis was the perceptions of individuals or stakeholders who have an influence or interest in Namibia's nation brand. This was the most suitable unit of analysis because the researcher's aim is to explore the perceptions of Namibia and how developing a compelling brand image could enhance its global competitiveness as a nation brand. Therefore, the study focused on the perceptions of professionals from diverse fields and backgrounds as its unit of analysis.

3.4.2 Population and Sampling

This section will discuss the study's population and sample.

3.4.2.1 Population

In research, the population represents events, things or the group of people that the study aims to investigate (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:222). This is the group of interest from which the researcher wants to draw inferences. Similarly, Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2021:110) state that a population refers to all the possible people, places, or things where the information you need can be found. The target and ideal population for this study comprised of professional individuals from both the public and private sector, who hold positions in tourism-related offices, direct foreign investment departments, business, media, transport infrastructure, government and culture and heritage.

Additionally, the population included other stakeholders who have a direct interest or influence in the nation brand of Namibia. All participants were Namibian professionals from diverse professional backgrounds, currently employed and residing in Namibia, and were included in the study to gauge perceptions and insights from different fields. The study included participants aged between 21 and 60 years, with no restrictions based on ethnicity

or race. This approach enabled the researcher to gather a wide range of opinions on the current perceptions of Namibia as a nation brand.

3.4.2.2 Sampling

Because the population size may be excessive, sampling becomes necessary. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2021:145), sampling is defined as the process of determining which individuals and elements will be included in the research. Therefore, the process of selecting appropriate individuals to represent the entire population is known as sampling (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:221). Various sampling strategies are employed depending on the research problem and questions, guided by the research approach.

There are two main sampling designs: non-probability and probability sampling. Probability sampling ensures that every element in the population has a known, non-zero chance of being selected as a sample. Conversely, non-probability sampling does not guarantee a known or predetermined chance of selection for each element (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:226). This study employed the non-probability sampling method.

Non-probability sampling designs are broadly categorised into convenience sampling and purposive sampling. This study employed judgment sampling, a type of purposive sampling method. Judgment sampling involves selecting participants who are considered best suited to provide the necessary information (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:233). This approach was suitable for the study because it directly addressed the enhancement of Namibia's national brand image and reputation to bolster global competitiveness through tourism and foreign investment attraction. Therefore, was appropriate to select individuals who either had a direct interest or influence in shaping Namibia's national brand or who were directly or indirectly connected to the six dimensions of the nation brand hexagon. This study focused on Namibian professionals living and working in Namibia, excluding foreign nationals, to intentionally capture current perceptions of Namibia from its own citizens rather than from an external perspective. The sample included twelve participants, with data collected through virtual in-depth interviews. Participants' contact details and information were obtained from online sources, including company or establishment websites and their personal LinkedIn profiles.

3.4.3 Data Collection Methods

A rationale is a justification for every decision made during the research process, ensuring you stay focused on how to implement these decisions (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:204). Data collection methods are an integral component of research design. Primary data collection refers to the techniques used to gather data directly from sources specifically for this study (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:117). Hofstee (2006:115) states that a research instrument is any tool or method used to collect data for analysis. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2021:119), qualitative research involves exploring the underlying attributes of subjective experiences and the meanings associated with phenomena. Measuring and quantifying these subjective experiences and meanings can be challenging, if not impossible. As a result, quantifiable measures are unsuitable for studying the lived experiences and experimental meanings of individuals, small groups, and communities. Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2021:200) further stated that it is important to note that qualitative research aims to explore and comprehend, rather than to quantify, predict, measure or generalise.

The data collection method must enable the researcher to achieve the desired findings of the study, as anticipated by the formulated research problem, goals, and questions (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:202). Qualitative research, which predominantly operates within the interpretivist or constructivist worldviews, encompasses a variety of perspectives, also known as approaches and theoretical schools of thought. The most

widely applied perspectives in qualitative research include grounded theory, ethnography, case study research, phenomenology and narratology. A case study is a comprehensive and detailed description of a social phenomenon within its real-world setting. It recounts a real-life situation by thoroughly describing the scenario in which the phenomenon occurs, aiming to understand the phenomenon within specific circumstances.

Ethnography, or ethnographic research, on the other hand, is a field research approach involving the description of a particular culture that the researcher is interested in exploring. Phenomenology examines everyday phenomena and participants' conscious awareness of their life worlds in the 'real world,' aiming to understand people's perceptions and perspectives of a particular scenario. Grounded theory develops theory from the dynamic interplay between data collection and analysis. Finally, narratology focuses on ethical, moral, and cultural ambiguities over an extended period, often several months or years (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:203-204).

Because this study aimed to discover the current perceptions of Namibia as a nation brand, it employed the phenomenological qualitative design perspective. Moreover, Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2021:203-204) explained that phenomenology focuses on studying individuals' immediate experiences of phenomena, specifically their conscious perceptions and sensations of the real world. In phenomenology, participants share their conscious experiences of phenomena, and the researcher interprets these concrete and authentic experiences to understand human experiences. Phenomenology aims to uncover participants' preconceptions, while the researcher 'brackets out' their own.

The term 'qualitative method' typically encompasses a wide range of data collection techniques. Data collection methods for phenomenological research may include focus groups, interviews, field notes, and participant observation. More generally, qualitative data collection methods can involve in-depth interviews, focus groups and unobtrusive observation (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:202). This study utilised in-depth interviews as its primary data-gathering method. The in-depth interviews were guided by a structured interview question guide which can be found in Annexure A (see appendices).

Bougie and Sekaran (2020:119) define an interview as a guided, intentional conversation between two or more people. Various types of interviews exist, including group or individual interviews, which can be structured, unstructured or semi-structured and conducted by telephone, face-to-face or online. An in-depth interview can be defined as a qualitative data collection method that enables the researcher to ask participants questions to gain insights into their opinions, beliefs and views on specific phenomenon. These interviews function as a form of conversation, primarily aimed at gathering information through open-ended questions (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:219).

This study utilised semi-structured in-depth interviews, which provided the researcher with valuable insights into current perceptions of Namibia's nation brand, which were then interpreted to understand the participants' responses to specific questions. Semi-structured interviews were befitting to provide more in-depth information about specific variables of interest (Bougie and Sekaran, 2020:129). This was the most effective data-gathering method for this study, as it enabled the researcher to ask specific questions that provided a deeper understanding of current perceptions of Namibia's nation brand (Brand Namibia). It also aided in exploring how Namibia could develop a compelling brand image and reputation to enhance its global competitiveness.

The in-depth interviews were conducted using the Microsoft Teams or Zoom video conferencing application to collect data at the participants' convenience. Participants were asked to sign a consent form to confirm their agreement to participate in the study. Moreover, with their permission, the interviews were recorded and automatically transcribed by the

applications to ensure accuracy and capture the data. This process also aided the researcher during the analysis stage.

Bougie and Sekaran (2020:126) stated that with the significant advancements in technology, videoconferencing has become an effective means of gathering information from various individuals or groups located in different areas. In-depth interviews conducted through video conferencing platforms like Microsoft Teams or Zoom were best suitable for this study because of their significant advantages over traditional methods, particularly when geographical limitations and resource demands are considered. Firstly, using virtual platforms allowed the researcher to interview participants from diverse geographic locations without the need for physical travel. This flexibility is crucial for reaching participants who are located in different cities, regions, or even countries. By eliminating geographical barriers, the researcher was able to access a broader range of perspectives and experiences, enriching the quality and diversity of the data collected.

Secondly, in-person interviews often incur significant travel costs for researchers. Video conferencing eliminates these expenses, freeing up resources for other aspects of the study. Furthermore, scheduling interviews becomes more flexible. Participants didn't need to dedicate time to travel, making them more likely to agree to participate.

Thirdly, video conferencing allows researchers to pick up on non-verbal cues, similar to in-person interviews, facilitating a more natural flow of conversation and deeper exploration of topics. Platforms like Microsoft Teams and Zoom enabled the researcher to share screens and collaboratively view documents or images with participants, enriching the interview experience.

Next, the ability to record interviews with participants' consent facilitated easier transcription and revisiting of key points later, enhancing data analysis. The availability of recorded sessions allowed the researcher to revisit the interviews multiple times, ensuring a thorough and nuanced understanding of the participants' responses.

Finally, utilising virtual platforms for data collection was a more sustainable option because it reduced the carbon footprint associated with travel and physical meetings. This aligns with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) environmental goals and reflects a commitment to sustainable research practices. Additionally, the researcher wrote notes in a notebook and read the interview questions from an interview guide that was projected on the screen. Both the video recordings and the notes assisted the researcher in the coding and analysis stage of the study. Each interview was scheduled to last between 45 and 60 minutes.

3.4.4 Data Analysis

After qualitative data had been collected, the next step was to analyse it. Data analysis is the process of sifting through, sorting, selecting, and organising the information to enhance the understanding of the phenomenon under study (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:333). The authors emphasised that over the years, various general approaches to analysing qualitative data have been developed.

Hofstee (2006:117) suggests that data, in and of itself, simply exists. To transform it into information, it needs to be analysed, thereby turning it into evidence. Qualitative data are displayed in the form of words. Interview notes, video recording transcriptions, and answers to open-ended questions will constitute the qualitative data gathered from the in-depth interviews. The analysis of this qualitative data aimed to make valid inferences from the many a times overwhelming volume of information collected (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:307).

Typically, qualitative data analysis involves three key steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:307).

The initial step in qualitative data analysis involves data reduction which refers to the process of selecting, coding, and categorising the data (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:307). Following this, the data is displayed, which involves presenting the information in various forms, such as charts, a selection of quotes, matrices, or graphs. This visualisation helps the researcher better understand the data and draw conclusions based on patterns in the reduced dataset (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:307).

There are numerous data analysis methods, including qualitative conversation analysis, discourse analysis, content analysis, multimodal conversation analysis, thematic analysis and semiotic analysis. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, and Bezuidenhout (2021:269), qualitative content analysis is used to explore and identify both overt and covert themes and patterns within a text. This process involves systematically reducing the data and deriving meaningful interpretations. The data analysis method for this study was thematic analysis, particularly employing reflexive thematic analysis. Reflexive thematic analysis is a widely accessible and theoretically adaptable interpretive approach to qualitative data analysis, enabling the identification and examination of patterns or themes within a given data set (Byrne, 2021:1392)

This method enabled the researcher to identify common patterns and themes within the data collected from the participants. By recognising these patterns, the researcher prioritised them to extract the most crucial information from the interviews, thereby aiding in answering the study's research questions.

The recorded interviews were transcribed and thereafter, coded. The researcher developed codes based on patterns recognised within the interviews. By identifying and prioritising these patterns, the researcher extracted the most essential information to address the study's research questions. The qualitative research software, ATLAS.ti (Web Student Version24.2.0) was used for pattern recognition, coding and analysis, providing an organised method for conducting thematic analysis. This was complemented with manual coding and analysis.

The study used Braun and Clarke's approach due to its descriptive methods of conducting thematic analysis (TA). Byrne (2021:1398- 1410) explains the six-step process for conducting thematic analysis, as proposed by Braun and Clarke, which aids in the analysis and helps researchers identify and focus on key aspects of thematic analysis. The six- steps are as follows:

Table 3.1: An illustration of the six steps of reflective thematic analysis

Step one	Step two	Step three	Step four	Step five	Step six
Preparation and familiarisation with data	Generating initial codes	Generating themes	Reviewing potential themes	Defining and naming themes	Producing the report

(Adapted from: Braun & Clarke, 2021; Byrne, 2021:1398- 1410)

The six-steps of reflexive thematic analysis, as illustrated in Table 3.1, are explained below:

Step One: Preparation and familiarisation with data

To prepare the data, the researcher will organise and transcribe the raw data collected into written text before analysis. It is crucial to do this systematically to simplify the subsequent analysis process.

Step Two: Generating initial codes

This involves determining the basic coding unit or text segment that the researcher intends to analyse. The researcher will specify whether individual phrases, symbols, words, paragraphs or sentences will serve as coding units, organising the data into meaningful chunks. Codes serve as the essential building blocks that later develop into themes. Coding involves assigning concise, descriptive, or interpretive labels to segments of data that are potentially relevant to the research question(s).

Step Three: Generating themes

In qualitative research, different themes are identified and used as the units of analysis. This step begins once all relevant data items have been coded. At this stage, the focus moves from interpreting individual data items to analysing the collective meaning across the dataset. The coded data is reviewed and examined to determine how different codes with shared meanings can be grouped to form themes or sub-themes.

Step Four: Reviewing potential themes

This step involves assessing the clarity and consistency of category definitions using a data sample. If consistency is low, the researcher will redefine coding definitions and rules. Additionally, any doubts or issues related to the coding categories will be resolved at this stage.

Step Five: Defining and naming themes

In this phase, the researcher presents a comprehensive analysis of the thematic framework. Each theme and sub-theme are examined with the dataset and the research question(s), providing a detailed interpretation of their significance.

Step Six: Producing the report

The researcher will thoroughly and honestly report the processes applied in coding, analysis, and interpretation. Qualitative content analysis will be supported by the computer program ATLAS.ti. Documenting the methods used is crucial to maintaining the trustworthiness and reliability of the research.

This data analysis method proved most effective, enabling a deep exploration of shared perceptions, opinions, and beliefs regarding brand Namibia among participants.

3.4.5 Trustworthiness

In the context of research, reliability, validity, and trustworthiness are imperative. Although

'reliability' and 'validity' are terms most used in quantitative research to evaluate study quality, these concepts are also important in qualitative research. However, qualitative researchers use the term 'trustworthiness' to assess reliability and validity within qualitative studies, which comprises four criteria: dependability, transferability, credibility, and confirmability (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:286). The author further explained that since qualitative research does not use numbers as evidence, it relies on different criteria to determine the trustworthiness or integrity of its findings. It is also important to note that qualitative research aims to understand a particular phenomenon within a specific context rather than to generalise results to a broader population.

Ensuring the trustworthiness of this study is therefore important, as it is an effort by the researcher to maintain research rigour and uphold the quality of a qualitative study (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:295).

Credibility

Credibility assesses how well the researcher has adhered to accepted procedures in conducting qualitative research (Kuada, 2012:100). Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2021:296) argued that credibility is enhanced when the study's findings are believable the participants' perspective. To ensure credibility, the researcher consistently reiterated the questions, clarified any jargon or terminologies, and reconfirmed participants' responses. This approach ensured that participants fully understood the questions and allowed them to verify that their statements were accurately interpreted.

Transferability

According to Kuada (2012:101), transferability requires providing a detailed account of the context in which the study was conducted. This will allow future researchers to compare the study with theirs to determine if the findings are applicable in other contexts. To ensure the transferability of this study, the researcher provided detailed descriptions of the participants' professional backgrounds and opinions, while maintaining their anonymity.

Dependability

Dependability requires maintaining detailed records of all phases of the research process, including problem formulation, selection of research participants, fieldwork notes, and interview transcripts. These materials provide evidence that the study was conducted according to prescribed methods. In other words, the dependability criterion reinforces the credibility and transferability criteria (Kuada, 2012:101). To enhance the dependability of this qualitative study, the researcher provided a detailed description of the research design (methodology and method), the data collection processes, including the researcher's notes, the data analysis process, data interpretation, and a reflective appraisal of the study.

Confirmability

This refers to the extent to which the data collected supports the researcher's interpretations and the study's findings. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2021:297), It indicates how well the conclusions are derived from the data. Kuada (2012:101) asserts that confirmability reinforces the other three criteria of trustworthiness. It requires demonstrating that the researcher has acted in good faith throughout the research

process. The researcher reinforced confirmability by demonstrating that the sole interest in the research is to understand the reality being investigated, which was the perceptions of Namibia's nation brand. Moreover, confirmability was ensured by maintaining the researcher's objectivity throughout the study and ensuring that the findings were based on the participants' opinions and beliefs, without being influenced by the researcher's own beliefs and opinions.

3.4.6 Constraints of the Research Methodology

Below are the constraints of this research methodology:

1. **Time-consuming:** Qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and thematic analysis can be very time-intensive, requiring significant effort to collect, transcribe, and analyse data.
2. **Subjectivity:** The subjective nature of qualitative research may have potentially led to biases in data interpretation, affecting the reliability and validity of the findings.
3. **Limited generalisability:** Due to the often small and specific sample sizes in qualitative research, the findings were not easily generalisable to a larger population.
4. **Participant availability:** Relying on virtual interviews meant that participant availability and willingness to participate posed significant constraints.
5. **Potential for misinterpretation:** The nuanced nature of qualitative data required careful interpretation to avoid misrepresenting the participants' views and experiences.
6. **Context dependency:** The findings in qualitative research were highly context-dependent, which limited the applicability of results to different settings or contexts.
7. **Data management:** Handling large volumes of qualitative data was challenging and required effective data management and organisation strategies.

3.4.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethics can be described as your moral or professional code of conduct, which establishes standards for your attitude and behaviour. This applies to life in general, emphasising the importance of being a person of integrity who can be trusted to uphold certain principles. In research specifically, ethics are imperative because they can significantly impact the stakeholders involved (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:300).

In the context of research, ethics refers to a code of conduct or societal norms of behaviour expected during the research process. Ethical conduct applies both to the researcher conducting the study and to the respondents providing the necessary data (Bougie and Sekaran, 2020:11).

In this study, a stakeholder is anyone with a vested interest in the research. Stakeholders may include the participants, the broader public, the IIE Vega School, local and international research communities, policymakers, the community, the mass media, and the researcher.

The following are the ethical considerations for this study:

1. The researcher did not view this study as harmful to the participants or herself.
2. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were required to give consent for both their participation and being video and voice recorded.
3. Participants were informed of the research objectives and were permitted the right to request a summary copy of the completed research.
4. No incentives were provided for participation.

5. Participants' information was protected and kept confidential throughout the study. Furthermore, to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of participants' data collected via the videoconferencing applications, all video recordings and their transcriptions will be securely stored on a password-protected Google Drive, a cloud storage solution. This data will be retained for five years to maintain integrity and compliance with data protection guidelines.
6. Participants were given the right to withdraw at any time without consequences.

Finally, ethical clearance to proceed with this research was granted by the IIE following a successful defence.

In conclusion, this chapter has detailed the methodology employed in this study, including the research design, data collection methods, and ethical considerations. The phenomenological qualitative design allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions. The in-depth interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams or Zoom video conferencing applications, the data collection technique used in this study, to ensure rich and detailed insights. Ethical considerations were thoroughly adhered to, ensuring the integrity and trustworthiness of the research process.

The next chapter will focus on analysing and discussing the data collected. The analysis will provide a deeper understanding of the findings and their implications, further contributing to the objectives of the study.

Chapter 4: Analysis

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the data collected was analysed. The collected qualitative data was used to prepare, categorise and synthesise the data to address the purpose of the study and answer the research questions. The chapter begins with a concise reiteration of the sampling techniques and criteria employed, explaining their rationale and relevance. A summary of the data collection and analysis process follows, highlighting its suitability for the research and the alignment with the findings. The findings are presented into categories and themes, each supported by participants' responses. Moreover, the trustworthiness of the study is considered, detailing the measures taken to ensure its credibility and reliability.

4.2 Sampling

This study used the non-probability sampling design and employed judgment sampling, a type of purposive sampling method. Supporting the judgment sampling which involves selecting participants who are considered best suited to provide the necessary information (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:233), twelve individuals were identified to participate in the study.

The participant selection criteria were based on their direct influence or vested interest in shaping Namibia's nation brand, considering the roles they hold in specific offices or sectors, their professional backgrounds, and the particular dimension of the Nation Brand Hexagon they fall under. All participants were Namibian professionals, currently employed and residing in Namibia, and were included in the study to gauge perceptions and insights from different fields and perspectives. The study included participants aged between 21 and 60 years, with no restrictions based on ethnicity or race. This approach allowed for a wider range of opinions on the current perceptions of Namibia as a nation brand.

4.3 Data Collection

Twelve in-depth virtual interviews were conducted with individuals from both the public and private sectors. These participants represented diverse professional backgrounds, including tourism, foreign investment, green energy, investment banking, business, media, port infrastructure, government, and culture and heritage sectors. The specific selection of these participants was purposeful and ideal because of their roles, affiliations with key organisations, and relevant professional backgrounds.

After obtaining their contact details and information from internet sources, the twelve participants were initially contacted via the WhatsApp Messenger application and an email to request their consent to participate in the study. Following their agreement, an official email was sent, providing contextual information about the research with a consent form. Participants were asked to sign and return the consent form to the researcher for record-keeping purposes. Convenience played a role in the selection of participants for this study. Table 4.1 provides an anonymised profile of the participants.

Table 4.1 Anonymised profile of the participants.

Source: Own compilation

Participant number	Participant ID	Organisation/ Employer	Sector	Background/ Sector
1	P1	Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT)	Public	Governance

2	P2	Parliament of the Republic of Namibia	Public	Governance
3	P3	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH	Public	Green Hydrogen
4	P4	Namibia Wildlife Resort (NWR)	Public	Tourism
5	P5	Paragon Investment Holdings	Private	Business (Aviation services, real estate and property, advertising and mining)
6	P6	The Namibian Newspaper	Private	Print Media
7	P7	Namibia Revenue Agency (NAMRA)	Public	State taxes, duties and revenue
8	P8	FNB/ RMB - Rand Merchant Bank	Private	Investment Banking
9	P9	Gondwana Collection Namibia	Private	Tourism
10	P10	Namibian Ports Authority (NAMPORT)	Public	Ports infrastructure
11	P11	Culture and Heritage Consultant (Self-employed)	Private	Culture and Heritage
12	P12	Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB)	Public	Investments attraction, promotion and development

The data was gathered from the twelve in-depth interviews, ten of which were conducted via Microsoft Teams and two via Zoom videoconferencing applications. The interviews lasted between forty-five and sixty minutes and were divided into two parts, A and B. Part A gathered background information on the participants, including their names, current roles at the time of the interview, and place of employment. Part B was structured into five categories.

Category one explored the current perceptions of Namibia as a nation brand. Category two focused on strategies for building a compelling brand image and reputation for Namibia. Category three addressed promoting Namibia for investment and tourism, while category four centered on the six dimensions of Simon Anholt's nation brand hexagon: tourism, investment and immigration, exports, governance, culture and heritage, and people. Category five examined national pride, active citizenship, and social cohesion. Finally, a complimentary category invited participants to share additional comments and suggestions for building a compelling nation brand for Namibia.

Participants were presented with a visual representation of the Brand Hexagon model, similar to Figure 1 in Chapter One. The model's significance was explained, and each pillar of the Brand Hexagon was described in detail to provide context and enhance understanding. Throughout the interviews, the researcher supplemented the process by taking notes in her notebook, which helped streamline the analysis and coding of the data.

4.4 Data Analysis

The researcher employed the thematic analysis method to analyse the data, using the ATLAS.ti software to code and sort through the data. Thematic analysis enabled the researcher to identify common patterns and themes within the data collected from the participants (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, and Bezuidenhout, 2021:269). By recognising these patterns, the researcher prioritised them to draw out the most crucial information, thereby aiding in answering the study's research questions.

The collected data was analysed using the six-step process of reflexive thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's approach, known for its clear and structured methods of conducting thematic analysis (Byrne, 2021:1391) as indicated in Figure 4.1. The semi-structured interviews were recorded and automatically transcribed by the Microsoft Teams and Zoom videoconferencing applications, and the transcriptions were inputted into the ATLAS.ti software. To ensure participant anonymity, each participant's transcript was given an identification number bearing no association to the participant, such as their name, employer, designation or interview date.

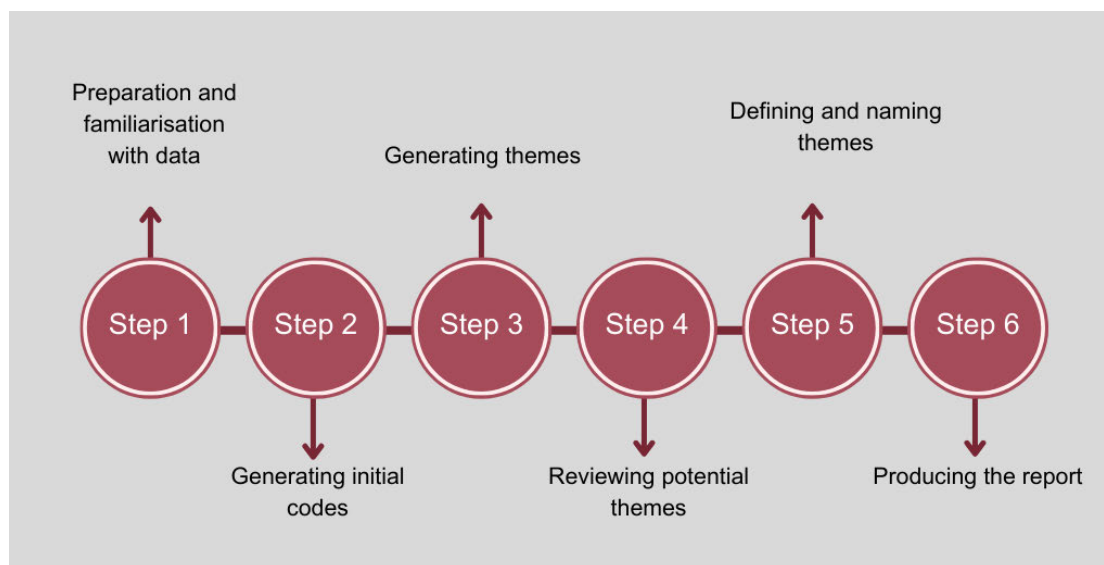


Figure 4.1: An illustration of the six steps of reflexive thematic analysis
(Adapted from: Braun & Clarke, 2021; Byrne, 2021:1398- 1410)

Step one began with the researcher familiarising herself with the data by watching and listening to the interview video recordings, reading the automatically generated transcripts, and reviewing the written notes taken during the interviews. Step two involved generating initial codes. To make sense of the data, the researcher manually created coding tags and used the ATLAS.ti software to assign relevant tags to key concepts within the dataset. The researcher identified the basic coding units or text segments for analysis, specifying individual phrases, words, paragraphs, or sentences that served as coding units. This process organised the data into meaningful chunks, following a tiered categorisation

approach for the tags.

In step three, the researcher generated initial themes by identifying patterns across the dataset, focusing on addressing the research question. Step four involved revising these preliminary themes, where certain themes were either discarded, enhanced with additional code tags, merged, or further divided into new themes to refine the analysis. In step five, each theme was summarised to ensure it centered on a specific concept and contributed meaningfully to the overall dataset. Appropriate names were assigned to each theme. In the final phase, step six, the researcher integrated the findings from all previous phases to present the themes and their significance. The resulting categories, sub-categories, themes and findings are discussed in the following sections.

4.5 Categories and Themes

The reflexive thematic analysis revealed several patterns in the research participants' responses. These patterns were organised into main themes and codes per category, as detailed in Table 4.2 below. Where applicable, themes have been further divided into relevant subsections, each appropriately named. A summary of the findings is provided, accompanied by relevant quotes from the participants.

Part B was structured into five categories, each with sub-categories aligned with the research questions. Part B's categories and sub-categories are as follow:

4.5.1 Category 1: Current perceptions of Namibia as a nation brand

Table 4.2: Current perceptions of Namibia as a nation brand

Sub- category	Main theme	Main codes
(i) Current perceptions about Namibia	Theme 1: Peace and stability as a core identity	Peace and political stability
	Theme 2: A land of natural beauty and rich resources	Natural beauty & environment
	Theme 3: Cultural diversity and national pride	- Cultural diversity - Pride
	Theme 4: Beautiful tourism destination	Tourism and attractions
	Theme 5: Untapped potential for economic growth	Economic potential
(ii) Namibia's uniqueness	Theme 1: Natural wonders	- Vast opportunities - Untapped potential - Highest population of cheetahs - Oldest living desert - World's largest meteorite - Sandwich Harbour - Conservation laws
	Theme 2: Wildlife	
	Theme 3: Opportunities for growth	
	Theme 4: Cultural uniqueness	
	Theme 5: Economic advantages	

(iii) Namibia's strengths	Theme 1: Strength in stability, governance, and natural resources	• Peace and stability • Good governance • Natural resources • Infrastructure • Diversity • Environmental conservation
(iv) Weaknesses and negative perceptions of Namibia	Theme 1: Challenges of corruption, bureaucracy, and poverty	• Corruption and bribery • Bureaucracy and red tape • Inequality and poverty • Crime
	Theme 2: Lack of clear national branding strategy	• Lack of branding strategy • Negative stereotypes
(v) Comparative perception	Theme 1: Lack of clear identity and brand strategy	• Lack of identity and brand strategy
	Theme 2: Lag in technological advancement	• Lag of technological advancement
	Theme 3: Namibia's strength in governance and environmental resources	• Strengths in governance & environment
	Theme 4: Low crime rate	• Lower crime compared to neighbours • Peaceful environment

(i) Current perceptions about Namibia

Participants indicated that Namibia is a peaceful and politically stable nation, characterised by its vast natural landscapes, distinctive environmental features, abundant natural resources, and rich diversity in terms of people, tribes, climate, wildlife and opportunities.

Participant 2 (P2) described Namibia as:

“a small population that despite coming from a very violent past, we have been very peaceful. We are very diverse. “

Participants also emphasised that Namibia is a beautiful tourist destination with significant

economic potential. P3 reinforced this by stating:

“Namibia is rich in minerals as natural resources. It’s the hub of your green hydrogen, oil and gas and mining (diamonds).”

(ii) Namibia’s uniqueness

Participants highlighted that Namibia's uniqueness lies in its natural wonders (such as being home to the world's oldest living desert and the Sandwich Harbour), its abundant wildlife, growth opportunities, cultural diversity, and significant economic potential. P12 described:

“Namibia has vast resources, is [a] peaceful [country] with unique people and cultural heritage.”

P10 similarly attributed that:

“Namibia is a young country with potential to establish itself as a nation brand that it wants to be. “

(iii) Namibia’s strengths

Participants indicated that Namibia's key strengths related to its political stability, good governance, abundant natural resources, infrastructure, diversity and environmental conservation. P8 stressed that:

“Namibia is a working economy. Its peace, stability and good infrastructure is also a strength.”

(iv) Weaknesses and Negative Perceptions of Namibia

Participants identified challenges such as corruption, bureaucracy, poverty, inequality, and crime as the predominant negative perceptions of Namibia. Additionally, the absence of a clear national branding strategy and negative stereotypes were highlighted as major weaknesses affecting the country's image and reputation. P9 explained that:

“Although Namibia has a substance of nationhood, we are not managing it well. There have been various campaigns on nation branding from various institutions however, there is no coordination. There’s a challenge with packaging and telling the Namibian story compared to a country like South Africa that is doing well in their nation branding efforts. “

P6 supplemented this response by stating that:

“Corruption and the high unemployment (which leads to crime) damages the country’s image and reputation. As a result, investors will be reluctant to invest in the country.”

(v) Comparative perception

Participants noted that, unlike its peers, Namibia lacks a clear identity and nation branding strategy. P5 emphasised that:

"Namibia is associated with many things but not one defining aspect. For example, Angola is known for oil and gas, South Africa for being the 'rainbow nation,' and Botswana for its diamonds, wildlife, and good governance. Namibia doesn't have a distinct element it is known for compared to its neighbouring countries."

P12 concurred, stating that:

"Countries like Botswana and South Africa are way ahead in nation branding and Namibia still has a long way to go. Countries like Kenya have done well on internal [nation] branding and nation pride."

Additionally, participants highlighted that Namibia lags in technology compared to countries like South Africa and Botswana. However, Namibia's strengths lie in its good governance, environmental sustainability, tourism, and relatively low crime rate. P11 compared Namibia to other countries, stating that:

"Namibia is known for its peace, security, cleanliness, good standard of living and good road infrastructures."

4.5.2 Category 2: Strategies to build a compelling brand image and reputation

Table 4.3: Strategies to build a compelling brand image and reputation

	Main theme	Main codes
(i) Visual identity	Theme 1: Natural and cultural symbols as the core of brand identity	• Identity establishment • Highlight Namibia's strengths • National colours • Modern emblem • Youthful and lively visuals • Cultural symbols
(ii) Values or narrative	Theme 1: Emphasising unity, resilience, and economic potential in the national brand narrative	• Bravery and resilience • Unity and diversity • Peace and stability • Natural resources & tourism • Economic potential
(iii) Nation branding strategies or campaigns	Theme 1: Tourism Promotion	• Invest in tourism campaigns • Curate specialised tourism packages • Promote visit Namibia campaign • Boost tourism
	Theme 2: Leverage Digital and influencer marketing	• Digital campaigns

		• Invest in influencer marketing
	Theme 3: Promoting social cohesion and national pride internally	• Social cohesion campaigns • National pride • Unite citizens
	Theme 4: Investment promotion	• Campaigns promoting investment opportunities • Export culture and heritage
	Theme 5: Stakeholder mobilisation	• Mobilise stakeholders • Collaboration • Institutional support

(i) Visual identity

Participants emphasised the critical need for Namibia to first establish a clear brand identity before developing a nation branding strategy. P1 shared that:

“We need to know who we are first and [then] preach the gospel thereafter.”

P9 supplemented the response by stating that:

“We need to highlight Namibia’s strengths in its nation brand identity.”

The participants attributed that Namibia’s visual identity should reflect and represent Namibia’s distinct features, strengths, national colours, cultural symbols, people and values. P10 encouraged the visual identity to reflect:

“A visual element or modern emblem that is lively, animated and youthful.”

P7 complimented this by explaining that:

“The Welwitschia plant as it has a special story of perseverance and resilience. We need symbols and visual elements that represent Namibia and its people. “

(ii) Values or narrative

Participants stressed the importance of crafting a clear, concise and intentional narrative for Namibia’s nation brand (Brand Namibia). This narrative should focus on resilience, unity, and economic potential, while also highlighting the country's strengths in diversity, abundant natural resources, and emerging industries. P1 shared that:

“Namibia is a country with brave people. A peaceful country with free press, best roads, good security and political climate.”

P7 complimented the response by stating that:

“Namibia is a dry and arid country with so much life and vibrancy in it.”

P9 enhanced this by referring to the Namibian narrative as:

“Namibia, where silence has a sound is great.”

P8 emphasised that:

“Namibia is the land of untapped potential. “

Finally, P12 stressed that:

“Namibia should be known as the energy capital of Africa. A country rich in diversity in all aspects including people, resources, business opportunities.”

(iii) Nation branding strategies or campaigns

Participants suggested that Brand Namibia should prioritise tourism promotion by leveraging digital and influencer marketing. Additionally, efforts should focus on promoting investment, as well as fostering social cohesion and national pride. P1 shared that:

“We need to begin at home, by having small intentional campaigns that can unify us so that when we go out there, we are united. Every Namibian should act as an ambassador of Namibia and should speak positively about the country. “

P2 suggested that:

“Similarly to Rwanda’s Visit Rwanda campaign, Namibia can imitate a similar approach as this will boost the country’s popularity. Namibia needs to go out there aggressively and let the world know about it. “

P5 emphasised that:

“Our primary focus when positioning ourselves should be tourism, and our strong processes, systems and institutions. Namibia is a country which is an excellent tourism destination, and because it’s a land of contrast, where the ocean meets the desert, its open spaces and unique wildlife.

On the other hand, P6 suggested that:

“There’s a need to mobilise all stakeholders and institutions to work together on strategies and campaigns that will sell the Namibian nation brand. “

4.5.3 Category 3: Promoting Namibia for investment and travel

Table 4.4: Promoting Namibia for investment and travel

	Main theme	Main codes
(i) Target audiences	Theme 1: Diverse target audiences for tailored messaging	• Locals • International Investors • Tourists • Decision makers • Diplomatic missions and embassies
(ii) Platforms and events	Theme 2: Strategic use of global platforms and events	• Conferences and expos • Targeted digital media • Invest in social media campaigns and influencer marketing • Advertise on digital billboards in big cities • Curate national events • Host national investment events Invite foreign investors
(iii) Role of partnerships and Key partnerships	Theme 1: Importance of public-private partnerships and international collaborations	• Public-private partnerships • Public sector sets up the foundation • Private sector mobilises resources • Partnerships with international players • Endorsements by credible international celebrities
	Theme 2: Mobilisation of key stakeholders for collaborative branding	

(i) Target Audiences

Participants emphasised the importance of identifying diverse target audiences for tailored messaging. This should include local citizens, international investors and tourists, decision-makers, as well as diplomatic missions and embassies. P8 highlighted that:

“Namibia has something for everyone. “

P5 complimented the response by stating that:

“The primary target market should be none- Africans and the secondary target market should be Africans. “

P7 however suggested that:

“Namibia needs to do more work in capturing the Asian market. “

(ii) Platforms and Events

The participants highlighted the need for Namibia to leverage global platforms such as international conferences, expos, and economic forums to promote itself. Additionally, they suggested that Namibia should curate their events and explore targeted digital campaigns on social media and major international outlets to maximise its reach. P6 suggested that:

“Namibia needs to invest in targeted social media campaigns with visually attractive content and international media houses like Bloomberg and the Financial Times. Namibia needs to promote themselves at targeted platforms and events. “

P2 supplemented the response by advising that:

“Namibia should participate in international conferences to market themselves. Namibia should also curate its own events and invite people to showcase investment opportunities that the country has to offer.”

Finally, P5 advised that:

“We need to look at where the world gathers. The world is at sports gatherings, tourism indabas and the World Economic Forum. “

(iii) Role of Partnerships and Key Partnerships

All participants concurred that partnerships and collaboration are essential for advancing Namibia's nation brand. They further reiterated the importance of public-private partnerships and international collaborations and encouraged the mobilisation of key stakeholders for collaborative nation branding. P12 shared that:

“Collaboration is very crucial amongst the stakeholders as the public and private can bring insights from different industries and can mobilise resources to promote Namibia's nation brand. “

P1 proposed that:

“Brand Namibia should partner with credible international celebrities to endorse and promote Namibia. The Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB) should partner with other public stakeholders. The private sector should also come in.”

4.5.4 Category 4: Leveraging Simon Anholt's brand hexagon to build a compelling nation brand for Namibia

Table 4.5: Leveraging Simon Anholt's brand hexagon to build a compelling nation brand for Namibia

Brand Hexagon Pillar	Main theme	Main codes
(i) Tourism	Theme 1: Enhancing tourism for global competitiveness	• Improve customer service and tourist experience • Highlight Namibia's natural landscapes (desert, vast space, wildlife) • Promote cultural and business tourism • Offer curated tourism packages • Increase tourism activities
	Theme 2: Promote prominent natural attractions	• Etosha national park • Sossusvlei Dunes • Sandwich Harbour • Dune 7 • Zambezi Floodplains • Grand Canyon
	Theme 3: Adventure and outdoor activities	• Ziplining • Water activities • Desert activities (dune climbing, sandboarding) • Wildlife watching and safari experiences • Self-drive tours and outdoor exploration
	Theme 4: Cultural and local experiences	• The Kapana experience (local cuisine) • Community outreach and interaction with locals • Diamond museums and historical sites • Local festivals and indigenous cultures
	Theme 5: Tourism infrastructure development	• Waterfront experiences

		• Affordable tourism and hospitality for domestic and regional visitors • Building recreational parks and improving tourism facilities
(ii) Investment	Theme 1: Attracting foreign investment in key sectors	• Foreign Investment in key sectors (green hydrogen, oil and gas, agriculture, mining, ICT, renewable energy, fintech, manufacturing) • Focus on value chain investment and practical policies • Improve ease of doing business, customer service, and regulatory frameworks • Promote sustainability investment
(iii) Immigration	Theme 1: Namibia as an attractive destination for immigration	• Favourable immigration destination • Peaceful • Low crime rate • Flexible immigration laws • Strong educational institutions • Young population
(iv) Exports	Theme 1: Increasing export potential and competitiveness	• Focus on key exports (beef, uranium, diamonds, grapes, dates, beer, fish, green hydrogen, gold, charcoal) • Increase production and meet international demand • Improve product quality, branding,

		and marketing strategies • Leverage trade missions and market analysis
(v) Governance	Theme 1: Good governance as a pillar for investment and tourism	• Good governance • Gender equality • Well-functioning systems • Stability
(vi) Culture and heritage	Theme 1: Promoting Namibia's culture and heritage	• Promoting Namibia's culture and heritage • Promote eco-tourism and cultural diversity • Leverage historical and cultural landmarks • Celebrate national festivals and cultural events collectively • Promote the stories of the San and Ovahimba people (the first people)
(vii) People	Theme 1: Emphasising the strengths of the Namibian people	• Diverse and educated workforce • Hospitable, welcoming, peaceful, and resilient population • Emphasise indigenous communities and skilled professionals • Highlight human development

(i) Tourism

Participants suggested promoting key Namibian natural attractions, adventure and outdoor activities, as well as cultural and local experiences. They also emphasised the need to improve tourism infrastructure to attract more visitors. P9 mentioned that:

“We need to embrace and sell our differentiators such as our world-class safari products, the desert and unique experiences. Namibia is a soulful and an itinerary destination and we should sell that more. “

P2 complimented the response by suggesting that:

“Namibia needs to create a waterfront experience, make tourism and hospitality affordable to domestic and regional tourists. We need to develop and leverage the desert like building a recreational park or a city in the desert.”

(ii) Investment

Participants highlighted the importance of attracting foreign investment in key sectors. They identified green hydrogen, oil and gas, agriculture, mining, ICT, renewable energy, and fintech as crucial sectors that could draw significant investment to the country. P6 argued that:

“There’s [however] a need to do research and invest in the value chain of these industries and capitalise on them.”

(iii) Immigration

Participants highlighted Namibia's appeal as an attractive destination for immigration. P1 indicated that:

“Namibia is the best. When it comes to immigration, our immigration regime is quite flexible. However, we do need to make provisions and be more flexible to accommodate foreign workers whose unique skills are needed in certain industries. Our immigration policies and laws should not be cast in stone but should be flexible.”

(iv) Exports

Participants emphasised that to enhance Namibia's export potential and competitiveness, the focus should be on key export products such as beef, uranium, diamonds, grapes, dates, beer, fish, green hydrogen, gold, and charcoal. In light of this, P1 suggested that:

“Namibia should focus on mass producing dates (for the Islam community for when they have Ramadan) beef and agricultural products. We however need to export more finished products. “

P9 complimented this by highlighting that:

“Namibia has amazing infrastructures which can make Namibia a logistical and trade hub in Africa. The mining, renewable energy and tourism sectors can increase our export potential. “

(v) Governance

Participants were asked about their views on Namibia's governance. All participants indicated that the country is well-governed, with functioning systems and processes that should be leveraged as a foundation to attract foreign investment and tourism. P7 stated that”

“Namibia is one of the best governed countries in Africa. “

P9 indicated that:

“Namibia has stability which may attract investors and tourists as a result of its good governance. “

(vi) Culture and heritage

On Namibia's culture and heritage, the participants stressed that it should be promoted more. P9 highlighted that:

“We have an unbelievable diversity in cultures and heritage. We need to tap into that and provide tourists with these cultural experiences. “

(vii) People

Participants emphasised the importance of highlighting the qualities of the Namibian people more prominently in the nation's branding efforts. P2 indicated that:

“Namibia has friendly, diverse and talented people.”

4.5.5 Category 5: Encouraging national pride, active citizenship, and social cohesion

Table 4.6: Encouraging national pride, active citizenship and social cohesion

	Main theme	Main codes
(i) Fostering national pride	Theme 1: Fostering national pride through economic opportunities and education	• Create economic opportunities • Reduce unemployment • Economic inclusion • Nationhood education • Celebrate small victories • Promote national values • Educate citizens on opportunities
(ii) Initiatives for active citizenship and nation-building	Theme 1: Initiatives for active citizenship and nation-building	• Host nation-building events • Inclusivity initiatives in government and the business sector • Establish a Brand Namibia Council • Educate people on civic responsibilities

		• National festivals and celebrations • Campaigns like "Share My Namibia" and "My Namibia, My Pride" • Tell more Namibian stories
(iii) Encouraging social cohesion and unity	Theme 1: Promoting social cohesion and unity	• Eradicate tribalism • Promote local music, sports, and cultural events • Develop a national language or attire • Sports as a unifier (soccer, rugby, athletics) • National songs and slogans (e.g., "One Namibia, One Nation") • Tribal representation in governance • Establish unifying meeting points • Invest in sports infrastructure

(i) Fostering national pride

Participants indicated that to foster national pride amongst Namibian citizens, there's an urgent need to create economic opportunities to reduce unemployment. Moreover, the focus should be on economic inclusion, nationhood education, celebrating small victories and promoting national values. P1 stressed that:

"Namibia needs to create opportunities that will involve Namibian people economically so that they can be proud to be Namibian. There's a need for economic inclusion."

(ii) Initiatives for active citizenship and nation-building

When asked about initiatives to encourage active citizenship and nation-building, participants suggested that Brand Namibia host nation-building events and campaigns, promote inclusivity initiatives within the government and the business sector, educate citizens about their civic responsibilities and share more Namibian stories. P10 suggested

that:

“We need to develop various activations and marketing initiatives, as well as host events, conferences and seminars that will encourage Namibians to participate more in the country’s nation branding. “

(iii) Encouraging social cohesion and unity

Participants noted that promoting social cohesion and unity requires eradicating tribalism, investing in local music, sports, and cultural events, and establishing unifying meeting points. P5 suggested that:

“We need to identify meeting points for unity and social cohesion- sports and the Namibian people being two of them. “

P10 supported this by stating that:

“Namibia can invest in sport infrastructure, and sport codes that Namibians are good at as these will bring the Namibian people together.”

4.6 Trustworthy, Credibility and Reliability

Ensuring the trustworthiness of this study was important, as it was an effort by the researcher to maintain research rigour and uphold the quality of a qualitative study (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:295). To warrant the quality and rigour of this qualitative study, the following characteristics were monitored and tested continuously. Trustworthiness was ensured by prolonged discussions with participants. Transferability was enabled by providing detailed descriptions of findings. Confirmability and dependability were tested by audit trails of transcriptions and the researcher’s notes.

Table 4.7 evaluates the trustworthiness of the study by outlining the techniques and application of each criterion of dependability, transferability, credibility and confirmability.

Table 4.7: Trustworthiness of the study

Criteria	Description	Application
Credibility	Credibility assesses how well the researcher have adhered to accepted procedures in conducting qualitative research (Kuada, 2012:100). Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2021:296) argued that credibility is enhanced when the study's findings are believable from the participants' perspective.	To ensure credibility, the researcher consistently reiterated the questions, clarified any jargons or terminologies, and reconfirmed participants' responses. This approach ensured that participants fully understood the questions and allowed them to verify that their statements were accurately interpreted. Participants from diverse organisations and professional backgrounds were included.

		This approach minimised the influence of factors specific to any single field or organisation and allowed for a broader range of perspectives, providing richer and more varied insights.
Transferability	According to Kuada (2012:101), transferability requires providing a detailed account of the context in which the study was conducted. This will allow future researchers to compare the study with theirs to determine if the findings are applicable in other contexts.	To ensure the transferability of this study, the researcher provided detailed descriptions of the participants' professional background and opinions, while maintaining their anonymity.
Dependability	Dependability requires maintaining detailed records of all phases of the research process, including problem formulation, selection of research participants, fieldwork notes, and interview transcripts. These materials provide evidence that the study was conducted according to prescribed methods. Better put, the dependability criterion reinforces the credibility and transferability criteria (Kuada, 2012:101).	To enhance the dependability of this qualitative study, the researcher provided a detailed description of the research design (methodology and method), the data collection processes, including the researcher's notes, the data analysis process, data interpretation, and a reflective appraisal of the study.
Confirmability	Confirmability refers to the extent to which the data collected supports the researcher's interpretations and the study's findings. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2021:297), it indicates how well the conclusions are derived from the data. Kuada (2012:101) asserts that confirmability reinforces the other three criteria of trustworthiness. It requires demonstrating that the researcher have acted in	The researcher reinforced confirmability by demonstrating that the sole interest in the research is to understand the reality being investigated, which were the perceptions of Namibia's nation brand. Moreover, confirmability was ensured by maintaining the researcher's objectivity throughout the study and ensuring that the findings are based on the participants' opinions and beliefs, without being influenced by the researcher's own beliefs and opinions.

	good faith throughout the research process.	
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4.7 Conclusion

Chapter 4 set out to analyse the data collected from the study. Through this analysis, numerous codes and themes emerged. Key findings were extracted from the data and critical analysis was conducted to provide insightful interpretations of the findings. The proceeding chapter sets out the study findings, and recommendations and concludes the study.

Chapter 5: Findings, Recommendations and Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

The research problem is that despite Namibia's ability to captivate those who experience its beauty, the country faces the challenge of not having a well-defined nation branding strategy. The lack of research on the current perceptions of Namibia and its nation branding hinders its efforts to create a compelling nation brand to attract tourism and foreign direct investment, ultimately strengthening the country's global competitiveness. This lack of a consolidated approach hinders efforts to strategically manage perceptions of Namibia both locally and internationally (Movirongo, 2023).

Movirongo (2023) further stressed that as a developing market, Namibia frequently competes with other countries to attract investors, travellers, and potential business partners. The common perception of Namibia as "Africa's best-kept secret" is unlikely to significantly boost tourism or foreign direct investment—both vital for driving economic growth and activity. While this perception may spark curiosity and interest, Namibia needs comprehensive strategies to leverage this reputation effectively.

The purpose of this study is to explore current perceptions of Namibia and how building a positive brand image and reputation can create a compelling nation brand to attract tourism and foreign direct investment, ultimately strengthening the country's global competitiveness.

The research questions, which will be addressed in Section 5.2, were formulated to guide the study in gathering relevant insights to fulfil the research purpose.

This final chapter concludes the research by presenting the key findings, recommendations, and conclusions. Regarding the earlier chapters, the research problem, purpose, and questions are revisited, and the findings are summarised. The chapter offers a critical discussion of the results, recommendations for future action, and a reflection on the limitations of the study.

5.2 Research Findings

This section presents the findings derived from the collected data and analysis, aligned with the Literature Review in Chapter 2. To address the research purpose, the findings are presented and discussed concerning the study's research questions.

5.2.1 Research Question 1

What is the current perception of Namibia as a nation brand?

The findings revealed that Namibia is widely perceived as a peaceful, politically stable country with immense natural beauty, rich resources, and cultural diversity. These perceptions were clustered into several key themes:

Political stability and peacefulness: Namibia's reputation for peace and political stability, along with its adherence to the rule of law, is a core element of its national identity. This stability is seen as a critical asset in both its domestic and international image.

Natural beauty and rich resources: Namibia is viewed as a country with vast, pristine landscapes, unique environmental features, and abundant natural resources, including minerals like diamonds, green hydrogen, and oil. These attributes enhance its appeal as a destination for investment and tourism.

Cultural diversity and national pride: The nation's cultural diversity and the harmonious coexistence of its people reflect its strong cultural identity. National pride is deeply connected to this diversity, further enriching Namibia's nation brand.

Tourism potential and economic growth: Namibia is recognised as a beautiful tourist destination with untapped economic potential. It holds promise for growth, particularly in tourism, as well as in emerging sectors like renewable energy. Branding efforts could unlock further global competitiveness in these areas.

Namibia's uniqueness lies in its breathtaking natural wonders, like the Namib Desert and Sandwich Harbour, its abundant wildlife, and its cultural diversity, which all contribute to a distinctive national identity. The country also presents growth opportunities in emerging sectors like green hydrogen, oil, gas, and mining, while its commitment to environmental conservation strengthens its appeal and positions it as a sustainable and attractive destination.

Namibia's strengths include its stable political environment and effective governance, which reinforce its reputation as a safe, peaceful nation. The country's wealth in natural resources, such as minerals, green hydrogen, and oil, makes it a significant player in global markets. Namibia's infrastructure development, particularly in port services and logistics, is seen as an asset for economic growth, while a commitment to environmental conservation establishes Namibia as a leader in sustainability. Additionally, the country's cultural diversity and national pride are powerful components of its unique identity.

Despite its strengths, Namibia faces challenges that impact its growth and image. Corruption and bureaucratic red tape harm its governance reputation and discourage investment, while poverty and inequality remain significant socio-economic hurdles. Moreover, a lack of a unified nation branding strategy limits Namibia's ability to effectively communicate its identity and strengths globally. Technological advancements lag neighbouring countries, and negative stereotypes, along with an underdeveloped branding narrative, weaken its international reputation. Addressing these issues is essential for Namibia to fully leverage its potential.

In comparison to its peers, Namibia's peacefulness and stable governance are strengths, giving it an edge over South Africa in security and comparing favourably to Angola. Like Botswana, Namibia boasts rich natural resources and strong conservation efforts, though it lacks the same global recognition. Moreover, Namibia's untapped tourism potential could rival South Africa and Botswana if better branded.

Conversely, as outlined by Movirongo (2023), Namibia's biggest weakness is its absence of a unified nation brand, unlike Botswana and South Africa, which have clearer identities. Namibia also falls behind South Africa in technological development, limiting its attractiveness to digital investors. Finally, Namibia, like Angola, faces challenges with corruption and bureaucracy, reducing its competitiveness compared to Botswana's more efficient governance. To compete with its peers, Namibia must consolidate its nation brand and leverage its unique assets and strengths more effectively (Chen, 2024:1382).

5.2.2 Research Question 2

What strategies can Namibia implement to build a compelling brand image and reputation?

As outlined by Gupta (2010:240), to build a compelling nation brand, Namibia must first establish a clear brand identity. This identity should be rooted in the country's unique natural landscapes, cultural diversity, and national symbols, which can be integrated into its visual identity. A distinctive visual identity, incorporating Namibia's natural features, national colours, cultural symbols, and values, will serve as a powerful brand identifier (Ali & Rehman, 2015:35). A clear, concise, and intentional narrative is essential for 'Brand Namibia'. This narrative should emphasise resilience, unity, and economic potential while highlighting Namibia's diversity, natural resources, and emerging industries.

To build a strong nation brand, Brand Namibia should focus on strategic tourism promotion by utilising digital platforms and influencer marketing to captivate global audiences. The integration of digital strategies and influencer marketing is crucial for promoting Namibia's strengths on the global stage, reaching a younger, tech-savvy audience. Specific campaigns, such as "Visit Namibia," should highlight the country's unique tourism offerings, while others can focus on promoting investment opportunities in sectors like energy and infrastructure. These efforts will help solidify Namibia's position as a competitive and compelling nation brand.

Finally, prioritising investment in emerging sectors like energy, infrastructure, and green industries will also enhance its appeal. Additionally, as outlined by Anholt (2005:1119), fostering social cohesion and national pride through internal campaigns can unify Namibians and inspire them to serve as dedicated brand ambassadors.

5.2.3 Research Question 3

What strategies can be employed to promote Namibia for both investment and travel, targeting both domestic and international audiences?

To effectively promote Namibia for investment and travel, it is crucial to identify and target diverse audiences with tailored messaging. These target groups include:

1. Local citizens to foster national pride and encourage domestic tourism.
2. International investors and tourists to drive foreign direct investment and boost travel.
3. Decision-makers in industries and governments.
4. Diplomatic missions and embassies to build strategic international partnerships.

As outlined by Hassan and Mahrous (2019:146), nation branding strategies are gaining research priority as market complexities rise and national competitiveness rankings become increasingly significant. Namibia should leverage major global platforms such as international conferences, expos, and economic forums to present its strengths and opportunities for investment and tourism. Additionally, the country needs to curate its events to showcase its unique offerings, creating a space to engage with its citizens, potential

investors and tourists directly. Digital campaigns on social media and international outlets can expand Namibia's reach to global audiences. Targeted messaging should focus on specific groups such as retirees, young travellers, and decision-makers, addressing their distinct needs and interests. By combining participation in global platforms with tailored digital marketing strategies, Namibia can maximise its visibility and appeal to both domestic and international audiences.

Another key strategy for promoting Namibia for investment and travel is to focus on partnerships and collaboration. As explained by Anholt (2005:15), public-private partnerships and international collaborations are essential to advancing Namibia's nation brand. Mobilising key stakeholders—including local businesses and citizens, government entities, international organisations, and influencers like international celebrities—will enhance Namibia's global image and outreach.

These partnerships will help in creating unified nation branding efforts, where both sectors can co-create strategies to promote the country's unique offerings.

Engaging local businesses will foster domestic investment and tourism, while collaborations with international organisations will open pathways for foreign direct investment and global tourism. Additionally, partnerships with credible influencers and celebrities can drive more effective promotion, as they help amplify Namibia's brand across diverse audiences.

5.2.4 Research Question 4

How can Namibia leverage tourism and investment from Simon Anholt's brand hexagon to enhance its global competitiveness in developing its nation brand?

To strengthen Namibia's global competitiveness using Simon Anholt's Brand Hexagon model, the country should focus on key areas:

1. Tourism

Tourism has become a global phenomenon and one of the largest industries worldwide, playing a pivotal role in shaping a nation's brand. As outlined by Chen (2014:1383), Namibia can leverage its vast natural attractions, adventure and outdoor activities, and cultural experiences to boost its tourism appeal. Unique destinations such as the Etosha National Park, The Skeleton Coast, Sossusvlei Dunes, Sandwich Harbour, the Zambezi Floodplain and other prominent places should be highlighted and promoted aggressively. Promoting these sites, alongside adventure activities like ziplining, dune climbing, and wildlife safaris, can attract global tourists seeking both adventure and serenity.

To attract more tourism to the country, Brand Namibia should prioritise promoting key activities such as desert tours, safaris, sandboarding, cultural festivals, and self-drive experiences, all of which showcase Namibia's natural and cultural attractions. Emphasising local culinary experiences like "Kapana" (local street food cuisine) and interactions with indigenous communities can also enrich the cultural appeal.

Moreover, investing in tourism infrastructure—upgrading lodging, transportation, and recreational facilities along with affordable hospitality and improved customer service, will elevate the tourist experience. Finally, curating tourism packages that blend wildlife, history, cuisine, and adventure can attract diverse travellers, including adventurers, wildlife enthusiasts, and cultural tourists.

2. Investment

As outlined by Mohib and Carrol (2024:2), nation branding plays a crucial role in attracting foreign businesses, thereby supporting the economic development and global competitiveness of countries. To leverage the investment pillar to enhance Namibia's global competitiveness, the country should focus on attracting foreign investment in key sectors such as green hydrogen, oil and gas, agriculture, manufacturing, mining, Information Communications Technology (ICT), renewable energy, and fintech. Brand Namibia should focus on sectors with strong economic potential.

Key strategies include investing in value chains to export finished goods, thereby enhancing the country's economic profile and attractiveness to investors. Additionally, fostering an investor-friendly environment through streamlined regulations, better customer service, and supportive policies will improve the ease of doing business. Emphasising sustainability by promoting eco-friendly projects can also position Namibia as a leader in renewable energy, appealing to green investors and aligning with global environmental trends.

3. Immigration

To leverage immigration as part of its nation branding, Namibia should emphasise its peaceful environment, low crime rates, and favourable living conditions, making it an attractive destination for immigrants seeking stability. Although the country has a flexible immigration policy, further adjustments to support foreign workers and students in key industries could attract skilled talent. Promoting strong educational institutions and a youthful workforce can also encourage long-term residency and employment opportunities for immigrants. Streamlining and improving the immigration process will further enhance Namibia's appeal to potential immigrants, making it easier for skilled workers and investors to settle in the country.

4. Exports

Namibia can strengthen its export potential by focusing on key products such as beef, uranium, diamonds, fish, green hydrogen, and charcoal, positioning them as premium Namibian goods. Increasing production capacity to meet global demand will enhance its market presence, while investments in quality improvement, branding, and targeted marketing will further establish Namibia's reputation as a reliable exporter. Leveraging trade missions, market analysis, and international expos will allow Namibia to explore new markets and foster strategic partnerships, thereby expanding export opportunities and boosting economic competitiveness.

5. Governance

Stability and effective governance are essential for enhancing Namibia's global competitiveness. To capitalise on this governance pillar, Namibia should emphasise its strong reputation as a well-governed nation with stable systems, which can attract foreign investment and tourism. Promoting its political stability will reassure investors and tourists of a secure environment for business and travel. Additionally, highlighting progress in gender equality alongside effective governance can position Namibia as a model of inclusive governance, further strengthening its international reputation.

6. Culture and heritage

Namibia can adopt several strategies to promote and preserve its culture and heritage. First, it should highlight the rich cultural diversity of its indigenous communities, including the stories of the San and Himba people, enhancing its appeal for cultural tourism. Celebrating cultural festivals and events can foster a sense of pride and attract both local and international visitors, offering immersive experiences. Moreover, leveraging significant historical landmarks, such as Christuskirche, Heroes Acre and other national museums and monuments, will enrich the visitor experience while preserving cultural identity. Finally, emphasising eco-tourism and sustainable practices can attract environmentally conscious travellers, aligning with global trends in responsible tourism.

7. People

Namibia can enhance its brand identity by focusing on several key strategies that highlight the qualities of its people. Emphasising the diversity and education of its workforce can showcase the innovation and adaptability essential for emerging industries. Promoting the hospitality and resilience of Namibians will attract tourists and investors seeking a welcoming environment. Furthermore, integrating the stories and contributions of indigenous communities honours cultural heritage while appealing to those interested in authentic experiences. Finally, highlighting skilled professionals in sectors like technology and renewable energy can boost investor confidence in Namibia's workforce.

5.2.5 Major Findings and Outcomes

The research indicated that there is a critical need for Namibia to establish a clear brand identity rooted in its natural landscapes, cultural diversity, and national symbols. This identity should be effectively communicated through a cohesive narrative emphasising resilience, unity, and economic potential. To attract both tourists and investors, Namibia should identify diverse target audiences and leverage global platforms, such as international conferences and expos, while also enhancing its digital presence. Public-private partnerships and collaborations with international organisations and local businesses are essential for advancing Namibia's nation brand and driving investment and tourism.

Furthermore, promoting Namibia's rich cultural heritage, indigenous communities, and historical landmarks can enhance its appeal, particularly in the eco-tourism and cultural tourism sectors. The research also indicated that attracting investment in sectors like green hydrogen, agriculture, mining, and renewable energy is crucial for economic growth. Efforts should also be made to improve export quality and branding strategies.

In conclusion, the research underscores the importance of a unified and strategic approach to nation branding that leverages Namibia's unique strengths while addressing its weaknesses. By fostering a compelling brand identity and actively promoting its cultural and natural assets, Namibia can enhance its global competitiveness and attract both investment and tourism.

5.5.6 Limitations

Limitations refer to constraints in a research study that are beyond the researcher's control, such as restricted access to information or specific individuals, limited financial resources, and time constraints (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021:314).

The following limitations were identified based on the research methodology of this study:

- Access to a sufficiently large sample group due to the in-depth interview data collection method, which is time-consuming.
- Limited prior research on the nation branding of Namibia which could have enriched the theoretical framework of the study.
- The focus of the research was specifically on how enhancing Namibia's brand image and reputation can attract tourism and foreign investment to boost its global competitiveness, thus limiting automatic generalisation as other crucial factors may also influence Namibia's global competitiveness as a nation brand.
- Conducting the research virtually restricted the researchers' physical access to the sample group. This presented limitations in terms of the research not being able to fully engage with the participants.
- Although all participants resided and worked in Namibia during the time the data was collected, the researcher conducted interviews remotely from Johannesburg, South Africa, while some participants were in Namibia and other parts of the world due to work commitments. As a result, some interviews experienced internet disruptions, leading to extended interview times and the possibility of missing key information.
- The sample for this study consisted exclusively of Namibian citizens, which limited the scope of insights to local perspectives. This may have introduced potential bias, as participants could have been influenced by their own national pride or personal experiences. The absence of non-Namibians in the sample restricted the opportunity to gain broader, external viewpoints, which could have provided more valuable insights into how Namibia's nation brand is perceived internationally.
- The cross-sectional design of the study limited its ability to examine changes and developments in perceptions or the progress of Namibia's nation branding efforts over time (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020:112).
- Direct access to top decision-makers representing the key pillars of the nation brand hexagon was not achieved. Engaging these influential figures could have significantly enriched the research by providing deeper insights and perspectives that reflect the strategic priorities and decision-making processes behind Namibia's nation branding efforts.

5.3 Recommendations

This section will first address the implications of this study, followed by a summary of key recommendations.

5.3.1 Implications

This study presents various implications for both academia and practitioners. This section will discuss these implications.

5.3.1.1 Implications for the Namibia Investments Promotion Development Board

The Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB), as the country's lead investment promotion agency, plays a crucial role in positioning Brand Namibia as an attractive destination to live, visit, and invest. Situated within the Office of the President, the NIPDB's mandate directly supports efforts to drive both local and foreign investment, which

in turn boosts economic growth. The key findings from this study provide valuable insights for the NIPDB. By focusing on strategically managing local and international perceptions, enhancing Namibia's image and reputation, and developing a strong nation brand strategy, the NIPDB can position Namibia more competitively on the global stage, thereby increasing its appeal for investment and tourism.

5.3.1.2 Implications for government bodies

This research highlighted the critical role of the Namibian government as a key stakeholder in building and promoting Namibia's nation brand. For Brand Namibia to achieve its mandate, strong government support and commitment are essential. The government can use the findings of this study to craft policies that align with a comprehensive nation branding strategy. Moreover, it can leverage these findings by mobilising all relevant ministries and agencies that directly interact with international investors and tourists to create a cohesive nation brand. This coordinated effort will help strengthen Namibia's global image, boosting its international appeal and competitiveness.

5.3.1.3 Implications for the private sector

Businesses play an important role in promoting Brand Namibia, and their active participation in nation branding can lead to mutual benefits. Companies in sectors such as tourism, investment, renewable energy, and ICT can use the insights from this study to innovate and promote Namibia as an attractive destination for investment and tourism. By enhancing service delivery and improving customer experiences locally and internationally, businesses contribute to strengthening the country's global image. In return, their participation in nation branding can lead to increased sales, profits, and improved market competitiveness, as a strong national brand attracts more foreign investment and visitors.

5.3.1.4 Implications for the Namibian citizens

This study offers valuable insights for Namibian citizens by serving as educational material on the importance of Namibia's nation brand and their role in shaping it. Through national pride, active citizenship, social cohesion, and unity, Namibians can contribute to building a strong nation brand. By acting as patriotic ambassadors, they stand to benefit from the long-term results of a robust nation brand, which can help address socio-economic challenges like unemployment and inequality, ultimately improving the quality of life for all Namibians.

5.3.2 Future studies

The study aimed to gain deeper insights into the concept of nation branding, with a particular focus on Namibia's nation brand and its potential to enhance foreign direct investment and tourism for global competitiveness. By addressing a gap in existing literature, this research aimed to provide valuable knowledge to relevant stakeholders within the sector. The researcher identified a significant lack of research on Namibia's nation brand, presenting a clear opportunity for further exploration in this area.

Additionally, there is a need for more in-depth studies on how other factors can strengthen Namibia's nation brand, improving its image, reputation, and global competitiveness. Further

research should also examine international perceptions of Brand Namibia and develop strategies to enhance its brand equity, ultimately contributing to a stronger nation brand and its positioning on the global stage.

Finally, as this study primarily focused on two dimensions of the brand hexagon—tourism and investment, future research should explore the remaining four dimensions of the nation brand hexagon (exports, governance, culture & heritage, and people) more in-depth, to understand their potential contributions to building a strong nation brand for Brand Namibia.

5.3.3 Summative recommendations

This research has shown the importance of building a compelling and lucrative nation brand to attract foreign direct investment and tourism, ultimately boosting the country's global competitiveness. This can be done by improving a country's image and reputation and developing and implementing a robust nation brand strategy that targets various stakeholders to deliver their cohesive messaging.

In addition to the implications discussed in this research, several supplementary recommendations are proposed. First, securing leadership buy-in is essential for the success of nation branding initiatives. Namibian leaders should be educated on the importance of nation branding and its potential benefits for the country. By fostering a deeper understanding among leaders, Namibia can build a strong foundation for a compelling nation brand that reflects its values and aspirations.

Secondly, the establishment of an independent nation brand agency for Brand Namibia is recommended to enhance Namibia's branding efforts. While Brand Namibia currently operates within the Namibia Investment Promotion Board (NIPDB), the research suggests creating a dedicated agency with political support and government funding. This agency would focus solely on managing the nation's brand, improving its image and reputation, and attracting investment and tourism. Additionally, establishing satellite offices in key regions, including Europe, Asia, the Americas, and Australia, would further promote Namibia globally for direct foreign investment and tourism opportunities. To effectively promote Brand Namibia, a comprehensive and tailored branding strategy is essential. This strategy should focus on creating unique experiences that resonate with both investors and tourists. Additionally, there is a need for aggressive nation branding campaigns that effectively communicate Namibia's distinct story and identity to a global audience.

To enhance its nation branding efforts, Namibia must coordinate and consolidate initiatives by uniting stakeholders from various sectors. This unified approach should involve strong partnerships between government agencies and private enterprises that engage with international audiences. Key stakeholders identified for collaboration with the NIPDB include several ministries—such as Home Affairs, Finance, International Relations, Industrialisation and Trade, Environment, and Information and Communication Technology—as well as the Namibia Tourism Board, Namibian Ports Authority, Namibia Airports Company, Team Namibia, and prominent tourism entities like Gondwana Collections and Namibia Wildlife Resorts. Additionally, organisations such as the Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, civil society groups, and local communities should be engaged to ensure a comprehensive and strategic branding effort.

Moreover, Namibia needs to streamline visa acquisition and ease the process of doing business in Namibia, which would attract more investors and tourists. Reducing

unnecessary red tape is essential to improving the ease of doing business and tourism in Namibia. Finally, to effectively promote and preserve Namibia's rich history, culture, and heritage, it is recommended that existing national museums and monuments be well-maintained and managed. The establishment of new institutions, such as a Herero-Nama Genocide Museum and a Namibian Culture and Heritage Museum, would play a crucial role in safeguarding the nation's history. These institutions would not only honour Namibia's past but also contribute to cultural tourism and nation-building efforts, fostering a deeper sense of national pride and identity.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings and insights from the research, addressing the study's purpose and research questions. It explored perceptions of Namibia's nation brand and identified key strategies for enhancing the country's global competitiveness through nation branding. The findings emphasised the significance of public-private partnerships, collaboration across sectors, and leveraging Namibia's unique assets, including its culture, heritage, natural resources, and governance. Furthermore, the chapter underscored the potential for Namibia to enhance its image by focusing on tourism, investment, exports, and the strengths of its people.

While the study has limitations, these do not undermine the practical applicability of its findings. The implications for government agencies, private enterprises, and the Namibian people highlight the necessity of a unified nation branding strategy that fosters active citizenship, social cohesion, and national pride. These insights will be valuable for stakeholders aiming to enhance Namibia's international appeal, attract foreign investment, and promote sustainable development.

In addition to highlighting Namibia's strengths, it is crucial to acknowledge the weaknesses that need to be addressed. Key areas for improvement include enhancing visa and business processes, reducing bureaucratic hurdles to facilitate ease of doing business and tourism, and addressing inconsistent service delivery. Moreover, the limited international awareness of Namibia's unique offerings presents a challenge. To build a stronger nation brand, Namibia must work on these areas while capitalising on its strengths, ensuring increased competitiveness on the global stage.

This study contributes to the literature on Namibia's nation brand, providing practitioner insights and recommendations for further academic research. The findings also offer valuable guidance for Brand Namibia and stakeholders who will benefit from an enhanced national brand.

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Appendices

Annexure A: In-depth Interview Discussion Guide

1. Participant Details:

Name	
Designation	
Organisation	
Interview Date	
Interview Time	
Virtual Platform (Microsoft Teams/ Zoom)	

2. Introduction

Interviewer: My name is Victoria Shimweefeleni and I am a Master of Commerce in Strategic Brand Leadership student at IIE Vega School in South Africa. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Dr Erika Zeelie regarding Namibia's nation branding.

The reason why you were selected to participate in this study, and why you qualify as an idea participant is either because you have a background in direct foreign investment, tourism or you are deemed a valuable stakeholder who have a direct interest or influence in the nation brand of Namibia.

I hope that this research will uncover the current perception of Namibia as a nation brand, and enhance our understanding on strategies that can be implemented to build a compelling brand image and reputation for 'Brand Namibia' in order to attract direct foreign investment and tourism to ensure the country's global competitiveness.

Please note the following ethical considerations for this study:

- This study is not harmful to you (the participants) or me (the researcher).
- Your participation is entirely voluntary.
- You will be informed of the research purpose and objectives.
- You may request a summary copy of the completed research.
- No incentives will be provided for your participation.
- Your information will be kept private and confidential throughout the study.
- You have the right to withdraw at any time without consequences.

Finally, ethical clearance to proceed with this research was granted by the IIE Vega following a successful defence.

3. Logistics

- Interview duration is +/- 45- 60 minutes.

- With your permission, the interview will be recorded to enable the researcher to be able to transcribe your responses.
- Please be direct, honest and open with your responses.
- There are no wrong or right responses or opinions.

Warm-Up Questions

1. Can you please introduce yourself and describe your current role?
2. How familiar are you with the concept of nation branding?

Section 1: Current Perceptions of Namibia as a nation brand

General Perception:

- What are the first five things (associations) that come to mind when you think of Namibia?
- In your opinion, what makes Namibia unique compared to other countries?

Strengths and Weaknesses:

- What do you consider to be Namibia's greatest strengths as a nation?
- What negative perceptions are associated with Namibia?
- What are some of the weaknesses or challenges Namibia faces in terms of its nation image and reputation?

Comparative Perception:

- How does Namibia compare to its neighbouring countries in terms of nation image and branding?
- Are there any nation branding strategies or campaigns from other countries that have particularly impressed you? If so, what aspects made them effective in your opinion?

Section 2: Strategies to Build a Compelling Brand Image and Reputation

Brand Identity:

- What visual elements or symbols should be included in Namibia's nation brand identity?
- What values or narratives should Namibia emphasise in its nation branding efforts?
- What strategies or campaigns do you think Namibia could implement to build compelling brand image and reputation?

Section 3: Promoting Namibia for Investment and Travel

Target Audiences and Promotion Channels:

- Who do you think should be the primary target audiences for Namibia's nation branding efforts (e.g., tourists, investors, students, locals)?
- Are there any specific platforms or events that you believe Namibia should leverage to promote itself?

Partnerships and Collaborations:

- What role do you think partnerships with private sector companies or international organisations can play in Namibia's nation branding?
- In your opinion, which organisations or individuals should collaborate/ partner to strengthen Namibia's nation brand?

Section 4: Leveraging Simon Anholt's Brand Hexagon

Tourism:

- How can Namibia enhance its tourism offerings to attract more international visitors?
- What unique experiences, activities or attractions of Namibia would resonate most with potential tourists?

Investment:

- What sectors in Namibia present the most attractive opportunities for foreign investment and how can Namibia capitalise on these opportunities to make itself more appealing to international investors?

Immigration:

- Would you consider Namibia a good place to work, study, or reside? Please elaborate.

Exports:

- What sectors or products do you think Namibia should focus on to increase its export potential?
- How can Namibia improve the visibility and competitiveness of its exports in the global market?

Governance:

- What's your perception on Namibia's governance?
- What impact do you think governance has on Namibia's attractiveness to investors and tourists?

Culture and Heritage

- What aspects of Namibia's culture and heritage should be more prominently featured in promoting the nation globally?
- Are there any specific cultural events or heritage sites that you believe should be highlighted more in Namibia's nation branding?

People:

- What qualities of the Namibian people should be emphasized in the nation's branding efforts?

Section 5: Encouraging National Pride, Active Citizenship, and Social Cohesion

- How can Namibia foster a sense of national pride among its citizens?
- What initiatives can encourage Namibians to participate more actively in nation-building
- How can Namibia encourage social cohesion and unity within its diverse population?

Section 6: Additional comments and suggestions

- Do you have any additional comments or suggestions to building a compelling nation brand for Namibia?

Thank you for your participation.

- - END - -

Annexure B: Consent Form

Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants
To whom it may concern, My name is Victoria Shimweefeleni and I am a student at The IIE's Vega School. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of DR ERIKA ZEELIE about Namibia's nation brand. The purpose of this study is to explore the current perceptions of Namibia, and how developing a compelling brand image and reputation can lead to its global competitiveness as a nation brand. This study aims to contribute to the literature and serve as a resource for practitioners in the branding and communication industry, particularly regarding Namibia's brand image and reputation. Moreover, this study aims to contribute to the limited research on Namibia's perceptions and nation branding. Finally, it seeks to provide insights to Namibian private and public stakeholders, by offering valuable research on the topic. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of Namibia's current perceptions, aiming to develop a compelling brand image and reputation for Namibia. This, in turn, could attract direct foreign investment and tourism, thereby enhancing its global competitiveness. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.
What will I be doing if I participate in your study?
I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you fit the sample group of my study and will add knowledge to the field. Moreover, your valuable insights will contribute to the limited research on Namibia's perceptions and its nation branding. Your participation could also help in developing a compelling and lucrative nation brand strategy for Namibia, thereby attracting direct foreign investment and tourism, and ultimately enhancing the country's global competitiveness. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to conduct an in-depth interview with you. This interview will be 45-60 minutes in duration via Microsoft Teams or Zoom depending on your preferred application. You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.
Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?
Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your honest perceptions of Namibia, its image and

reputation whether negative or positive. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

The following are the ethical considerations for this study:

7. The researcher does not view this study as harmful to herself or the participants.
8. Participation is entirely voluntary, and participants are required to give consent for both their participation and being video and voice recorded.
9. Participants will be informed of the research objectives and have the right to request a summary copy of the completed research.
10. No incentives will be provided for participation.
11. Participants' information will be protected and kept confidential throughout, and after the study.
12. Participants have the right to withdraw at any time without consequences.

Finally, ethical clearance to proceed with this research was granted by the IIE Vega School following a successful defence.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record and transcribe the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at IIE Vega School, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my IIE Vega School. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Victoria Shimweefeleni



The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:
 Dr Erika Zeelie

Participant or respondent Informed Consent – Audio and Visual Recordings.	
I agree to participate in the research conducted by Victoria Shimweefeleni about Namibia's current perceptions, aiming to develop a compelling brand image and reputation for brand Namibia. This, in turn, could attract direct foreign investment and tourism, thereby enhancing its global competitiveness. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: - I agree to participate in this research and be recorded for the purpose of data collection. - My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private and confidential. - My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research. - I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview. - I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.	
Signature	Date

Annexure C: Ethics Approval Letter



Our Ref: M. 400824
Enquiries: research@iie.ac.za

19 August 2024



Outcome of Ethics Clearance Application for Master of Commerce in Strategic Brand Leadership.



Student name: Victoria Shimweefeleni
Student number: [REDACTED]
Brand and campus: IIEVega



Dear Victoria,

Thank you for submitting the ethics clearance application for the study: *A critical analysis of Namibia's nation brand.*



We are pleased to inform you that the IIE's Higher Degrees Committee considered and granted ethics clearance. This means that you may proceed with data collection. Kindly reflect on the feedback provided by the Higher Degrees Committee to ensure that suggestions are considered in the mini-dissertation. If you are collecting data from a specific organisation, ensure that you have a gatekeeper's letter that confirms their approval of the data collection being done.

You are reminded that any changes made to the research methodology or title of the research study must be signed off by the IIE's Higher Degrees Committee. Kindly ensure that all ethical considerations are duly applied whilst collecting, analysing and interpreting the data for the completion of your research.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your programme team or supervisor directly.

All the best with your research..



Dr Willy Engelbrecht
Chair: Higher Degrees Committee



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