

14 Steps to Nation Branding

A practical guide for building and managing a
Nation Brand, developed by Bloom Consulting.

November 2024

The 14 Steps to Nation Branding

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Forward

Just as no two countries are the same, no two nation branding projects are alike. Every nation faces unique challenges and paths to address them. Despite these differences, Bloom Consulting has distilled a common simplicity into this practical guide. It stems from a blend of lived personal experiences and the professional expertise of Bloom Consulting.

Any route you take – as any 'nation brand architect' knows – it takes time, serious commitment, loads of passion and a strong dose of resiliency to build a nation brand. So I commend those of you brave and lucky enough to tackle yours. It's an endurance sport!

It's been an honour to work with the team at Bloom Consulting and their wise counsel comes to life in this guidebook.

The steps in this book highlight the technical process we adopted from the first months of our project.

14 Steps to Nation Branding is designed for 'new' nation branders – to help bring simplicity to the complexity inherent in any nation branding initiative. Perhaps my greatest contribution to this practical guide was to simplify from 20 to 14 steps. As the company we turn to for guidance on Australia's Nation Brand, we admire Bloom Consulting for their attention to detail, but in this case, less was more.

Finally, while Jose and the team have prepared this as a neat, linear, progressive guide, the reality may see as many curved lines and loops as linear ones. Our journey is no different. Nor is it complete! But so far I've found it's in these loops and curves where the magic and real fun happens! It's where the very DNA of your nation is exhibited most by those in your team and those on this magnificent journey with you.

So celebrate them in the knowledge that bold and ambitious work is never neat or linear.

Enjoy. Good luck.

Fiona de Jong

Head of Australia's Nation Brand

Introduction

Welcome to the brand architects' guide to Nation Branding. A step-by-step key to unlocking the otherwise overwhelming endeavour of Nation Branding.

The objective of *14 Steps to Nation Branding* is to create a blueprint for those who have never before taken on this challenge. This roadmap to Nation Branding benchmarks in building a Nation Brand.

14 Steps to Nation Branding follows the methodology of Bloom Consulting and our distinctive take on Nation Branding. Our carefully curated and practical approach is built on the foundation of research, strategy, implementation, and measurement. We make reference to our Nation Brand dimensions throughout this guide, check back here if you need a refresher.

Bloom Consulting Nation Brand Wheel® is made up of five unique dimensions, each measurable in their own regard in terms of attraction and appeal and influenced by the Nation Brand. The five dimensions are investment, tourism, talent, prominence, and exports. Each dimension caters to a specific brand audience (or target audience); investors, tourists, workforce, general public, and companies (respectively). Nation Branding strategies are furthermore implemented to work on their behalf with consideration for the unique needs of each target audience; advantages, experience, lifestyle, admiration, and uniqueness (respectively).

Nation Branding is the act of strategically building, connecting and managing the systematic flow from perception to emotion within the scope of reality to minimize distorted images and maximize Nation Brand potential to attract and appeal through a positively reinforced reputation.

In short, Nation Branding enables you to be the nation you want to be and be seen for who you are.

This guidebook does not have all of the answers but rather should act as a reference for the entire Nation Branding process to ensure you and your brand builders are on the right track. No matter the stage you are in, it can't hurt to have a look and ask yourself whether your process thus far has skipped over a step or two.

While this guidebook is not exclusively about our experience with Australia, I would like to thank... Fiona de Jong and the Austrade team for trusting in us and for being such dedicated partners in building the Australia Nation Brand.

I would also like to thank the Australian people who have always received me with open arms and make me feel welcome whenever visiting their home. Finally, I need to thank Dillon Sawyer, Gonzalo Vilar and the team at Bloom Consulting without whom this guidebook would not have been possible.

José Filipe Torres
CEO



Step 01

Lay the foundation
and create the
preliminary structure

Create something that is strong and resilient,
capable of withstanding the hardships ahead.



Australian Government

CHAPTER EIGHT —

Partner

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security and p

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and invest global
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attraction and ic
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to help shape ou
Australia can be

Australian Foreign Policy White Paper highlighting
the importance of the Australia Nation Brand.

Partnerships and soft power

and diversity of Australia's connections to the world. Partnerships between all levels of government, and Australian Government and business and civil society, lead to effective foreign policy. Such partnerships amplify international influence. The Government will continue to work closely with a broad range of partners to advance our prosperity.

ports, cities and even regions increasingly have strong voices. Our migrant communities in Australia have grown in number. The number of Australians working overseas is growing. Our companies trade globally. Education and tourism bring us to our region. Our commitment to sustainable development and humanitarian crises is growing.

It also means that soft power can influence the behaviour of others through the power of ideas—is becoming more important for Australia. By using soft power to shape our external environment, we can better pursue its interests.

As we move forward, to stay on top of focus keep pace with changes in technology, the Government will conduct a review to ensure we continue to build soft power and exercise influence effectively.

At the same time, the Government will also develop a stronger nation brand that puts Australia in better positions in the eyes of the global community. In competitive and fast-changing global markets, we want to be recognised as uniquely Australian.

Foreign policy partners

States and territories

The Commonwealth Government is committed to a close partnership with its counterparts on

Step 1

Lay the foundation and create the preliminary structure

Creating a strong foundation is equally as important in Nation Branding as in building a home. Before we pour the concrete, let's have a look at a few key questions: *why are you doing this, what is it going to look like, and where do you begin?*

First up, you need to have a firm mandate. This includes mapping out who will be involved in kick-starting this major undertaking. Are you looking at the ministerial level or specific individuals? Once this has been addressed, it is time to create an advisory board. Curating the proper mix of delegates to head this venture is vitally important to maximize stakeholder and target audience representation and satisfaction, considering the needs of both the public and private sectors.

The advisory board is meant to embody leadership and direction for the Nation Brand, removed from political interests and unaffected by changes in government. It will be their responsibility to discuss sourcing options and establish the necessary relationships to get the Nation Brand project off the ground.

The difficulty will be in securing funding from relevant stakeholders who are being asked to commit to a long-term return on investment.

That said, money speaks to money. It will be up to the advisory board to think like a start-up and prepare the necessary business plan to present to potential backers. If successful, they would be equally committed to the brand and contingent on its success.

The advisory board will be designed under its own governance model and ultimately support the executive team. It's necessary to do so to uphold the brand values throughout turnover, turmoil and tumultuous nationwide affairs. Spoiler alert, it's no walk in the park.

Before getting started, the advisory board must decide on the type of institution they will operate under. *Will this team be a part of a foundation, independent institution, private partnership or specific ministerial body?* The decision is yours but is vital to do so before bringing in new players.

Now, find your fellow brand architects. Let's have a look at the people behind the paint. The brand management team should be made up of passionate, knowledgeable, creative and capable members. Accompanied by the support and practical guidance of experienced Nation Brand strategy consultants, the interim team should be comprised of a minimum three people.

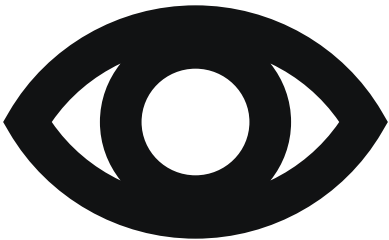
Primary objectives are two-fold, beginning with the technical process and followed by addressing stakeholders. One major concern moving forward will be communication. Not only will you brand the nation but your institution as well. You will be tasked with reaching a broader range of audiences and stakeholders while aiming to be seen as *the* Nation Brand builders for your country.

Who will be at the helm? The team will be led by a Nation Brand Director, or Chief Nation Brand Builder. It is advised to position someone who is comfortable with exposure, capable of facing difficult stakeholders, and is not politically associated as it would hinder the brand's development regardless of the level of involvedness with political affiliations or interests. This figure must have a comprehensive understanding of what Nation Branding is and hold competences in data-driven research and analytics, business-orientation and the digital world as we will later see this plays a critical part in Nation Branding.

Prioritization should be made for professional over creative skillsets at this stage. Primary objectives are more operations and logistics based. You first have to build the “start-up” before getting to the creative part.

Takeaways:

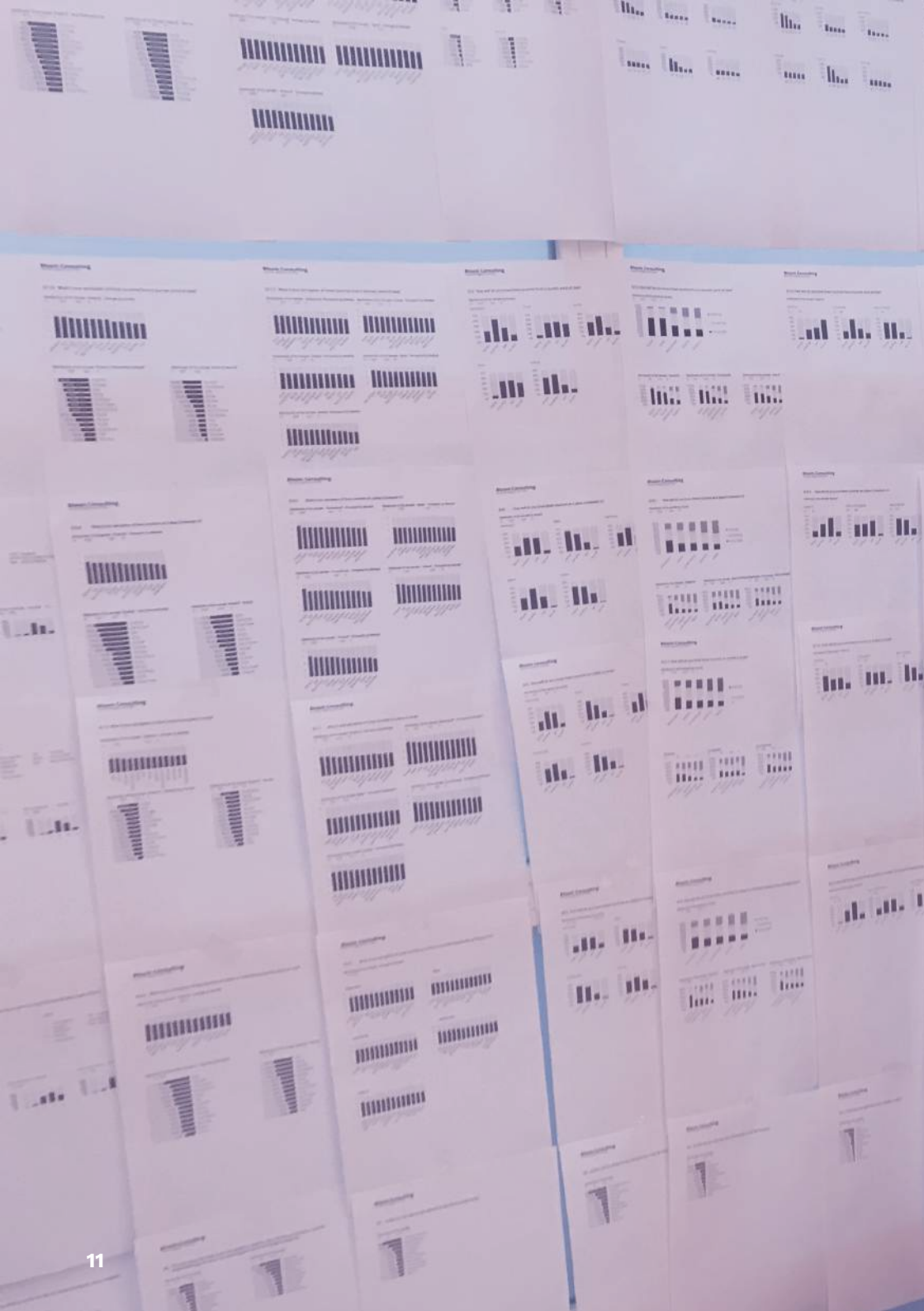
- Ask yourself, why are you doing this?
- Create an advisory board with strong representation.
- Find your fellow brand architects and name the director.



Step 02

Understand current perceptions

Gather the thoughts and opinions of the national and international communities, what does everyone think about you right now?





In this image you can see the Bloom Consulting Nation Brand data analysis process.

Step 2

Understand current perceptions

Taking a deeper dive into how your country is perceived across the five dimensions of the Bloom Consulting Nation Brand Wheel®, you will assess domestic and international perceptions and measure them against conceived identity. Your aim will be to answer the following questions: *are we experiencing an image-identity gap, what emotions does our brand evoke, and with what do people associate our brand?*

First, make sure you are asking the right question to solve the right problem. Undertake national research, allowing for a clear idea of who you are and gaining insight as to whether your conceived identity aligns with reality. Results will enable the initial stages of defining the problem and setting realistic objectives to solve it.

This process holds added value in spreading awareness of your efforts while engaging with stakeholders through interviews and open discussions of Nation Brand building and its benefits.

Second will be to identify international perceptions via quantitative and qualitative analysis. The international and domestic datasets collected will then present a contrasted view of perceptions.

How does the world see you against how your own people see themselves and their country?

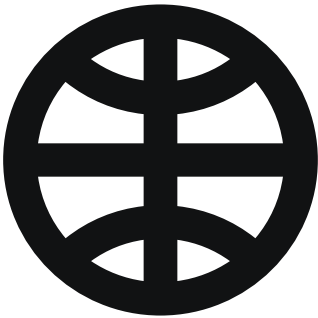
90% of the countries we have worked with are not happy with the way they are perceived internationally, and rightfully so. Perceptions tend to be much worse than reality. Reality is by no means perfect, but it's not *that* bad.

There is a reason *why* international perceptions are often so misleading, and gaps develop. Digital Identity is a major contributor as to *why* you are perceived in a certain way. Google yourself and you'll see what we mean. The first few pages of search results must certainly showcase actions, activities and policies aligned with the perceptible Nation Brand.

In answering the *why* as to current perceptions, Digital Identity should be your key suspect. By cross-referencing previously defined qualitative and quantitative perception datasets coupled with Digital Identity, you begin to see the bigger picture and establish a viable benchmark for long-term strategic planning.

Takeaways:

- Ask yourself, with what do people associate our brand?
- Assess domestic and international perceptions.
- Establish a benchmark by understanding your Digital Identity.



Step 03

Establish target markets

Identify strategic traditional and new target markets who will be the most receptive and efficient in developing your Nation Brand.



Malcolm Allan, President of Bloom Consulting, at a Nation Brand workshop to define target markets.

Step 3

Establish target markets

A common mistake we see is that countries and their Nation Brands work overtime to appeal to a global scale of audiences. Instead, we suggest a narrower scope.

Over the course of the preceding steps while working to understand domestic and international perceptions through qualitative and quantitative research, target markets will have surfaced. Survey respondents will reveal who is most likely to receive and react positively to your emerging Nation Brand. Markets will be made clear through stakeholder opinions and quantifiable data research.

We can talk about two different types of markets: traditional and new. The first, traditional, is determined by default. These are the markets with whom you are currently in operation and cannot be divided from.

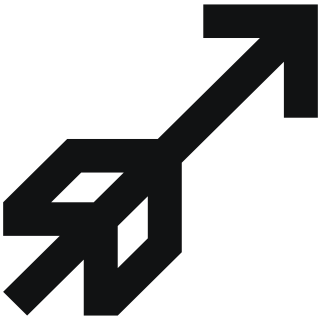
New markets on the other hand, are those you wish to work with and will take some convincing.

Both will be further understood in terms of demand of specific markets through digital demand and hard facts.

While exploring the two segments above (traditional and new), keep these questions in mind: *who are my current markets and what am I offering them, and who could we be attractive to and what do we have to offer them?* With limited resources, as many Nation Brand projects face, it would be wise to clearly identify where you need to strategically invest your time and money.

Takeaways:

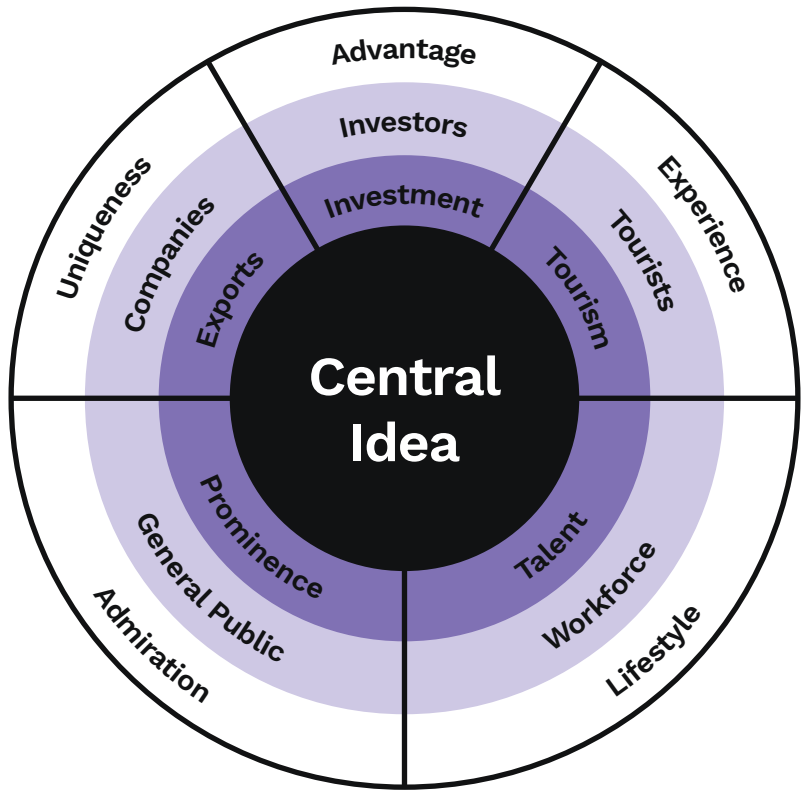
- Narrow your focus of target markets.
- Determine target markets with the help of stakeholder interviews.
- Address both traditional and new target markets.



Step 04

Set realistic objectives

We all get carried away from time to time, but it is very important in this case to manage expectations and set yourself up for success.



Bloom Consulting
Nation Brand Wheel®,
its five dimensions and
international dimensions.

Step 4

Set realistic objectives

The challenge in setting realistic objectives is first understanding the challenge itself. Ask yourself, *why are we doing this and who are we doing it for?* To answer this, please refer to the Bloom Consulting Nation Brand Wheel©. This will help in determining what the real objective is and you'll work backwards from there.

One possibility for an overall objective would be aligning perceptions with reality. In many cases this is the root of the problem, but not for everyone. There may be a more complex or even simpler answer as to why you are taking on such a project. Perhaps, your aim may be to steer the nation towards a specific dimension in a realistic way. You reckon tourism is undervalued in your nation and this is where you'd like to take the Nation Brand. Now you have a clear (but not easy) objective with an apparent target audience: tourists.

The fine line between reality and embellishment must remain at the forefront of objective setting as to not disappoint stakeholders whether global citizens or the nation itself. Objectives must be measurable, thus ask yourself, *what can we measure?*

Your institution is capable of building a Nation Brand with the power to cultivate appeal of individual dimensions as set out by the **Bloom Consulting Nation Brand Wheel©**. Using dimension setting as a tool for navigation will be beneficial. Identify the bigger picture, decide which track to take and select the best vehicle to get you there.

Takeaways:

- Ask yourself, why are we doing this and who are we doing it for?
- Understand the challenge and direct your focus with dimension setting.
- Set objectives that are measurable.



Step 05

Mitigate project risk and strategize crisis management

Be prepared. Your project faces great adversity, and you must be ready for all that can be thrown your way whether internal or external.

Step 5

Mitigate project risk and
strategize crisis management

**Plan for the future before the future plans for you.
By no means will your team think through every possible scenario but having a playbook ready and standard operating procedures in place will surely be helpful during times of uncertainty.**

Think, what could jeopardize the Nation Brand project from an internal perspective such as budget cuts, crises, changes in government or leadership and the Nation Brand itself (external), such as a political or social crisis.

Predict scenarios of what could go wrong. Next, decide which actions would be necessary to mitigate these risks. Taking a look at the example above, *a change in leadership*, what would be your first point of order if a major shift in power were to take place? Set a meeting. Risk mitigation begins with reassuring your team and stakeholders that you are prepared to react, assume responsibility for your deliverables, and alleviate any disruptions for branding projects and their implementation.

Risks associated with Nation Brand strategy, such as low stakeholder engagement, problems of design elements, brand representatives, supportive agents, and resources all require internal resilience.

Interruptions in the Nation Branding process are inevitable. Preparing an efficient strategy for the internal aftermath to minimize adverse risk effect is the core function of this step. *What would we do if this were to happen?*

Now, let's think about the bigger issues. As the team in charge of managing the Nation Brand, it is your job to step up during times of crisis.

These unique moments will be opportunities for your institution to solidify its position as a leader as many will be keen to hear what you have to say. Utilize the brand to your nation's advantage while ensuring it is not tarnished by the creation of negative perceptions. Crises will put Nation Brand management to the test. This is your time to shine and showcase Nation Branding as a worthy investment.

External crises will impact a broad range of stakeholders. Global crises bring scrutiny for nation performance in terms of crisis management. Thinking back to our earlier steps, how can you assess current performance and use this data to make strategic decisions to optimize brand performance.

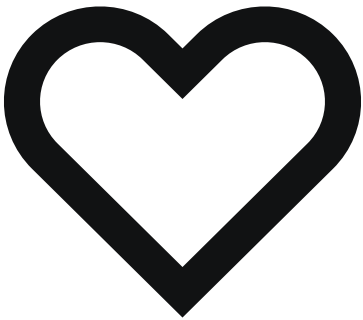
Developing a crisis management strategy early on will prepare you and the team to react swiftly to what will most certainly be a surprising and inherently negative occurrence. In general, a crisis may or may not affect the reputation of a country.

Research shows that reputation impacts the image of a country when one of the following or a combination of these three elements occurs: prolonged crisis, high level of intensity, or a crisis that affects the country's identity and culture. As a reminder, the only way to successfully position a Nation Brand is to show by doing, not saying.

This rings especially true for crisis management. Do what you do best, and positive perceptions will follow suit.

Takeaways:

- Plan for the future by predicting worse case scenarios.
- Mitigate risk by building internal resilience.
- Prove yourself during times of crisis by using data to make strategic decisions.



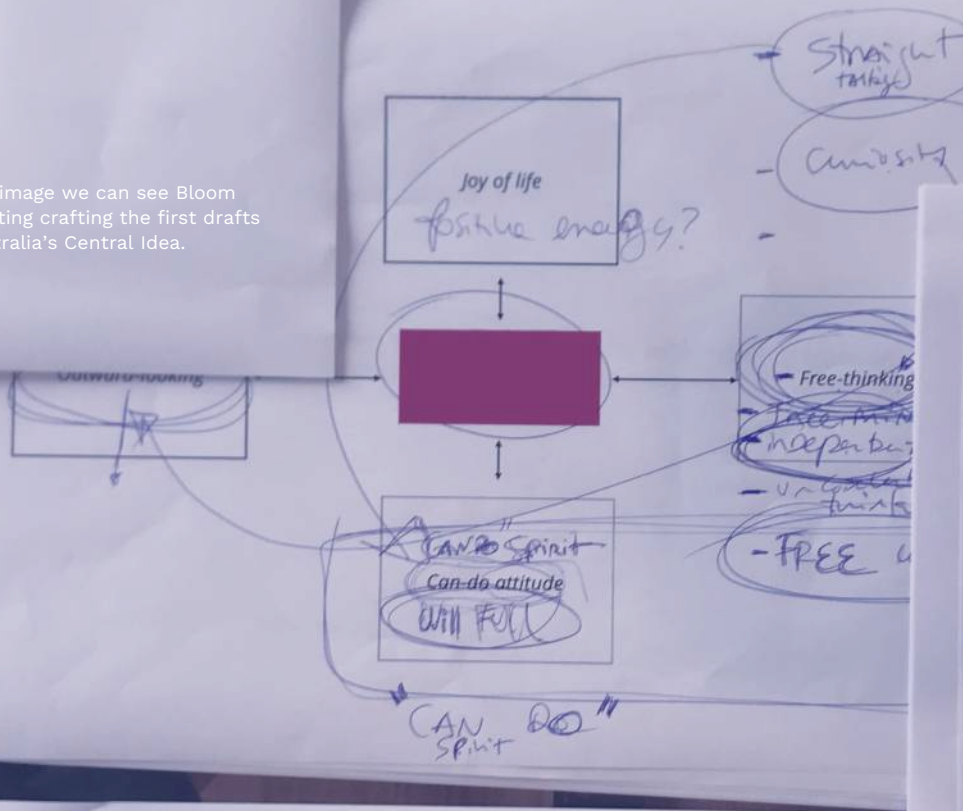
Step 06

Define your Central Idea

Your Central Idea is silent, simple, and not a slogan, and should come from your nation's essence and purpose.

...ple.
 ge innovation.
 business.

In this image we can see Bloom Consulting crafting the first drafts of Australia's Central Idea.



...purpose, promise,
 brand.

and culturally rich

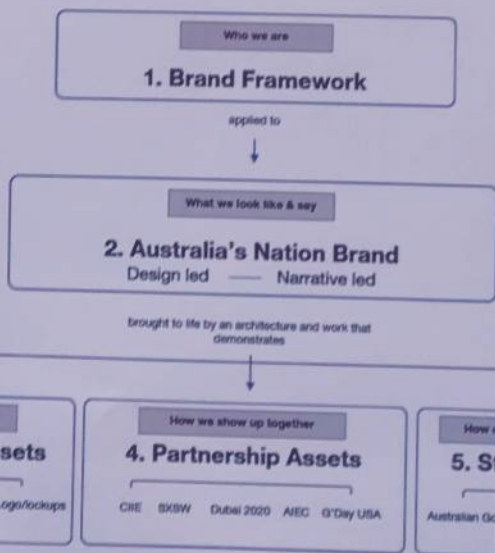
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Bloom Consulting
 Countries Regions and Cities

Outward-looking

Step 6

Define your Central idea

Your Nation Brand should be treated as a vessel through which the country's identity is carried out and globally distributed. Do away with misconceptions about your nation and its people.

Your Nation Brand should represent what makes your country unique and relevant to your audiences identified in step four. To do so, you will need to define your Central Idea, the key driver and motivation behind all place brand touchpoints.

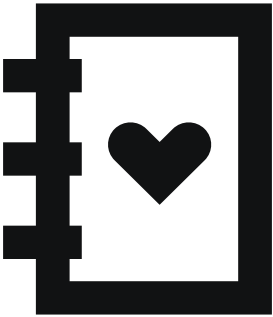
It is the emotion and feeling you want your audiences to feel every time they hear your country's name. Your Central Idea is something that can only be felt without being spoken; it's about the things you do rather than the things you say.

Having a look at two examples of how a Central Idea can be representative of a nation: Australia's Central Idea is very different than that of Andorra who openly identifies as balance. These nations work towards consistency, repetition, and coherency with (almost) everything they do.

How you act will speak louder than shouting who you want to be.

Takeaways:

- Act the way you want to be perceived; don't talk about it.
- Create a strong point of reference for all brand behaviour.
- Collaborate with stakeholders for them to weigh in during Central Idea development.



Step 07

Be on-brand, stay on-brand

Creating checks and balances for yourself and others will only become more and more important as your pool of stakeholders continues to grow. Don't lose sight of what's important!

In this image we can see Bloom Consulting conducting a workshop to create and test brand touchpoints. As you can see, post-its are essential to our operation...

Step 7

Be on-board,
stay on-board

Don't go wandering. Define your Central Idea and stick to it. Nation Brand success is contingent on consistency across all place brand touchpoints. How can we do so? Understand what it means to be ON- and OFF-brand by creating a short set of questions (10 or so) which will help to answer whether place brand touchpoints are on-brand.

Regularly referring back to your Central Idea is key to brand stabilization and acceptance. Now that your Central Idea has been defined, it's time to formulate your ON and OFF brand filters.

The purpose of ON and OFF brand filters is to challenge new and existing place brand touchpoints. Your Central Idea is the guiding light for everything 'Nation Branding', and the touchpoints developed therein after must be aligned. ON and OFF brand filters are a measure of defence against going off-brand and not building the desired perception in your brand audiences' mind.

In questioning whether an event for example is on- or off-brand, ask yourself whether it speaks to your Central Idea and is representative of the desired brand behaviours.

*Does it attract the right attention?
Does the signage speak to your brand vision? Is there a contradiction in messaging and action being taken?*

Putting your brand to the test is the only way to stay true to who you are.

Takeaways:

- Stick to your Central Idea.
- Create ON and OFF brand filters to stay on-brand.
- Test your place brand touchpoints; are they representative of your brand vision?



Step 08

Audit and activate touchpoints

It's time to get creative and determine which programmes and projects will be most effective in achieving your objectives.



This diagram represents the four quadrants of the Bloom Consulting SpiderBrand® where we design and build place brand touchpoints (work in a clockwise direction).

Step 8

Audit and active touchpoints

Place brand touchpoints are diverse in nature as they are the platforms through which a brand is experienced. The four quadrants of the Bloom Consulting SpiderBrand® are actions, activities, policies, stakeholder engagement, Digital Identity, and marketing. Each has the power to influence individual image and national reputation.

At this stage of the Nation Branding process, you will develop programmes validated by the Central Idea, epitomizing the brand message and behaviour. Asking yourself, *what can we do that's on-brand?*

Stakeholder engagement initiatives will be further explored as a critical point in the Nation Branding process such as creating a Nation Brand toolbox and providing training and support for brand builders.

Actions, activities and policies are greatly dependent on the objectives of the Nation Brand strategy.

In looking at different brand audiences such as international talent (workers, students, etc.) and economic brand awareness, visa policies could play a great role in the brand development.

In addressing your nation's Digital Identity as a place brand touchpoint, target audiences will be faced with an overwhelming point of interaction if not managed accordingly. Taking the perspective of target audience, if you are positively influenced by something you see online, you are all the more likely to investigate and research more.

This is where marketing comes in.

We would like to note that up until this point we have virtually omitted marketing from the steps to branding a nation no matter the pressures your institution will inevitably face by brand builders and developers who believe it is the end all be all.

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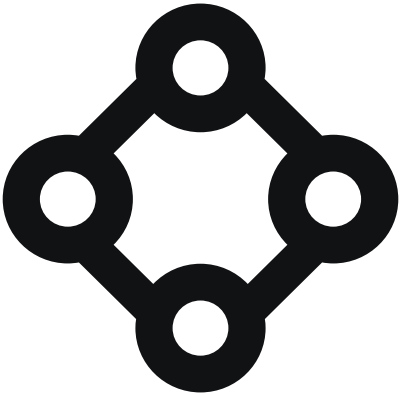
This is where marketing comes in.

We would like to note that up until this point, we have virtually omitted marketing from the steps to branding a nation no matter the pressures your institution will inevitably face by brand builders and developers who believe it is the end-all be-all.

A great policy can be put in place, but if no one is talking about it or reading about it online, there is a loss of transactional value due to a missed moment of capitalization. Marketing efforts in this case will not be advertising; rather they hold the purpose of driving awareness so that people are *genuinely* curious and interested in the Nation Brand and activated quadrants of the **Bloom Consulting SpiderBrand®**.

Takeaways:

- Ask yourself, what can we do that's on-brand?
- Develop programmes validated by the Central Idea.
- Implement your actions, activities and policies, and stakeholder engagement initiatives to optimize brand awareness.



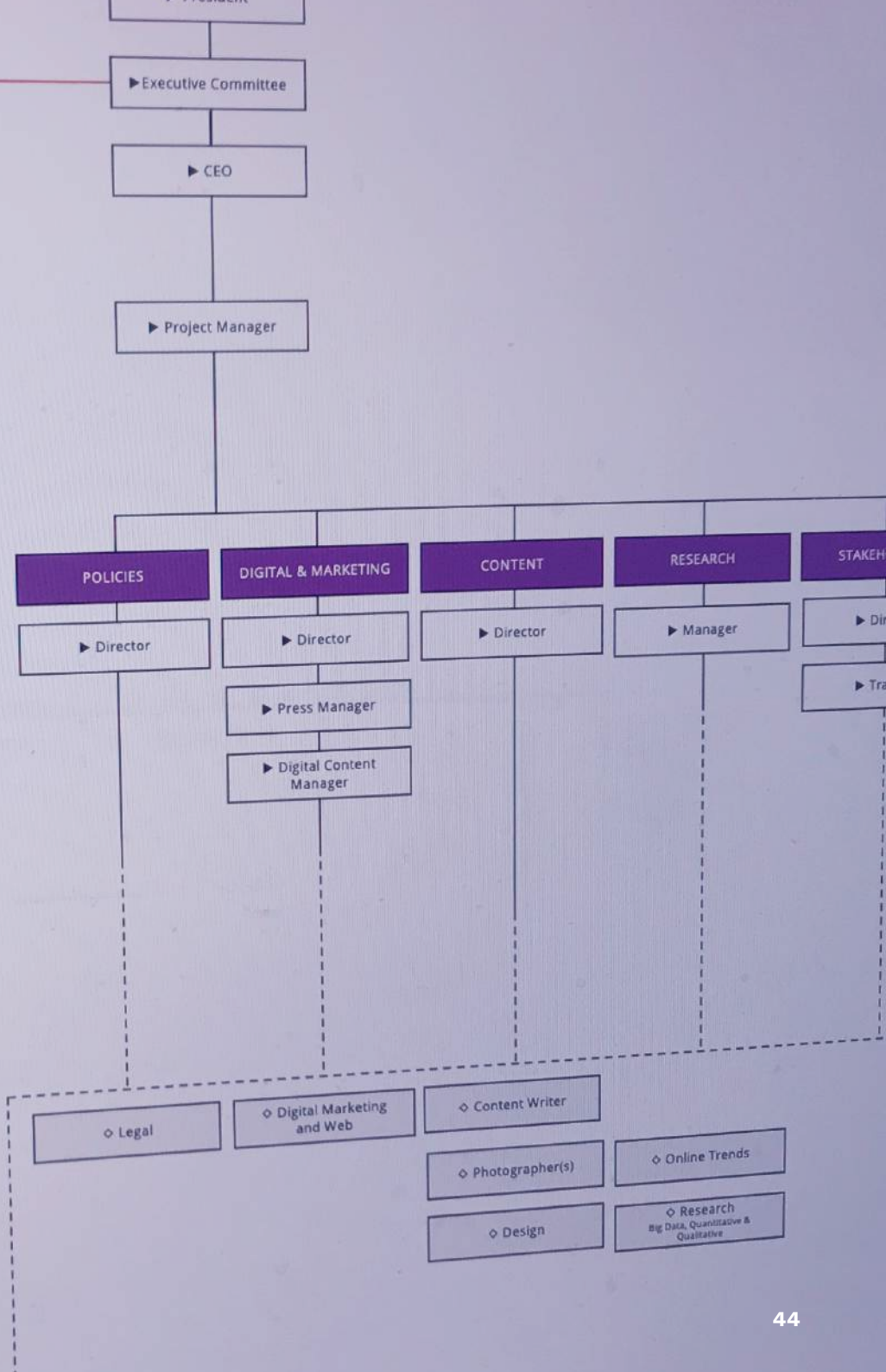
Step 09

Build your Nation Brand management model

Find the governance structure that will work best for you and your needs to be successful as the go-to Nation Branding institution.



Initial drafts of potential management structures and target objectives for a Nation Brand project being conducted by Bloom Consulting.



Step 9

Build your Nation Brand management model

You have identified your needs, you have your programmes ready to activate, and you have the tools to be successful. Now it is time to ask yourself, *what is the ideal governance model to ensure the previously established touchpoints and measurement tools are implemented correctly?* The proper structure will be necessary to maintain the reputation of go-to Nation Branding institution.

You'll now make the leap from an interim team to your executive team. It's highly important that during this shift in internal power, the newly founded members are 100% aligned with, committed to, and understanding of the Central Idea.

This expansion will take the form of building out your team to 10-15 people who are dedicated to the brand, know their role, and understand the Central Idea and vision for the Nation Brand.

One of the primary objectives assumed during this transition will be the role of management regarding Digital Identity. We will later elaborate on the importance of building digital supply and demand.

The executive team will spearhead the brand on an ongoing basis. These brand builders must be trained on how to decide, utilize and manage touchpoints which reflect the carefully curated Nation Brand and furthermore speak its language and convey meaning validated by the Central Idea.

In growing from a start-up-like venture to a large-scale operation, it's important to remind everyone that the new team members are responsible for deliverables such as capacity building and stakeholder engagement. Too often, Nation Branding institutions feel a sense of responsibility to engage in classical marketing practices in lieu of further pursuing their *real* objectives.

Takeaways:

- Ask yourself, what is the ideal governance model for my Nation Brand project?
- Grow your team to 10-15 people who are dedicated to the brand.
- Don't assume classical marketing practices; stick to your objectives.



Step 10

Engage with Stakeholders

You cannot do this alone.
Gather and maintain the support of all levels of stakeholders; this will make or break your brand.

In this image we see Fiona de Jong and team presenting together with Bloom Consulting, the Nation Brand strategy of Australia to a group of stakeholders.





Step 10

Engage with stakeholders

Next up, the Achilles' heel of Nation Branding; stakeholder engagement. Mapping and connecting the dots of *who* will be the necessary stakeholders beyond the advisory board. The executive team will seek to escalate brand matters and initiatives beyond the internal structure through meetings, workshops and tireless communication.

This is where you assess the level of acceptance and commitment of stakeholders. Be receptive to feedback and make the necessary adjustments while maintaining consideration for internal capacity building.

This guidebook often makes reference to the four distinct types of stakeholders; brand architects (those who initiate the Nation Branding project, you), brand builders (everyone else, primarily the public sector who deliver the brand promise), brand developers (third parties) and brand audience (or target audience). Engagement is not exclusive to one type. There is a certain level necessary within each segment and each must be handled in a unique fashion.

99% of all reasons related to Nation Brand strategy failure are related to low stakeholder engagement.

Perhaps the most crucial step to Nation Branding, the *house* cannot be built without the understanding and support of all brand architects, builders, developers and audiences.

Stakeholders, stakeholders, stakeholders. Listen, respect and respond to your stakeholders' criticisms and concerns. One effective measure in maintaining the conversation between the outside world and your organization would be to establish a point of contact. This could take the form of private and public institutions or businesses designating one team member as the point person for Nation Branding initiatives and messaging.

Without shifting focus away from external stakeholders, continue to engage with those who are inside of your organization. Develop and implement your capacity-building program. This will enable team members to engage with a range of brand builders and developers to garner support and broaden the reach of effective brand strategies.

The focus will be on creating opportunities for *internal brand builders* to uplift and support the brand. Capacity building will take your brand builders to the next level as they acquire, develop, and harness the necessary skills and tools to be successful in their role.

Brand builders and developers are going to push the brand beyond its realisation by optimizing strong (continuing) stakeholder engagement programs while maintaining an open dialogue, repeatedly asking *how can we keep the brand alive?*

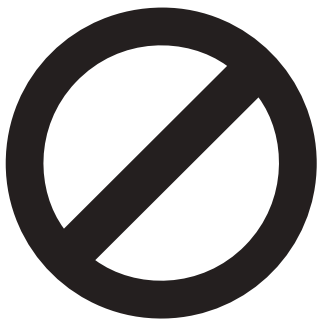
Do not relax. This is your moment to capitalize on all of the hard work you've done up until now and positively encourage local involvement and boost your brand even further.

Reporting, reporting, reporting.

Equally important in maintaining brand relevance is the measurement of results, benefits, and KPIs. Both internal and external brand builders are going to anticipate the impacts of their investment whether it was time or money. The question will bode in stakeholders' minds, *what has actually been done?* Actively reporting on your progress and future planning will uphold the interest of your team and their supporters.

Takeaways:

- Map out necessary stakeholders beyond the advisory board.
- Engage with *all* types of stakeholders: fellow brand architects, brand builders, brand developers, and brand audiences.
- Develop and integrate a strong capacity-building program.



Step 11

(Don't) Launch the
brand &

(Don't) Create a logo

Trust us, this will save you a great deal of time,
money, and headaches.



In corporate branding, logos are the cherry on the top. In Nation Branding they are the **rotten** cherry on top as they won't help to build perceptions and can compromise the entire Nation Brand project.

Step 11

(Don't) Launch the brand &

(Don't) Create logo

You are not *launching* the brand or creating a logo. Nation Branding is at no point definitive; it is an ongoing process which must be treated as such. Conducting an official launch with a costly logo can spark controversial feedback and misunderstanding across a range of stakeholders, participants, and onlookers whether domestic or international.

Removing this moment from the equation will reduce the hardship of unnecessary explanation of your institution's purpose to those who are not pertinent to its success.

It is **not** our recommendation to attach the Nation Brand to a logo. Take this opportunity to avoid an unnecessary risk.

Logos are too often criticized and bring no value to the overall perception of a nation. In our experience, we have seen projects fail due a poorly accepted logo, and for what?

Now tell me, what's the logo of Japan? South Africa? Brazil? If you answered, "*not sure*" to any of these three examples but still have some association of what that nation means to you (negative or positive), we have succeeded in proving our point. Investing in a logo is costly and ineffective in creating a lasting *positive* perception. However, in the case of a *negative* perception, logos can be the rotten cherry on top.

Takeaways:

- Do not launch the brand.
- Do not waste time or money on a logo.
- There is no end to the Nation Branding process.



Step 12

Monitor and measure your brand

Measure what you can. Remember, this is not the answer to all nation problems, so find the tools that work for you to show off your achievements.



This is an image of a Nation Brand tracker © prototype, a tool to measure the working Nation Brand.

Step 12

Monitor and measure your brand

It is important to use the same variables which were previously addressed to successfully measure whether your Nation Branding initiatives are taking hold. *Has there been greater, more positive, interaction with new and existing place brand touchpoints?*

First, you will work to find which tools will give you the formula for success in terms of brand builder and developer satisfaction. Nation Branding projects are unique; much depends on who is funding, supporting and overseeing the program. As motivations differ, priorities in results will respectively shift.

Looking back at earlier steps which make up your foundational research, refer to previously established benchmarks: domestic and international datasets, perceptions, target markets, competitor landscape, dimensional analysis and Digital Identity.

One mode of collective measurement would be the creation of a brand tracker dashboard. Here would be an opportunity to propose variables for brand builders to agree upon and engage with actively. However, it's important to keep in mind that a great key performance indicator (KPI) for one may not be the best for another.

Every aspect of Nation Branding cannot be measured. Choose your battles wisely, and maintain the expectations of those involved.

The newness of Nation Branding can cause confusion amongst stakeholders. For this, it is critical that KPIs are clear and measurable.

Takeaways:

- Ask yourself, has our work thus far produced positive results?
- Determine the best measurement tools for your project.
- Communicate effectively with stakeholders using clear KPIs.



Step 13

make the move to Nation Branding 2.0

Nowadays, we need to look at Nation Branding 2.0. Perceptions begin in the digital sphere and must be managed accordingly.



One of the key components to Nation Branding 2.0 are the first few pages of results when searching for a place online.

Step 13

Make the move to Nation Branding 2.0

Nations need to take into account their Digital Identity, as we've explored in earlier steps, this is no longer unavoidable. Being an early adopter of this fundamental shift in power will give you the upper hand needed to succeed in years to come.

It will be your mission to manage the Digital Identity of your nation. The aim is not to directly *create* content; rather provide stakeholders (brand builders and developers) with the tools necessary to brand themselves (communities, businesses, products, etc.) in a way which supports and reflects your Nation Brand. Generate real interest in your nation through interaction with the digital world, where else would people be going these days for information?

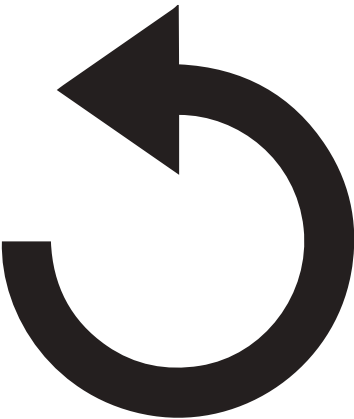
The greater the degree of separation the better. Content generated in-house and released as a method of encouraging brand audiences would be seen as promotional and weaken the credibility of the Nation Brand. *Be aware of the fine line of promotion.*

If you are managing the Nation Brand, try to be the facilitator of a unified Digital Identity and be seen as *the* source of information and support system for stakeholders. As a reminder, don't force the brand on developers, but, like we said, enable them to succeed in an on-brand way by optimizing digital tools.

Having a look at digital supply, encourage unbiased material from the media, opinion leaders, bloggers, and so forth, wherein the message conveyed is representative of the Nation Brand strategy. Now build demand. Brand builders will be tasked with inspiring curiosity and rousing interest in brand audiences to take the first step in choosing you, your nation.

Takeaways:

- Do not take on the responsibility of content creation.
- Bring relevant content (supply) to the digital world with the help of brand developers.
- Build demand amongst brand audiences through Digital Identity.



Step 14

Reflect, assess, repeat

Where do we go from here?
Backwards.

In this image we see the Bloom Consulting team continuing work on a Nation Brand to keep up momentum and ensure Nation Brand relevancy.



Step 14

Reflect, assess, repeat

You and your brand builders have taken the first steps to Nation Branding, but now it is about strength and resilience. Unfortunately, the work is not complete and never will be. Brand management will be an ongoing process.

Fortunately, you have already done the heavy lifting and will feel more comfortable returning to previous steps, ensuring continual brand momentum. Remembering the start-up mindset, challenges will persist, but you've made it to an important milestone. Don't quit now!

It is recommended to look back at **step seven**, *Be on-brand, stay on-brand*. Over time, things may have changed, and minor adjustments will be necessary to stay relevant in the eyes of stakeholders, target audiences, and the international community.

This does not mean stray from who you are or change the Central Idea which drives your Nation Brand. Evaluate the current situation, and see what has worked, what hasn't worked, and how you can improve.

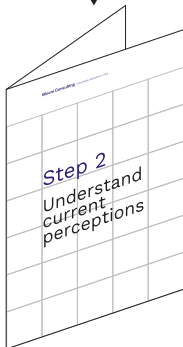
As you push forward, the odds will always be against you while misconceptions of Nation Branding exist and objectives not satisfactory for certain stakeholders. Stay resilient as you have been thus far, and resist the temptation to change your modus operandi. Stay true to your objectives, stay true to your Central Idea, and stay true to your brand.

Takeaways:

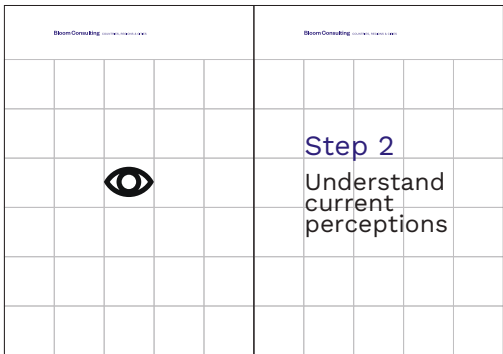
- Don't stop now.
- Head back to step seven and ensure you're still on the right path; things may have changed.
- Stay resilient and defend Nation Branding as a worthy investment as the odds will be against you.



Print the step



Hang the step somewhere you'll always have in sight



Stay on track by answering these questions

- How much progress have I made on this step?
- What do I have left to do to complete this step?

Here is a recap of the 14 steps to Nation Branding.

Step 1

Create something that is strong and resilient, capable of withstanding the hardships ahead.



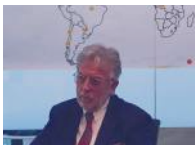
Step 2

Gather the thoughts and opinions of the national and international communities, what does everyone think about you right now?



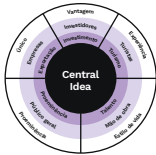
Step 3

Identify strategic traditional and new target markets who will be the most receptive and efficient in developing your Nation Brand.



Step 4

We all get carried away from time to time, but it is very important in this case to manage expectations and set yourself up for success.



Step 5

Be prepared. Your project faces great adversity and you must be ready for all that can be thrown your way whether internal or external.



Step 7

Creating checks and balances for yourself and others will only become more and more important as your pool of stakeholders continues to grow. Don't lose sight of what's important!



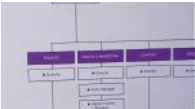
Step 8

It's time to get creative and determine which programmes and projects will be most effective in achieving your objectives.



Step 9

Find the governance structure that will work best for you and your needs to be successful as the go-to Nation Branding institution.



Step 10

You cannot do this alone. Gather and maintain the support of all levels of stakeholders, this will make or break your brand.



Step 11

Trust us, this will save you a great deal of time, money and headaches.



Step 12

Measure what you can. Remember, this is not the answer to all nation problems, so find the tools that work for you to show off your achievements.



Step 13

Nowadays, we need to look at Nation Branding 2.0. Perceptions begin in the digital sphere and must be managed accordingly.



Step 14

Where do we go from here? Backwards.



Glossary

Nation Brand

Perceptions, feelings, and emotions that someone has whenever they hear a country's name.

Nation Branding

The act of strategically building, connecting, and managing the systematic flow from perception to emotion within the scope of reality to minimize distorted images and maximize Nation Brand potential to attract and appeal through a positive reinforced reputation.

Bloom Consulting SpiderBrand©

Four quadrants of place brand touchpoints to be audited and activated; actions, activities, policies, stakeholder engagement, Digital identity, and marketing.

Bloom Consulting Nation Brand Wheel©

Consists of five dimensions, catering to specific brand audiences (or target audiences) each with a distinct need: advantages, experience, lifestyle, admiration, and uniqueness.

Dimensions

Investment, tourism, talent, prominence, and exports.

Brandtags

Distinct categories comprised of keywords used in online searches.

Brand architect

Those who initiate the Nation Branding project.

Brand builders

Everyone else, primarily the public sector, who deliver the brand promise.

Brand developers

Third parties who contribute to the Nation Brand development.

Brand audience

Target audience: those who interact with the brand; investors, tourists, workforce, general public, and companies.

Digital Identity

The representation of the nation in the digital sphere; in essence, the first three pages of results when you search for a place online.

Nation Branding 2.0

The act of managing your Digital Identity.

Central Idea

Unspoken point of validation derived from your nation's essence and purpose.

Place brand touchpoint

Platforms through which a brand is experienced.

Be the nation you want to be and be seen for who you are. Nation Branding is no quick fix for a poor reputation.

It takes hard work and real change. Let this guidebook be your first step towards achieving greatness and being internationally known for it.

*With love,
The Bloom Consulting Team*

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