

TAYO ABOBARIN

BRAND New Nigeria

Random,
Bias and
Practicable
Branding
Insights.





BRAND NEW NIGERIA
by TAYO ABOBARIN

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INTRO.



An appropriate and properly planned marketing mix is like a magic wand - it works all the time.

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INTRODUCTION

There were hawkers crawling alongside travelers, trying to get a fair bargain for their wares, friends and family members seeing off their loved ones after some time spent together, attendants helping promising passengers with their luggage and hustlers hunting for desperate travelers who could afford to pay double or more for a last minute ticket.

It was a clear day that Saturday at the Center of Excellence - Lagos, Nigeria. I started the day with a seminar, then a wedding, then a short hangout with friends and finally headed for Murtala Muhammed Airport on my first trip to Abuja ever.

Beside me on the flight was my mentor, on the other side was the beautiful universe displaying its beauty through the oval window and towards me was a pretty lady coming to say something I assumed would be "buckle up, bros." But my mind wasn't in the present. I was lost in thought, imagining a new Nigeria! Not exactly the type of Nigeria where there will be no more corruption and violence, as much as I desire that. The picture my brain-brush was painting on the canvas of my imagination was more like a deep green woven basket with a plain white ribbon delicately tied around it. Now you ask, what's a basket got to do with Nigeria?

If you have ever made, bought or received a hamper, then you would understand the value of the basket. Sometimes people continue to use these baskets years after receiving the hampers. Needless to say that even before it was bought, the basket was a

major determinant of the price or value of the hamper. However, the green basket in my daydream was not meant to be filled with wines, cornflakes or candy bars. It is a symbol of a Nigerian business with a purpose, owned by an entrepreneur who understands the principles of style and substance as it applies to his/her audience.

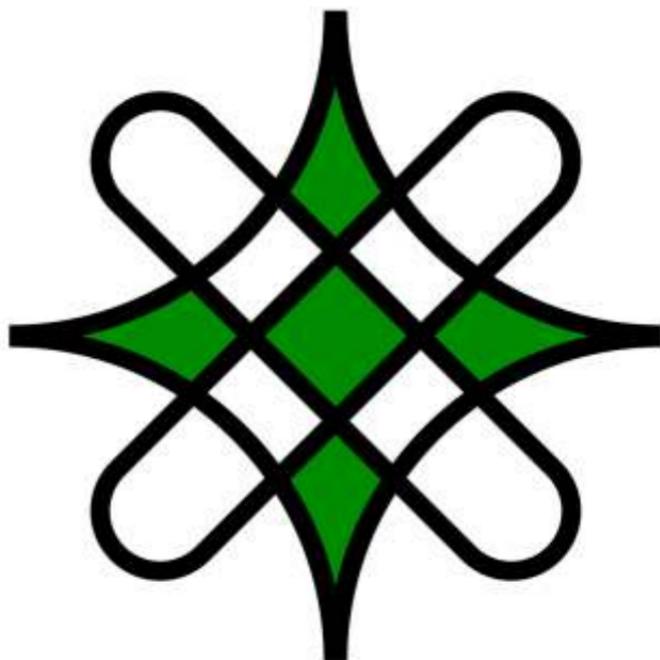
This delicately woven, experience defined and open minded container has developed the capacity to sieve unwanted influences and present with professionalism, a well packaged product or service which is not only pleasant to behold, but as well, easy to understand and in every way, functional. This container could however be a business or the entrepreneur, together with their content and the perception they attract, we have a **BRAND**.

Does it have to be a green basket?

Yes! Every success story has a geographical origin. The men who built America did not do it with blocks and mortar, they did by building successful enterprises. Our primary responsibility as Nigerian entrepreneurs is not just to make money, but to build businesses that will endure. Even our children will forever be grateful for that kind of gift. When we have enough people with a mindset and determination to create enduring brands, then we would look around and discover we are in the Promised Land, only to realize it was the same land we built with our own hands -

A BRAND New Nigeria!

WHOSE? BRAND



The Arewa Knot: a

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BRAND

Whether through conscious effort or involuntarily, you're always building/projecting a brand. That is, no matter what you do, your audience are going to form a perception of you or your business/product and consequently relate to you based on that perception.

Every business is already a brand, even if you don't treat it as one. Your customers (and potential customers) already have a perception of what your business means to them. Building a brand just means communicating your message to them more effectively so they immediately associate your business with their requirements.

Why Brand?

One of the many interesting things I did at the National Youth Service Orientation Camp before commencing my boring service year was joining a SAED* make-up class, which was cool until someone suggested that they use me for a make-up experiment. Everyone liked the idea except the only guy in that class - me. I was denied access to a mirror until the work of art was perfected on my face. The result - I looked like an ape-clown, and it was my last day in that class. I felt it was terrible branding for me.

The concept of branding started out being a way of identifying livestock by placing a mark on them to signify ownership - most times, an indelible mark. I grew up in an environment where raising livestock, especially hens and goats, in a domestic environment was normal, even enviable.

A Controversial Identity

I've only been to a few places in the country. However, one place that left an indelible impression on my mind is Kaduna, the crocodile city.

The Northern Nigeria can be summarized with just a single image - the Arewa (ahraywah) knot.

The Arewa knot, also known as the northern star, is arguably the most ancient and widely used symbol in Nigeria. This symbol is said to represent “Unity in Diversity,” and while its real origin is sketchy and controversial, the use is widely spread across northern Nigeria. It is regarded as the identity of the north and hardly will you drive a mile without seeing this symbol being used on either a signage or an edifice.

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Someone or a group of people decided to represent an idea with a symbol, such that it essentially becomes a household entity and anywhere the symbol is seen, it resonates a relationship with that original idea.

That is branding!

WHAT'S? NEW

The Arewa Knot: a

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NEW

Nothing, as you most likely have already guessed.

Hustle Must Pay

Most Nigerians go to work basically to make ends meet. Setting out to make money for food, rent and other basic necessities year in, year out. Because there are bills to pay and mouths to feed, prioritizing and capitalizing on the next profit then becomes the focus. Consequently, most Nigerian brands remain a one-man business, lacking a proper management structure that can sustain it for the long haul. Usually as a result of this, when the founder takes on another

venture or leaves the scene for whatever reason, the business consequently becomes obsolete.

While I cannot boast of a tested and trusted way out of the rat race, I believe that building a brand for the long haul at the detriment of immediate gain is worth it. And it is important to realize that it never happens in a wave, building a brand requires dedicated effort of repeatedly and consistently communicating (via all necessary channels) the same thing to your audience. Brand trust is built overtime, not overnight.

Trending Now

There are people whose passion and skills are in starting and building new businesses. They set out with a plan and start executing without looking back. Of course, while success can be predictable there is never a

guarantee of no mishaps in any entrepreneurship journey. You may call them serial entrepreneurs or whatever you like.

But these are not the people I want to talk about here. These ones have a considerable understanding each particular venture before investing and would not just jump on a bandwagon of what is trending. I was going through a friends business website some years back and on the services page, I read a list of so many unrelated services from maternity wares to farm produce! It was unbelievable. When I asked him why, he replied with something like “you don’t know which one will be selling more per time or which one the person visiting the website will be interested in, so it’s better to put everything there.”

No sir, it’s not!

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It's not wrong to be a generalist, but it's wrong to not define what you are to which set of people. You can't be everything to everyone.

WHY? NIGERIA



The Arewa Knot: a

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NIGERIA

Mind Your Business

It is human to put ourselves above everyone else. It is natural to be selfish. If it was easy not to focus on ourselves, “love your neighbor as yourself” would not have been regarded as the second most important commandment.

At some point, every business concerned with growth faces the dilemma of either keeping the staff happy or keeping the business alive, due to limited cashflow. The best choice is always to keep the business alive, so we either delay remunerations or we layoff. It’s natural to be selfish after all.

Therefore, while we're individually focused on our own issues, we naturally forget about the brands that are not meeting our present needs. I don't care about Paystack's recent seed investment or growth strategy. I use the payment service simply because it makes payment easy for me and my clients. It's always about me.

Keeping Promises

One of the difficult things to do when starting a business is to create content. You know about your business and what you have to offer but putting it into writing is not so easy for most of us. One way out is to hire a content writer, another way is to scout websites of other similar businesses and craftily edit their content to suit yourself, but how

Proudly Nigerian

You've seen the emblem of small a flag with a green wheel in it's background. It's the proudly Nigerian logo. As I was writing I looked around my apartment and the few Nigeria products that I use do not have this emblem on them. Is it because 'Proudly Nigerian' is not really a selling point or because adding the logo takes too much space on their packaging?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tayo Abobarin, also known as "The Brand Architect," is a Nigerian Architect and Brand Strategist. He helps businesses and individuals position their brands to attract and engage the intended audience with a functional approach using stories, digital media and architecture.

His book, *The Magic Wand Brand Strategy* is one of the most acclaimed brand strategy resource for growing businesses in the country.

Tayo is a member of the *Chartered Institute of Marketing* and an executive member of *Life Coaches Association of Nigeria*. He is the founder of IDSbrands, a Brand Identity & Digital Experience Design Agency; and the host of “The Pub,” an online community set up to help members build businesses driven by the right ideas and strategies. His aim is to help organisations and entrepreneurs build functional and profitable brands using simple processes and practical strategies.

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