

**BRAND IDENTITIES ADOPTED BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL  
ORGANIZATIONS IN KENYA**

**LEVIS M.NDERITU**

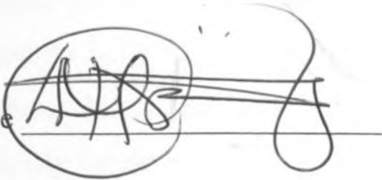
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## DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented to any college or University for examination purposes.

Signature



Date

12/11/2012

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This research proposal has been submitted for examination with my approval as University Supervisor.

Signed.....



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks go to the following people, for all they are and could ever be:

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## **DEDICATION**

To my Dad and Mum,

This is for you-for all the love.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
NPO	Non-Profit Organization



## ABSTRACT

Increasing competition, dwindling donor resources and the rise in public accountability in the nonprofit sector has called for Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to consider commercial branding concepts. The objectives of this study were to assess the extent to which NGOs in Kenya have embraced the brand concept, to establish the brand identities adopted by these NGOs and finally, to identify the role of these brand identities in the organizations. The research design was descriptive in nature, and an experience survey was used. The population of the study was 6,075 registered NGOs in Kenya and a sample of 30 NGOs was selected for the study. The study achieved a response rate of 30% with 9 NGOs participating in the research. The NGOs were both local and international from diverse sectors. The data collected was both primary and secondary with the primary data collected through interviews using an interview guide as a tool. The key informants of the NGOs interviewed included 6 communications officers, 2 program officers and 1 executive director. The data collected was analyzed through content analysis.

The findings of the study revealed the following: that the brand concept among NGOs in Kenya was new and growing, with only the larger international NGOs embracing the concept while the local NGOs lagged behind. The findings also showed that the brand identities adopted by the NGOs were brand-as-organization with the approach and methods of the NGO giving it its uniqueness, the brand-as-symbol with NGOs having several meaningful and identifiable symbols and brand-as-cause, which was found to be the main identifier. The brand personalities of the NGOs were unique to the different contexts but not key identifiers. The brand identities played dual roles, although the external role of visibility, fundraising and trust were found to be more important.

The study concluded that the brand concept is a growing area in the NGOs in Kenya and needs to be a proactive strategic tool in managing the existing organizations equity, enhance mission and sustainable results of the organization. The study recommends development of organizational branding guidelines, impact-driven culture and branded campaigns. Further research should be done in the areas of managing the nonprofit brand across multiple publics as well as return on investment of nonprofit branding.

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Non Profit Organizations (NPOs) have been defined as associations, charities, cooperatives, and other voluntary organizations formed to further cultural, educational, religious, professional, or public service objectives. Registered NPOs are usually granted tax exemptions, and contributions to them are often tax deductible. Most nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are NPOs. They are also called not for profit organizations (Business Dictionary, 2012).

In 2010, the World had more than 2 million nonprofit organizations (Stride & Lee, 2010). In the UK, ten thousand new organizations are joining the charity sector each year (Hankinson, 2005). In this complicated philanthropic sector, people are overwhelmed by numerous messages from a wide selection of organizations (Stride & Lee, 2010). The economic crisis that faced the world does not make matters easier. Light (2008) predicted that at least 100,000 nonprofit organizations would be forced to close their doors by 2010.

To thrive in the new era of not-for-profit management, charities ought to learn how to compete successfully and rethink their reaction to the concept of competition in the nonprofit sector (Brinckerhoff, 1997). One of the ways in which charities are responding to this increased competition is by adopting commercial branding techniques (Tapp 1996; Ritchie, Swami et al. 1998). Brand orientation can help to raise awareness amongst target audiences (Hankinson 2005), build loyalty within donor and supporter groups (Ritchie, Swami et al. 1998) and facilitate donor choice (Hankinson 2005).

Tenets of good branding will be more critical to nonprofit organizations as there is less money forthcoming from corporate, government, and individual donors. A nonprofit organization with a clearly differentiated brand promise, a track record for executing it, and a culture with a well-defined sense of purpose is better placed to survive economic turmoil than one that has not placed some emphasis on branding (Roth, 2009). In the same breath, the nonprofit brand has taken a new shift and is now seen as having a broader and

more strategic role in an organization's core performance, as well as having an internal role in expressing an organization's purposes, methods, and values (Kylander & Stone, 2012)

### **1.1.1 Concept of Brand Identity**

In the commercial context, Aaker (1996) defines brand identity as a distinctive set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. He further asserts that the associations reflect what the brand stands for and they depict the organization's promise of value to the target audience. According to Keller (2008), a brand identity is the systemic set of brand elements. He explains that it is the contribution of all brand elements to awareness and image. Keller (2008) suggests that the cohesiveness of the brand identity depends on the extent to which the brand elements are consistent. Aaker (1996) maintains that a brand identity should serve to provide direction, purpose and meaning to the target audience. He goes on to add that a brand identity should be able to help in establishing a relationship between the brand and the target audience by generating functional, emotional and self expressive benefits.

In the nonprofit sector, the concept of the brand identity is largely similar but may be somewhat different as explained by Cuesta (2003) who defines a nonprofit brand identity as: an authentic understanding that an organization offers to its participants and supporters. According to Deatherage (2009), an organization's cause can become the main identifier. In addition, Kylander and Stone (2012) state that when an organization's employees and volunteers embrace a common brand identity, it helps in creating organizational cohesion, concentrates focus and reinforces shared values. List (2012) further states that a brand identity enables the organization to tell its story thus enabling it to clarify set expectations, gain attention and nurture relationships in a way that will enhance its' survival in the long term.

The process of creating strong identities (Kurtz, 2012) in the nonprofit sector seems to be in transition. Although a majority use it as a fundraising tool, an increasing number are exploring the wider, strategic roles that brands can play: driving broad, long-term social

goals, while strengthening internal identity, cohesion, and capacity (Kylander & Stone, 2012).

### **1.1.2 Non-Governmental Organizations in Kenya**

NGO Co-ordination Act (1990) defines a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) as a private voluntary grouping of individuals or associations not operated for profit or other commercial purposes but which have organized themselves either at a national or international level for the benefit of the public at large and promotion of social welfare, development, charity or research.

There has been an increasing growth in the number of NGOs registered in Kenya. Since 2001, the sector has been growing at the rate of 400 organizations per year. In August 2009, there were 6,075 registered organizations. This growth of the sector means competition for donor funding will increasingly be stiffer. These organizations differ from small local based organizations to international organizations that have programs in several countries. A wide variety of activities is carried out by these NGOs: human rights, education, agriculture etc. in addition, their strategies are also diverse from policy and advocacy to research and training, communication among others. Some have limited budgets while others manage over a billion Kenya shillings per year. (National Survey of NGOs Report, 2009)

In 2003, the sector was contributing an estimated Kenya shillings 80 billion annually to the economy. As of 2009, statistics reveal that most NGOs in Kenya rely on foreign countries for the funding of their operations. Most donations to NGOs were from Germany (58%); United States (9%); Netherlands (8%); United Kingdom (7%) and Kenya (in country donations) (12%).The heavy overreliance on donor funding impacts the operations of the NGOs. (National Survey of NGOs Report, 2009)

## 1.2 Research Problem

People trust nonprofit brands more than commercial brands (Edelman, 2009). The YMCA of the USA's brand is worth an estimated \$6.4 billion, making it the USA's most valuable nonprofit brand (List, 2009). With the increasing competition for funding (Brinckerhoff, 1997) and striving to make greater impact at the society level, nonprofit organizations are increasingly adopting the brand concept, at least the International NGOs level (Kylander & Stone, 2012). According to DaSilva, nonprofit organizations are increasingly managing their brands professionally (as cited in List, 2009). In addition, Kurtz (2012) observes that partnerships and alliances between nonprofit organizations and commercial, profit-driven firms require nonprofits to maintain a focused business approach.

Although the value of building a nonprofit brand could be evident (List, 2009), relatively little work exists on nonprofit branding and brand management (Laidler-Kylander & Simonin, 2009; Laidler-Kylander et al., 2007). The existing work has focused on large international NGOs whose targets are not funding opportunities at all. While the mega international NGOs such as Amnesty International, Red Cross, World Wildlife Fund among others are embracing the brand concept through a "global identity" and other strategies (Kylander & Stone, 2012), the extent to which NGOs in developing countries have embraced the concept is yet to be ascertained. Studies done by Warinda (2002), and Musembi (2005) focused on the social marketing concept in NGOs, whereas studies by Kiliko (2000), Kamau (2010), Chumo (2011), Mukanga (2011) focused on Strategy and Sustainability in the NGOs. There is an apparent research gap on brand identities in the NGO sector. The study will seek to answer the following research questions: To what extent do the Kenyan NGOs embrace the concept of branding? What brand identities do these NGOs adopt to create meaningful value to their constituents? What role do the brand identities play in these organizations?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study were:

- i. To assess the extent to which Kenyan NGOs embrace the brand concept.
- ii. To establish the brand identities that Kenyan NGOs adopt.
- iii. To examine the role that these brand identities play in the organization.

### **1.4 Value of the Study**

The study will equip academicians with relevant first-hand information on brand identities that are adopted by NGOs in Kenya. This will be useful in providing holistic approaches to the brand concept. Academicians will benefit from a wide array of examples and applications from not only the commercial world, but the non-profit sector as well. This will result into richer lectures and material preparation. Again, it will broaden the students' perspectives to the brand identity concept.

The study will avail researchers with a dynamic and growing area of study where further research can be undertaken. As a relatively new and fresh field, there exist numerous areas of branding in the NGOs that are yet to be tapped into. There is also a need for newer models and frameworks that researchers can develop to meet the unique contexts that nonprofit organizations operate in as opposed to the commercially adopted models that may not fully integrate the dynamics of nonprofit organizations.

It will help the executives in the NGO sector with first hand information on the different perspectives of brand identities and their role in the organizations. It will provide them with a brand identity framework that they can use to apply in their organization so as to remain true to their mission, values and culture as they leverage on a strong identity for more donor resources, greater internal cohesion and a superior social impact. It will also provide them with a justification to build or refresh their brand identity.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the different concepts of nonprofit brand identities, the perspectives of brand identities and the role of brand identities in the nonprofit sector.

### 2.2 Nonprofit Brands

Global nonprofit brands have been termed the World's new "super brands" (Woolliff & Deri, 2001). Many nonprofit brands are valued higher than some of the well-known corporate brands (Salls, 2005). According to Edelman (2009), across the world, (except for Asia-Pacific), nonprofits are the only institutions trusted by over 50% of informed publics.

In the for-profit context, Aaker (1991) defines a brand as a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) meant to identify the goods or services of either one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors. According to De Chernatony (2008), a brand is cluster of functional and emotional values that helps an organization to make a promise about a unique experience. However, in the nonprofit sector, the definition of the brand may be somewhat different as seen by Cuesta (2003) who defines a nonprofit brand as: the shared emotional perception participants and supporters hold in relation to the programs and services (that) the nonprofit offers. He further adds that the nonprofit brand is the value chain that brings together an organization's mission to the results that the board, staff and volunteers create for the target audience (Cuesta, 2003). According to Daw and Cone (2011), a nonprofit brand articulates what the organization stands for: the compelling, focused idea that sets it apart and is relevant to its supporters. Sergeant (2009) states that nonprofit brands are a promise to the public that an organization has certain features or will behave in some definite way.

The fundamental differences between for-profit and nonprofit organizations have an impact on the function of the brand as well as brand management efforts undertaken by

the organization. Oster (1995) suggests that nonprofit organizations differ from their for-profit counterparts in at least five major areas: their organizational culture; their human resources; their collaborative rather than competitive approaches; the complexity of their customers; and the importance of mission.

Nonprofit organizations are skeptical and some misunderstand the brand concept. Some see branding as a sellout to commercialism, cheapening the sincere effort of tireless volunteers (Roth, 2009). Still, some nonprofits may be suspected by others to compromise their ethical values and to lose track of their social mission (Peter, 2012). In addition, Kylander and Stone (2012) suggest some of the following reasons to the skepticism: it's a commercial concept, a way of avoiding participatory strategic planning, it doesn't focus on the needs of the organization and that powerful brands may overshadow weaker ones in cases of partnerships and collaborations. Roth (2009) summarizes the barriers to building nonprofit brands as: resources, responsibility and resistance.

### **2.3 Brand Identity**

The brand identity of an organization is what it stands for, a reflection of the soul and vision of the brand (Aaker, 1996). The same author further says that the brand identity communicates the strategic intent of the organization in terms of how it would like to be perceived or associated. According to Olins (1989), corporate identity is concerned with the impressions, the image, and the personality an organization projects. However, Aaker (1996) argues that brand identity is different from brand image. He states that an image is more of how you are perceived whereas an identity focuses on how you aspire to be perceived. Aaker (1996) further reiterates that an identity is strategic and looks into the future compared to an image which looks at the present. Kylander and Stone (2012) point out that brand identity and brand image are different sides of the same coin and that a nonprofit brand is stronger when the organization's internal identity and external image are in sync with each other and with its values and mission. Nonprofit executives seem to be at ease with the terminology "identity" compared to "brand" when referring to their organization (Kylander & Stone, 2012).



## **2.4 Brand Identity Perspectives**

There are four broad perspectives of looking at a brand identity that Aaker (1996) suggests: brand-as-organization, brand-as-person, brand-as-symbol and brand-as-product. These aspects mainly apply to the for-profit sector, although they can be transferable across sector since the principles of branding are the same (Roth, 2009). However, to remain relevant to the context, the brand-as-product perspective will be looked at as brand-as-cause. This is because nonprofits do not primarily exist to market products but causes and services for social impact (Kurtz, 2012), and secondly, the buyers (donors) differ sharply from the users (beneficiaries) making it complex to evaluate (Kylander, 2012).

### **2.4.1 Brand as Organization**

This perspective concentrates on the attributes of the organization rather than those of the product or service. These attributes are created by the staff/volunteers, culture, values and programs of the company. Organizational attributes are more permanent and harder to duplicate. The people at an organization encountered either in person or via media need to be seen to be dedicated to the values and culture of the organization. They provide a sense of trust that cannot be otherwise be achieved by mere announcements or promotional materials.

Some organizations are endowed with a charismatic leader who can both represent and express the organizational association effectively. This goes a long way in building a strong relationship with the constituents. It is therefore apparent that viewing the brand as an organization generates organizational associations that can be attached to the brand as part of the brand identity. It also provides internal guidance on the organization's mission, values, culture and vision (Aaker, 1996)

### **2.4.2 Brand as Person**

This perspective, also known as brand personality, is defined as the set of human characteristics that a given brand possesses. It includes characteristics such as gender, age, social class, as well as human personality traits. Like a person, a brand can embody

different personalities in diverse contexts and roles. Brand personality can be measured in terms of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. It helps in creating self-expressive benefits, in that the constituents can express their own personality as they interact with the brand. Brand personality contributes in differentiating a brand identity and creating a relationship with the target audience. (Aaker, 1996)

### **2.4.3 Brand as Symbol**

Olins (1989) asserts that symbols can be powerful tools in communicating the brand identity of an organization. McLean (1997) explains that symbolism depicts the representation of the organization either through words, visual representations or beliefs. According to Aaker (1996) anything that represents the brand can be a symbol, he however highlights three major ones: visual imagery, metaphors and brand heritage. A strong symbol can provide cohesion and structure to an identity and make it much easier to gain recognition and recall; it can be a source of functional, emotional or self-expressive benefits. A symbol can have a great influence on brand personality and brand strategy (Aaker, 1996).

### **2.4.4 Brand as Cause**

Although like the for-profit organizations, some nonprofits may brand tangible goods and services such as the pink products marketed during the National Breast Cancer Awareness month (Kurtz, 2012), the very nature of nonprofits is to market and brand causes rather than products. Cause-related programs can add interest, enhanced impact and visibility to a brand (Aaker, 1996). In addition, Deatherage (2009) suggests that the cause can be the main identifier of an organization. According to Aaker (1996), causes should be branded and as Kylander and Stone (2012) reveal, branded causes can have their own identity as the case of the Girl Effect of the Nike Foundation.

## 2.5 Role of Non-profit Brand Identities

Aaker (1996) suggests that brand identities seek the following roles: to create credibility, relationship with target audience, and clarity of organization culture and values. On the other hand, nonprofit brands have a dual objective of enhancing fundraising and the successful implementation of the mission (Salls, 2005). Nonprofit brand identities are thus difficult and complex to manage since it is not a case of separate identities under one umbrella identity but of services, goals and multiple constituencies being represented by one single identity (McLean, 1997).

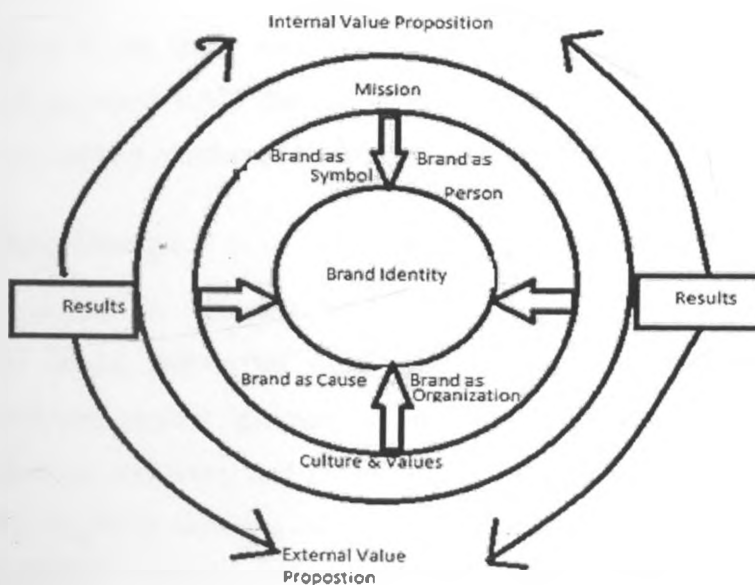
Kylander and Stone (2012) suggest that a strong brand is as a result of a well aligned brand identity and image which result in internal cohesion and capacity as well as external credibility, trust and social impact respectively. Internally, a strong brand identity means having a clear sense of who the organization is, what it does, and why its' mission is important. The authors further reiterate that when everyone supports a common brand identity, it creates organizational cohesion, builds focus, and enhances shared values. The external trust as a result of a clear identity and image brings about additional talent, financing, and authority.

To address the role of the brand in the nonprofit context, Kylander and Stone (2012) have developed the Nonprofit Brand IDEA framework. The IDEA stands for Integrity, Democracy, Ethics and Affinity. Brand Integrity means that the external image of the organization is in sync with its mission. Brand Democracy means that the organization trusts its internal and external publics to communicate the organization's core identity, without the need of 'policing' how the brand is presented. Brand Ethics means that the brand embodies the core values and culture of the organization. Lastly, Brand Affinity means that the brand is not 'self-absorbed', it encourages collective interests and brings on board partners and collaborators. Nonprofits can thus evaluate the role that the brand identities play in their organization with greater clarity.

## 2.6 Conceptual Framework

The heart of the framework is the brand identity which is the set of aspired unique associations that the brand strategist intends to create or maintain; what the organization stands for. There are four brand identity perspectives that Aaker (1996) suggests: brand-as-person, brand-as-organization, brand-as-symbol and brand-as-product. In this framework, brand-as-product has been replaced with brand-as-cause as the author believes that NGOs do not exist to brand products but causes. The brand identity perspectives/system should be within the constraints of the organization's mission, values and culture as suggested by Cuesta (2003) and Kylander (2012). The overall results or impact is double-edged: internal benefits (value proposition) as well as external benefits (Aaker, 1996).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Researcher

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter looks at the research design, the target population, sample design that was adopted, the data collection method and how the data collected was analyzed.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This study used a descriptive cross sectional research design. It attempts to describe a subject as well as seek to gain insights and clarify concepts (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2010). An experience survey was the research design. It enabled the researcher define the problem more concisely (Kothari, 2004). The problem under study being brand identities adopted by Kenyan NGOs.

### **3.3 Population**

The population of the study was purposively a cross section of registered NGOs in Kenya. There are about 6,075 that are registered. The capital City Nairobi was selected since it has the highest number of NGOs in Kenya (NGO Coordination Board, 2009).

### **3.4 Sampling Design**

The study purposively selected 30 NGOs from the population of 6,075 (NGO Coordination Board, 2009) that were contacted. The NGOs were drawn from the following different sectors: international development, youth empowerment, Christian ministry, children, advocacy and human rights (see appendix 2). There were several reasons for purposively selecting the sample: they are a representative of both local and international NGOs, they have diverse missions, programs and target groups, some are well known globally and others are not.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

The data collected was both primary and secondary. The primary data was collected through administering interviews on with the use of an interview guide. The interview guide was unstructured to allow the respondents to raise issues and questions that the

researcher has not previously considered. For the purpose of this study the respondents were key informants who include but not limited to country directors, program officers, public relations/communication officers. The interviews were carried out at the respondents' place of work to ensure minimal interruptions in the collection of data. The researcher was the moderator of the interview. The interview guide was sent to the key informants at least 5 days prior to the interview to allow them to familiarize with the questions and follow up emails and telephone calls were made to ensure that the interviewees were ready for the interview. The interview discussion was recorded through notes taking and the notes put in a file for analysis.

The interview guide was divided into three major parts. Part 1 covered general awareness and appreciation of the brand concept; Part 2 looked at the different brand identity perspectives and Part 3 looked at the role of brand identity in the NGO sector. The secondary data was collected through brochures, published annual reports, strategic plans and NGO websites.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

The qualitative primary data collected during the interviews was coded (a code was a group of similar words), categorized, and analyzed through thematic content analysis and presented in prose form. The rationale is that there were large volumes of qualitative data that needed to be matched and grouped. Content analysis can be defined as a systematic replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories (themes) based on explicit rules of coding (Berelson, 1990). The analysis of content is a central activity whenever one is concerned with the study of the nature of verbal materials (Kothari, 2004). The researcher analyzed the data.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of the data obtained from the field using an interview guide as a tool. The main objectives of the study were to assess the extent to which NGOs in Kenya embrace the brand concept, to establish the brand identities adopted by these NGOs and to identify the role that these brand identities play in the NGOs. The chapter presents an analysis of the results in the 3 main sections (with sub-sections included) of the interview guide and a discussion of the findings as compared to the findings in the literature review. General information on the NGOs interviewed is provided.

### **4.2 Sample Characteristics**

There were 30 NGOs that were selected and contacted for the study. Only 9 NGOs were interviewed, making it a 30% response rate. Of the 9 NGOs interviewed, 7 were local and 2 international. The response rate was low due to bureaucracy in providing information. A list of the NGOs selected and interviewed is appended (Appendix 2). The key informants from the NGOs included: 6 Communications Officers, 2 program Officers, 1 Executive Director. The NGOs interviewed were from diverse sectors and had varying missions and causes they supported. The sectors included: International development (2), Human rights (2), Christian Ministry (3), ICT among women (1), Capacity development, and advocacy (1). The findings were as diverse as the organizations interviewed.

### **4.3 Application of the Brand Concept**

To assess the extent to which NGOs in Kenya embrace the brand concept, the findings reveal that all the nonprofit executives interviewed believed that it was possible to have strong nonprofit brands that are easily identifiable. The nonprofit brands cited as strong included: Kenya Red Cross, World Vision and USAID. When asked to define a nonprofit brand, the interviewees stated it as: the cause, the impact or the results that the NGO produces. As one communications officer put it, "a nonprofit brand is the promise plus impact that the NGO brings out to the people."

There was a general agreement among the interviewees that branding in the Kenyan NGOs is a new concept that is gradually being embraced especially by the ‘big’ or international NGOs. Majority are still taking time to catch up. One communications officer says, “Nonprofits lagged behind as they thought that perceptions did not matter. The corporate organizations are building their brand on what nonprofits do-transforming lives.”

The findings show that some of the reasons that are leading nonprofit organizations to brand themselves include competition for donor resources, donor requirement, need for public goodwill, internal and external ownership of the cause, and need to create a trusted image and identity. As one communications officer of an international NGO put it, “INGOs are moving towards a global brand identity so as to have a unified approach across the different countries. Again, employees have become globally mobile and donors are looking out for same standards across the board regardless of where the INGO is located.”

There are however, various reasons that the nonprofit executives identified as barriers to nonprofit branding that make some NGOs shy away from embracing the brand concept. They include: limited budgets, belief that branding is not a ‘careful’ way of spending donor funds, branding is a commercial a concept and modesty. These were captured in statements such as, “should we spend so much on package rather than content?”, “we don’t want to look like we are merchandisers” “NGOs are like shy babies, we don’t want to scream, I’m here!”

#### **4.4 Brand identities adopted by Kenyan Non Governmental Organizations**

To establish the brand identities adopted by NGOs in Kenya, the findings were categorized in 4 thematic areas: brand as organization, brand as person, brand as symbol and brand as cause.



#### **4.4.1 Brand as Organization**

The missions and problems solved by the NGOs interviewed were diverse and varying: some alleviating poverty, others building entrepreneurs capacities while others advocated for human rights of sexual minorities. However, from the findings there seemed to be a point of convergence of specific organizational values such as open communication, professionalism, teamwork and flexibility. The results also showed that the organizational cultures adopted by the NGOs were not elaborate except for a local human rights organization that lobbies for sexual minority rights, where a culture of 'sensitivity to diversity' was clear and distinctive. It was also clear from the findings that the uniqueness of an individual NGO was on its approach on how it fulfilled its mission. The approach distinguished the NGO from other players in the same sector. As one executive director put it, "we serve a niche and we have a unique model for our programs, fundraising, and sustainability." Only one NGO prided itself in their expertise staff as a distinctive aspect of their organization. On asking what the NGOs would like to be associated with, majority stated their work (cause) and sustainable impact (results).

#### **4.4.2 Brand as Person**

The findings revealed that the diverse NGOs had unique personalities: from an authoritative middle-aged female to a God fearing male to a young transgender woman. It was also apparent from the study that the occupations attached to the NGOs reflected the mission or the target audience of the organization. Most of the interviewees 'gave' the brand the voice of the beneficiary with two giving it the voice of the executive director/founder. All the NGO executives interviewed stated that they would have a close relationship with the 'brand as person' and they would not need an appointment to see the 'person'. Majority of the interviewees believed that the 'person' would be consistent in their attributes, with two NGOs stating that the 'person' would be dynamic.

#### **4.4.3 Brand as Symbol**

With regards to the brand as symbol, the findings revealed that most of the interviewees could attach meaningful associations to the logos and taglines except for one NGO whose

logo was termed as 'vague'. The logos and taglines were updated over time as was the case with three NGOs. Most of the NGOs interviewed stated that they did not have an identifying 'symbol' such as the red ribbon that they use except for two NGOs. Again, the results showed that most NGOs did not have a character they use in their communication, the few that had, it varied with different projects/programs. The majority of the interviewees stated that their NGOs had a specific color palette as well as a specific font typeface they used in their communications. As one communications officer of an international NGO put it, "we have specific branding guidelines that reflect how we use our symbols and how we communicate our global identity. We also have elaborate photo guidelines." On the other hand, most of the interviewees admitted that they were not as consistent in the use of their symbols in their communication. Some bluntly stated they were inconsistent and a few stated they were consistent.

#### **4.4.4 Brand as Cause**

From the study, the different NGOs interviewed advance diverse causes via multiple programs. The findings showed that each NGO interviewed had a minimum of three programs/focus areas that served unique publics. The results revealed that beneficiaries and the public were the target audience of the NGOs. As one communications officer put it, "we are accountable to the public, and any scandals reported will ruin our brand." Only one NGO perceived their donors as a target audience. In the same vein, the findings showed that most NGOs did not run a yearly campaign to champion for their cause except for a local human rights organization that supports the rights of sexual minorities and a Christian organization that holds 'awareness days'. Majority of the NGOs stated that they supported and participated in the different International days that were related to their cause. Most of the interviewees stated that their target audience was more aware of their cause rather than the organization.

#### **4.5 Role of Brand Identities**

The findings of the study revealed the following as the external role that the brand identities play in the Kenyan NGOs:

Creating visibility: Nonprofit brand identities were seen to provide meaningful and relevant ways in creating awareness of the organization and its cause. Strong symbols such as logos and colors were identified as key visibility tools. Again, visibility was provided by the brand identities when the constituencies were aware of the organization's cause and mission.

Facilitating donor funding: The interviewees stated that a strong brand identity was critical in raising donor support and funding since it would be easier to 'sell' the cause to them. Although this was a key role, one executive director teamed it as a 'chicken-egg' scenario where you spend a lot of money on branding to get more donors to fund your cause. He felt this could lead to 'hollow brands'. A majority of the respondents however acknowledged that a well articulated brand identity facilitates increase in donor funding and flexibility in the use of those funds.

Building trust and credibility: It was apparent from the interviewees that a strong brand identity leads to trust, connection and credibility of the organization and its cause. It was felt that both donors and beneficiaries would trust the work that a nonprofit was doing. This trust and credibility was greatly valued by the nonprofit organizations.

Internally, there was not much that was said other than the brand identity builds up ownership and buy-in from the staff. As one executive director of a local NGO put it, "sometimes branding is more for the outsider to be attracted than for internal value."

## **4.6 Discussion**

The findings of the study reveal a positive acceptance of branding across the nonprofit sector. This is consistent with the findings by Tapp (1996) and Ritchie et al (1998) who stated that charities are responding to increased competition by adopting commercial branding techniques. However, the extent to which the NGOs have adapted these techniques is still at a growth stage, as revealed by the findings which show that only the larger international NGOs are fully embracing the concept with the local ones lagging behind. In the same vein, there was a general feeling from the findings that the local NGOs that tried to brand themselves were overpowered by the larger international NGOs

who were their key partners, donors or collaborators. They had strict branding guidelines that constrained the smaller local NGOs while favoring their global brands. This confirmed the finding by Kylander and Stone (2012) who had revealed this challenge and posited it as skepticism to nonprofit branding.

It was also revealed by the findings that some NGOs embraced the brand concept in cases of donor coercion, culture transitions, or other strategic changes within their organizations. It seemed that branding was adopted as a reactive rather than proactive tool. As Aaker (1996) states, that the brand building process needs to be strategic and the brand identity should be a reflection of the vision (the future) of the organization. It was nonetheless observed that the NGOs were yet to reach that point. Some of the barriers to nonprofit branding as revealed by the study were consistent with what Roth (2009) stated resources, responsibility, and resistance. Even so, resistance to the concept was a greater barrier than was limited resources. The NGOs were nonetheless cognizant of the benefits of good branding. The challenge was to balance the benefits of branding with the resistance encountered.

In the same breath, the findings of the study revealed that the uniqueness of an NGO was in its approach and methods. Aaker (1996) defines a brand identity as a unique set of brand associations that the organization aspires to create or maintain. Although Oster (1995) had expressed these collaborative rather than competitive approaches in his work, he however did not mention that this could be the main distinguishing identifier of a nonprofit organization.

Again, the findings also depicted a lack of a distinctive and elaborate culture in the majority of the NGOs. It may be assumed that that there was less emphasis on the culture and values possibly due the commonality of values and a 'helping' culture that cuts across the general nonprofit sector. This sharply conflicts with what Aaker (1996) stated in the commercial context where the people at an organization seem to be dedicated to the values and culture of the organization, and that these would distinguish one organization from another due to the permanency of specific organizational cultures. It was also apparent from the findings that the NGOs would like to be associated with their

cause and sustainable results. The results support what Cuesta (2003) had found out: that the nonprofit brand aligns the organization mission to its results.

It was also evident from the findings that the NGOs were distinctive in their personalities within given contexts just as Aaker (1996) had earlier expressed: that the set of human characteristics with a given brand varies with the contexts. A significant revelation of the findings was that the brand attributes 'given' to the organization reflected self-expressive benefits and a close relationship with the target audience. This confirms the finding by Aaker (1996) that show that brand personalities offer self-expressive benefits and build relationships. On the other hand, the findings showed that most NGOs had several distinctive symbols they used in their communications. The challenge, as revealed by the findings was in remaining consistent in their application in communicating the message. This could possibly be as a result of multiple publics that the NGOs served or a lack of commitment in the brand consistency concept. Keller (2008) suggests that the cohesiveness of the brand identity depends on the extent to which the brand elements were consistent.

In the same vein, it was apparent from the results that most NGOs had several causes promoted via multiple programs bringing the complexity of multiple publics and audiences in creating and managing a brand identity. This is consistent with the studies done by McLean (1997) who stated that nonprofit brand identities were different and complex to manage as a result of multiple publics represented. The findings also reveal that most NGOs did not have a major event or campaign that they run yearly to promote a particular cause. As Aaker (1996) suggests causes should be branded and can have their own identities as revealed by Kylander and Stone (2012). The cause was found out to be the main identifier of an organization consistent with the findings of Deatherage (2009).

It was also apparent from the findings that the majority of the NGOs found the external benefits of visibility, fundraising and trust more important than internal benefits. This is consistent with the studies by Kylander and Stone (2012) who expressed that most nonprofit undertake branding for fundraising purposes.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a summary of the study, a conclusion of the findings, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

The main objectives of the study were: to assess the extent to which NGOs in Kenya embrace the brand concept, to establish the brand identities adopted by these NGOs and to identify the role that these brand identities play in the NGOs.

In lieu of the stated objectives, it was found out that the brand concept among NGOs in Kenya was new and growing, with only the larger international NGOs embracing the concept while the local NGOs lagged behind. The findings also showed that the brand identities adopted by the NGOs were brand-as-organization with the approach and methods of the NGO giving it its uniqueness, the brand-as-symbol with NGOs having several meaningful and identifiable symbols and brand-as-cause, which was found to be the main identifier. The brand personalities of the NGOs were unique to the different contexts but not as key identifiers. The brand identities played dual roles, although the external role of visibility, fundraising and trust were found to be more important.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

The study concludes that the brand concept is a growing area in the NGOs in Kenya and needs to be a proactive strategic tool in managing the existing organizations equity, enhance mission and sustainable results of the organization. Despite the challenges of resistance from management, limited resources and a laid back attitude towards nonprofit branding, both local and international NGOs in Kenya should embrace the benefits of visibility, increased donor funding and credibility that comes with a clear and strong brand identity.

In the same breath, NGOs in Kenya adopt a brand identity from the perspective of brand-as organization with the approach and methods of the organization as key distinguishing elements. Again, a unique and elaborate organizational culture, if well leveraged is seen to be a key identifier. In addition to this, the NGOs adopt unique symbols to build on their identities. Meaningful logos and taglines that help in building awareness, recall and recognition are valuable assets in building a brand identity. Again, the brand identify is developed when the brand is perceived and communicated as the cause. This has been found to be the main identifier of NGOs in Kenya. It is however not elaborate on how NGOs in Kenya adopt the unique personalities of their organizations as main identifiers.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

From the findings of the study, the researcher would like to recommend the following:

Nonprofit branding should be adopted as a proactive strategic tool rather than a reactive fire-fighting measure adopted during transitions and other strategic changes within or outside the organization. This necessitates for the need for elaborate branding guidelines to be adopted and possibly published and circulated to all the internal staff, partners and collaborators of the organization. The guidelines should clearly articulate the brand identity of the organization. The branding guidelines will ensure that there is a consistency of the brand identity of the organization to both the internal and external constituencies.

NGOs should develop and articulate clear organizational cultures that reflect their mission, target audience and approach. The organizational cultures should be consistently communicated and reflected to all constituents who interact with the organization. A distinctive culture that is especially focused on impact and results is a sure way of developing an identity that yields trust and credibility with both the beneficiaries as well as the donors.

NGOs should brand their causes and campaigns. Since the cause is the main identifier of the NGO, a branded cause supported by a branded campaign will enhance the brand identity which in turn leads to visibility. NGOs should also identify campaigns that have

developed their own identity and leverage on the strength of this equity to either develop weaker campaigns or enhance the overall equity of the organization. Commercial partners are especially keen on these branded campaigns which could be an entry point for future alliance and partnership with the commercial sector.

### **5.5 Limitations of the Study**

The study had several limitations. Time was a limiting factor of the study as this was done over duration of 3 months. This could have constrained the overall effect of the nature and number of NGOs selected and interviewed. To overcome this, careful planning was done prior to data collection to ensure that the interviewees were ready for the interview beforehand.

The study was also limited by scope as only the NGOs in Nairobi were selected and interviewed. The researcher was aware that the findings would have varied if NGOs in different context and economic realities were interviewed. To overcome this limitation, NGOs with a national coverage were selected. Again, the scope of the study was limited to the specific concept of brand identities rather than broader branding issues.

The data supplied by the interviewees may not have reflected the feelings and opinions of everyone in the organization, thus the research can be subjective, open to the bias and experience of both the researcher and the researched..To overcome this, the interviews conducted remained focused, objective, and non-judgmental.

### **5.6 Suggestions for Further Research**

Following the limitations of time, scope and objectives, the researcher would like to suggest that further studies should be done on managing brand identities across multiple publics. This study will help inform NGOs on how to effectively manage their brands within the complexity of multiple publics and target audiences. Again, studies on the return on investment of nonprofit branding will provide the NGOs on the rationale of investing in branding.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Key Informant Interview Guide

#### Introduction and Ice-breaking (5mins)

Researcher (Interviewer) introduces himself and purpose of the meeting

#### Main Discussion (40mins)

##### 1. (A) The Brand Concept: General awareness and appreciation.

- i. In the commercial world, we have seen and experienced strong brands that we easily identify and are associated with (e.g Coca-Cola, Google, Nike etc).Do you feel that we can have Non-Profit Brands that can connect to people that strongly?
- ii. What do you think a brand would be in the non-profit context?(probe for perceptions, associations, experience, etc)
- iii. Do you think NGOs are branding themselves? To what extent?
- iv. Are there any NGOs, either locally or internationally, that you know have greatly embraced branding?
- v. What could be some of the factors that have led to these branding efforts?(probe for competition, clarity of mission, visibility, internal cohesion)
- vi. What do you think are some of the reasons that some NGOs are skeptical or shy away from branding themselves?(Probe for lack of funding, understanding, management support, role of non-profit brands, commercial concept etc)

##### 2. Brand Identities

(A brand identity is a unique set of brand associations that the organization aspires to create or maintain. It is the 'who' of the organization)

## **B) The Brand as an Organization**

- i. What is the mission of your organization?
- ii. Please tell me what problem/need does your organization seek to meet/What are some of your main objectives?
- iii. What is the vision of the organization?
- iv. What are your key organizational values?
- v. How would you summarize the culture of your organization?
- vi. Do you feel your organization is different from other NGOs in the same sector? What makes your organization unique?(probe for mission, values, culture, programs, target group)
- vii. What would you like your organization to be associated with?

## **C) Brand as a Person**

Thinking your organization as a person:

- i. What sex would he/she be? What age?
- ii. What occupation?
- iii. What personality traits/attributes would he/she have(e.g caring ,innovative, pace-setter etc)
- iv. What voice would this person have?( probe for spokesperson, founder, Executive director, beneficiary, donor etc)
- v. What kind of relationship would you have with him/her?(Probe for depth of relationship, closeness etc)
- vi. Would you need an appointment to see him/her?
- vii. Do you feel this person would be consistent in her attributes and actions?

## **D) The Brand as Symbol**

Please tell me, does your organization have the following?(ask respondent to describe and attach meanings/associations)

- i. A logo
- ii. A slogan/tagline
- iii. A symbol (e.g the red ribbon)

- iv. A character that the organization uses (e.g a child, teenager, elderly person, cartoon?)
- v. A specific color palette
- vi. A specific font typeface in its communication?
- vii. Does your organization consistently use its symbols, in all its communication, all the time, every time?(probe for same symbols in different programs)

### **E) The Brand as a Cause**

- i. What are the main causes you promote?
- ii. What are some of the programs/projects your organization run?
- iii. How widely spread are the programs?(probe for regions, cities, villages etc)
- iv. Who are your main target audience? Which group of people do you mostly reach out to?(probe for multiplicity of publics or specific constituent)
- v. Do you have a major event/campaign that you run yearly to promote a particular cause? (e.g Breast Cancer Awareness Day etc).If so, how many years has it consistently run?
- vi. In your opinion, are people more aware of your Cause or your Organization?

### **3. Role of Brand Identity**

In your opinion, do you think that a strong brand identity contributes (would contribute) value to your organization? In what ways?(probe for external and internal importance)

### **4. Final Remarks**

Does your organization have any budgets allocated to branding activities? What are some of the reasons for that? Where do you see the future of nonprofit branding?

**Thank Respondents**

## Appendix 2: List of Interviewed NGOS

No	NGO	Type/Scope Of NGO	Area Of Focus
1.	SNV Netherlands	International	Development
2.	Technoserve	International	Development
3.	African Center for Women	Local	Women/Youth Empowerment
4.	Fellowship of Christian Unions-Kenya	Local	Christian Student Ministry
5.	Iserve Africa	Local	Christian Student Ministry
6.	National Council of Churches of Kenya	Local	Christian Ministry
7.	Act Kenya	Local	Capacity Development
8.	Center for Rights Education and Awareness	Local	Human Rights
9.	Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya	Local	Human Rights