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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS FOR ENHANCING AFRICA'S INVESTMENT ATTRACTIVENESS IN GLOBAL MEDIA

Feven Brook Kebede

Coordinator, Government Relations and Africa, United Nations Global Compact
New Jersey, USA

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ABSTRACT

The article presents an analysis of strategic communications as a tool for enhancing the investment attractiveness of African countries in the global media space. The study is based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines political science, economics, and communication research. Particular attention is paid to the content analysis of academic and applied sources covering issues of nation branding, public diplomacy, and media positioning. Key practices were identified, including the “Zimbabwe is Open for Business” initiative, Johannesburg’s branding, and digital promotion strategies, which demonstrated heterogeneous impacts on investor perceptions and the international image of countries. A comparative analysis of African campaigns and Qatar’s international experience revealed differences in institutional sustainability and systemic branding strategies that determine long-term effectiveness in attracting foreign direct investment. The necessity of overcoming barriers of political instability, weak institutionalization, and limited global media coverage is substantiated, as these factors hinder the formation of a sustainable investment image of the region. The article also examines the prospects for adapting global nation branding practices, digital media cooperation, and platform integration to strengthen Africa’s presence in the international information environment. The findings will be useful to researchers in strategic communications, specialists in global development, and practitioners in investment and public-private partnerships interested in building an effective image of Africa as an attractive and promising region for investment.

KEYWORDS: Strategic communications, Nation branding, public diplomacy, Foreign direct investment, Africa, Global media.

INTRODUCTION

Modern strategic communications practices in Africa, both at the national government level and in regional initiatives, are undergoing a period of reevaluation. This is driven by increased competition for the attention of global investors and the need to cultivate a positive international image. The growing role of media and digital platforms in disseminating information about national brands is

stimulating a transition from traditional promotional tools to comprehensive communication strategies that integrate governmental, business, and cultural narratives (Camatti N., 2022). In this context, the use of the global media space as a channel to demonstrate the investment attractiveness of African countries and to counteract negative stereotypes is of particular importance.

The shift toward a proactive positioning of Africa on the world stage presents unique challenges for strategic communications. These include the need to build a coherent investment brand for the region, counter information distortions, align local and supranational interests, and ensure the trust of the international business community. A key factor is the ability of African countries to build sustainable information campaigns, supported by both internal institutions and external partners, which allows for the formation of a long-term reputation.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the practices of nation branding and public diplomacy aimed at increasing awareness and trust in Africa within the international media. Among these, strategies integrating digital technologies, cultural diplomacy, and sporting events hold a special place, as they enhance the effect of communication campaigns and contribute to the formation of a positive image.

Integrating strategic communications into the processes of enhancing Africa's investment attractiveness requires a comprehensive approach. This includes developing coordinated narratives, institutionalizing media strategies, using modern technologies for monitoring and analyzing perception, and forming sustainable mechanisms for interacting with international audiences. The key aspects of such solutions are the consistency of messages, adaptation to the specifics of global media platforms, consideration of socio-cultural factors, and a long-term orientation toward building trust. All of this creates a foundation for developing effective communication strategies capable of transforming the perception of Africa in the eyes of the world community.

The objective of this study is to analyze strategic communications as a tool for enhancing the investment attractiveness of Africa in the global media space, to identify successful practices and barriers, and to determine directions for adapting international experience to the regional context.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is based on an interdisciplinary approach, combining developments in the fields of strategic communications, nation branding, public diplomacy, and economic sociology. This choice is because the formation of Africa's investment attractiveness cannot be considered in isolation from media discourse and institutional practices. To achieve the objective, the method of qualitative content analysis was applied, aimed at identifying recurring thematic frameworks, media narratives, and

practical case studies in academic publications.

An important area of analysis is related to the study of external communication influences. For instance, the research by Antwi-Boasiako I. (Antwi-Boasiako, 2022) reveals the mechanisms of Russia's public diplomacy on the African continent, which allows for identifying competitive lines of influence and assessing how local actors can adapt their strategies. Alongside this, the work of Camatti N. (Camatti N., 2022) demonstrates the importance of involving internal communities through co-creation mechanisms, which is critical for regional branding and aligning the interests of various stakeholders.

A significant role is played by the assessment of how Africa is represented in global media. The study by Gondwe G. (Gondwe G., 2024) analyzes the patterns of coverage of the region's technological innovations by Western publications, which makes it possible to identify structural biases in perception. Cultural and sports communications are examined in the work of Li X. (Li X., 2024), where virtual communities and sporting events are shown as effective tools for strengthening a national brand. The publication by Mashiah I. (Mashiah I., 2024) focuses on digital storytelling and narratives about the technological leadership of territories. Additionally, studies focusing on the internal dynamics of African countries were examined. The work of Madondo E. (Madondo E., 2025) presents a retrospective of Zimbabwe's strategic campaigns in the post-Mugabe period, which revealed a direct link between information campaigns and fluctuations in the flow of foreign investment. The research by Mbinza Z. (Mbinza Z., 2024) explores the specifics of branding South African cities, while the works of Mbinza Z. E. systematize the interconnections between branding, social constructs, and digital representations, which are particularly relevant in the region's urbanized economies. For comparison, international examples were also drawn upon. The study by Mohib A. A. (Mohib A., 2024), using the case of Qatar, shows how nation branding becomes a factor in attracting foreign direct investment.

Thus, the methodological strategy of the research is built on a comprehensive content analysis, including a comparison of African and external case studies, theoretical models, and applied practices. This approach has made it possible to identify stable frameworks for the application of strategic communications for the purpose of enhancing the investment attractiveness of Africa in the global media space.

RESULTS

An analysis of strategic communications in African countries reveals patterns that reflect a direct dependence between the quality of institutionally constructed campaigns and the dynamics of the region's perception in the eyes of foreign investors. Unlike discrete PR actions, strategic

communications form a coherent and long-term narrative that can either enhance or, conversely, diminish the attractiveness of the investment environment.

The experience of Zimbabwe is indicative, where the state initiative "Zimbabwe is Open for Business" became a symbol of an attempt to change the country's international image after political transformations. The study by Madondo E. (Madondo E., 2025) found that the campaign created an image of reforms and openness to capital inflow; however, an imbalance between rhetoric and actual institutional practice limited investor confidence.

The South African context presents a more complex picture. The research by Mbinza Z. (Mbinza Z., 2024) noted that the branding of Johannesburg as a "world-class African city" was aimed at combining global perceptions of a metropolis with a local cultural identity. The analysis showed that this communication model attracted investment in infrastructure projects and enhanced tourist appeal, but at the same time, it was met with a mixed reaction within society itself. This combination of positive and critical reactions confirms the thesis that the sustainability of an investment image is formed through international media discourse and thanks to internal consensus and support. An important point is the comparison of communication initiatives of various African countries and cities. Table 1 examines how government campaigns and media strategies have influenced investor perception.

Table 1 – Comparison of communication campaigns and their impact on FDI

| Country / Campaign | Main communication messages | Channels of dissemination | Impact on investor perception | Source |
|---|--|---|--|--------------------|
| Zimbabwe — “Zimbabwe is Open for Business” | Image of reforms, openness to FDI, and economic liberalization | International media, government forums | Increased interest, but constrained by distrust in political stability | (Madondo E., 2025) |
| Johannesburg (South Africa) — city branding | A combination of the image of a “world-class African city” and local | Slogans, media campaigns, public events | Attraction of investment in infrastructure and tourism; mixed reaction | (Mbinza Z., 2024) |



| | | | | |
|--|----------|--|------------------------|--|
| | identity | | from local communities | |
|--|----------|--|------------------------|--|

Empirical evidence of the effectiveness of communication strategies is demonstrated by modern international events with African participation. The scale of such initiatives is reflected in millions of impressions in global media and thousands of participants in hybrid formats, which indicates the region's growing ability to occupy a prominent place in the information space. In addition to reputational effects, direct economic results are recorded, including corporate investment commitments and the signing of partnership agreements. This points to the need for the systematic use of communication forums as a tool to consolidate Africa's investment image. A comparative analysis shows that in the case of Zimbabwe; there was a limited effect from external communication efforts. Despite increased interest, investors remained cautious. South Africa is characterized by a more complex strategy, where the use of cultural codes and infrastructure projects enhanced the city's image, but at the same time sparked internal debates. This asymmetry confirms the need to integrate strategic communications with institutional reforms, which allows for the formation of a long-term, sustainable investment image. Additional observations are supported by other sources. For example, the study by Mbinza Z. E. (Mbinza Z., 2024) found that the digital representation of cities in South Africa enhances the perception of transparency and manageability, while the work of Camatti N. (Camatti N., 2022) emphasizes the importance of co-creation with local communities in branding processes. These findings indicate that strategic communications cannot be effective in isolation from internal structures of trust and public support. Moreover, the research by Mohib A. A. (Mohib A., 2024) demonstrates that even in countries with stable economic resources, as in the case of Qatar, only a coordinated combination of image campaigns and institutional policy ensures the attraction of investment.

The study of international experience in nation branding allows for a comparison of successful cases and the identification of lessons applicable to African countries. Of particular importance is the example of Qatar, where the construction of an image of an investment-attractive state was coupled with targeted communication strategies supported by institutional reforms. The research by Mohib A. A. (Mohib A., 2024) shows that Qatar's national brand was formed through a combination of socio-economic stability, diplomatic activity, and infrastructure projects, which ensured a high level of trust from foreign investors.

The African context presents a significantly more heterogeneous picture. The analysis of the "Zimbabwe is Open for Business" campaign by Madondo E. (Madondo E., 2025) revealed a limited effect from declarative statements in the absence of sustainable institutional transformations. This shows that symbolic messages not backed by real changes are unable to ensure a long-term inflow of capital. At the same time, the work of Mbinza Z. (Mbinza Z., 2024) notes that in South Africa, city

branding practices can strengthen the investment image by emphasizing urban and cultural features; however, the effect remains localized and is not always translated into the international space.

A comparative analysis confirms that the success of the Qatari model is explained by the volume of financial resources and the coordinated integration of communication and institutional efforts. In Africa, however, communication campaigns often operate in isolation from administrative reforms and global diplomacy, which limits their effectiveness. Table 2 shows which brand elements have the greatest influence on investor decisions and how they vary between Qatar and African countries.

Table 2 – Comparison of nation branding factors in Qatar and African countries

| Brand factors / NBI dimensions | Qatar | African cases (Zimbabwe, South Africa) | Source |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--------------------|
| Socio-economic prosperity | Wealth, high GDP per capita, stability | Uneven development, low macroeconomic resilience | (Mohib A., 2024) |
| Global integration and hubs | Regional trade and digital hub, “Invest Qatar” | Partially: “gateway to Africa,” but limited connectivity | (Mbinza Z., 2024) |
| Active diplomacy and soft power | Conflict mediation, sports, culture, and diplomacy | Local initiatives, weak presence in global media | (Madondo E., 2025) |
| Culture and identity | Preservation of traditions alongside modernization | Afropolitanism, cultural diversity | (Mohib A., 2024) |
| High quality of life | Safety, comfort, image of “Monaco of Arabia” | Limited infrastructure access, inequality | (Mbinza Z., 2024) |

As can be seen from Table 2, the key drivers of Qatar's attractiveness were sustainable socio-economic development and institutionalized diplomacy. African countries, in contrast, face contradictions

between potentially strong cultural narratives and limited infrastructure. This creates an asymmetry effect. Strong symbolic codes are not always translated into investor trust.

The analysis shows that Africa needs to adapt international experience, taking into account local specifics. First and foremost, this requires the alignment of strategic communications and state reforms, and a systematic presence in global media. The study by Gondwe G. (Gondwe G., 2024) emphasizes that Western media create structural distortions in the perception of African innovations, which reinforces the need for an independent narrative aimed at correcting stereotypes. Furthermore, the work of Li X. (Li X., 2024) demonstrates the potential of sports and cultural initiatives as channels for strengthening the international brand, which is applicable in the African context, provided they are scaled and included in the diplomatic agenda.

Thus, a comparison with the experience of Qatar confirms that nation branding becomes an effective tool for attracting investment only when communications are integrated with policy, diplomacy, and institutional modernization. African countries have the resources to form competitive brands, but successful implementation is possible only through the combination of internal and external efforts.

DISCUSSION

An examination of the limitations of strategic communications in the African context reveals systemic obstacles that reduce the effectiveness of image campaigns and limit their ability to attract investment. Unlike positive examples of international branding, African practices face a number of barriers that create an asymmetry between stated goals and the actual perception of investors. One of the key factors is political instability. The study by Madondo E. (Madondo E., 2025) noted that the "Zimbabwe is Open for Business" initiative, despite its wide resonance, could not overcome the distrust in political institutions, which reduced the long-term effect of the campaign. Similar problems are observed in South Africa, where, according to Mbinza Z. (Mbinza Z., 2024), a change in strategies without the consolidation of institutional frameworks weakens the stability of the investment brand. Political volatility in this case acts as a systemic barrier, devaluing communication efforts. Another obstacle is the weak institutionalization of communications. The research by Mbinza Z. E. (Mbinza Z., 2024) shows that African campaigns are often built on a dependence on external consultants and lack a stable internal organizational base. This leads to inconsistency in the implementation of strategies, a gap between global messages and local practice, and a reduction in the resilience of brands over time. A limiting factor is the weak presence of African brands in global media flows. According to Mbinza Z. (Mbinza Z., 2024), African initiatives rarely make it onto the agenda of leading world media, which hinders the formation of recognition at the international level. In addition, the study by Mbinza Z. E. (Mbinza Z., 2024) notes that even with local successes in digital positioning, these efforts are not reflected in the global media map. This information asymmetry creates a gap between internal efforts

and external perception.

Finally, a structural barrier is socio-economic inequality. The study by Camatti N. (Camatti N., 2022) highlights the contrast between elite areas and poor neighborhoods in Johannesburg, which undermines the integrity of the brand and causes skepticism among investors. This imbalance creates a dual-image effect. Official communications convey a dynamic of development, while social reality demonstrates contradictions. Table 3 structures the main barriers that limit the effectiveness of strategic communications and their impact on investor perception.

Table 3 – Key barriers to the effectiveness of strategic communications in Africa

| Barrier | Manifestation in African cases | Consequences for investment | Source |
|-------------------------------|---|---|--------------------|
| Political instability | Distrust in Zimbabwean reforms, rapid changes of strategies | Reduced investor confidence | (Madondo E., 2025) |
| Limited global media coverage | African brands rarely enter the agenda of leading international media | Insufficient global recognition | (Mbinza Z., 2024) |
| Weak institutionalization | Inconsistent implementation of campaigns, reliance on consultants | Low brand resilience | (Madondo E., 2025) |
| Socio-economic inequality | Contrast between elite areas and poor districts (Johannesburg) | Undermined credibility of the brand image | (Mbinza Z., 2024) |

An analysis of international examples shows that the successful use of strategic communications requires expressive media campaigns and comprehensive institutional support. The most indicative case is presented in the study by Mohib A. A. (Mohib A., 2024), which details how Qatar built a national brand capable of attracting foreign investment. The foundation of its success was a combination of sustainable socio-economic development, infrastructure projects, and active diplomatic participation. The applicability of this approach to the African context lies in the need to

combine external communication efforts with internal transformations, which will help increase investor trust.

The adaptation of the Qatari model to Africa, however, must take into account specific constraints. The countries in the region lack a comparable volume of financial resources and political stability, which reduces the possibility of directly replicating the strategy. Nevertheless, some of its elements, such as integrating branding with national reforms or positioning the state as a regional hub, can be applied. In particular, the experience of Zimbabwe demonstrates that declarative campaigns without the backing of institutional changes do not form sustainable trust (Madondo E., 2025). Therefore, the practical value of the Qatari case for Africa lies not in copying, but in the selective integration of elements that ensure the coherence of communications and administrative reforms.

Practical confirmation of the significance of strategic communications is demonstrated by the author's participation in organizing the Global Africa Business Initiative (GABI) and its flagship forum, "Unstoppable Africa." These events, recognized by the UN as leading platforms for discussing the continent's future, brought together heads of state, CEOs of multinational corporations, representatives of global media, and the expert community. The scale of the forum was expressed in more than 5,000 participants in online and offline formats, and millions of impressions in leading media outlets (Bloomberg, CNN, BBC, CNBC Africa). An important result was specific corporate commitments to investment and the signing of memorandums of understanding between government structures and the private sector. This case clearly confirms that strategic communications, when institutionalized and supported by international partnerships, can be transformed into long-term economic results. An equally important direction is the strengthening of the role of digital platforms and media cooperation. The study by Mbinza Z. E. (Mbinza Z., 2024) shows that the digital representation of cities and countries allows for the formation of an image of transparency and modernization; however, in the global information field, African brands are still represented fragmentarily. This creates an imbalance. Local achievements go unnoticed by international audiences, which limits the inflow of investment.

The development of digital infrastructure allows social networks, specialized online platforms, and global media services to be considered as key channels for promoting the investment image. The study by Gondwe G. (Gondwe G., 2024) notes that it is the media discourse that determines the frames of perception of innovations, which confirms the need for active participation of African actors in shaping their own narratives.

Thus, the prospects for integrating global practices of strategic communications in Africa are linked to a dual task: the institutionalization of branding efforts and the strengthening of digital presence. The experience of Qatar points to the need to combine reforms and media campaigns, while studies



of African cases emphasize that without this synthesis, communications remain declarative. A long-term result is possible only if strategic communications are considered not as a tool for short-term positioning, but as a structural element of investment policy, supported by digital channels and international partnerships. An integral direction for the development of strategic communications in the African context is its alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Communication initiatives that integrate narratives of sustainable growth, social inclusion, and environmental responsibility create additional arguments for international investors who are guided by ESG criteria. Promoting the SDGs through media strategies allows African countries to strengthen their image as promising investment destinations and actors in the global agenda, which helps to increase the trust of the international business community.

CONCLUSION

The conducted research has established the specific features of applying strategic communications as a key tool for shaping the investment attractiveness of Africa in the global media space. It has been shown that the sustainable positioning of the region's countries requires state and corporate actors to transition to comprehensive strategies that combine nation branding, institutional reforms, and media support.

It was revealed that the practical effectiveness of communication campaigns is limited by barriers of political instability, weak institutionalization, and insufficient reach in global media. The necessity of integrating international experience, particularly in the case of Qatar, where the coordinated use of branding initiatives and diplomatic activity ensured investor trust, has been confirmed. A comparison of African and foreign practices has shown that the success of communications is determined not by declarative messages, but by their reinforcement with socio-economic stability and institutional transparency.

An analysis of the comparative characteristics of national and city campaigns has demonstrated a difference in their applicability. Initiatives like "Zimbabwe is Open for Business" generated temporary interest but were limited by the weakness of their political foundation, whereas the branding of Johannesburg emphasized cultural and infrastructural advantages, although it provoked a mixed reaction from society. An important factor for the sustainability of communication strategies is a digital presence, which ensures brand recognition and the ability to correct international stereotypes.

The relevance of developing media cooperation and digital platforms capable of expanding Africa's international presence and consolidating narratives of modernization, integration, and cultural diversity has been substantiated. A promising direction is the institutionalization of strategic communications as a structural element of investment policy, which will allow for the alignment of

internal reforms and global positioning.

Thus, strategic communications form a sustainable framework in which nation branding, diplomacy, and digital media become interconnected conditions for the successful strengthening of Africa's investment image. Prospects for further research are related to the development of models for integrating global practices, forming a unified continental narrative, and using digital technologies to increase the trust of international investors.

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