ISSN: 2394-3122 (Online)
ISSN: 2394-6253 (Print)
Impact Factor: 6.03

Volume 12 Issue 10, October 2025

SK International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research Hub

Journal for all Subjects
e-ISJN: A4372-3088
p-ISJN: A4372-3089

Research Article / Survey Paper / Case Study
Published By: SK Publisher (www.skpublisher.com)

A Monthly Double-Blind Peer Reviewed Refereed Open Access Multidisciplinary & Multilingual International Journal - Included in the International Serial Directories

Revisiting Branding – A Longitudinal Study of Inspiration Economy Projects

Mohamed Buheji
Founder- International Institute of Inspiration Economy - Bahrain.
buhejim@gmail.com

DOI: https://doi.org/10.61165/sk.publisher.v12i10.3

Abstract: This paper explores the unique branding paradigm of the Inspiration Economy (IE), which diverges from conventional product or service branding to instead brand transformative socioeconomic solutions, processes, and outcomes. Through a qualitative analysis of IE's extensive portfolio of labs and publications, a strategic framework is identified and mapped where the branded "product" is a replicable model, a proven methodology, or a powerful human outcome.

The study demonstrates how IE constructs its brand authority through a cohesive ecosystem anchored in a core philosophy of inspiration, articulated through distinct thematic pillars, and validated by evidence-based, co-created impacts. We argue that IE branding operates by turning abstract concepts into tangible, credible assets, leveraging "Inspiration Currency" as a measure of non-financial value, and targeting stakeholders from governments to communities. Ultimately, this paper posits that IE represents a paradigm shift in strategic branding, where trust and authority are built around a new, impactful way of creating and measuring socioeconomic change.

The findings reveal that IE branding is an evidence-based ecosystem that integrates a core philosophy, strategic thematic pillars, and multi-channel dissemination to build authority. The study concludes that IE successfully brands concepts, making them replicable and desirable for a global audience of policymakers, NGOs, and communities, thereby establishing a new standard for value and impact in socioeconomic development.

Keywords: Inspiration Economy, Strategic Branding, Longitudinal Study, Brand Value Co-creation, Inspiration Currency, Transformative Outcomes, Evidence-Based Marketing, Solution Branding, Process Branding, Place Branding, Human-Centric Branding.

1.0 Introduction

An analysis of ten years of the Inspiration Economy Labs projects and publication portfolio shows that the extensive list of 106 project categories and the 300-plus papers and books published can be identified in core themes, strategic focus areas, and underlying philosophy that would help to construct a unique brand and marketing strategy.

The projects are unified by a distinct set of principles that form the "brand" of the Inspiration Economy. The foundational belief is that every problem contains the seeds of its own solution. The focus is on unlocking latent potential ("intrinsic powers") within individuals and communities, Buheji et al. (2023). Value is created not just through financial capital, but by inspiring people, changing mindsets, and fostering a proactive, can-do attitude.

© 2025, SK Publisher All Rights Reserved

Solutions are not siloed; they intentionally bridge sectors—for example, connecting education with the labour market, or healthcare with social development. The solutions are based on pull thinking, which is a recurring methodology that involves creating systems and environments. The solutions are pulled by demand and need, rather than pushed by central planning. This is evident in education reforms, labour market programs, and e-government services. This holistic approach brings in a conscious shift from merely "empowering" beneficiaries to actively developing their capacity for self-sufficiency, independence, and legacy creation.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 The Value Proposition of Inspiration Economy Projects

Kotler and Keller (2016) mentioned that marketing needs to evolve from being product-centric to customer-centric and, importantly, to value-centric marketing. The key to successful branding, as per Kotler and Keller (2016) is to understand customer needs and create value propositions that address those needs better than competitors." Based on the extensive list of publications and labs, the Inspiration Economy (IE) approach to branding is distinctive. It doesn't brand a product or service, but rather brands the solution, the process, and the transformative outcome itself. However, the IE branding approach can be contextualised by comparing it to several established and emerging branding paradigms. Its uniqueness lies in how it *combines* these approaches for socio-economic transformation.

IE extends this logic beyond customers to communities, creating value propositions that address chronic socioeconomic needs. Its 'Poverty Elimination Model' is not a product but a value proposition branded as a definitive solution to a fundamental human need. Buheji et al. (2023)

Gyrd-Jones and Kornum (2013) explore the complexities of managing multiple brands within an organisation and how they relate to a central corporate brand, which is directly analogous to IE's structure of multiple labs under one umbrella. The corporate brand provides a 'moral contract' that guides the organisation's behaviour and is a source of identification for internal and external stakeholders. This perfectly describes the IE framework. As Gyrd-Jones and Kornum suggest, the overarching Inspiration Economy brand acts as a 'moral contract' of empowerment and multidisciplinary problem-solving, Buheji (2025c). This contract guides and legitimises each distinct lab—from the 'Poverty Elimination Model' to the 'Gaza Resilience Lab'—creating a coherent brand architecture where diverse solutions are unified by a core ideological promise.

2.2 Branding a Solution: The "Poverty Elimination Model"

Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) introduced the concept of co-creation of value, where the brand is built through dialogue and shared experiences with consumers. Today, the market has become a forum where consumers play an active role in creating and competing for value. This directly supports the approach of IE's labs. As Prahalad and Ramaswamy foresaw, IE labs function as 'forums' where community members are not beneficiaries but active co-creators of the 'Inspiration Currency,' thereby building the brand from the ground up through shared problem-solving.

This approach involves branding a core methodology, platform, or system that clients use to solve a fundamental problem. Thus, any service-based major consultancy firm would use its solution programs, i.e. its proprietary methodologies and problem-solving approach, as its brands. Comparably, IE brands its "Poverty Elimination Model" or the "Inspiration Lab" process that brings focus on the efficacy and replicability of the solution itself, not a tangible consumer good. The target audience (governments, NGOs) is "buying" a system for change.

As per the work that was published on "Reporting Extreme Poverty Elimination Model from Sub-Saharan Africa — A Case Study of Two Years Journey from Mauritania", or the "Coops in Inspiration Economy — Raising the Capacity of the Poor", the branding strategy was to move from branding specific products made by the poor (e.g., handicrafts, etc.), to brands

the IE approach to "Poverty Elimination Model" itself. This model is the product as per the main plan of the Marketing Strategy of IE. Buheji (2025b), Buheji (2022)

Vredenburg et al. (2020) discussed the risks and imperatives of brand activism, emphasising the need for authentic, long-term commitment to a cause. Authentic brand activism requires a long-term commitment to a cause, integration into core business functions, and a willingness to accept potential short-term economic losses. This provides a lens to view IE's credibility. Unlike commercial brands that risk 'woke-washing,' the Inspiration Economy's brand activism is inherently authentic. This means IE projects, labs and publications are being socially progressive or aligned with a social justice cause for marketing and reputational benefits.

As Vredenburg et al. dictate, IE's commitment to causes like poverty elimination and crisis resilience is long-term, fully integrated into its core 'business' of running labs, and operates entirely outside the paradigm of seeking short-term economic gains, thus building unassailable credibility.

Choosing the brand identity to be poverty elimination (not "poverty alleviation") is a powerful, definitive brand promise. The brand story is one of "From Theory to Life Transformation". It's a story of proven, replicable success and uses evidence-based marketing as it is built on the credibility of case studies and longitudinal data (two years or more). The publications are the marketing brochures for this brand.

The visual identity for the brand could be visualised with "before and after" community maps, graphs showing a rise from poverty to self-sufficiency, and images of cooperative structures. This suits the targeted audience for this brand, like other NGOs, governments, and development agencies, who are "buying into" and replicating the model.

Traditional solution branding is primarily commercial and profit-driven. IE's "solutions" are non-proprietary, focused on social impact, and their "currency" includes non-financial wealth like community resilience and knowledge.

2.3 Branding a Process: The "Inspiration Lab"

Aaker (2004) showed that a strong corporate brand can create a clear 'halo' that provides credibility for the products and services offered by the business. This can be seen from the review of the IE's ecosystem, which provides credibility and a replicable framework for its diverse labs, from Mauritania to India. The trusted 'Inspiration Economy' master brand lends authority to each specific solution-brand, such as the 'Shea Nut Tree' model."

The work of 'Gaza Resilience Lab', and the 'COVID-19 Untapped Solutions Lab' have managed to establish a brand through its unique processes. This can be seen in the paper "Understanding Problem Solving in Inspiration Labs." In fact, the entire COVID-19 series brands the "Untapped Solutions Lab" process. Buheji and Ahmed (2021), Buheji (2017)

Suchman (1995) provided a theoretical framework for how branding can gain, maintain, and repair legitimacy through pragmatic, moral, and cognitive dimensions. Legitimacy is a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions. This explains IE's projects marketing strategy, with having massive output of peer-reviewed publications during the COVID-19 pandemic serving as a powerful 'cognitive' legitimising tool, positioning the 'Untapped Solutions Lab' not merely as an initiative but as a 'proper and appropriate' authoritative source for crisis innovation, not only for the COVID-19 pandemic, but for any other complexity-based crisis. Buheji (2025b), Buheji and Ahmed (2021)

Czinkota et al. (2014) examined how knowledge creation and intensity contribute directly to the construction of brand legitimacy, which is precisely what IE does with its prolific research output. IE, being a knowledge-intensive concept built its brand legitimacy by demonstrating expertise and generating valuable knowledge that is perceived as credible for the targeted audience through its publication strategy. The knowledge intensity of IE labs and publications has built a relentless generation

of credible, relevant knowledge in every type of field targeted. i.e. over 60 papers during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate unparalleled expertise and construct an authoritative, legitimate brand in this type of socioeconomic crisis mitigation and development space.

The branding strategy of the "Inspiration Lab" is the go-to methodology for crisis innovation and complex problem-solving. Its brand identity is tagged by the paper "The Inspiration Lab: A Collaborative Space for Generating Untapped Solutions." Then, the brand story is about "Influencing Without Power", which is about finding opportunities inside chaos. It's a brand of agility and multidisciplinary ingenuity. Buheji (2025c), Buheji (2024)

The massive output of over 60 peer-reviewed papers during the COVID-19 pandemic is the ultimate branding tool, positioning the lab as an essential, rapid-response knowledge factory and creating evidence-based marketing. Based on this, a visual identity is created.

Where a logo of (interlocking circles, networks) and process (a cycle or a journey map) suggests collaboration. This suits the targeted audience for this brand, which is the policymakers, community leaders, and academics seeking a structured yet flexible approach to wicked problems.

2.4 Branding a Methodology or an Outcome: "Anti-Fragility"

Vargo and Lusch (2004) established that service-dominant methodology creates a value that is co-created which helps in the application of competencies for the benefit of others and establishes a basis of exchange.

The application of specialised skills and knowledge, as per Vargo and Lusch, is the fundamental unit of exchange. This directly echoes the concept of "Inspiration Currency," where the specialised knowledge is the unit of exchange is operationalised by IE's 'Inspiration Currency.' The brand's value is measured in the co-created application of knowledge, resilience, and community empowerment, moving beyond financial metrics to measure the exchange of transformative competence.

This strategy involves branding a powerful idea or philosophy that transcends any single product or service. Similar to brands that market the ideology of environmental activism or brand a sustainable energy future, IE brands the overarching concepts of "Inspiration Economy," "Resilience Economy," and "Anti-Fragility." These are not just projects but belief systems that followers and participants adopt. Buheji (2025a)

Ind et al. (2022) explored how brands are co-constructed through interactions with stakeholders, emphasising participatory meaning-making. The corporate brand is co-created through the interactions and experiences of multiple stakeholders, who collectively construct its meaning. This directly supports the analysis of IE's participatory labs. Ind et al. (2022) argued that a brand is co-created through stakeholder interactions. This is the operational engine of the IE brand, where each community member in a lab is not a recipient but a co-author of the brand's meaning, collectively constructing the narrative of 'resilience' or 'elimination' through their lived experiences and solutions.

While some brands use ideology to sell products (clothing, cars, travel), IE's end goal is the widespread adoption and replication of its socio-economic models for community benefit, not product sales. The IIEP labs published a series of papers on Anti-Fragility, such as "Reconstruction of an Anti-Fragile Universities in Gaza", "Building Anti-Fragile Generation — Stories on Mothers of Gaza", "Creative Destruction and Trumpism: Building an Anti-Fragility Framework...", "Building Anti-Fragile Generation – Stories on Mothers of Gaza", and "Building Anti-Fragility – Cases on Poverty Elimination from Mauritania". Buheji (2025a), Buheji and Migdad (2025)

The branding strategy focused on the concept of "Anti-Fragility" (which means going beyond resilience to actually gain from disorder) as its signature outcome. Even IE labs branded the identity of each publication or lab, such as "The Anti-Fragile Generation" or "Anti-Fragile Universities," which created a powerful, aspirational label. Buheji (2025d)

Thus, the brand story is not just about survival, but about "Building from Destruction" and "Waves of Inspiration Despite Genocide". It's a story of profound strength. The use of storytelling of specific "Inspirers" – the mothers, the students, and the academics is also used as living proof of the anti-fragile brand, and this helps build evidence-based marketing. The visual identity is represented by a phoenix rising from ashes, a structure that becomes stronger under pressure, or the image of a Gazan mother as the archetype of strength. The target audience for such a brand is the communities in post-conflict zones, institutions facing disruption, and individuals seeking to overcome adversity. Buheji and Migdad (2025), Migdad et al. (2024)

2.5 Branding a Value System: "Inspiration Currency"

Jain and Mishra (2020) focused on the rise of purpose as the central principle for modern brands, which must authentically align with societal values. A purpose-driven brand is one that is built around a core reason for being that transcends profit maximisation and is aligned with societal well-being. This is the core of IE's identity. IE is a quintessential purpose-driven brand, as defined by Jain and Mishra. Its entire existence is built around a 'core reason for being'—transforming problems into opportunities—that transcends traditional economic metrics and is fundamentally aligned with societal well-being, measuring its success in 'Inspiration Currency'.

All labs, but explicitly in 'Women Development Labs', 'Self-Sufficiency Projects', 'Youth Economy' and 'Socioeconomic Problem Solving' and 'Agile Resilience' bring with them inspiration currency that creates a non-financial wealth value. The branding strategy here is that the entire IE project brands a new value system where impact is measured in "Inspiration Currency," not just money. Buheji (2017)

The brand identity can be visualised as "Invest in Inspiration Currency." Or "Our Wealth is Measured in Impact." The narrative here is that this type of thinking brings in a new economic paradigm. It argues that true wealth is community resilience, knowledge gained, and lives improved.

Marketing materials for a Women's Development Lab would state: "Our 'currency' is not money, but a 40% increase in women-led community projects and the launch of 15 new family businesses" which means it uses evidence-based marketing. The visual identity for such an approach can a "currency note" that features symbols of community, growth, and knowledge. And the target audience for such a brand is the Social investors, philanthropic organisations, and conscious consumers who want to see their contribution create measurable, non-financial value.

2.6 Branding a Place-Based Solution: The "Gaza Anti-Fragile Generation' and the "Bamboo School Village"

Holt (2004) explained how iconic brands become cultural icons by addressing societal needs and embodying powerful myths. Cultural branding draws from historical disruptions in society. The brand's myth repairs the acute anxiety that the disruption has caused. Similar to this spirit of Holt's cultural branding, IE's 'Anti-Fragile Generation' brand in Gaza addresses the profound societal disruption of war, offering a powerful myth of not just surviving but gaining strength from chaos, thereby repairing a collective anxiety and building an iconic identity of resilience.

Defining how places can build a brand identity through a specific approach or culture, and people, is what makes a brand unique, as per Anholt (2007). The brand of a place is not just a logo or an advertising campaign; it is rather the sum of all the thoughts, feelings, and associations that people have about that place. This is central to the Gaza case study. As Anholt asserts, a place's brand is a collective perception. The 'Gaza Resilience Lab' work is a deliberate intervention in this process, seeking to reshape the global sum of 'thoughts, feelings, and associations' about Gaza from victimhood to 'anti-fragile and agile resilience,' demonstrating IE's application of advanced place-branding principles in a context of extreme adversity.

Similar to this case is the brand that came as a result of 'Experiential Learning Lab' in (India) in the paper "Rebuilding Tolerance in Times of Scarcity Thinking - Case of Bamboo School Village (Assam — India)". The branding strategy used here is that the physical location and its model are branded as a tangible, replicable symbol of a solution.

Bocken and Geradts (2020) defined the barriers and drivers to sustainable business model innovation, which involves redefining value creation beyond profit. Sustainable business model innovation involves redefining value creation to deliver positive social and environmental impact alongside economic value. This aligns with IE's core operational model, where the IE labs represent a form of radical sustainable business model innovation. As Bocken and Geradts outline, they fundamentally 'redefine value creation,' designing models where the primary delivered value is social impact and community resilience, with traditional economic value being a supportive outcome, not the primary driver.

Braun et al. (2010) highlighted the critical and often overlooked role of residents as active participants and ambassadors in the branding of their city or place. Residents are the most important stakeholders and the most prominent brand ambassadors for a place brand. This is central to the "Gaza Resilience" and "Bamboo School Village" cases. "Braun et al. emphasise that residents are a place's most important brand ambassadors. The IE's branding of the 'Bamboo School Village' and 'Gaza Resilience' brilliantly operationalises this insight, turning residents into the primary narrators and living proof of the brand, thereby ensuring its authenticity and powerful emotional resonance.

Branding identity was the "Bamboo School Village." The name itself brands simplicity, sustainability, and community-centricity. The brand story is about "Rebuilding Tolerance" and overcoming "Scarcity Thinking." It's a brand of harmony and sustainable living. The village itself is the primary marketing asset—a "living proof" demonstrator. The paper serves as the case study that others can visit or replicate, and this is an evidence-based approach. The visual identity for this lab is the iconic image of the bamboo school structure, set in a natural landscape. This helps to build a targeted audience of educators, community developers, and NGOs looking for low-cost, high-impact models for education and social cohesion.

Table (1) shows that IE projects (labs and publications) can build their brand from the solution, the process, the outcome, the value system and the living proof.

Table (1) Constructs of Branding in IE Labs and Publications

Branded Entity	Example from Publications	Core Brand Promise	Target Audience
The Solution	"Poverty Elimination Model" (Mauritania)	A proven, replicable model to eradicate poverty.	Governments, NGOs
The Process	"Inspiration Lab" (COVID-19, Gaza)	A structured method for finding "untapped solutions" in crises.	Policymakers, Leaders
The Outcome	"Anti-Fragile Generation" (Gaza)	The ability to not just survive, but thrive from chaos.	Communities in Crisis
The Value System	"Inspiration Currency" (Women's Labs)	A new way to measure wealth based on social impact.	Social Investors, Donors
The Living Proof	"Bamboo School Village" (India)	A tangible, visitable demonstration of a solution in action.	Educators, Developers

In essence, Inspiration Economy branding is about building authority and trust around a new way of creating value. It brands concepts, making them tangible, credible, and desirable for replication and support, turning abstract solutions into powerful, impactful brands.

3.0 Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, longitudinal, and case-study-oriented research design to deconstruct and analyse the unique branding paradigm of the Inspiration Economy (IE). The methodology is structured to systematically investigate how IE projects, labs, and publications collectively construct a cohesive brand identity around socioeconomic solutions, processes, and outcomes over ten years.

3.1 Research Design

The research is founded on a Qualitative Longitudinal Study framework. This design is appropriate for tracking the evolution and maturation of the IE brand over time, allowing for an in-depth examination of how its branding strategies have been consistently applied and refined across diverse contexts and projects since 2015.

The primary approach within this design is an In-Depth Qualitative Case Study Analysis of the entire IE portfolio. The "case" is the overarching IE branding ecosystem, with embedded sub-units of analysis represented by specific labs, publications, and thematic pillars. This enables a holistic understanding while permitting detailed exploration of specific branding manifestations.

3.2 Data Sources and Collection

The study utilises a comprehensive set of documentary data from the IE's own outputs, constituting the full population of its documented work rather than a sample. The data sources include project and publication portfolios. The complete list of 106 project categories of "Socioeconomic Advancement Labs" initiated between 2015 and 2025, and the entire corpus of over 300 academic papers, books, and case studies published by the International Institute of Inspiration Economy during the same period.

Thematic framing internal or foundational documents outline the core philosophy of IE, such as its principles of "pull thinking," "inspiration currency," and "anti-fragility." The data collection was conducted through a systematic archival review of these sources, primarily accessed through academic databases (e.g., ResearchGate) and the institute's publications.

3.3 Data Analysis Framework

Drawing from the literature review a preliminary analytic framework was developed based on established branding theories (e.g., solution branding, co-creation, cultural branding). This framework was used to guide a deductive analysis of how IE's activities constitute branding.

A deep qualitative content analysis was performed on a purposively selected set of key publications that represent the core branding strategies of IE be it core branded entity (e.g., Solution, Process, Outcome), the brand promise and narrative, the target audience, the evidence and marketing tools used (e.g., case studies, longitudinal data). The analysis includes the articulation of "Inspiration Currency".

4.0 Application & Analysis

4.1 Primary Thematic Pillars

The IE projects represented by labs and publications can be grouped into several major thematic pillars, which represent the core areas of intervention.

4.1.1 Human Capital & Mindset Transformation Pillar

This is the most fundamental pillar, focusing on developing the potential of individuals across their lifespan. For example, some work focuses on transforming systems to discover and nurture "inspired" students (not just gifted ones), creating inspiration-based curricula, and establishing lifelong learning pathways. This can be seen in instilling life-purposefulness, future

foresight, and mapping national youth strategies to combat issues like NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). Also, this pillar shows that IE projects and labs help to manage the mindset and the psychology through managing anxiety, building resilience, addressing mental health (especially post-COVID), and fostering positive psychology through media.

Kotler et al. (2021) presented in Marketing 5.0 the application of human-mimicking technologies to create, communicate, deliver, and enhance value across the customer experience. In relevant to IE work, the focus is on the mindset that can help advance human-centric approaches. Hence, while Kotler et al. discuss technology mimicking humanity, the Inspiration Economy operationalises humanity itself as the technology. Its labs are 'human-mimicking' systems of empathy and co-creation, designed to deliver value not just to customers, but to entire communities, embodying the 'Technology for Humanity' ethos without relying on digital tools as a primary driver.

4.1.2 Socio-Economic Inclusion and Community Resilience Pillar

The inspiration economy also focuses on integrating marginalised groups and strengthening community structures. For example, the poverty elimination projects and publications bring in a comprehensive approach that goes beyond aid to create sustainable social-for-profit ventures (e.g., bamboo villages, shea butter production, eco-tourism). The targeted programs for people with disabilities, the elderly, refugees, migrants, and "waste pickers" focus on capacity building and competitive production. Some programs also focus on moving from women's empowerment to women's development through entrepreneurship NGOs, productive family programs, and rural women's co-ops.

Part of the inclusion practices in IE is to revitalise the villages through eco-tourism, preserving heritage, and improving the quality of life via local projects (water wells, healthcare, handicrafts).

4.1.3 Public Service & System Efficiency Pillar

This pillar applies inspiration economy principles to optimise government and public services. For example, processes in primary care, hospitals, ICU management, and public health are re-engineered to improve throughput, quality, and resource utilisation (e.g., reducing patient wait times, optimising bed usage).

The labs target to solve practical problems in electricity (faster connections, reducing blackouts), water (leak detection), sewage, and traffic management. Here, even the efficiency of e-government, tender boards, police services, and legal courts, often achieved by reducing bureaucracy and enhancing citizen trust.

4.1.4 Economic Diversification & Sustainable Livelihoods Pillar

This pillar focuses on creating viable economic opportunities, particularly in niche and traditional sectors. For example, the IE labs work on enhancing the value chains in specific local industries like camel wool carpets, fisheries, agriculture, date palms, and leather production. The IE approach focuses on establishing small cooperatives or supporting small family businesses, facilitating generational transitions, and promoting necessity entrepreneurship. The labs use field research to build knowledge asset registers to improve the link between academia and industry.

4.1.5 Geographic & Contextual Focus Pillar

The work demonstrates a clear focus on specific contexts that help to build up diverse international reach. This is shown from the accumulated experiences drawn from over 21 countries, with a strong presence in specific nations like Bahrain, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Mauritania, India, Ghana, Sudan, and Morocco.

IE projects, labs and publications also focus on developing post-conflict economies that are tailored to the unique socio-economic challenges of developing nations, post-conflict regions (like Bosnia), and communities facing poverty and migration. Besides, **IE s**olutions are adapted for both urban settings (e.g., municipality services, police) and isolated rural communities (e.g., Amazigh villages, Assam bamboo camps).

4.1.6 IE Brand Expression Pillar

In this part, we are going to explore one of the IE publications. The papers selected represent a line of branding following in each type of IE projects, labs or publications. The branding of the Inspiration Economy (IE) operates through a cohesive, multi-level ecosystem that seamlessly integrates its core philosophy with tangible outputs, as evidenced by its labs and publications. This ecosystem is anchored by a foundational brand philosophy centred on transforming socioeconomic problems into opportunities through inspiration, resilience, and multidisciplinary holism. This core identity is strategically expressed through distinct thematic pillars—such as Resilience Economy, Youth Economy, and Poverty Elimination—which structure the labs and communicate focused expertise.

The brand's expression is consistently maintained via a uniform visual and verbal identity, employing standardised terminology like "inspiration currency" and a structured lab framework across all documents, which reinforces professionalism and coherence. Knowledge dissemination is strategically channelled through academic platforms like ResearchGate, educational tools such as YouTube e-learning series, and public forums, ensuring broad accessibility and credibility.

Crucially, the IE brand is experienced as a participatory process, where community engagement and co-creation in labs transform participants into active brand advocates, fostering a sense of ownership and shared mission. Finally, the brand's legitimacy is continually validated by documented impacts—case studies, published research, and scalable models—that not only evidence the fulfilment of IE's brand promise but also create a self-reinforcing cycle where proven outcomes attract further engagement, solidifying IE's authority and visionary role in socioeconomic development.

4.2 Branding Resilience: Shaping Gaza's Global Identity

"Branding Resilience: Shaping Gaza's Global Identity through Narrative, Solidarity, and Advocacy" (Buheji & Hamza, 2024) is a paper that represents a quintessential example of Inspiration Economy (IE) branding applied at a macro, geopolitical level. It perfectly illustrates how IE branding principles are used not for a product or a single lab, but for an entire nation and its people. The paper shows the most direct and sophisticated application of IE branding, moving from branding projects to branding a people's identity in the face of extreme adversity, i.e. how a region in crisis is being turned into a product.

The "product" is Gaza's Global Identity. The paper seeks to actively reshape how Gaza is perceived globally—away from a passive victim of tragedy and towards a global symbol of proactive resilience and unwavering determination.

The brand's central pillar is "Resilience." However, in the IE context, this goes beyond mere survival. It is branded as the ability to create, innovate, and build community structures (like Inspiration Labs) even under bombardment. The capacity to not just endure but to become stronger and more determined through the trauma, as seen in the "waves of inspiration" generated and this what is branded as 'Anti-Fragile Resilience'.

The paper on Gaza uses narrative re-framing to send a message that Gaza, despite the genocide and total destruction, victimhood, and helplessness, would stay a source of inspiration, and a teacher to the world on how to withstand and overcome extreme pressure. The new, branded narrative sent by this IE lab is that Gaza, as a "Living Lab of Resilience" would carry stories of mothers, students, and healthcare workers, which would become "case studies" in this new brand identity.

The global solidarity position Gaza resilience not just as a source of empathy, but as the primary channel for distributing and amplifying the new brand. Pro-Palestine protests, academic boycotts, and consumer activism (BDS) are framed not as protests alone, but as a global movement "buying into" and advocating for the "Gaza Resilience" brand.

Advocacy is the branded marketing campaign. It moves beyond asking for aid to communicating Gaza's "Inspiration Currency." The advocacy message is: "Do not look at Gaza only for what it has lost. Look at it for what it has created:

unparalleled human resilience, a model of anti-fragility, and a powerful global solidarity movement. This is our value; this is our currency."

The brand's value is measured in non-financial "Inspiration Currency," which includes ‘Moral Authority’ which shows how Gaza gains a powerful voice on the global stage. The other currency comes from the ‘Global Solidarity’ which represents the massive, youth-led international movement which become an asset of the brand. The paper creates a transformation from a symbol of despair to a symbol of an indomitable human spirit. Thus, "Gaza Resilience Model" becomes a source of learning for other oppressed or crisis-stricken communities, and this is what makes it a replicable knowledge.

There are a variety of targeted audiences in this paper. First, there is the global public, which works to build sustained international pressure and support. Then, there are the international institutions and NGOs which shift their approach from humanitarian aid to supporting resilience-based development and advocacy. Also, the policymakers who influence foreign policy and diplomatic stances. Finally, there is the Palestinian Diaspora and Youth, whom this paper provides them with an empowered, proud identity to mobilise around. Even the people of Gaza themselves can benefit from the theme of this paper, as it would reinforce their own sense of agency, purpose, and identity as "Inspirers," not victims.

4.3 Branding Poverty Elimination: Sustainable Solution through "Shea Nut Tree" Ecosystem

The branding strategy in "Sustaining poverty elimination around the shea nut tree - case from Ghana" (Buheji, 2024) is a classic example of Inspiration Economy (IE) branding applied to a localised, resource-based development project. This paper moves beyond branding a product (shea butter) to branding an entire socio-economic ecosystem and its replicable model.

The "product" is not just shea nuts or shea butter. It is the integrated "Poverty Elimination Model" built around the shea nut tree. This model encompasses sustainable harvesting, community-owned production, women's empowerment, and environmental conservation. The brand's central promise is that poverty is not just being alleviated, but permanently eliminated through a system that is ecologically sustainable through renewable resources (the shea tree) and economically self-sufficient within the community. Also, the brand is socially empowering, specifically elevating women, who are often the primary harvesters.

The brand of the "Shea Nut Tree" project recognises a tree that symbolises natural wealth, deep roots, and sustainable growth. The brand story is one of "Unlocking Hidden Wealth." It frames the shea tree not as a simple plant, but as a "bank" and a "factory" that already exists within the community, waiting to be activated. The problem of poverty is solved by the opportunity hidden within the local environment, and this can be applied to any other wealth.

The physical, functioning project in Ghana is the primary marketing asset. The brand is built by showing, not telling. Potential partners or donors can be shown the entire value chain—from the tree to the finished product to the improved livelihoods—as irrefutable proof of concept.

The brand narrative is not about a foreign saviour. It is about "community-owned wealth."

The "Inspirers" (the women working on the Shea Butter) are the brand ambassadors. Their stories of transformation—from poverty to business owners—become the core marketing content, making the brand authentic and powerful.

The brand is positioned at the intersection of multiple global values. The SDG 1 (No Poverty): Poverty elimination, SDG 5 (Gender Equality): Women's empowerment, SDG 8 (Decent Work): Sustainable economic growth, SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption): Sustainable use of resources. This alignment makes the brand highly attractive to international development agencies and ethical investors.

The value of this brand is measured in its non-financial returns, where "Women Advancement Currency" is measured by the number of women who become entrepreneurs, mentors, and community leaders. The skills of making the organic products

from the Shea Butter and managing it as a business in the community is what build the "Knowledge Transfer Currency". Also, the preservation and sustainable management of the shea parklands builds an "Environmental Stewardship Currency" that leads to a "Community Stability Currency" that is represented by the reduction in economic migration and the increase in family well-being.

This lab and paper target to attract other rural communities in Ghana and West Africa. The model is packaged and marketed as a replicable solution for other regions with similar resources. The brand offers a proven, holistic, and sustainable investment opportunity, not a temporary charity project. This can attract international NGOs and development funds. Also, companies looking for a transparent, empowering, and sustainable supply chain for shea butter would be the ideal commercial partners. Thus, over time, the paper presents a model that can be the basis for a viable national program for rural economic development that provides ethical consumer brands.

4.4 Branding a Proven Methodology: The "Mauritania Model"

The branding strategy in "Reporting Extreme Poverty Elimination Model from Sub-Saharan Africa – A Case Study of Two Years Journey from Mauritania" (Buheji, 2022) is a foundational example of Inspiration Economy (IE) branding, focusing on establishing authority and a replicable "product" in the development sector. Thus, this paper does not brand a physical product or a community, but rather a proven, systematic methodology for solving one of the world's most intractable problems.

The "product" is the "Extreme Poverty Elimination Model" itself. This is a strategic, process-driven brand, positioning the IE approach as a viable and superior alternative to traditional poverty alleviation programs.

The brand's central promise is bold and definitive: "Elimination," not "Alleviation." This is a crucial distinction that sets it apart from most development initiatives. The promise is Time-Bound, reviewing what is achieved in a "Two-Year Journey." It is also evidence-based, which is a "Case Study" with reported data and outcomes. Besides, it is replicable as a "Model" that can be applied elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Authority and Evidence-Based Branding are one of the main strategies followed in IE. Take, for example, the "Extreme Poverty Elimination Model." The name is clinical, powerful, and positions the solution as a serious, proven intervention, akin to a medical or engineering solution. The brand offers a story that frames the two-year journey in Mauritania as a rigorous test, the results of which are now being reported to the world. The narrative is: "We have cracked the code, and here is the evidence."

The other type of branding strategy is the "Open-Source Solution". The paper itself is a marketing tool for this open-source strategy. By publishing the model, methodology, and results, the brand invites replication. The target audience (other NGOs, governments) is encouraged to "adopt" this branded model, much like one would adopt a new software platform or management standard.

When marketing starts with a problem like "Extreme Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa." IE follows a problem-centric framing strategy that positions the brand as the definitive answer that transforms the mindset of the stakeholders from a sympathetic model to an empathetic mode that aims to solve a complex socio-economic equation. Thus, the Mauritania project serves as the tangible proof that the model works, making the brand credible and trustworthy.

4.5 The "Inspiration Currency" of the Brand

The value generated by this brand is immense and measured in how it helps others to utilise something already tried and tested. It generates hope for other communities and policymakers that extreme poverty is not a permanent condition. For donors and investors, the brand promises a more effective use of resources compared to open-ended aid programs. This poverty elimination brand is marketed as a national strategy that can be integrated into public policy, and it positions the IE approach as

a new, more effective standard for development work that many international NGOs or United Nations Alliances can use. Also, it offers a high-impact, evidence-based "investment" opportunity for their funds.

The core message is not about the cost of the program, but about the return on investment measured in eliminated poverty—the ultimate Inspiration Currency. The model brands the outcome as a "resilient community"—one that is no longer vulnerable to the shocks of extreme poverty and has a self-sustaining economic base.

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 The "Inspiration Economy" Brand

The portfolio of Inspiration Economy projects, labs and publications presents it not as a theoretical concept, but as a practical, actionable framework for problem-solving. Its "brand" is characterised by four variables: Action-Oriented, Human-Centric, Optimistic & Pragmatic, and Scalable & Adaptable.

It is fundamentally about *doing* and creating tangible change; thus, it is action-oriented. It is human-centric since it believes that the most valuable resource is inspired human capital. Besides, it is optimistic and pragmatic since it combines a positive, opportunity-seeking mindset with practical, implementable strategies. Finally, the way the IE principles are applied in a Bahraini ministry, a Bosnian spa, or a Rwandeese or a Sudanese or a Mauritanian village shows the model's flexibility shows it is scalable and adaptable.

In essence, the Inspiration Labs project list showcases a systematic approach to turning socio-economic challenges into opportunities for sustainable development, using inspiration as the primary catalyst for change. Mushimiyimana and Buheji (2024)

5.2 Inspiration Economy Brand Framework

The IE framework can be seen in the paper "Branding Resilience: Shaping Gaza's Global Identity through Narrative, Solidarity, and Advocacy" (Buheji & Hamza, 2024), which demonstrates that the most powerful "brand" is a human brand of resilience. The problem (genocide and oppression) is the starting point, and the brand is built around the solution (resilience and advocacy) emerging from it. Also, every Palestinian in Gaza, especially mothers, medical workers, and students, becomes a brand ambassador.

The value of the brand is clearly the global solidarity and moral authority it generates. It builds a 'Resilience-Focused' Brand. The entire endeavour is to make "Gaza" synonymous with "Resilience." In conclusion, Buheji & Hamza (2024) is not just an academic paper; it is a branding manifesto. It outlines a strategic communication plan to weaponise narrative and solidarity to reshape a global identity, turning Gaza's suffering into a source of unassailable strength and its people into the world's most profound "Inspirers." This is marketing in the Inspiration Economy at its most powerful and transformative.

The paper of "Sustaining poverty elimination around the shea nut tree - case from Ghana" is a perfect illustration of branding an IE "Solution" rather than a "Product." Thus, the problem (extreme poverty) is the genesis. The solution (the shea tree model) is the branded outcome.

The project itself functions as a live "lab" where the model's success is marketed not in tons of shea butter produced, but in lives transformed, communities stabilised, and a sustainable system created. The brand is synonymous with creating a community that is resilient to economic shocks and environmental challenges because it controls its own sustainable value chain. In conclusion, Buheji (2024) brands the "Ghana Shea Nut Model" as a powerful, nature-based, and community-driven blueprint for defeating poverty. It transforms a local resource into a global symbol of self-sufficiency and intelligent, empathetic development. This is IE branding that turns a project into a paradigm.

5.3 The Depth of the Strategic Branding of Inspiration Economy Projects

This document exemplifies the strategic branding approaches of the Inspiration Economy (IE) framework through a comprehensive portfolio of Socioeconomic Advancement Labs initiated since 2015. The IE brand is constructed around a unified, mission-driven vision of pioneering multidisciplinary solutions to complex global challenges. This is operationalised through a consistent and structured presentation, where each lab is clearly themed—such as Resilience Economy or Youth Economy—and follows a standardised framework, reinforcing a systematic and replicable methodology.

Credibility and authority are built via a strong emphasis on evidence-based practice, with each lab substantiated by academic publications, seminars, and e-learning resources, often disseminated through multi-platform channels like ResearchGate and YouTube to ensure accessibility and transparency.

The branding strategically leverages storytelling and impact narratives from diverse geographical contexts—from Bahrain to Bosnia to India and to Ghana—to humanise its mission and demonstrate tangible, community-centric outcomes. Furthermore, the brand positions itself as forward-thinking and innovative through labs focused on future foresight and Industry 4.0, while its core messaging consistently centres on empowerment, resilience, and the transformative power of inspiration as a currency for change. This cohesive integration of vision, evidence, engagement, and emotional resonance effectively establishes IE as a visionary, credible, and globally engaged leader in the socioeconomic development landscape.

5.4 Key Branding Development Approaches (The "How")

The analysis reveals that recurring strategic models are used to implement solutions. For example, the "Lab" is used as a Model. Each project acts as a live laboratory for testing solutions in real-world conditions, emphasising learning by doing. IE also use gamification and competitions (e.g., between health centres, schools, co-ops) to drive engagement and measure impact.

The labs work on leveraging the power of peer-to-peer to improve student performance, then sharing knowledge among professionals, followed by driving community change, is another approach seen in IE labs. Despite not being claimed to be intentional, IE uses approaches similar to Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) to identify and leverage existing community assets (e.g., local crops, traditional crafts, natural resources) as the foundation for development, rather than focusing on needs and deficits.

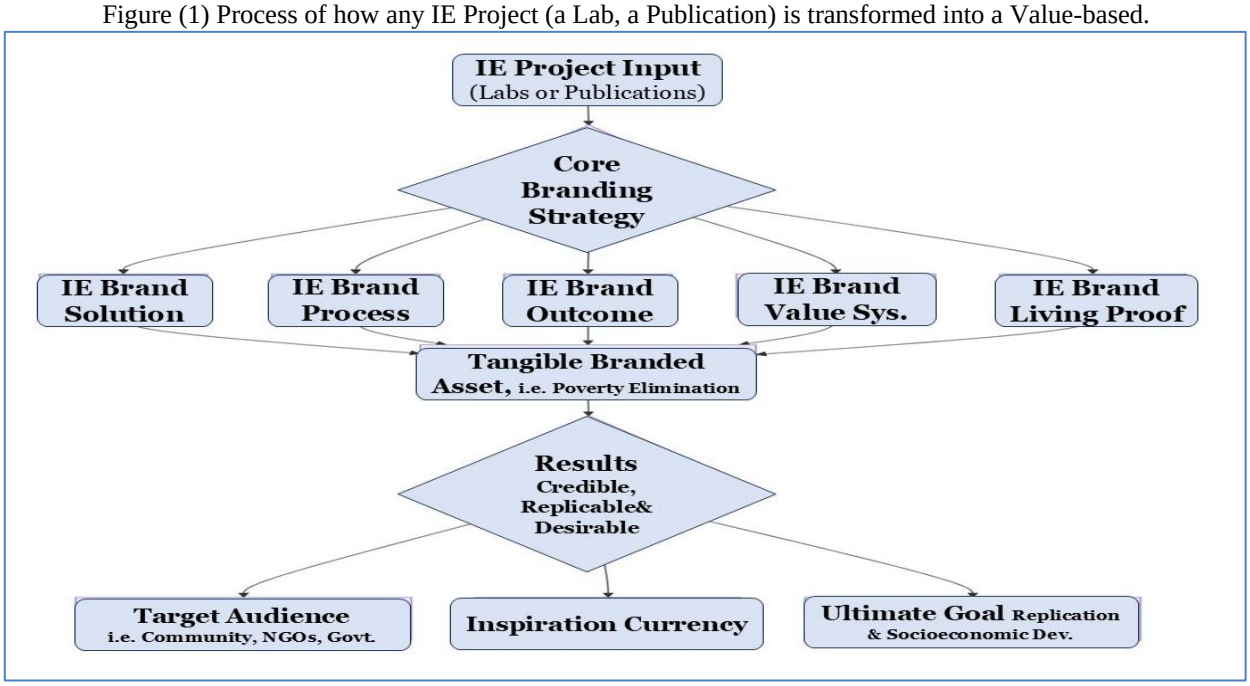
The other example of key branding development is based on fundamentally rethinking the processes, not just incremental improvement, but (e.g., "Reverse-Design" for the Camel Wool Factory, re-engineering academic advisory services).

5.5 Visual Framework of Inspiration Economy Branding Ecosystem

This framework visualises how the IE constructs its unique brand authority by turning abstract concepts into tangible, replicable assets. Figure (1) shows a hierarchical structure of the IE brand, from its core philosophy to its tangible impacts. The first level is focused on core philosophy. Thus, transforming problems into opportunities through inspiration, resilience, and multidisciplinary holism.

The framework shows the strategic focus areas, which are based on diversification and geographic focus. Then we have a level where the solution (such as a blueprint for "Poverty Elimination Model"), then the process (such as "Inspiration Lab"). The same level also has the outcome (such as creating "Anti-Fragile Resilience"), followed by a value system (such as "Inspiration Currency"). Finally, we see the living proof (such as the "Bamboo School Village").

Figure (1) Process of how any IE Project (a Lab, a Publication) is transformed into a Value-based.



The IE brand is driven by evidence-based impact that comes from (case studies) that are disseminated by (ResearchGate, YouTube), which lead to co-creation and advocacy. The final level is focused on the ultimate impact (the Results) that helps to build authority, global replication, and socioeconomic change. The validated currency strengthens the IE brand's trust and authority, attracting more engagement and leading to the replication of models in new contexts.

References

1. Aaker, D. A. (2004). *Leveraging the Corporate Brand*. California Management Review, 46(3), 6-18.
2. Anholt, S. (2007). *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*. Palgrave Macmillan.
3. Bocken, N. M., & Geradts, T. H. (2020). Barriers and drivers to sustainable business model innovation: Organization design and dynamic capabilities. *Long Range Planning*, *53*(4), 101950.
4. Braun, Erik; Kavaratzis, Mihalis; Zenker, Sebastian (2010) : My City - My Brand: The Role of Residents in Place Branding, 50th Congress of the European Regional Science Association: "Sustainable Regional Growth and Development in the Creative Knowledge Economy", 19-23 August 2010, Jönköping, Sweden, European Regional Science Association (ERSA), Louvain-laNeuve
5. Buheji, M (2017) Understanding Problem Solving in Inspiration Labs, American Journal of Industrial and Business Management, 7, pp. 771-784
6. Buheji, M (2022) Reporting Extreme Poverty Elimination Model from Sub-Saharan Africa – A Case Study of Two Years Journey from Mauritania, International Journal of Management (IJM), 13(8), 2022, pp. 8-20.
7. Buheji, M (2025a) Building Anti-Fragility – Cases on Poverty Elimination from Mauritania, *International Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 16-25.
8. Buheji, M (2025b) Marketing in Inspiration Economy – Strategies for Scaling Socioeconomic Impact in a Post-Capitalist World, International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews, Vol 6, Issue 10, pp 5272-5282.
9. Buheji, M (2025c) From Theory to Life Transformation – A Decade of the Inspiration Economy Theory tested through Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary Lens – A Longitudinal Study, International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation , Vol (6):5, p. 819-834.
10. Buheji, M (2025d) Reconstruction of an Anti-Fragile Universities in Gaza, International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation, Vol 6(2): 1454-1466
11. Buheji, M (2025e) Socioeconomic Advancement Labs done by IIEP-Since 2015 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381489902_Socioeconomic_Advancement_Labs_done_by_IIEP-Since_2015
12. Buheji, M (2024) 'Influencing Without Power' for A Good Cause - The Experience of Gaza Resilience Lab, International Journal of Social Sciences Research and Development (IJSSRD), 6(2), 2024, pp. 1-12.
13. Buheji, M and Ahmed, D (2021) COVID-19 The Untapped Solutions, (Part 2), Westwood Books Publishing, USA. *ISBN 978-1-64803-629-3*
14. Buheji, M and Ahmed, D (2025) From Theory to Practice: Leveraging Anthropology and the Inspiration Economy for Community-Driven Solutions, International Journal of Management Sciences and Business Research, Vol-14, Issue 1, p. 25-43.

15. Buheji, M and Brahim Bebana, M (2022) Coops in Inspiration Economy – Raising the Capacity of the Poor, International Journal of Management (IJM), 13(1), 2022, pp. 17-26.
16. Buheji, M and Hasan, A (2024), Capitalising on the 'Social Capital' That Would Accelerate the Collective Wealth of Gaza, International Journal of Social Sciences Research and Development (IJSSRD), 6(1), pp. 134-152.
17. Buheji, M and Kakoty, P (2022) Rebuilding Tolerance in Times of Scarcity Thinking – Case of Bamboo School Village (Assam – India), International Journal of Management (IJM), 13(5), 2022, pp. 89-105.
18. Buheji, M. (2018) "Influencing without Power" Currency in Inspiration Labs—A Case Study of Hospital Emergency Beds. American Journal of Industrial and Business Management, Vol. 8, pp. 207-220.
19. Buheji, M. (2024). Sustaining poverty elimination around the shea nut tree - case from Ghana. Journal of Economics and Economic Education Research, 25(2), 1-14.
20. Buheji, M. and Ahmed, D (2018) Understanding Inspiration Currencies in Woman Development Programs, American Journal of Economics, 8(3): 174-182.
21. Buheji, M; Ahmed, D (2020) 'Covid-19 The Untapped Solutions ', Westwood Books Publishing LLC, USA. *ISBN- 978-1-64803-377-3*
22. Buheji, M; Aniceth, K and Ntiserurwa, A (2023) Optimising Communities Non-Financial Wealth- Case from Nyagatare- Rwanda, International Journal of Management (IJM), 14(7), pp. 142-153.
23. Buheji, M; Hamza, J (2024) Branding Resilience: Shaping Gaza's Global Identity through Narrative, Solidarity, and Advocacy, International Journal of Advanced and Multidisciplinary Social Science, 2024; 9(1): 1-10.
24. Buheji, M; Migdad, M (2025) Building Anti-Fragile Generation – Stories on Mothers of Gaza, *International Journal of Advances in Philosophy*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 6-13.
25. Czinkota, M., Kaufmann, H. R., & Basile, G. (2014). The relationship between legitimacy, reputation, sustainability and branding for companies and their supply chains. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *43*(1), 91-101.
26. Gyrd-Jones, R; Kornum, N (2013) Managing the co-created brand: Value and cultural complementarity in online and offline multi-stakeholder ecosystems, Journal of Business Research, Volume 66, Issue 9, Pages 1484-1493.
27. Holt, D. B. (2004). *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding*. Harvard Business School Press.
28. Ind, N., Iglesias, O., & Schultz, M. (2022). Towards a Paradigm Shift in Corporate Branding, Routledge
29. Jain, S., & Mishra, S. (2020). Purpose-driven branding: A new paradigm for the 21st century. *Journal of Brand Management*, *27*(6), 649-663.
30. Journal of Research Administration, 6(2), p.508 - 529.
31. Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). Marketing Management (15th ed.). Pearson Education.
32. Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2021). *Marketing 5.0: Technology for Humanity*. Wiley.
33. Migdad, M; Migdad, S; Migdad, A and Buheji, M (2024) Waves of Inspiration Despite Genocide – Cases from Youth and Children of Gaza,
34. Mushimiyimana, E and Buheji, M (2024) Rwanda's Self-Sufficiency Journey - Analysis of Achievements, Challenges, and Way-Forward in The Context of Sub-Saharan Africa, International Journal of Management (IJM), 15(1), pp. 43-66.
35. Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). *The Future of Competition: Co-Creating Unique Value with Customers*. Harvard Business School Press.
36. Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches. *The Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 571–610.
37. Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 68(1), 1-17.
38. Vredenburg, J., Kapitan, S., Spry, A., & Kemper, J. A. (2020). Brands taking a stand: Authentic brand activism or woke washing? *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, *39*(4), 444-460.

::: Cite this article :::

Mohamed Buheji. (2025). Revisiting Branding – A Longitudinal Study of Inspiration Economy Projects. SK INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH HUB, 12(10), 28–42. https://doi.org/10.61165/sk.publisher.v12i10.3