

Appraisal of Marketing Communication Tools for Effective Country Rebranding Campaign of Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was on appraisal of marketing communication tools for effective country rebranding campaign of Nigeria. It was an offshoot of the perennial erroneous perceptions of Nigerians and the consequent negative image equation in the international circles. This is in spite of the various federal government's Rebranding Nigeria project. The objectives of this study were to: ascertain if the right marketing communications messages, right marketing communications media, and right marketing communications personnel were used in the rebranding Nigeria projects. Survey technique was employed in the study, which targeted a cross section of Nigerians of varied social, economic and political classes. The area of coverage was limited to two cities: PortHarcourt and Lagos, where Nigerians of all ethnic persuasions live and work there in large numbers. From a working population of 1,200,000, a sample size of 350 was determined. Data were analyzed with the Chi-square (X^2) statistical tool, at a confidence level of 95% and a 5% margin of error. Results reveal that: the wrong marketing communications messages were used in the execution of the rebranding Nigeria project; the wrong choice of media channels were used in the rebranding Nigeria exercises and majority of the personnel used in the rebranding Nigeria programmed did not have the requisite marketing communications skills. Based on this, it was recommended that trained marketing communications' practitioners and appropriate media should be used in future rebranding Nigeria exercises.

Keywords: Marketing Communications, Country Rebranding, Media, Personnel.

1. Introduction

The image of a country is how the external publics (the international community) see the country and its citizens. That is their perceptions of the national character, qualities, strengths, weaknesses, and culture of the country and its people. All are however products of the national reputation of the country, which could be effectively managed. Wikipedia (2008:1) says that character and attitude are the ultimate reputation builders. Establishing a good reputation, therefore, entails making and keeping your words. The image of Nigeria and Nigerians is how the external publics (the international community) see the country and its citizens. Hence, for Nigeria and Nigerians to effectively market themselves acceptably to the international community, they must first rebrand themselves on an image and reputation management matrix. This could only be brought about through a well-planned and sustained marketing communications campaigns, Black (1989:12).

Due to some erroneous perceptions of Nigerians and the consequent negative image equation, every Nigerian needs to market himself/herself positively both at home and to the outside world through good conducts. This calls for a change of attitude on all in a spirit of sound reputation management. This is the philosophy behind the various rebranding projects of the Nigerian government. The government of Nigeria, therefore, launched the Nigeria Image Project in July 2004. Former Minister of Information, Chukwuemeka Chikelu, described the project as both informational and orientational in nature, involving both the media, advertising and public relations practitioners. But this project failed and was replaced by the Heart-of-Africa image project under Frank Nweke Junior as Information Minister, which also failed. Finally, came the much-publicized Rebranding Nigeria Project, championed by the former Minister of Information, Late Professor Dora Akunyili, which also failed allegedly due to poor marketing communications strategies.

Meanwhile, marketing communications is defined by Wikipedia (2010) as the messages and related media used to communicate with a market (target group in public relations parlance). It is the "promotion" part of the "Marketing Mix" or the "four Ps": price, place, promotion, and product. Those who practice advertising, branding, brand language, direct marketing, graphic design, marketing, packaging, promotion, publicity, sponsorship, public relations, sales, sales promotion and online marketing are termed *marketing communicators*, *marketing communication managers*, or more briefly, *marcom managers* (Clow and Baack, 2007:6).

National rebranding on the other hand is the effective transformation of the negative attitudes and characters that give a nation and its citizens bad names/images, to positive attitude and characters that are much

more alluring and acceptable to other citizens of the world, and advertising those positive attitude/attributes through effective marketing communications strategies to the outside world. Country re-branding is the process whereby a country actively seeks to create unique positive identities for itself and its citizens with the aim of positioning the country internally and internationally as good people, worthy of doing business with and a good destination for tourism and investment. The principles of branding apply to countries as they do to products and services, but the methods differ because creating a brand programme for a country demands a social marketing integration policy. Secondly, national rebranding must revolve around a nation's culture and values but most significantly how its citizens behave and also perceive themselves. The Nigerian people and the sum total of all their conducts inside and outside the country is the Nigerian brand. Rebranding Nigeria therefore demands a change of attitude from negative to the positive from all Nigerian citizens, home or abroad. There is no magical formula, however, there is rather a methodical process which involves careful strategy, memorable visuals and personal interactions, all of which must speak in unison for a customer to place full trust and invest their emotions in what is on offer, Sinclair (1999:14) maintains.

2. Statement of Problem

In spite of the federal government Rebranding Nigeria project, Nigeria and Nigerians image abroad has remained largely negative. That is to say a greater percentage of foreigners still view majority of Nigerians as crooks, con-men, 419ners, internet scammers, credit-card scammers, drug traffickers, fake products producers/importers, female/child traffickers and a lot more. The only area where we seemed to have gotten it right in shoring up the soured image of the country is the recent 2011 general elections, adjudged by both local and international observers as being largely free and fair.

All these therefore raise the nagging question as to the effectiveness of the marketing communication strategies being employed in the rebranding Nigeria programme. Are the right messages, media and personnel actually being used in prosecuting the rebranding exercise? Finding answer(s) to this poser is the main focus of this study.

3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were as follows:

- (i) To ascertain if the right marketing communications messages were produced and sent to Nigerians in the rebranding Nigeria exercises.
- (ii) To find out if the right marketing communications media were employed in marketing the rebranding culture to Nigerians.
- (iii) To verify if the right marketing communications personnel were used in prosecuting the rebranding Nigeria programmes.

4. Hypotheses

To find answers to the above, the following null-hypotheses were tested:

- (i) Ho: The right marketing communications messages were not significantly used in the execution of the rebranding Nigeria projects.
- (ii) Ho: The right marketing communications media were not significantly employed in the rebranding Nigeria exercises.
- (iii) Ho: The right marketing communications personnel were not significantly used in executing the rebranding Nigeria programmes.

5. Review of Related Literature

5.1 Branding and Rebranding

Wikipedia (2010) says a brand in commercial circles is a symbolic embodiment of all the information connected with a product or service. It includes a name, logo and other visual elements such as image, fonts, colour, schemes and other elements connected with the product or service. It also encompasses the set of expectations associated with a product or services, which typically arise in the mind of people. Such people are those involved with distribution, sale and supply of the products or services and ultimately customers. It is the brand's very substance, therefore, that leads to brand identity, Harm (2005). Branding then begins internally with a thorough examination and refinement of this identity.

Brand building therefore, considers issues like the following:

- (1) The Mission: The mission or purpose of building a particular brand. What do you want your brand to be and become? Why do you want it to become that? When do you want it to become that? What role should it play in your brand portfolio? The success of any brand will depend on how well these questions that results in clarity of purpose are asked, answered and understood by all who are related to the brand or the brand will go nowhere ultimately.

5.2 Rebranding Nigeria

Rebranding Nigeria demands that the citizens must ask themselves what/how they want to be construed by outsiders? The products here are Nigeria and Nigerians. They must be made good, for foreigners to delight in them. In line with Bajah (2009: 1) our national image is the impression, feeling or opinion, which other people have about us. In this case the impression or feeling or opinion, which other countries has about Nigeria/Nigerians. Over the years the image of Nigeria grows worst rather than bad. Nigeria has been branded thieves, drug-traffickers, Internet fraudsters, 419ers, election riggers and lately also terrorists. All these have had serious negative implications on our international image. Nigerians are subjected to the most stringent and most thorough check at foreign airports, seaports and other international boarders. Nigerians have been denied Visa entry to international engagements. Last year, the former Speaker of the House of Representative, Dimeji Bankole, was embarrassingly subjected to a search by the British Airlines notwithstanding his official status then.

However, the opinion that all Nigerians are thieves, 419ers, fraudsters, drug pushers, etcetera could be proved wrong, by carefully adopting the procedures of rebranding Nigeria through effective marketing communications and public relations, Aladiji (2000) said.

National rebranding therefore is the use of cohesive, enduring integrated marketing communications strategies to recreate positive impressions of Nigerians in the minds of her external publics. To rejuvenate Nigeria's bartered image, encourage foreign investments and make Nigeria a country to be reckoned with in the committee of Nations, demand a holistic change of attitude to the positive sides by all and communicating same to the outside world. Remember that action (your character) speaks louder than your words. So, empty propaganda alone can never achieve anything here. It is only countries with sound images, whose citizens also harbour positive images that could be taken serious in the global market arena.

5.3 Marketing Nigeria's Image As A Brand

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2005) reports that Nigeria's poor image is denying it much needed foreign investment to accelerate economic growth. Nigeria is bogged down by this negative image as one of the most corrupt nations in the world, Nworah (2005).

Major issues giving Nigeria/Nigerians the negative image problems were identified to include corruption, electoral frauds, drug trafficking, adulteration/faking of products, bribery and corruption, unemployment, poor infrastructure development, poor work ethics, increasing citizens dissatisfaction and disaffection with the government political structure and politicians, corporate large scale organizational irresponsibility, inadequate funding of the educational, health and other key sector, neglect of the agricultural and other non-oil productive manufacturing sectors, continued manufacture of poor quality, fake and substandard goods and service, over dependence on imported goods, poorly regulated capital and financial market, tribal, ethnic and religious squabbles, homelessness, poverty and hunger, poor maintenance culture, poor planning, lack of security and disregard for human life and property, armed and pen robbery, and others, (Nworah, 2005).

Recently, the bad image problem has been worsened by our citizens' involvement in acts of terrorism, ethnic and religious conflicts, etc. There is also the problem of youths' restiveness and rampant cases of kidnapping in the country.

To market Nigeria effectively to the outside world therefore requires a combination of marketing and public relations strategies (Edeani, 2001:121; Egwu, 2007:13).

5.4 Re-Branding Nigeria: The Place Of Marketing Communications

Brymer (2003:77) informs us that the principles of branding apply especially to countries as they do to products and services, but the method differ because creating a brand programme for a country demands an integration policy that most countries do not possess. According to Ajayi (2006: 1), this is a favourable period to re-brand Nigeria as the world's focus is on Africa. Nworah (2005) says that rebranding Nigeria demands that careful crafted communications messages should be marketed to millions of Nigerians internally and in Diaspora who are in the better position to represent Nigeria in their different countries of residence.

According to Ajayi (2006) internal branding revolves around a nation's culture and values but most significantly how its citizens perceive themselves. The Nigerian people are the Nigerian brand and that an internal branding strategy will equip Nigerians to sell "Brand Nigeria." The numerous benefits of gaining a positive and favourable image for a country like Nigeria through re-branding cannot be overemphasized. For a country with so many products and services to offer, re-branding its image positively will bring about the desired development and integrity. It will educate, indoctrinate and transform attitudes of Nigerians from negative to positive,

Involving Nigerian mega movie stars, home and abroad to showcase the culture, the people and country in a well-packaged documentary film that will compete with world standards will also help in the rebranding programme. This would go a long way to reposition Nigeria as a good brand in the world scene. This should be

the target of film producers with assistance from government at all levels, says Bajah (2009:7).

5.5 Marketing Communication and Branding: The Interface

Before, marketing communications focused on the creation and execution of printed marketing materials, then followed by mass media advertisements. But today, marketing communicators use the integrated strategic elements of branding, public relations, advertising, internet-marketing, direct-marketing, etc, in order to ensure consistency of message delivery throughout a campaign. Many trends in business can be attributed to marketing communications; for example: the transition from customer service to customer relations, and the transition from human resources to human solutions and the trends to blogs, email, and other online communications.

6. Methodology

Survey technique was employed in the study, which targeted a cross section of Nigerians of varied social, economic and political classes, since a behaviour-change is needed from all her citizens in the rebranding exercise. The area of coverage of this study was limited to PortHarcourt and Lagos. The choice of these two cities stems from the fact that Nigerians of all ethnic persuasions live and work there in large numbers. The two cities also boast of a good number of foreigners in the country.

From a working population of 1,200,000, a sample size of 350 was determined. The sample frame included airport staff, Nigerian international travelers, Nigerian importers, internet youth consumers, and a lot more. The data procured were analyzed with the Chi-square (X^2) statistical tool, at a confidence level of 95% and error limit of 50%.

7. Data Analysis

7.1 Respondents' Demographic Profiles

The demographic data of our respondents show that: 71.43% were males while 28.57% were females; 28.57% were in the age bracket of 21 to 30 years, 34.29% in the age range of 31 to 40 years, 28.57% were aged between 41 to 50 years, while the remaining 8.57% were either 50 years or above. 14.28% had only O'Levels, 8.57% had either OND or NCE, 48.57% had First Degrees, while the remaining 28.57% had either Masters Degrees or PhDs. 54.28% were married, while the remaining 45.72% were single.

Table 1: Respondents' assessment of the marketing communications messages used in the rebranding projects

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Effective Messages	100	28.57%
Ineffective Messages	220	52.86%
Not Certain	30	8.57%
Total	350	100%

From table I above, 100 (28.57%) of the respondents said the messages are effective. On the other hand, 220 (62.86%) of the respondents assessed the messages as being quite ineffective. While the remaining 30 respondents, representing 8.57% were not so sure what obtains here.

Table 2: Respondents Assessment of the media channels employed in the rebranding Nigeria Programmes

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Accessible	55	15.72%
Not Quite Accessible	256	73.14%
Not Certain	30	11.14%
Total	350	100%

The data displayed on table 2 above shows that only 55 (15.72%) of the respondents believed that the media employed in the rebranding project are quite accessible to Nigerians. On the contrary, 256 (73.14%) adjudged those media as not being quite accessible to a greater percentage of Nigerian populace. While the remaining 39 respondents, representing 11.14% could not make up their minds on this.

Table 3: Respondents Assessment Of Whether The Right Personnel Are Being Used in the Rebranding Nigeria Projects

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Right Personnel	76	27.43%
Wrong Personnel	230	65.71%
Not Certain	24	6.86%
Total	350	100%

Table 3 above shows that 96 (27.43%) of the respondents believed that the right personnel are being used in prosecuting the rebranding project. On the contrary, 230 (65.71%) of the respondents said that majority of the personnel don't have the requisite marketing communications skills. While the remaining 24 (6.86%) of

the respondents said they are not quite certain.

7.2 Tests of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One:

Ho: The wrong marketing communications messages are not being used in the execution of the rebranding Nigeria project.

Hi: The wrong marketing communications messages are being used in the execution of the rebranding Nigeria project.

Test Statistics = Chi – Square (X^2)

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

$$\Sigma = \sum \frac{\text{Observed Frequencies}}{\text{Number of Observations}}$$

$$= \frac{100 + 220 + 30}{3} = \frac{350}{3} = 116.66$$

Level of Significance = 95%

Test table 1: Assessment of the marketing communication messages

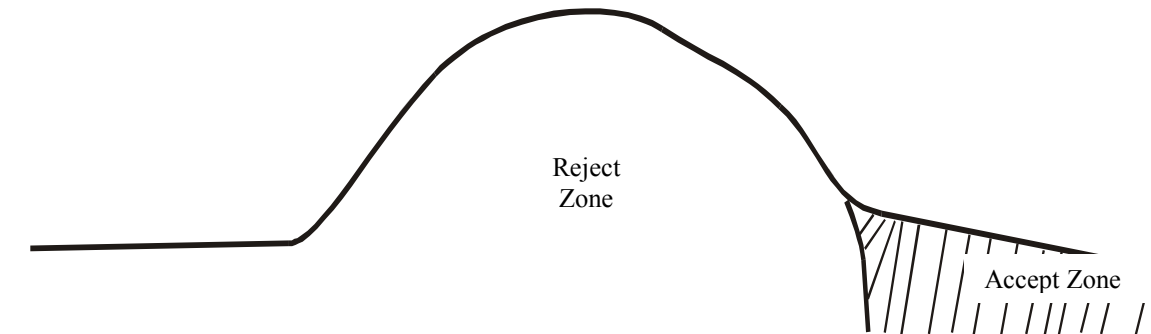
Options	O	E	Total
Effective Messages	100	116	216
Ineffective Messages	220	117	337
Not Certain	30	117	147
Total	350	350	700

Adapted from table 1.

Critical Chi-square ($X^2_{0.05,2}$) = 5.991

DECISION RULE

Reject Ho if the computed Chi-Square is greater than the critical Chi-Square. Otherwise, accept.



$$X^2 = \frac{(100 - 116)^2}{116} + \frac{(220 - 117)^2}{117} + \frac{(30 - 117)^2}{117}$$

$$= 2.21 + 90.68 + 64.69$$

$$= 157.58$$

CONCLUSION: Since the computed Chi-square is greater than the critical Chi-Square, we hereby reject the Ho and accept the Hi which says that the wrong marketing communications messages are being employed in the prosecution of the rebranding Nigeria project.

Hypothesis Two:

Ho: The wrong choice of media channel are not being made in the rebranding Nigeria exercise.

Hi: The wrong choice of media channels are being made in the rebranding Nigeria exercise

Test Statistics = Chi – Square (X^2)

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

$$E = \frac{\sum \text{Observed Frequencies}}{\text{Number of Observations}}$$

$$= \frac{55 + 256 + 39}{3} = 116.66(117).$$

Test table 2: Assessment of the Media Channels Employed

Options	O	E	Total
Highly Accessible Media	55	116	171
Not Quite Accessible	256	117	373
Not Certain	39	117	156
Total	350	350	700

Adapted from table 2.

$$X^2 = \frac{(55 - 116)^2}{116} + \frac{(256 - 117)^2}{117} + \frac{(39 - 117)^2}{117}$$

$$32.58 + 165 + 52 = 249.08$$

CONCLUSION: Since the computed chi-square is greater than the critical chi-square, we hereby reject the Ho and accept the Hi which says that: the wrong choice of media channels are being used in the execution of the rebranding Nigeria project.

Hypothesis Three:

Ho: The wrong personnel are not being used in prosecuting the rebranding Nigeria programme.

Hi: The wrong personnel are being used in prosecuting the rebranding Nigeria programme.

Test Statistics = Chi – Square (X^2)

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

$$E = \frac{\sum \text{Observed Frequencies}}{\text{Number of Observations}}$$

$$= \frac{96 + 230 + 24}{3} = 116 (117)$$

Test Table3: Assessment of the Capabilities of the Personnel Used

Options	O	E	Total
Right Personnel	96	117	213
Wrong Personnel	230	116	346
Not Certain	24	117	141
Total	350	350	700

Adapted from table 3.

$$X^2 = \frac{(96 - 117)^2}{117} + \frac{(230 - 116)^2}{116} + \frac{(24 - 117)^2}{117}$$

$$= 3.77 + 112 + 74$$

$$= 189.69$$

CONCLUSION: Since the computed chi-square is greater than the critical chi-square, we hereby reject the Ho and accept the Hi which says that: the wrong personnel are being used in prosecuting the rebranding Nigeria project.

8. Summary of Results

A summary of our data analysis gave the following results:

- i That the wrong marketing communications messages are being used in the execution of the rebranding Nigeria project.
- ii That the wrong choice of media channels are being used in the rebranding Nigeria exercise
- iii That majority of the personnel being used in the rebranding Nigeria programmed do not have the requisite marketing communications skills.

9. Discussion

For the rebranding Nigeria project to succeed, the right communications messages must be produced and disseminated to the people. In doing this, however, there is nothing like a mass message to a mass audience, rather, specific messages should be produced and targeted to specific target publics. For instance, pidgin English could be used better to reach the illiterates and the not so educated, while queens English could be used to repackages messages for the highly literate audiences. So, it is disheartening therefore, to learn from our number one result that the wrong marketing communications messages are being used in the execution of the rebranding Nigeria project. Hence, the necessary step must be taken to redress this anomaly.

Again, our number two result shows that the wrong choice of media channels are being used in the rebranding Nigeria exercise. For instance, why are televisions and radio only being used, when majority of the Nigerian rural populace, who constitute 70 percent of the population don't have access to such electronic media channels. And even those that have access to them, epileptic power supplies still prevents them from availing themselves fully of the opportunity.

Finally, the number three result reveals that majority of the personnel being used in the rebranding Nigeria programme do not have the requisite marketing communications skills. How then could the programme succeed? How then can the right messages be produced and appropriately targeted to the right people, and how can the right choice of media channels be made, if those that will carry out such functions lack the skills for such duties?

10. Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, we hereby recommend as follows:

- i. Trained marketing communications' practitioners should be engaged both as internal staff of the Ministry of Information and as external consultants, to assist in packaging promotional messages for the rebranding Nigeria exercise.
- ii. Appropriate media that puts into consideration target groups' educational levels, social and geographic variables should also be employed in reaching them.
- iii. The funding of the Rebranding Nigeria project should be beefed up, as a true national priority and all Nigerians, home and abroad must be carried along.

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