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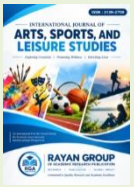

Nigeria's Rebranding Campaign:Fundamental Issues and Challenges of Reputation Building - a Discourse Analysis

By

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Abstract

This study took a 'panoramic' view of the Akunyili re-branding attempt to ascertain why the 2009 campaign recorded abysmal failure. The consternations arising from general perception of issues with regards the nation's reputation building cannot bear repeating because of concerns bordering on Nigeria's continuing deterioration on the her image path, as a time could come when it would be too late to salvage the situation. The paper is also of the view that Nigeria needs to invest strongly on her commitment towards patriotism and good leadership that is ready and willing to do the right things. Clearly, it's against this background that the fundamental issue of how to use the media to leap frog a new campaign that can make Nigeria sell rests. Where the preponderance of opinion doesn't favour another rebranding, it's the object of the study to factor what is responsible for the negative perception and also the type of media that would be more effective in the campaign. For the method of analysis, a combination of Content Analysis and Focus Groups approach (FGM) was used to gather data for the study from several sources. The population of the study comprised of total number of 233 daily editions of Daily Sun, The Guardian, Vanguard, and Punch newspapers plus 101 focus Groups. Sample size was derived through a combination of multi-stage sampling technique that yielded 223 stories covered during the campaign period, while the theoretical framework used to under guard the study was Social Judgement Theory. Based on stunning discoveries made, i.e. that media coverage was only 26% of the news holes and also because the campaign lasted for just about nine months which was such a short time and hence, could not make the desired impact, and since the country is still literally at a cross road, the study recommends a new campaign. The Federal Government should among other recommendations demonstrate the willingness to achieve set goals to the extent that its efforts would attract favourable press reports.

Keywords: rebranding, campaign, issues, reputation, Nigeria.

Introduction

The term reputation is some-worth abrasive in the sense of its usage and the way and manner one is seen by others. Such opinion is formed from a remote observation of the persons' general behaviour over a period of time. A nation's reputation emerges from a combination of the conduct of her citizens and perception held about its institutions. It is the notoriety with which a society is perceived due to some of the bad behaviours of her citizens that can negatively impact on her image. Obvious aspects such as poor business conduct, lack of transparency and so on in terms of corruption particularly among the ruling and political class, generally doing things outside the norms, tent to berate the nation. As Kyaagba (2022), says; a nation's reputation is not necessarily a simple judgement of good or bad behaviour but a culmination of issues that tends to be often emphasized in the nature of the governance system like: observance of fundamental human rights, quality of governance, economic standing, political/military rating, state of basic infrastructure, security of lives and property, strong economics that support high living standards, all of which have prospect in the promotion of reputation.

Thus, a nation's reputation is considered by placing certain variables in perspectives such as ability to keep agreements according to best practices in every sense of the word, and such variables that defines character and confers honour or reputation". Cohen (2011) argues that nations that have poor reputation are unable face their counterparts and stand on moral or ethical grounds to speak to certain issues because they realise their shortcoming. Since reputation building requires a strong sense of commitment and patriotism, the leadership must be ready and

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willing to do the right things. Cohen, (2011:31) further argues that driving reputation calls for "soul-searching and all and sundry must buy into the blueprint set by the leader as it takes one bad apple to ruin the entire bunch". It's certain that where preponderance of opinion doesn't favour the course of attitude change, every effort will come to nothing. This seems to be the case with re-branding the countries image considerably the campaign embarked on by the late Prof. Dora Akunyili. It's the focus of this study to examine the attitude and issues responsible for this poor reputation and image as it were, at the time being that the primary cause of the abysmal failure of the Akunyili re-branding attempt, as generally known, was that the public did not buy into it and it's now important to rethink the approach.

Again, given that the level of Roth in the society and how it has intensely magnified and what was seen as reprehensible no longer matters, where in-built checks and balances meant to curtail the excesses of the executive arm are observed in the breach as if the legislature is now an extension of the executive, calls for a critical decision on this campaign with a view to providing in our view, the pathway for the country to salvage herself. More so, the notoriety with which this excess has impacted on governance today for the wrong motives cannot be told, which is why this inquiry has become quite imperative (Akinrefun, 2025).

Much more so, the attitudes damaging Nigeria's image and also contributing to her catalogue of woes such as election rigging, corruption and fraud cases, how such vices are managed within established constitutional and legal framework and the maintenance of public order in the society. The situation whereby the image of the country is plumaged by compelling actions and inactions of the justice system - where it's no longer wrong to rig elections, for instance, places the country literally at a crossroad. With the new US immigrant policy under Donald Trump, a stable homeland policy has become a necessity at this point in time as it's no longer safe to walk away in search of greener pastures at others' expense. It's therefore, a wakeup call especially to societies in Africa to examine the issues pertaining to their reputation and for this reason; a study seeking to repackage the national image becomes compelling.

The objectives of the inquiry:

It's the main objective of the study to rethink the process of Nigeria's rebranding in light of prevailing attitudes responsible for the failure of previous rebranding attempt.

Specifically, it is the objective of this study to:

i. ascertain the major factors responsible for the present negative perception of the country,
ii. determine whether or not Nigeria actually needs rebranding to launder her image, and
iii. find out the form of media that would be more effective in the present rebranding exercise.

Research Questions:

i What are the major factors responsible for the prevailing attitudes or the negative perception of the country.

ii How important is Nigeria's image rebranding or laundering and

iii Which form of media would be more effective in the re-branding campaign?

Conceptual Imperatives

Nigeria's battered image became obvious when reports gained much traction because of some prominent citizens that were harassed at airport checkpoints and seaports around the world. It soon became an open conversation. Some persons including Nigeria's Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka openly reacted to the poor treatment meted out on him by immigration officials. It was such a horrendous, shameful and insulting scenario to say the least; not minding that certain negative actions and attitudes by some persons might have caused it. What followed was a flood of contention berating the way and manner the issue was approached at the time. The importance of this to the reader, who may not be quite conversant with the situation of things in Nigeria and the challenging task requiring surgical operation to extract the stereotypical variables contributing to the nation's perception. Being so, it remain to say that a nation's image building cannot be a tea party more especially as is the case where the political class are making matters worse by the day(Sobowale, 2019). The fact remains that the real damage to the nation's image is from its faulty foundation. It's for this reason that the phrase of the Bible verse in Psalm 11:3 "if the foundation be destroyed what can the righteous can do, truly presenting the question that explores the consequences of societal collapse when foundational principles are undermined comes to mind. This phrase actually suggests that when the very basis of something is corrupted, it is necessary to revisit that foundation which is the scriptural lesson the country's leadership have been trying to avoid.

Thus, Dike (2020:19) avers that "the extent to which the nation has sunk into decay is unimaginable and that the expectation of every right thinking Nigerian is towards fashioning a new path towards re-establishing an ideal society, since other societies have done so and survived despite negative impressions here and there." States as Uganda after the Idi Amin saga have done a similar thing to boost their image through their "Gifted by nature" campaign, South Africa's "Image programme" and Malawi's "Heart of Africa" is examples. Although the situation of the country has become some-worth complicated today with security as a major national challenge symptomatic of a larger conundrum the country is faced with. everything has really fallen apart, making a rebranding case almost unrealistic.According to Adelekan, (2024:6), since Dora Akunyili's re-branding Nigeria initiative following the footsteps of *"I love New York"* failed because it was not well conceived, what then will happen with the public knowledge of all the sinister interests and motives this time around? This troubling scenario paints a picture of absurdity and calls a timely alarm not only to the reader who needs to understand what the country is grappling with, but also the concerns of welding this ambivalence.

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Theoretical Framework

The field of psychology is open to contributions and insights from different literature. As studies have shown, a large body of knowledge exist especially within the confines of learning theory which are referred to as "latitude" or encompassing values- latitudes of acceptance, non-acceptance and non-commitment. It stands to reason that some levels of deductions would arise as social behaviour comes with favourable and unfavourable postures, depending on where the attitude pendulum falls. In his book *Social Psychology*, Sheriff (2010: 16), contends that "there are position generally measured by "valuation and attributions". But while not riding the wave of contentions here, De Fleur and Bell-Rotech (1975), cited by Folarin (1998), seems to have simplified this intriguing dimensions of binary decisions in their Social Judgement Theory, which is considered most appropriate to anchor this study. Proposed by Carolyn Sherif, Muzafer Sherif, Roger Nebergail, and Carl Hovland in (1961); Folarin avers that the foundation of the theory was laid in the 1950s and that the researchers were interested in understanding how different communicators develop their opinion which are also redistributed as they are gathered.

The theory's belief is that media messages fall within certain latitudes. If the message falls within the latitude of rejection, it means that the person receiving the message is likely to object to it as non-congruent. As relating to the study, if a conduct falls within the latitude of acceptance, it leads to high reputation and ultimately attitude of acceptance. It follows from this premise that it would be difficult to persuade individuals to trust the country or society having such latitude more so as the first instinct is to ascertain where the pendulum falls within the attitude continuum. The theory makes certain expectation namely that: that changing values has to go with the right frame of mind. Again, existing knowledge about group value is essential and it depends on the readiness of the society to make positive changes (Mc Quail 2005). Credit should be given to the proponents of this theory for their penetrating insight into issues which are germane to this study.

Overview of 'Re-branding Nigeria campaign'

Nation branding is similar to product branding in the sense that the reputation of a nation involves integrated efforts of transferring image to the values of the society as applicable to products. Nation branding is essential in developing countries not for its attractions but international perception. Onuoha, Ekwo(2003:11) observes that" as brands showcases the features of products or services, nation branding helps to improve the rating of the country which is why many nations practice branding as a policy". France, United Kingdom, Japan, China, South Korea, South Africa, New Zealand and most Western Europe countries for example, have experienced rebranding at some time or the other. This goes to show that Nigeria can rebrand and rebranding ideally starts from replacing certain negative behaviour in governance and social life to make people believe that it is no longer business as usual.

Thus, the observable negative attitudes within and outside responsible for whittling down the country's image would gradually change. This is when other nationals start showing interest and so on. The late Prince Tony Momoh, former Minister of Information under the military regime of self-styled President Ibrahim Babangida, earlier made a solo effort at what could be referred to as rebranding in his series of *Letters to My Country Men* in which he urged the nation to reappraise herself by promoting values that would cause a reversal of the prevailing toga of untrustworthiness. Momoh's letter-writing approach may be unfashionable today but letter-writing was the intimate medium in those days. Building a culture of understanding and camaraderie in Momoh's view was a form of rebranding and the takeaway from this effort was for Nigerians to know that Nigeria is the only country we have and everyone should look at the country in the face by telling ourselves the truth. It was years later after the country was rated very low in the overall National Bands Index (NBI) according to Baker and Hear (2007:78), where out of 49 countries, Nigeria took the 48th position and it became a national embarrassment which became the trigger for Dora Akunyili who was then the Minister of Information and Communications to embarked on image campaign (wikipedia.org/wiki/nation branding).

In a well televised press conference on Monday, February 9, 2009, she pleaded Nigerians to present a more positive appearance saying that Nigeria like a product is not selling. Although cynics argue that there wasn't need for the exercise since the issues accentuating the loss of confidence in the country could not be wished away by mere propaganda, she went on with the launch on Tuesday, March, 17, 2009 with the slogan **"Good People, Great Nation"**. Obaretin Anderson, a Benin based human rights activist was one of those who lampooned the idea of rebranding saying; our hospitals are in comatose, power sector is a forgotten paralstatal, and our roads a death trap, the money budgeted for all these sectors have been diverted into private accounts. If there is going to be any meaningful achievement by this campaign, let our politicians change their orientation towards politics...what is Akunyili rebranding? (Anderson 2006:6). Anderson maintains that it would be difficult to correct the impression that corruption is not fashionable by the elite class occupying public office. The fact, according to him, is that 16. 9% fraud cases were responsible for bank distress, while deliberate action and inability to keep accurate record of sales in the oil sector led to diversion of oil windfalls at the time. Currently, lack of accountability and deliberate embezzlement is responsible for the loss of the present gains of oil subsidy removal at national, state and local council levels.

In the same vein, Ndolo, (2009:5), observes that the late sage Obafemi Awolowo had earlier counselled: "it's first and foremost to remake and recreate ourselves; those who offer to lead this country must do so aright and strive constantly to lead themselves out of unruly prompting of the instincts and liberate themselves from the tyranny of the fresh in all its dimensions. Nigeria is naturally good and great. It only remains for us her sons and daughters to strive for all that we are worth, to match her goodness and greatness for the welfare and happiness of every one of us". While there is no gainsaying that Nigerians should present a more positive appearance in order to de-emphasize the pervading negative perception, branding Nigeria, according to Akunyili "takes on added significance by offering her instant identification". And with all the features of a product or service that distinguishes it from other competing products or services, it is her advise that as marketing communicators are cautioned to pay greater attention to name, logo and overall features such as distributive colouring that promotes brand image, the country

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likewise should help to design the Nigeria brand by adopting the theme "Good people, Great nation" she meant to correct the impression that suggest that Nigerians are not worst people on earth and should not be tagged as such.

The point here is that good reputation attracts other nationals to a country and this is why American lottery programme is there for other nationals especially from developing countries to come and build America with their talents in their quest of the American dream. It is clear from this narrative that to re-brand means to distinguish the country and this requires openness and show of love. It has been argued that with the size in terms of vastness of resources and potentialities as well as political and economic power from traditional state based power structure, Nigeria ought to be a Mecca of a sort with an organized and globalized corporate, complex and ICT driven brands to showcase. Even religious organizations leaders which are in good number could have become a popular way of selling Nigeria to the outside world. But Nigerian leaders refused to allow the society thrive in a way that would make them strive to do things that promote the country and market its potentials (Daniel, 2015). America is known for its technology and for her universities even though American prisons are filled with local criminals and bandits. Germany came out of World War 11 as a pariah nation but today it is known for its heavy machines. France is known for wine. Italy for its fashion, note the mafias in Sicily. Switzerland is known for watches. Brazil is known for football. United Kingdom is known for financial services. Cuba is known for cigars. Kenya is known for safari, Japan is known for electronics. China is known for toys and shirts and of course its cuisines that appear to a universal palate. India is fast becoming the number one medical tourism centre in the world, without forgetting the IT explosion in Bangalore. Philippine is known for labour exportation. The market is the most effective tool for rebranding; it was the market that did it for India, for China, for Brazil, and for Turkey. China also has $1.5 trillion dollars as at 2009 in its account. With that account balance, only a few countries would be inclined to deal with China based on the horrible memory of both the Tiananmen Square and Wuhan Covid-19 disaster (See Saraki, 2009:7).

Fig.1. Fifteen Better Perceived Countries Based on Six Ranking Criteria

Ra Ranking	Th Criteria for Measurement of first Fifteen Countries' Scores					
	CulCulture/Heritage Competence Export Administration Investment/Immigration Tourism					
1	France	Canada	Japan	Switzerland	Canada	Italy
	(71.4)	(70.1)	(77.0)	(67.3)	(62.3)	(77.2)
2	Italy	Australia	USA	Canada	UK	France
	(79.9)	(68.9)	(74.8)	(67.2)	(62.1)	(75.0)
3	UK	Italy	Germany	Sweden	USA	Spain
	(69.0)	(67.7)	(72.7)	(66.5)	(62.1)	(73.3)

Source: http/bra.bunelac.uk/handle/2438/1286 cited by Nwodu (2012:59)

The details of the ranking done in 2022 via interviews among people of 18 years and above are presented below:

Competence: This measures the population's level of education, openness, friendliness and reverse qualities such as hostility and discrimination.

Administration: Measures perception of governance, fairness, commitment to democracy, justice, loves for people and environment**.**

Culture: Determines contemporary music, art, sports, and literature.

Export: Measures products and services and how consumers react to these products.

Tourism: Talks about levels of interest in visiting other countries or tourist attractions

Investment &**Immigration**: The power to attract other people to work and live in the country to develop the place.

Nigeria's Attempts at Presenting a Positive Image

Nigeria had made several attempts as far back as year 2005 under Olusegun Obasanjo led civilian administration to embark on what was then called "Heart of Africa Campaign". According to the authors of this concept, it was aimed at showcasing the country through certain individuals who were seen as materially visible and influential so to say at the time. The core of that group was the likes of: Alhaji Aliko Dangote, Michael Balogun, Jim Ovia, Tony Elumelu Cecelia Ibru and several others. The entire idea was centred on the business conducts of these individuals, who were expected to display a certain level of global best practices and behavioural standards as a town-and-gown approach linking Government and private sector together.

Right from beginning, there was much scepticism because the whole ideal did not gel. What was concerning was how to fuse the programme into a business policy without being directly under Government control. *The Punch*, of February 26, 2023 recalls how the exercise appeared: "it's like there were ulterior motives as there was clearly no link between the campaign or programme laundering Nigeria's image and the private sector operations. The fact that it gulped a whooping sum of ($5.6 billion) during its short life adds a new layer of correlation between Nigeria's past and present attitude where nothing changed". Uche(1999), sums up the features of good branding as:

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- visibility
- driven by leadership
- operational
- strategic packaging
- deliberate actions
- no bandying
- public interest

Visibility has to do with openness and transparency of the programme in the view of the public, while leadership involves driving the process and given the right attitude by leadership, there is bound to be positive response. Packaging is critical and it has to be operational without pretences and in the public interest. Despite perceived seriousness, the previous programme did not appear grounded for the public to buy into it. There were lots of sentiments by state and non state actors which did not go down well or resonate with the publics' opinion because in the first place, the individuals involved were business men and not models that can drive such a campaign. The values of the people must align with expectations like what is currently going on in Ibrahim Traore's Burkina Faso. Although the government came as a military coup d'état, the reforms that the Patriotic Movement tagged "Revolution", brought on board for some while is causing significant restoration to the people due to sincerity and feeling of government predence. For a country where 40% of the population had lived below national poverty line in spite of the presence of gold, diamond, zinc, phosphate, limestone and several other mining industries like Nigeria, it remains that until the right governance approach is instituted, presenting only a sort of spirited patriotism is not going to achieve anything (Egwu 2017:17).

The general view among Nigerians is that government does not care about the sufferings of the masses... "Each time citizens square up to fight for what is their right to restore the social fabric of the society, it's a dangerous revenge tool against the leaderships' image"(Uche,1999:16). He further queries: what is the worth of a system's credibility and validity of its message when its political, economic and social structures are incessantly characterized by instability, fraud, corruption, dishonesty, sheer laziness, quota admission, inefficient bureaucracy, fierce ethnic rivalry and religious intolerance? Plausibly, this rhetorical questions tend to capture the vivid problem inhibiting the development of the country and those who occupy public office must recues themselves from the tempting of these vices of which our newspapers and magazines are inundated with their comments, views, and cartoons which either exposes or condemns our country in high places.

Communication Strategies for Rebranding Nigeria

Communication is a common human experience but some of its elements may not be overt to onlookers. Hence, common as communication seems, it has some hidden elements and unique properties. This uniqueness and commonality is not suggestive of its equal understanding. Wilson and Itek (2006:38) in their exposition of this uniqueness aver that "communication is like a road everyone passes but not all understands the route"; it's transactional, meaning that each element influences the other. It follows a process meaning it is dynamic and constant. It has no observable beginning or ending, which is that it hasn't a fixed boundary; consist of several different elements- source, encoder, decoder, message, channel, feedback, content, and effect, which explain its complexity. Every human communication act influences future transactions and no two communication acts are ever identical or repetitive. It should be noted that a society is characterized in terms of several variables such as bureaucracy, rivalry, religious tolerance, etc. Fab-Ukozor (2019:7) believes that it's pertinent to consider where the message recipient's value and attitude continuum lies for effectiveness of any communicative approach. Drawing from the foregoing, since communication is often central to several negative outcomes of communicative experiences, the level of success and enthusiasm a campaign can generate would depend on strategic inputs, message salience, as well as persuasiveness. Poor applications of communication strategies have ruined so many worthwhile campaigns making them seem a mere propaganda. These strategies would be discussed in the preceding pages but it would be necessary to focus on existing negative attitudes.

Empirical Review of Literature

In their work on 'Brand Review', Arens and Bovee(1994: 159) identifies four different brand designations: 1. A brand name: Lipton, Charmin, etc. 2. A brand mark, symbol, design or distinctive colouring or lettering; examples are Rostrow-Purina's check board and Prudential's rock 3. A brand character, brand mark that is personified –McDonald and Morton Salt, etc. 4. A trade mark: brand mark with legal protection such as Scoth+. Brand designation is a necessary feature of design which perhaps explains why brands must anchor on differences in "images, meanings and associations". However, the ultimate aim of projecting symbolic value of a country is the successful transference of what the country has to sell. The knowledge of brand and branding is important to Nigeria because of repositioning the country. This is true given that it is essential for reasons including: to build a stable society in the long term, develop a solid basis for future growth and expansion maintain the interests of all stake holders and intermediaries, respect rule of law, restore Nigeria from liability to asset, create a reputation as an organization that people would want to develop relationship with (See Nwodu, 2012:48).

The worrisome position of the country compels the mass media to be in the vanguard of propagating development by spreading information to the grassroots in order to persuade them to embrace transformative ideas. The fact that investors from other countries are scared of investing in the country because of her dented image and reputation is why rebranding the Nigerian has become critical. The government and the governed as well as the media should invest their time and commit their energies to making this happen. In situating this call, Burundi's case, for instance, comes to mind for in less than two years of rebranding, her GDP per capita of $237 changed to approximately $2,289 as at 2024. Expanding this, Ndolo(2009:4-5) painfully paints the realities of the Nigerian situation by cataloguing her:

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1. - Diversity

- Over 230 million and 250 ethnic groups
- over 250 mutually unintelligible languages made more complex by 1000 dialects,

2. Antagonism
   - 2 major antagonistic religions; a third and indigenous one that compliments both,

3. Illiteracy
   - Many Nigerians are illiterate by Western standards and mostly rural dwellers,
   - The psyche of many Nigerians have been destroyed by years of military dictatorship,
   - Social, health, education, infrastructural and economic fabric is without basis.

The reasons for the poor state of the nation are political and it's well documented but the disenfranchisement of the citizenry is why committed leaders cannot emerge at various levels of governance. It's also at the roots of: poverty, underfunding of education, lack of basic amenities, corruption, drug-pushing and strip-searching humiliation at international airports around the world.

Methodology

The study was under guarded by two research approaches: content analysis and Focus Groups Method (FGM). Since gathering data on rebranding was from several sources - newspaper stories, reports from several forms or comments, the angle the researcher applied was basically historical in nature due to the issues and the underpinning considerations of the researchers. The following dailies were selected; *Daily Sun*, *The Guardian*, *Punch* and *Vanguard*, *because* they are national dailies .Samples were selected based on specific calendar dates approximately within the ten months period of the campaign. - Specifically from March 10th to December 31, 2009. The research data were obtained from local Libraries or directly from the newspapers houses. Weekend editions (Fridays to Sundays) were excluded because of lifestyles, which brings the total number of days to 233 or editions. These were then content-analyzed as Wimmer and Dominick (1987:155-156), agrees because it allows the groups to create reality as part of the research process, through interpretation that present both qualitative and quantitative research approaches aiding the understanding of current research problem.

Sampling Technique/Size

After gathering 233 editions of the dailies selected, they were read through by the panel of nine focus groups of eleven participants, the eleventh persons being the secretary. While the groups that participated were selected using a dedicated online platform, to ensure national spread, cluster sampling was applied in selecting the 99 participants, however, a multi-stage sampling technique was applied in the first stage involving the listing of all days in each of the months selected. Secondly, the first work day of the week was selected by systematic random sampling, other work week at the count of three and continued in that order until all the months were selected. See Table 1 below for the number of stories that fell into the sample -223 which is the sampling size. In selecting the samples two trained research assistant were invited by the researcher to supervise the process of writing the report thereby making the number of participants up to101. This sample size was considered adequate and manageable given other variables.

Analysis

The table below shows the stories covered by the select newspapers during the 2009 rebranding campaign: **Table 1: Stories Covered within the Sampling Period per Month**

Months	Daily Sun	The Guardian	Vanguard	Punch	Total %	Percentage%
January	1	2	3	5	11	4. 93%
February	4	6	3	3	16	7.17 %
March	10	14	13	17	54	24.21%
April	9	12	4	11	36	16.14%
May	7	9	9	5	30	13.45%
June	5	8	7	10	30	13.45%
July	3	5	3	7	18	8.07%
August	2	2	2	3	9	4.03%
September	1	1	1	-	3	1.34%
October	1	1	1	3	6	2.69%
November	1	1	1	3	6	2.69%
December	1	1	-	2	4	1.79%

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Colum Total	45	62	47	69	223	100%

Source: 2025 Contents in Nigeria

The rebranding story took a life of its own from March 2009 with 24% of the stories across the four newspapers, following the launch of the campaign in February. The quantum of reports went down to 16% in April and was neck-to-neck on 13% in May and June. By December, the programme as far as media attention was concerned had reached ground zero.

Table 2 Major Subjects Covered by the Select Newspapers

Subjects	Daily Sun	The Guardian	Vanguard	Punch	Total	Per %
Education/Culture	3	5	3	4	15	6.72%
Energy/Oil	8	9	6	7	30	13.45%
Politics/Governance	15	19	13	15	62	27.8%
Food/ Agric	-	2	3	3	8	3.58%
Environment	1	2	1	10	14	6.27%
Sc./Technology	2	4	2	3	11	4.93%
Economy/ Business	3	5	7	6	21	9.41%
Communication/society	2	1	3	3	9	4.03%
Health/Soc. Welfare	-	4	1	2	5	2.24%
Law/Justice	2	1	3	-	6	2.69%
War/Crisis	8	9	8	5	30	13.45%
Inter Relatn/Diplomacy	1	2	2	3	8	3.58%
Others	-	1	1	-	2	0.89%
Colum Total	45	64	53	61	223	100%

Source: 2025 Analysis

28% of the articles on rebranding were on politics and governance, 13% on oil and energy and same with crisis due to insurgency (13%) while a negligible proportion of news hole of 2% went to health and welfare.

Table 3 Emphasis Accorded to Stories of Rebranding per Newspaper

Story Placement	Daily Sun %	The Guardian	Vanguard	Punch	Raw Total	Per %
F/Page	4 (11.42)	8 (12.30)	11(22.4)	12(18.75)	35	15.69%
B/Page	(-%)	9 (13.84)	6 (12.22)	7(10.93)	30	13.45%
Centre Sp	5 (14.28)	3 (4.61)	1 (2.04)	-(-)	9	4.03%
Inside pages	8 (22.8)	23 (35.38)	13 (26.5)	13(20.3)	49	21.97%
Columns	11 (3.42)	2 (3.07)	1 (2.04)	10(15.6)	24	10.767%
Pictures	2 (5.71)	11 (16.92)	12 (24.4)	11(17.1)	36	16.143%
Advertorials	1(2.85)	9 (13.84)	4(8.63)	6(9.3)	20	8.96%
Cartoons	4 (11.42)	6 (9.23)	-(-)	3(4.68)	13	5.82%
Others	-(-)	4 (6.15)	1(2.04)	2(3.1)	7	3.13%
Colum Total	35	65	49	64	223	100%

Source: 2025 Analysis

Table 3, shows *Vanguard* and *Punch* with (22%) and (19%) respectively on the front pages in the placement of their rebrand stories, The *Guardian* on the other hand placed more of their stories (36%) on inside pages, with more of the pictures(16%) The table below indicates which of the subject(s) was positive or negative in support or against rebranding by subjects as sorted by groups.

Table 4: Rebranding Stories in Dominant Tones

Rating by Groups	Scores of Nine Focus Groups									Total %
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

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Subjects	P N	P N	P N	P N	P N	P N	P N	P N	P N	(Pos & Neg.)
Education/Culture	1 1	- 1	1 3	2 -	- 1	- 2	- -	1 -	1 1	15 6.72%
Energy/Oil	1 4	- 3	- 5	2 1	3 3	2 1	- 1	1 2	1 -	30 45%
Politics/Gov.	4 3	9 2	5 3	2 3	6 1	5 6	2 1	- 5	2 3	62 27.8%
Food/ Agric	1 -	1 -	- 1	- 1	- 1	- -	1 1	- 1	- -	8 3.58%
Environment	1 1	- -	1 1	1 1	- 1	1 -	1 1	1 -	1 2	14 27%
Sc./Technology	1 -	1 1	- 1	- 1	- 1	1 -	1 -	- 2	1 -	11 4.93%
Economy/ Business	1 2	- 2	2 1	3 1	2 -	- 1	3 2	- 1	- -	21 9.41%
Comm/society	- 1	1 -	1 1	- 1	1 1	1 -	- -	- -	- 1	9 4.03%
Health/Soc. Welfare	- 1	- -	- -	- -	- 1	- 1	1 -	- -	- 1	5 2.24%
Law/Justice	- -	1 1	1 -	- -	- -	- -	1 -	- 1	1 -	6 2.69%
War/Crisis	2 2	5 -	1 3	3 2	3 -	2 2	1 -	2 1	1 -	30 13.45%
Inter Rel/Diplomacy	1 -	- 1	- 1	1 -	1 -	- 1	- 1	1 -	- -	8 3.58%
Others	- -	1 -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- 1	- -	- -	2 0.89%
Colum Total	13 15	19 11	12 20 53	14 11	16 10	12 14	11 08	06 13	08 8	223 100%

Source: Content 2025 Analysis

113 news holes were found to be in support of rebranding, while 110 were in opposing tone. Table shows insignificant difference in the stories that were for and against rebranding, meaning that only about 50% of the stories was positively in support of the campaign.

Table 5 Factors responsible for Nigeria's image problems

Story Category	Daily Sun	The Guardian	Vanguard	Punch	Raw Total	Per %
Corruption in official places	3	5	1	1	10	11.90%
Brazen attitude of Nigerians	2	4	1	7	14	16.66%
Unwholesome corporate practices	5	1	1	2	9	10.71%
Ethnic/religious issues	5	1	3	3	10	10.71%
Party politics and manoeuvres	2	2	1	1	6	7.147%
Military/police brutality	2	1	2	1	6	7.14%
Banditry/kidnappings	5	2	4	3	14	16.66%
Dishonesty in business	1	1	1	3	6	7.14%
Others	1	3	1	2	8	9.52%
Colum Total	26	20	15	23	84(37.6)	100%

Source: 2025 Content Analysis

From table 5, the total number of stories relating to the above categories was (37.6%) or 84, out of which 17% comes across as brazen attitudes of Nigerians and kidnapping/ banditry, etc. Image problem is also affected by corruption (12%), Dishonesty amounts to 7% for Political Manoeuvres by the Military and Police the same.

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Table 6 Reasons why Nigeria's image should be laundered again

Story Category	Daily Sun	The Guardian	Vanguard	Punch	Raw Total	Per %
Long term stability	4	8	11	13	34	26.15%
Nigerians' interest	3	1	6	1	11	8.46%
Solid basis for devt.	1	3	1	1	6	4.61%
Respect Rule of law	3	13	3	-	19	14.61%
Recover national assets	1	2	1	1	5	7.69%
Build international Trust	2	11	9	1	23	17.69%
Secure the nation borders	2	2	4	4	12	9.23%
Promote trade & invest.	2	6	2	3	13	10.0%
Others	-	4	1	2	7	5.38%
Colum Total	18(13.84)	50(38.46)	38(29)	26(20)	130	100%

Source: 2025 Content Analysis

26% advocacy was for Stability of the Country, 17% to Build International Trust, while advocacy for Rule of Law took 15% of the news holes. *The Guardian* devoted 38% of its news items, followed by *Vanguard* (29%), while *Daily Sun l*ed the park from the rear with 14% of news items. In all, there was no serious advocacy to rebrand Nigeria, the reason being the media seems to have lost interest in such stories or they have buckled in or compromised.

Discussion of Findings

To discuss the findings of this study, let's take a look at the research questions again. What are the major factors responsible for the prevailing attitudes or negative perception of the country? How important is Nigeria's image rebranding or laundering again and which form of media would be more effective in the re-branding campaign? From excerpt of Focus Groups' report, it's certain that Nigeria's image is being damaged consistently by: election rigging, corruption and fraud, actions and inactions of the justice system and insecurity as observed in table 5, etc.

The competence level of the government and public institutions' influence on the educational system, commitment to democracy and love for the people are issues affecting the image of the country as well. Agbanu(2013:126) has said that while the reporters of media organization decide what to give out to the readers, the information source decide what to give out to media practitioners. The issue here is who is controlling what is released to the public domain? Although table 6 with (26%) news hole suggests significant underreporting of the rebrand news according to Agbanu(2013:126), news sources have the third eye and are able to present background and perspectives from which the world can see events in the society. News sources expose what government information team tend to hide, updating events from what is referred to sometimes as bush radio. Nigeria's inability to use her diversity to leverage on national reputation through events in the way that releases development information to the people is lamentable. News sources depict culture, music, art, sports literature including exporting Nigerian products or wears. Fewness of such is a major challenge to building reputation. Okunna's(2002:1292) emphasises the ramifications:

...“spiritual expectations should yield support for development along with the social and economic process of disseminating and transferring information, given the right values. The attitude to and behaviour of information sources should promote and reinforce the view about inclusivity of development to initiate, nurture, galvanize and coordinate the whole gamut of the process”.

This is why Edeani(1993:30) defines “development communication as “the use of all forms of communication in reporting, publicizing and promoting development at all levels of the society”. Thus, communication, according to Nwosu(2007:12) is “synergistic; “communication that guarantees favourable reportage and utilizes specialists to effectively manage development with the highest sense of objectivity and responsibility that promotes healthy values that will pave way for optimum realization of envisaged goals”.Secondly, there is need to rebrand the country again in order to address the lapses in the previous attempts. If Nigeria fails to rebrand, she will continue to suffer losses from Tourism which is about visiting other countries or places and with large followership of both Christian and Muslim religions, it could have been quite easy to attract positive attention to the country through tourism potentialities that abounds in the country. While there is no serious advocacy to rebrand Nigeria at the moment, the reason being that the media seems to have lost interest in the project, or they have simply buckled in such interest can be reignited again if proper orientation is carried out in order to see the need for it. Finally, the form of media that would be more effective in the re-branding campaign will not be different from what was used in the past. The difference will only lie in the application as shown by the group report.

Contribution to Knowledge

This work is a major contribution in that it adds to the sphere of knowledge in the area of mass communication and the need to rebrand Nigeria. Since there is no significant relationship between the stories and the commitment by the press, there was no serious campaign to realize the rebranding project. The failure of the previous campaign should, however, not be why another effort should not be made.

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Result

Having discussed the outcome of analysis in the preceding page, it is yet necessary to present the highlights of the investigation as follows:

1) Coverage by the newspapers was only (26%) starting from March 2009. This is not enough.
2) The programme fizzled out by December of 2009, meaning that it was shot lived
3) The public did not buy into the programme and it ended without activities to cover
4) Politics and governance took 62% off the news holes, leaving other aspects of development bare
5) Vanguard gave more attention to the rebrand programme with more front page stories
6) Thefts, banditry brigandage and other brazen attitudes add to the nations' poor image
7) The programme should be re-lunched for long-term stability of the country
8) Poor applications of communication strategies ruined the project
9) Governance was grossly marked by incompetence, applies propaganda techniques and coercion
10) There are several aspects including constitutional areas that need to be tackled first.

Conclusion/Recommendation

From the onset of this study, it is clear that Nigeria had all along been plagued by instability, fraud, corruption, dishonesty, quota admission, inefficient bureaucracy, fierce ethnic rivalry and religious intolerance. The rhetorical question posed earlier about Nigerian's public perception remains an issue because the leadership has refused to recues itself from the tempting of office. We averred that by rebranding Nigeria, it will improve the rating of the country like some other countries have done. The challenge is how to tackle certain negative behaviour in governance and social life to make people believe that it is no longer business as usual.

This study has evaluated the causes of Nigeria's poor image being encompassing that every Nigerian in government as well as corporate citizens should strive to manage the reputation problems and seek for a better understanding of the issues. Corruption is a major problem and it is quite pervasive. The press should be courageous enough to tackle its exposure irrespective of who is involved and not minding that similar campaign has failed in the past. It should not be a case of having one law for a set of people and another for another set of people. The Federal Government should demonstrate willingness to achieve set goals to the extent that their efforts would attract favourable press reports.

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