



Strategic Communication and Socio-Ecological Imperatives for Re-Marketing the Nigerian Brand

STANISLAUS IYORZA
University of Calabar, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The thrust of this paper is to examine select factors within the social and ecological realms that are attributed to the image crises of Nigeria and to proffer sustainable strategic communication solutions to re-marketing the nation as a brand. The de-marketing process of the brand Nigeria is a function of some obvious factors like corruption, bribery, ethnicity, communal and ethno-religious clashes. Consequently, almost everything 'Nigerian', whether human beings or products, is questioned or received with greater comparative scepticism, especially within the international community. Nigeria is no doubt in dire need of a corporate reformation and a review of the nation's socio-ecological posture and experience will offer a headway for the re-marketing of the brand. This paper adopts the analytical methods for the review of strategic communication and the Socio-Ecological Model, using selected scenarios in Nigeria as units of analysis. Findings reveal that Nigeria's albatross as an unattractive brand is the moral decadence of her citizens occasioned by a lack of adequate information of citizens, absence of motivation and ability to act, and the inherent norms that the people live with. This has thwarted the nation's (re)branding management efforts. This paper recommends that the Federal government of Nigeria should re-orient her citizens from the now youngest generation and re-order her communication architecture to communicate a renewed Nigerian brand that will help the nation's image to be attractive for a convincing patronage within the international market.

KEYWORDS
Brand,
Demarketing,
Nigeria,
Re-Marketing,
Socio-Ecological,
Strategic
Communication

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a popular brand not only in West Africa or the whole of Africa but in the world at large. Known by numerous nomenclatures as “the most populous black nation on Earth”, “the Giant of Africa” and many more, Nigeria is famous for its exploits including her contributions to international peace and security in notable places like Liberia and Sierra Leone. The nation is famous for its vast fertile land, agricultural production and even spiritual commitment exemplified in its status as one of the nations with the highest number of churches on earth. Nigeria indeed is the name; a brand.

The Nigerian brand, once marketable internationally, has become reportedly unmarketable. Local media journalists, both online and conventional, share in the blame for demarketing Nigeria at the expense of development communication and positive image building. Ezeji (2020) reported a widely publicised raid and arrest of Ramoni Igbalode, popularly known as Ray Hushpuppy, in Dubai over alleged fraud. Shortly after his arrest, Ososanya (2020) reported that companies in Dubai had begun to exclude Nigerian applicants from job vacancies apart from being barred from applying for tourist visas. Tostevin (2009) further reported in an online medium that Nigerians are imprisoned in Asia and Europe for drug trafficking while others are fraudsters, kidnappers, oil thieves, election riggers, and bribe givers and takers.

The negative reports or information about Nigeria has further complicated Nigeria’s identity crises, de-marketed the nation, and constituted further hardships for her citizens abroad, especially those who seek to travel to Europe and America. Observably, Nigerians’ international passport was ranked the 99th questionable travel document in the world in 2023. This implication is that Nigerians seeking to travel abroad would be heavily scrutinised, while those seeking resident permits to work abroad would be treated with a high level of scepticism and pessimism.

Iyorza, Ojorgu and Anweting (2020) also corroborated that there is hardly any crime committed in some parts of the world without the mention of a Nigerian. Is it fraud, theft, or prostitution in Dubai, Lebanon, or Italy? Let us draw closer to home. The Nigerian Embassy in Ghana, Africa, was pulled down sometime in April 2020. That act was a great one of utmost disregard for Nigeria and her citizens. Ghanaians had closed down Nigerians’ shops and demanded that they leave the country on several occasions. In South Africa, Nigerians were the greatest casualties of xenophobic attacks in 2019. Although some media claims purported that the Nigerian citizens were guilty of crimes that warranted assassinations and extra-judicial killings meted out to them, there was scanty proof to that effect and most victims were never subjected to fair trials. Incidentally, Nigerians were flown back to their country in droves.

In reality, the media, both local and international, have remained solid instruments, especially in a dysfunctional manner, of de-marketing Nigeria. These channels of communication have been at the forefront of reporting news stories of Nigerians involved in crimes more than those making exploits. The international media of communication, including the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Cable News Network (CNN), and Aljazeera, before now, have been at the forefront of transmitting more negative developments from Africa than positive events.

For instance, the news about Nigerians’ illegal migration to Libya and parts of Europe including Italy, Spain, and England, Nigerians’ deportation from foreign countries owing to their involvement in one criminal act or another, news about Nigerians’ involvement in drug trafficking, their arrests and most of the time their execution under the laws of the judication of foreign nations, have de-marketed more than marketed the nation to the world. The list of involvement in crime, including

prostitution, and human or child trafficking among others abroad, is endless and alarming. Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation (2024) is mandated with the management of the image, reputation, and promotion of the Nigerian brand. Specifically, the ministry is saddled with the duties of executing strategic communication of government policies and programmes as well as getting feedback and building a positive image for the country while promoting national consciousness among others.

There is a clear indication that Nigeria needs a new name (image); a new international perception; and a change in her citizens' behaviour and attitude from those that were internationally considered problematic to those that are socially acceptable. At the launch of the "Rebrand Nigeria Project" in March 2009, a former Minister of the Information in Nigeria under the former President Obasanjo's regime, Late Dora Akunyili, expressed the urgency for Nigeria "to commence a re-branding of her battered image" (Aririesike, 2009, 1). Iyorza (2014:15) described the former Minister's remark as an obvious misplacement of priorities regarding the term "rebranding", which she intended to "market Nigeria's image (irrespective of how battered it was) to the international community" using the achievements and exploits of the nation and her citizens in some areas like sports, economic intellect, and international peacekeeping and security. It became very clear that the reputation of Nigeria and the image of her citizens within the international community had suffered a setback. A critical examination of Nigerians' unfortunate predicament points to the absence of the nation's compliance with the demands of the socio-ecological model.

Nigeria is in dire need of a socio-ecological approach to change as well as a strategic communication methodology for effective remarketing of the brand within the international community. Nigerians need to be accepted and their nation and her product (human and non-human) need to be embraced with confidence bereft of distrust. Nigeria needs international patronage to grow and develop beyond its present status. Nigeria needs investors who will flock to the nation to create more job opportunities for her citizens but information about insecurity, bribery, corrupt practices, and other negative stereotypes, as well as the Nigerian government's inability to strategise her communication with the international community, her lack of motivation to encourage her citizens to be patriotic and her inability to satisfy the citizens' social and economic needs, which informed series of protests against the government in recent times, are growing socio-ecology concerns that seem to scare away the patrons or consumers of the Nigerian brand.

The Socio-Ecological Model is a reference point for planning and implementing change communication. It was designed by Mckee, Manoncourt, Chin, and Carnegie in the year 2000 for the individual level of change but can be applied to all levels including people, organisations, institutions, and national entities. The model has three rings, and a section of cross-cutting factors that explains how information and other factors can lead to individuals' changes in behaviour and perception. Certainly, Nigeria's strategic communication approach, if any, seems not to have given attention to socio-ecological concerns, which explains further Nigeria's predicament as a brand.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

There are two objectives of this paper, and they include:

- i. to examine strategic communication lapses that have de-marketed the Nigerian brand, and,
- ii. to find out socio-ecological approaches required for the re-marketing of the Nigerian brand.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions will therefore guide the structure of this paper:

- i. What strategic communication lapses have de-marketed the Nigerian brand?
- ii. What socio-ecological concerns are required to re-market the Nigerian brand?

CONCEPTUALISING THE NIGERIAN BRAND

The term ‘brand’ is often misconstrued by many scholars in the field of marketing communication. To marketing professionals, Twin (2024) stated that “a brand is a product or business that has a distinct identity in the perception of consumers.” Thus, marketing professionals have identified distinct elements of design and packaging that distinguish a company’s products from the competitors as a brand. By extension, a brand can be simplified to mean a name, a term, a design, a symbol, or any feature or characteristic that distinguishes a product, a corporate organisation, a person or a nation from another. A nation may purposefully choose to create a brand identity to attract the patronage of other nations while another nation may earn a brand perception based on how other nations perceive their citizens’ attitudes and character or behaviour. Thus, a national or country’s brand can be positive or negative. Nigeria’s perception is borne out of other nations’ perception of the country’s foreign policy and the extent to which it has pursued it; how the citizens behave and what they believe in. In this context, branding a nation is more of an international perception than national or local views.

Nigeria is a sub-Saharan African nation known to be the most populous black nation on earth. The country boasts of more than 250 ethnic groups with an estimated population of 220 million persons as of the first quarter of the year 2024. Nigerians, according to Dickson (2023) have a rich cultural heritage that has become an envious brand to the world and parades rich arts, music, dance, and traditional ceremonies; rich film industry – Nollywood, entrepreneurship and innovative spirit, cuisines and many more brands that are appreciated by the international community. They are known to be blessed with rich natural and human resources even as civil servants, businessmen and women, farmers, industrial workers, and students.

From the period of Nigeria’s independence, the country has produced great men and women of international repute in the likes of Late Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Late Chief Mrs Ransome Kuti and Dr Mrs Ngozi Okonjo Iweala. Consequently, Nigeria has been truly known as a powerful brand by the international community and as a great nation with a rich oil reserve, rich agricultural history, and brilliant and industrious youths who excel in all ramifications in any part of the world where they are engaged whether as sportsmen and women or as hired labourers and scholars. Many Nigerians are known to be industrious and hard-working, including the likes of Dr Ngozi Iweala (economist and global development expert), Ayodeji Ibrahim Balogun (a.k.a. Wizkid – musician), and Tiwa Savage as well as most Nigerian football players such as Victor Moses, Victor Osimhen and others who ply their trades abroad.

Whereas one can no longer overemphasise the very elements that define the Nigerian brand because of the nation’s glaring positive history, recent reflections on Nigeria in the local and international media as well as in the attitudes of the nation’s citizens, indicate that the Nigerian brand is currently considered as ‘criminal’, ‘deceptive’, ‘fraudulent’, ‘poor’, ‘hungry’, ‘corrupt’ and ‘redundant’. The re-conception of the Nigerian brand from a positive history to a negative stereotype is a function of emergent trends in the increasing negative reports on the country and the persistent anti-social behaviours of the citizens occasioned probably by the growing poor economic status of the nation. The National Bureau for Statistics (2024), reports that

133.3 million Nigerians, representing 63 percent of the country's population are suffering from multi-dimensional poverty – an indication that poverty is a Nigerian brand. The African Development Bank Group (2023) identified unemployment and inflation, crime as well as illegal migration as some of the factors confirming Nigeria as a negative brand.

By November 2023, Oyebade (2023) placed the Global Peace Index ranking of Nigeria as the 144th out of 163 safest countries in the world. Premium Times News (2024) also reported Transparency International (TI)'s ranking of Nigeria as the 155th out of 180 transparent countries in the world, citing cases of massive corruption, bribery, challenges to the justice system, extortion and political interference as yardsticks. Ephraim (2024) reported the 2024 International Air Transport Association's (IATA)'s ranking of Nigeria's international passport and pegged it at 95th out of 194, with South Africa pegged at 53rd, Ghana at 76th, Benin at 79th, and Togo at 83rd. Japan was pegged at the first position.

Iyorza (2014:15) stated:

Before then and even now, most Nigerians are labelled and stereotyped negatively at most international airports while others are subjected to intensive security checks anywhere they go. The international community considers most Nigerians to be fraudsters, racketeers and criminals.

With the above view and the current situation in Nigeria, the confirmation of the Nigerian brand as a negative stereotype is consolidated. Dickson (2023) shared the opinion that national brands influence the attitudes, perceptions and purchasing decisions of patrons and consumers from the international market and opined that Nigeria is a case of mixed brands. It is however necessary to agree with this position but to quickly add that Nigeria strives in the negative light as a brand with nomenclatures of terrorism, insurgency, armed banditry, and ethnic bigots; a nation known to live in affluence with poor infrastructure, poor income, political instability and poverty of her citizens. Nigeria's quest for international marketability points to the need to address socio-ecological concerns for strategising her communication architecture to prepare her for remarketing.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

The concept of strategic communication has remained unclear to scholars, just as communication professionals have continued to offer unsatisfactory demystification of the term. Understanding certain terms can be made easier with the sense of deconstruction of compound terms. 'Strategy' is widely known to be a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim; the art of planning. Planning by extension, according to Agarwal (2020), is a management function which involves decision-making about vision, mission, and goals including what is to be done, when to do it, who to do it, and where and why it should be done in order to achieve set objectives. Characteristically, strategy as a planning managerial function is goal-oriented and pervasive. It is a continuous process that involves the intellectual or application of empirically derived knowledge in the process of deciding on future performance, a strategy can be equated to a method of planning which can be long-term or short-term.

The concept of communication on the other hand involves a social function (interactive), psychological functions (thinking out ideas), physiological functions (sighs, body language), and traditional functions (localised, ethnically based). Ober (2006) defines communication as the sending and receiving of messages – sometimes through spoken or written words and sometimes through such nonverbal means as facial expressions, gestures, and voice qualities. Communication is, therefore, the

transmission of information, ideas or beliefs from the encoder to the decoder with the aim of achieving a common understanding, promoting a course or reacting to giving stimuli in the communication encounter. Communication aims at promoting understanding between or among two or more persons (subjects) or non-humans with a view or achieving set goals (change, persuasion, information, promotion of a cause, caution, convincing or winning over, gaining acceptance). Communication involves the sharing of information, or transmitting ideas, knowledge or faults from one or more persons to others.

Iyorza (2021) also divides communication into two broad categories: Verbal and Non-verbal communication. Verbal communication is divided into oral and written communication. Oral communication involves the use of human speech organs in producing meaningful sounds that represent meanings. Written communication involves the documentation or use of symbols, alphabets or some form of signs that represent peculiar meanings. Communication scholars have identified four main communication skills namely: speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Non-verbal communication on the other hand involves the use of body movement, distance or para-language for information transmission purposes.

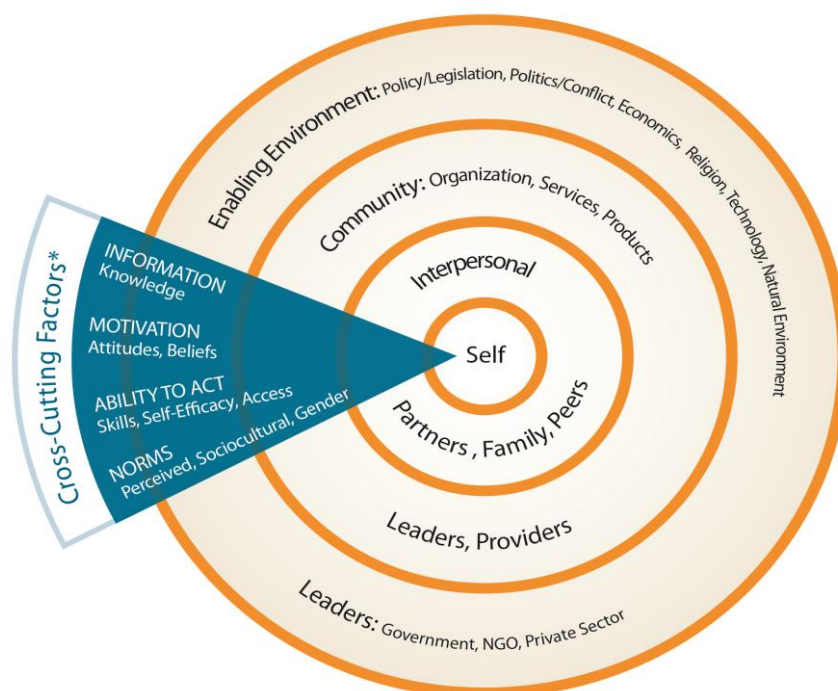
The acceptance of new ideas can be transformed through creation of an atmosphere of participatory communication involving dialogue, cooperation, mutual respect, and sharing of initiatives. Communication can be seen as a catalyst in the development process of any nation. Communication is necessary for projecting development just as development defines, modernises, and improves communication. Communication can also be viewed according to the nature that defines it. Intra-personal communication, for instance, occurs within an individual who is both the encoder and the decoder. Group communication occurs among three or more persons of a sizeable number, especially in a given location. Mass Communication occurs between the sender and a heterogeneous audience spread over a wide geographical area. Transnational or international communication occurs between two nations in various forms while organisational communication occurs within an institution based on set standards.



SOURCE: Adapted from: Health Communication Partnership, CCP at JHU (2003) the P-Process; McKee et al (2000) the ACADA Model; Parker, Dalrymple, and Durden (1998) the Integrated Strategy Wheel; Roberts et al (1995) the Tool Box for Building Health Communication Capacity; and National Cancer Institute (1989) Health Communication Program Cycle.

The diagram above confirms strategic communication as a planned process that begins with understanding the citizens’ present situation and focusing the message to target their information needs before creating and implementing, then evaluating the entire communication intervention. It involves making effective decisions about the sender (encoder) of the information, the message (ideas) itself, the channel (media of communication), and the receiver (decoders or the audience) to effectively achieve set goals. Strategic communication involves launching inquiries about the message sender (why he wants to communicate, who is he, where he lives, what he believes with regards to his communication encounter).

Socio-Ecological Model for Change



*These concepts apply to all levels (people, organizations, and institutions). They were originally developed for the individual level.

SOURCE: Adapted from McKee, Manoncourt, Chin and Carnegie (2000)

The above model confirms a series of definitions of strategic communication.

Bahn (2023) defines strategic communication as sending the right message by determining what to say, who to say it to, and where and when to say it to maintain a good reputation and achieve brand reputation for all the right reasons. The Arkansas State University (2022) corroborates the above definition and considers strategic communication as communicating the best message through the right channels, measured against well-considered goals; a method of delivering calculated, purposeful content, involving planned tactical forethought, implementation, and correct positioning around the organization’s mission. Hallanhan et. al. (2007) also define strategic communication as the “purposeful use of communication by an organisation (or a nation) to fulfill its mission. It identifies key concepts including audience analysis, goal setting, and message strategy.

This implies that strategic communication investigates the nature of the message (ideas) to be transmitted, how to transmit the message or how to code the idea), what medium (or media) to use, and when to use them. It studies the audience and their likes or dislikes and investigates their cultural standing in order to get them to

embrace the transmitted ideas. Strategic communication involves content creation, and implementation, monitoring, evaluation of progress, and re-planning when the initial strategy fails. From the failed strategy, the strategic communication traces or evaluates the input and the output and correct lapses in the initial plan.

THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL AND REVIEW OF RELATED THEORIES

The 'self' represents the citizen in this context. The 'partners, family and peers' possess the power to encourage and influence the citizen towards change in behaviour through daily interaction, family meetings and informal associations. The individual citizens are also influenced by their 'local community, services and products' by the 'leaders and providers' at one level and the 'national enabling environment and leaders' at a higher level. The socio-ecological model describes the relationship between the citizen and environmental factors that enable him to respond positively to change communication appeals for behaviour change.

Thus, the Socio-Ecological Model (SEM) explains that human behaviour is influenced by three tiers of societal system namely the microsystem, the exon-system, and the macro system. The constituents of the microsystem are family, classroom, peer group, etc., those of the exon include the school community, donor agencies, medical centres, the religious organisations while the macro system includes legislation, politics, the economy, culture, and nationality. The spectacular nature of SEM is the segment that bears the cross-cutting factors.

Cross-cutting factors include information, ability to act, motivation, skills, and norms which are all communication-based based, which are capable of encouraging positive or negative drives to certain behaviours. The cross-cutting factors can be instrumental in planning communication messages for the effective attainment of set goals. The entire SME explains the reason for the failure of most national policies and failed reputation and can be a model for promoting national commitment, citizenship, and national identity.

The model has been applied to investigations of many different health issues and community-based interventions such as the prevention of unsafe sex and risky sex behaviour, prevention of alcohol, tobacco drug abuse and related risky behaviour. UNAIDS (2020) states that in the United States of America, the Socio-Ecological Model was applied to reduce the rate of Americans who were having unprotected sexual intercourse and the result showed a decrease in unprotected sexual intercourse from 47% to 26% of men who were reached. In rural Thailand, the socio-ecological model was applied to a community-based program for motorcycle rider education to reduce risk behaviour and motorcycle-related injuries among motorcycle riders. After the intervention, the annual number and rate of fatal motorcycle-related injuries decreased significantly.

The socio-ecological model emphasises that a well-informed citizen can be easily persuaded to be committed towards a particular course like refraining from anti-social behaviours such as corruption, drug abuse and child trafficking. Such citizens can acquire a positive mindset if the cross-cutting factors, the right information, adequate motivation, ability to act and critical communication of societal norms are factored into the communication strategy. There exists a strong relationship between the socio-ecological model, Uses and Gratification Theory and Abraham Maslow's Motivation Theory of 'Hierarchy of Needs.

According to Iyorza (2018), the Uses and Gratification Theory was propounded by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch in 1974. The core assumption of the theory states that individuals use media messages to gratify their information

needs, and have alternate choices to satisfy their needs. Thus, media audiences scan the radio or television programmes that they prefer to see and listen to or watch based on the utility they derive from them. In the context of strategic communication, media planning, based on preferred channels that will gratify the audiences' information needs, will include a selection of communication media that will encourage the audience to patronise media messages as intended. The application of the Uses and Gratification Theory under strategic communication in the bid to market the Nigerian brand is a factor to be examined in this study.

Under the Socio-Ecological consideration, Rachman and Mescon (2009) identified Abraham Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy of Needs, considered the theory as one of the sub-sets of Motivational theories and postulated five basic levels of human needs, arranged in a hierarchy based on their importance namely: 'physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and self-actualisation needs' as corroborated by Larson (1992) and Belch and Belch (2001). The citizens need a satisfaction of physiological and psychological needs to develop the right mentality and act positively in the desired way. This implies that socio-ecological compliance from the Nigerian citizens requires a great deal of motivation which may not have been inherent in the Nation's efforts at marketing her brand.

DISCUSSIONS ON SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL IMPERATIVES NIGERIA'S COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Citing the American Marketing Association, which represents marketing professionals in America and Canada, Belch and Belch (2001), defined marketing as "the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational (and by extension national) objectives. In application, Nigeria is a key player or trader at the international market, with objectives of promoting and protecting her national interest and African integration respectively (Ephraim, 2024). The crux of Nigeria's foreign policy is only enshrined in the Nigerian brand promotion which is the fourth element of the marketing mix after product, price and place, which Belch and Belch (2001, GL 10) define as is the "coordination of all seller-initiated efforts to set up channels of information and persuasion to sell goods and services or to promote an idea.

Extract of the Nigeria Foreign Policy as stated by the Ephraim (2024) include:

...promotion and protection of Nigeria's national interest, promotion of African integration and support for African Unity, promotion of international corporation for the consolidation of international peace and mutual respect among nations and elimination of discrimination in all manifestation, ...promotion of a just world economic order – Foreign Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In achieving these imperatives, for instance, Nigeria needs an attractive image, a worthy reputation and a deserved integrity, which must be communicated strategically to the international community. If Nigeria and Nigerians perpetuate and condone, or tolerate crime, corruption, ethnicity, bribery, drug trafficking, child abuse and human trafficking, then Nigeria is conspicuously a bad brand and cannot be marketable internationally. Strategic communication, from the foregoing, is more than packaging and transmission of information to the audience on what the nation wants the international community to know about her (Nigeria). Without confirmed acts of integrity, trust and true identity, strategic communication cannot thrive. A devised communication strategy is therefore anchored on truth and sincerity of appeals as enshrined in the basic codes of public/international relations and advertising.

According to Johnson and Alao (2013), strategic communication is the communication policy of any nation, which guides the decision of the authorities, usually, the government or any other agency to harness the benefit of the process for the well-being of all Nigerians. The Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation has among its mandate, to promote the image, reputation and culture of Nigerians within the international community using credible information, and to execute strategic communication of government policies for the purpose of building a positive image for the country while promoting national consciousness among others, one can adequately infer that Nigeria has failed in the evolvement and utilisation of the very tenets of her strategic communication policy; a policy that focuses on the legal, ethical, political, infrastructural and social system within which public communication and the media systems operate and function in.

From the preceding analysis, one can infer that Nigeria used to be a sought-after brand when international reports had it that the nation was rich in human and natural resources. Next came de-marketing – the deliberate or unconscious decreasing of patronage of a brand or discouragement of customers in general towards a product or service (Olatunde, Niyi & Adejimi, 2020 and Oluwatoyin & Ayeni, 2021) – with reports that reflected Nigeria as one of the most unsafe countries to live in, and one of the poorest nations on earth.

The Socio-ecological exploration shows that there have been campaigns informing Nigerians about the need to be responsible citizens, such appeals like “do not give or take bribes”, “shun money laundering” and “Andrew” (a commercial that earlier discouraged Nigerians from unnecessary migration to foreign lands). However, there has been a dearth of motivation exemplified in poor pay packages for jobs, unemployment, embezzlement of funds by politicians and many more. The Nigerian government has not made available the ability for her citizens to act responsibly; a trend that has compelled many Nigerians to flee abroad in droves, hence the *japa* syndrome, legally and illegally. Nigerians have adopted the norms that the pasture is greener out there and the best way for an average African to find relevance in life is to travel and live and if possible, work in Europe, America or Asia.

Unfortunately, most Nigerians who migrate to other parts of the world or foreign lands bear with then luggage of acquired or socially influenced criminal behaviours. In South Africa, most Nigerians have been labelled as drug traffickers and criminals and in Europe mostly as fraudsters. Remarketing Nigeria as a brand is therefore a herculean task that demands the fulfilment of the socio-ecological requirements of truthful information, motivation and the political will of the government to act in terms of concretizing her promises to the citizens in addition to strategic communication approaches.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR RE-MARKETING THE NIGERIAN BRAND

Nigeria is truly a brand that has undergone a cycle of marketing and de-marketing occasioned by a combination of moral decadence on the part of the citizens; failure to motivate and provide basic necessities of life for citizens by the Federal Government and the international reportage by both local and international media at the expense of the nation’s integrity, image and market value. Following the craving desire of nations of the world to find value at the international market, Nigeria has sought to be patronised by investors; to sell her material products such as clothing, food and cosmetics and her non-material cultural products including their beliefs and ideas. Nigeria only has a cultural policy with the objective to “promote and protect”

her interests internationally without a comprehensive and well-articulated strategic communication policy to conduce a functional national communication system.

Inferentially, the road to achieving the marketability of the nation through communications and promotions seems to be far from realistic. This is because the marketing process of any brand, Nigeria inclusive, must be based on truth, trust and confidence of the consumers in the international market. No consumer would want to patronise a product that is communicated to be rotten or of lower standard or value. Nigeria's image internationally has been however challenged by the unthinkable acts of many other Nigerians at home, known for acts of election violence, high level of corruption, failed judiciary system, pronounced and reported forgeries by public officials, bribery, insecurity, banditry, communal clashes, armed robbery and kidnapping; and abroad with acts of drug trafficking, drug abuse, advanced fee fraud and human trafficking.

As a panacea for re-marketing Nigeria, this paper recommends that:

- i. The Federal Government of Nigeria, led by the President and members of the executive council should motivate her workers through payment of what the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) terms "living wage"; pay packages of workers that would make them self-content in terms of meeting up with basic needs of man, beginning from the physical needs of food, clothing and shelter to the social and psychological needs of self-esteem and self-actualisation as propounded by Abraham Maslow's Theory of Motivation in Rachman and Mescon (2009).
- ii. The Federal Government of Nigeria should fund social infrastructure and invest in the building of high-quality roads, schools and other social amenities and should create more job opportunities that would endear her citizens to work under similar job and financial atmosphere comparable to their counterparts in other advanced nations in Europe and America. In sum, the Government should focus on developing its citizens' abilities to act in a desired direction that would increase their market values nationally and internationally.
- iii. The Federal Government of Nigeria should re-organise her national information and National Orientation Ministry and evolve a local information work plan that would sustain the information of Nigerians from rural to urban areas; Nigerians of all ages especially the younger generation. This is to enable them to grow with a healthier mentality of maximum morality in terms of living and relating with others. Such orientation, featured on various media of communication should be implemented, sustained and evaluated periodically for efficacy.
- iv. Nigerians should develop personal beliefs in themselves once the Federal Government of Nigeria begins to show commitment to the course of social, human, economic, and infrastructural development. Nigerian citizens should disregard certain beliefs that have become a norm, such as the 'japa' syndrome. Through the concerted efforts of the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation, Nigerians should feel encouraged to support the efforts of the Federal Government towards national development.
- v. After all these have been done, the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation should intensify its national and international communication agenda; coordinate all local channels of communication by directing them to see the need to re-market Nigeria through positive news

reports based on the transformational efforts of the nation and her citizens to reposition themselves at the international market. Movies, editorials, news commentaries, features, billboards, and all communication programmes transmitted locally and abroad should adopt a paradigm shift from entertainment, information and education alone to all-encompassing development communication.

- vi. Local media should plan their communication, especially for the international audience; they should understand what perception their audience has about Nigeria through research and project information that will promote Nigeria and Nigerians more than those that will position the nation's image at the detriment of international pessimism.

REFERENCES

- African Development Bank Group (2023). *African Economic Outlook 2023*. Retrieved 17 March 2024. <https://www.afribank.org>.
- Agarwal, K (2020). *Concept and Definition of Planning*". *Principles of Management*. <https://notespress.com>.
- Arkansas State University (2022). *What is meant by strategic communication? Strategic Communication*. <https://www.degree.astate.edu>.
- Aririesike, J. (2009). *Re:Rebranding Nigeria Image Project: We All Must Support and Contribute*. April 16th. Retrieved 4th May, 2024. <http://www.onlinenigerian.com>.
- Bahn, C. (2023). *What is strategic communication and why does it matter?* LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com>
- Belch, G. & Belch, M. (2001). *Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communication Perspective*. McGraw Hill.
- Dickson, C. (2023). *A Nigerian Brand*. Nigerian Tribune. September 16. <https://tribuneonlineng.com>.
- Ephraim, P. (2024). *Nigerian passport ranked 95th world wide in 2024 - report*' Leadership News. Retrieved 17 March 2024. <https://leadership.ng>.
- Erezi, D. (2020). *How Hushpuppi, others were arrested.*" *The Guardian*. Retrieved 17 March 2024. <https://guardian.ng/news>
- Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation, Federal Republic of Nigeria (2024). *Vision, mission, Mandate and Activities*. <https://mino.gov.ng>
- Hallahan, K., D. Holtzhausen, B. Ruler, D. Vertic and K. Sriramesh (2007). *Defining strategic communication*. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 1, 3 -35.
- Iyorza, S. (2014). *The Impact of Crises on Rebuilding the National Image: The Paradox of Nigeria's Rebranding Project*. *The International Journal of the Image*, 4(2), 53-59.
- Iyorza, S. (2018). *The Media Consumer Theories and Emergent Constructs in Post-Postmodern Advertising in Nigeria*. Eds. Edde Iji, Liwhu Betiang, Esekong Andrew-Essien. *Theatre and Media in the Third Millenium*. Ibadan: Kraft. Pp 211-219.
- Iyorza, S. (2021). *Social and Behavioural Change Communication: Principles, Practices and Experiences from Nigeria*. Unical Press.
- Iyorza, S., Ojorgu, L., & Anweting, L. (2020). *New Media and Journalism: How Citizens Complicate Nigeria's Unmarketable Identity*. *TSU Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, 3(2), 1-23.
- Johnson, J. & Alao, D. (2013). *Towards a robust communication policy in Nigeria: A discourse analysis*. *Journal of Research and Development*, 1.2.
- Larson, C. (1992). *Persuasion, Reception and Responsibility*. Wadsworth.
- National Bureau of Statistics (2024). *Unemployment Statistics*. Retrieved 12 April 2024. <https://www.nigerianstats.gov.ng>.

- Ober, S. (2006). *Contemporary Business Communication*. Houghton Mifflin
- Olatunde, O., Niyi, A., & Adejimi, O. (2020). Demarketing of tobacco in Nigeria: The role of the marketing mix. *European Journal of Logistics, Purchasing and Supply Chain Management*, 8(1), 1-14.
- Oluwatoyin, O., & Ayeni, O. (2021). Demarketing: A Tool for Managing Youth Vices in Tertiary Institution for National Development. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, 8(6), 1-6.
- Ososanya, T. (2020). *After Hushpuppy's arrest and extradition over fraud, Nigerians are excluded from Dubai jobs, tourist visa*. Legit. www.legit.ng. Retrieved 20 June, 2024.
- Oyebade, W. (2023). *Global Peace Index 2023*". *The Guardian Nigerian News*. November 24. <https://guardian.ng>.
- Premium Times (2024). *Nigeria moves five places up in TI's corruption perception ranking*. Premium Times. January 30.
- Rachman, D. & Mescon, M. (2009). *Business Today*. New York. Random House
- Tostevin, M. (2009). *Nigeria's image problem*. Reuters. <http://blogs.reuters.com>. Retrieved 20 June, 2024.
- Twin, A. (2024). *Brand: Types of brands and how to create brand identity*. Investopedia. Retrieved 20 June, 2024. <https://www.investopedia.com>.
- United Nations Programme on AIDS, UNAIDS. (2020). *New survey*. Penn State University.

CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Stanislaus Iyorza is an Associate Professor of Development Communication in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Calabar, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mass Communication from Benue State University, a Master of Arts Degree in Theatre Arts and a Doctorate Degree in Theatre and Media Studies from the University of Calabar, Nigeria. He has participated in several local, national and international conferences and has more than fifty (50) publications in books, journal articles and book chapters.

Contact: stanisiyorza@unical.edu.ng

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5507-6366>

Stanislaus Iyorza has asserted his right to be identified as the author of this work in the format submitted to Pan-Atlantic University Press.