

Tourism As A Tool For Re-Branding Nigeria

Joshua Okenwa Uzuegbu

Abstract

This research appraises the image crisis in Nigeria and the effort of successive governments, starting from the period of independence to the present dispensation, towards cleaning up of the wrong perception of the country. The study observes that, among other efforts at achieving successful rebranding, tourism is a veritable tool. Thus, some tourism resources in Nigeria were analyzed so as to show how useful they are in the Nigerian rebranding project.

Introduction

One may be tempted to ask, whether Nigeria actually needs to be re-branded? If the answer is in the affirmative, then what is the effective tool to achieve this? This is the question this paper tries to address. It does this by taking a look at the level of damage inflicted to the image of Nigeria by the activities of few unscrupulous individuals. A review of the activities in the political, social, economic and other spheres of the national life reveals that the country's negative image, especially in the international arena is informed by negative activities of few in these sectors. This does not mean that majority of Nigerians are not meaningfully engaged in productive ventures that contribute positively to the development of humanity. The fact remains that the international media either by omission or commission have chosen to ignore the positive contributions of these majority, and focused attention on the shortcomings of the few to give the country a bad name.

Professor Dora Akunyili, former Minister of Information and Communication and the initiator of re-branding project, while briefing the media on the imperative of this project, observed that the programme is a new chapter in Nigeria's attempt to take conscious steps at redefining the nation. Thus, the campaign has come at a time Nigeria need image cleaning (Solomonsydelle:2009).

Clarification of Concepts

Tourism:

This concept attracts interest of experts from every discipline. To a lay man, tourism is simply narrowed down to travelling to some interesting places mainly for relaxations. But to an informed authority, tourism is more than that. It encompasses travelling to interesting places and also involves services rendered by people and government agencies to tourists, so as to make their stay a memorable one. Such services include transportation, hospitality, entertainment, postal and e-mail services etc. To this end, the totality of all these services, coupled with the practice of travelling itself, form a tourist industry (Ogundele 2001:108). The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines tourism as "the movement of people to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty four hours but not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited" (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism).

Another definition by Holloway (1989:9) sees tourism as “the temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work and activities during their stay at these destinations. It includes movement for all purposes, as well as day visit or excursions.”

The above definitions, reveal that tourism involves temporary movement of persons to some exciting sites for numerous reasons, including leisure, sports, conference, religion, education, entertainment. Furthermore, tourism is broadly divided into domestic and international tourism. Domestic tourism is the movement of people within a defined territory, while international tourism involves crossing international boundaries by tourists for the purposes of relaxation, sports, education, religion and so on.

Re-branding:

Re-branding is a pre-fixed word sourced from the addition of re to branding. Therefore, “re-branding is the recreation of a new term, symbol, design or a combination of them for an established brand with the intention of developing a differentiated new position in the mind of stakeholders” (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rebranding).

In his submission, Nworah (2009:14) opines that “country branding is the process whereby a country actively seeks to create a unique and competitive identity, with the aim of positioning the country internally and internationally as a good destination for trade, tourism and investments.” The common denominator in both definitions, is that re-branding involves changing of a brand’s name, logo, image and marketing strategy. To this end, (Omotayoinbo 2010) observed that re-branding “is not needed unless something is wrong with the brand either in quantity or quality.”

DOES NIGERIA NEED RE-BRANDING?

The above question is one that every patriotic citizen of the country would readily answer in the affirmative. This is because of the damage inflicted on the country’s image by few unpatriotic elements who engage in vices like Advance Free Fraud (419), Corruption, Armed robbery, Militancy, Oil bunkering, human trafficking, election rigging, kidnapping, bombing *et cetra*. To further illustrate how bad the country’s image have become, the following incidences should be noted. The recent political crisis which trailed the just concluded 2011 General election. For instance, the burning of about five hundred brand new cars, two hundred tricycles and the killing of about five persons in Eket Akwa-Ibom State by both supporters of Action Congress of Nigeria (A.C.N) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Also, the wanton destruction and killing of innocent people in some northern states especially members of National Youth Service Corps engaged as *ad hoc* staff by the Independent National Electoral Commission, following the declaration of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan as the winner of the presidential election. Equally, the bomb explosion near Eagle Square Abuja on the eve of 50th anniversary celebration; the frequent communal crises which have claimed several lives in Jos and its environs; the attempted blow up of an American Delta airline on the eve of 25th December 2009 in Detroit by a 23 year old Nigerian Faruq Abdulmutallab, the suicide bombing, killing and destruction of private and government properties by the dreaded religious sect known as Boko Haran group.

Some critics of the re-branding project are skeptical about the success of the programme, because of the alleged unsuccessful outing of the previous project tagged “Heart of Africa” by the Chief Olusegu Obasanjo administration. Furthermore, others argue that the re-branding is a waste of public fund and time which would have been channeled into the provision of public infrastructure, good governance and free and fair elections. To counter

these critics, Professor Dora Akunyili, the initiator of this project and former Minister of Information and Communication emphatically observed that Nigeria cannot afford to wait to solve all its problems before cleaning its battered image. Furthermore, she remarked that the estimated budget for the project is about one million dollars and that the funding will be transparent and is being provided by the government and private sector (Solomonsydelle:2009). Thus, Nigeria needs re-branding to improve her battered image within the comity of nations. This is because a positive perception of a country is an important gauge for judging her standing in the international political system, which also translates to respect, influence and prestige (Egwemi 2010:1).

Many countries and corporate establishments have at one time or the other rebranded itself. This they do by purging itself of some negative attributes and taking advantage of some of its positive qualities to create an acceptable brand or entity. . Furthermore, companies whose fortunes have dwindled as a result of corruption, economic melt-down, stiff competition etc have re-packaged themselves. These include Phillip Morris (U.S.A.), American Insurance Group (AIG), Goldman Sachs etc. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rebranding). For instance, South Africa has successfully shed off the toga of Apartheid, by encouraging tourism growth, and creating attractive business environment. Equally, United States of America, despite its high crime rate and drug addiction, have used transparency in governance and businesses to launder its image abroad. Other countries like China, France, India, Singapore, Ghana and Kenya have also undergone this process of re-branding. They used good governance, tourism, sports and value re-orientation to achieve good image. At this juncture, it will be safe to state that Nigeria need re-branding.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF NIGERIA’S RE-BRANDING EFFORTS

Since independence, Nigeria’s image has fluctuated between extreme positivity and negativity. Thus the reactions of successive governments in relation to image cleaning depend on which side of the extremes the pendulum swings. According to Egwemi (2010:12), during periods of negative external image, various governments have responded via different programmes and policies aimed at turning around and improving the negative image. Immediately after independence, Nigeria’s image soared high in the international community because of the attitude and zeal of the founding fathers in moving the nation forward. This is coupled with the abundant natural resources in the country. Nigeria thus became a “beautiful bride” among other nations. This was punctured by the first military coup d’etat of 1966 and the subsequent civil war of 1967 – 1970. These events dealt a fatal blow to the corporate image of Nigeria, because she was seen as incapable of managing her affairs well. Thus, between 1966 and 1975, the regime of General Yakubu Gowon (RTD), responded by introducing the rebranding campaign concepts of “3Rs” “Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction” and “No Victor, No vanquished.” These were aimed at healing the wounds inflicted by the war and creating a united Nigeria

Following on the heels of Gowon’s regime, late General Murtala Muhammed 1975 – 1977, embarked on another re-branding effort by emphatically declaring total fight against corruption and also adopting Africa as the “Centre Peace” of his administration’s international relation. Saliu (2002) observed that this “singular effort enabled Nigeria to assume her proper role as an African leader, whose views were sought on African and world issues.”

Between 1983 and 1985, the regime of Generals Muhammadu Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon introduced War Against Indiscipline (W.A.I.) as a rebranding campaign. The aim of this campaign was to eradicate indiscipline in both private and public lives. This campaign was not only used to launder the country's image after the alleged massive corruption of Shehu Shagari's civilian administration, but also to give Nigerian a new lease of life.

In 1987, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB) (RTD) launched a re-branding project named Mass Mobilization for Self Reliance, Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER). This was aimed at re-positioning the fortune and image of Nigeria. From 1992 to 1998, Nigeria's image both home and abroad nose-dived to its lowest ebb. This was as a result of various actions and in-actions of government and individuals that were inimical to the good image of the country. These ranged from official corruption, politically motivated assassinations, autocratic rule, poverty, poor human right records, the cancellation of the freest and fairest election (June 12, 1993 general election) and its attendant consequences. The climax was the killing of the environmental activist Ken Saro Wiwa and other Ogoni activists and this culminated in the expulsion of Nigeria from the Commonwealth of Nations.

The emergence of a democratically elected government headed by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, in 1999 marked a new beginning for Nigeria. The administration adopted the re-branding strategies of allowing the president to tour major capitals of the world, and also the launching of the "Heart of Africa" project aimed at making Nigeria the heart beat of Africa. Inasmuch as the administration tried to re-brand Nigeria, it failed to conduct credible elections in 2003 and 2007. In fact late president Umoru Musa Yar'dua acknowledge that 2007 general election that produced him as the winner, was characterized by a lot of irregularities. This informed his administration's resolve to conduct a free and fair general election in 2011, adopt the rule of law and re-brand the country. Subsequently, the president in 2009 approved the implementation of the current rebranding campaign with its popular slogan "Nigeria, Good People, Great Nation". This campaign, among other things, is aimed at creating conducive atmosphere for investments, and making Nigerians to be proud of their country.

Using Tourism Resources to Re-brand Nigeria

It has been observed that successive Nigerian governments have adopted different re-branding tools to clean up the country's bad image. Despite all these efforts, none has achieved the result it set out to accomplish. The continuous promotion of tourism industry in Nigeria will elevate the country's image to the level where it will over-shadow other shortcomings. Therefore, it is the position of this paper that tourism resources will definitely make a positive impact in re-branding Nigeria. Tourism resources will surely complement what Alabi (2009) observed as focused leadership, sincere, transparent, disciplined and humane behaviours in all strata of the society in achieving this onerous task.

Firstly tourism exhibitions especially those organized in Europe, Asia and America, are veritable platforms for countries wishing to re-brand itself abroad. Such platforms afford countries the opportunities to interact with stakeholders in tourism business like airline operators, hotel operators, travel traders etc. This will help correct some misconceived ideas about the said country. Akintola (2010) observed that Nigeria participated at both the World Trade Market Exhibition in London 2010 and the Tourism Exhibition at Berlin 2010, where Otumba Olusegun Runsewe, the boss of Nigerian Tourism Development cooperation (N.T.D.C.), took the advantage to launder Nigeria's image. This he did by itemizing and

eulogizing the virtues of our rich cultural festivals, varied cuisines, abundant serene landscapes, varied traditional attires, important historic monuments, archaeological artifacts and above all, a hospitable people. Thus correcting the long-held misconception that Nigeria is not safe to tourists and other investors.

Secondly, the use of a country's tourism "Catch Phrase" to launder its image, is another noble way of using tourism as a re-branding tool. The mere mention of this "Catch Phrase" will evoke the feeling of an interesting place and good people. Egypt for instance, launched a re-branding campaign in the "You – tube" using its tourism "Catch-Phrase" "From Egypt with love" to launder its image, immediately after the political crisis that rocked the country in February 2011. This effort is to encourage tourists and the entire world to look at Egypt with fresh eyes (www.fastcomapny.com/1728802/egypt-u). Other countries that have succeeded in using tourism "Catch Phrase" to rebrand, include:

- India – "Incredible India"
- Mali – "Authentic Africa"
- Kenya – "Magical Kenya"
- Gambia – "Smiling Coast of West Africa"
- Malaysia – "Truly Asia".

In all, these countries are now seen as tourist safe heavens, with more people arriving on daily basis, thus increasing foreign exchange earnings. Thus, Nigeria's current effort at using its tourism "Catch-Phrase" "Tourism is life", should be intensified. More efforts should be made by exploring all avenues in the I.C.T. world using this "Catch-Phrase" to sell the country globally, while effort are made to develop the major tourist sites to international standard.

Thirdly, the use of National Museums across the country, as an ingredient of tourism resources to re-brand Nigeria, needs to be properly appraised. This is because, museums are places where material and non-material cultural heritage of a people are collected, preserved and displayed for the entertainment of the general public (see Momin and Okpoko 1999:157). Presently, Nigeria has about 33 National Museums across the federation. To effectively use these media in re-branding Nigeria, there must be a synergy between all agencies charged with the planning of the movements/itineraries of visiting heads of state, foreign diplomats and other important personalities to Nigeria and staff of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The aim is to include museum visitation in their programme of events. This Medium Apart from giving the V.I.P.s the opportunity to appreciate Nigeria's cultural values and accomplishes, such visits will also make them to understand and appreciate Nigerians and her good people. Furthermore, V.I.Ps should be encouraged to visit other important tourism landmarks in Nigeria including Obudu Ranch Resort, Surkur World Heritage site, Yankari Games Reserves and others.

In similar vein, National Commission for Museums and Monuments (N.C.M.M.) must be commended for its effort in using museum objects to create good image for the country. In 1980, N.C.M.M. formerly known as Federal Department of Antiquities organized foreign exhibition of some indigenes antiquities at the metropolitan museum to Arts, New York U.S.A. from 14 August to 26th October. The exhibition was titled *Treasures of Ancient Nigeria: Legacy of 2000 years*. Two years later, in 1982, the exhibition was on display at the Royal Academy in Piccadilly London from 30th October 1982 to 23rd January 1982 (Archibong, 2011). Recently, some artifacts from Ife, Benin and Niger-Delta region were out of the country on loan exhibitions in Europe and America. The exhibition was also titled

Kingdom of Ife, Dynasty and Divinity: Ife Art in Ancient Nigeria. Speaking at the home-coming of these artifacts back to Nigeria, The Director-General at N.C.M.M, Mallam Yusuf Abdallah Usman observed that the exhibition served as image modifier for the nation and Nigeria is now seen internationally as a culture rich country, thus favourably defining its image in the comity of nations outside oil and reinforcing our belief in the role the N.C.M.M can play in re-branding the image of Nigeria” (Akeredolu 2012).

It suffices to state here also that if the pictures of important National Monuments, artifacts and cultural landscapes are used as official images in government logo’s and postal stamps, they will definitely have wide reaching effects in concretizing the re-branding efforts of the federal government. With these items in place, persons involved in any government transactions will consciously or unconsciously be aware of these tourism resources, and these will help to project Nigeria’s tourist heaven. To lend credence to this idea, the French government recently unveiled a campaign where images of important national landmarks were used as national logo’s. One of the logos is the feature of a young woman, symbolizing Marianne, an allegorical figure and national symbol since the French Revolution and the Tangleline, “Rendez – yours enforce”, designed to seduce visitors to the land of fashion, food and wine (Dheepthi Namesivayam, 2009). Equally, it used some of the existing tourism resources like the Opulent French Riviera, Iconic Eiffel Tower and Luscious Vineyards to enhance the country’s image globally.

China, France and other countries have successfully used their local cuisines to build global reputation. A foreign tourist to China and France will definitely not feel accomplished, unless when such a person has eaten the Chinese food or tasted French wine. Even here in Nigeria, Chinese restaurants and French exotic wines are highly valued. These cuisines and wine have been used by China and France over the years to shed off negative attributes their countries must have been associated with. For instance, China is synonymous with good food, irrespective of its poor human rights record. In a similar vein, France is reputed for the best wines irrespective of its poor management of black immigrants. Consequently, Nigeria should built her global reputation by harnessing its varied local cuisines and wines. To achieve this, major hotels and restaurants especially those that receive foreign tourists should be encouraged to serve particular local dishes on specific days. The wide range of these local dishes include “*Abacha*” (African Salad), *Ewedu soup*, *ofe nsala*, *Fura di nunu*, *Erikikon soup*, palm wine and others.

The already internationally accepted tourist festivals like Argungu fishing festival, Durbar, Osun Oshogbo festivals, Iri-ji festival, Abuja and Calabar Cultural Carnivals should be repackaged to make them have wider international appeal. The tourism calendar of these events should be widely published both home and abroad. Local tourists should be encouraged to attend such events possibly by giving them work free days and also providing free transportation for interested tourists wishing to attend the events. Finally, international tourists should be assured of their safety and comfort by providing adequate security in and around the venues of the events.

Conclusion

It has been established that a country’s image is largely determined by the ways and manner it handles its domestic and international affairs. Having gone through periods of extreme negative image, Nigeria adopted various re-branding strategies to launder its image. The measure of success recorded by each image cleaning exercise, depends on its contents

and the approach adopted. Thus, this paper has shown that, among other re-branding concepts adopted by successive governments in Nigeria, tourism stands out as a pivot around which other re-branding contents must revolve. This stems from the fact, that apart from being a people-oriented industry, tourism resources are available in every geo-political zone of the country and therefore stand to be used positively for making the country a tourist heaven of international repute. This will automatically help to brighten the country's image.

APPENDIX

A SURVEY OF NIGERIA'S TOURISM RESOURCES

Nigeria is endowed with enormous tourism resources such that each geo-political zone has a peculiar resource that can be harnessed for re-branding purposes. Therefore a run-down of these tourism resources becomes imperative. They are examined under the following sub-headings:

Table I: Nigeria's Popular Cultural Tourism Resources

S/no	Names	Locations	Contents
1	Argungu Fishing Festival	Argungu Town Kebbi, State	Fishing competition, motor rally, agricultural show etc.
2	Ammasoma Festival	Ammasoma, Bayelsa State	Boat regatta and fishing competition.
3	Black Heritage Festival	Badadry, Lagos state	Celebration in respect of love, peace and re-union between Nigerians and blacks in diaspora.
4	Durbar Festival	Kano, Katsina and most northern states	Celebrated annually during salah, involving horse riding, racing and payment of homage to an emir
5	Egungu Festival	Oyo State	To showcase colourful masquerade
6	Egwuimoka Festival	Akwa South L.G.A. Anambra State	To show appreciation to god for protection.
7	Iri-ji (New Yam Festival)	Igboland	Celebrated annually to appease god for abundance harvest and also mark the end of farming season
8	Mmanwu Festival	Enugu State	Masquerade festival in Igboland
9	Njuwa-Ibi Festival	Njuwa-Ibi, Taraba State	Fishing festival
10	Sharo Festival	Fulani Dukku, Gombe State	Initiation of young men into life of perseverance and power.
11	Ofala Festival	Onitsha and some towns in Anambra state	Celebrated to thank god for successful reign of the Obi and ushering in a successful

			harvest.
12	Osun Osogbo Festival	Osun State	Sacred art used for traditional worship.

Source: N.T.D.C Tourist Map of Nigeria www.nigeriatourism.net and Okpoko A.I. and Okpoko P.U 2002 pages 40-46.

Table 2: Selected Archaeological and Historic Tourism Resources in Nigeria

S/no	Names	Locations	Contents
1	Kano City Wall	Kano State	Old defensive wall built around Kano
2	City wall Benin	Edo State	Old defensive wall built around Benin empire
3	Dufunna Canoe	Yobe State	Ancient canoe of about 8,000 years old
4	Badagry Slave Trade Chain	Badary, Lagos State	Collections of the relics of slave trade chains
5	First Storey House	Badary, Lagos State	Built and used by early European
6	National Museums	In most state capitals of Nigeria	Showcases cultural heritage of different Nigerian peoples.
7	Igbo Ukwu Archaeological Sites	Igbo Ukwu, Anambra state	Sites where famous archaeological object were excavated
8	Indigenous Iron Working Sites	Opi, Lejja, Orba Taruga etc.	Shows relics of furnaces and slags
9	Nok Terra-cotta Site	Nok village, Kaduna State	A museum showing various forms of Nok objects.
10	Mary Slessor's Grave	Calabar, Cross-River state	Contains the remains of Mary Slessor who stopped the killing of twins in Nigeria.

Source: N.T.D.C Tourist Map of Nigeria www.nigeriatourism.net and Okpoko A.I. and Okpoko P.U 2002 pages 40-46

Tables 3: Nigeria's Popular Eco-Tourism Resources

S/no	Names	Locations	Contents
1	Awhum waterfall	Awhum, Enugu State	A beautiful waterfall, cave and serene environment.
2	Azumini blue river	Azumini, Abia state	A sparkling flowing blue river and sprawling beach
3	Yankari National Park	Bauchi state	Natural and cultural landscape. It also contains

			accommodation and sports facilities.
4	Gashaka-Gumпти National Park	Adamawa State	Natural and cultural landscape. It also contains the gangarwal peak (Highest peak in Nigeria).
5	Idanre Hills	Idanre Town, Ondo State	Impressive hill formation
6	Ikogosi Warm Spring	Ikogosi, Ekiti State	A natural habitat of plants and animals, with a warm spring
7	Surkur World Heritage Site	Adamawa State	Cultural landscape
8	Ogunike cave	Ogunike, Anambra state	Cultural and natural landscape
9	Oguta lake	Oguta, Imo State	Natural lake and beach
10	Olumo Rock	Abeokuta, Ogun state	Natural rock formation
11	Obudu Ranch Resort	Obudu, Cross-river state	Natural landscape and good accommodation

Sources: N.T.D.C Tourist Map of Nigeria www.nigeriatourism.net and Okpoko A.I. and Okpoko P.U 2002 pages 40-46

Table 4: Selected Religious Tourism Resources in Nigeria

S/no	Names	Locations	Contents
1	Awhum monastery	Awhum, Enugu State	A Catholic monastery built for religious pilgrimage
2	Arochukwu long juju	Arochukwu, Abia State	A place of traditional worship
3	National Christian worship centre	Abuja	Headquarters of all Christian worshippers in Nigeria
4	National Mosque	Abuja	Headquarters of all Moslem worshippers in Nigeria
5	Rev. Fr. Mbaka adoration ground	Enugu State	Worship and pilgrim centre of catholic worshippers.

Source: N.T.D.C Tourist Map of Nigeria www.nigeriatourism.net and Okpoko A.I. and Okpoko P.U 2002 pages 40-46

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