

The Rebranding of Nigeria through Marketing Communication Strategy after Endsars and Covid 19 Lockdown

AYOZIE, DANIEL OGECHUKWU (PhD)

Department of Business Administration, The Federal University, P.M.B 1174, Lokoja, Kogi State Nigeria

**Corresponding Author:* AYOZIE, DANIEL OGECHUKWU (PhD), Department of Business Administration, The Federal University, P.M.B 1174, Lokoja, Kogi State Nigeria. EMAIL: ayozie.ogechukwu@fulokoja.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

Any decision by the Nigerian government to pursue the comprehensive programme of packaging and rebranding Nigeria most especially after the violent #Endsars protests of October 2020, will come as a welcome development. Branding involves adding values, creating a unique feature, market or identity for a product, service, nature or place, in order to differentiate between it and another, and to stimulate the customers emotional attachments. Unique brands exist in the market and amongst the nations of the earth, e.g. Jerusalem, Mecca, and Washington DC. The mention of few brands leads to some emotional attachment e.g. Prado, Hummer, and Pajero jeeps, Glo, MTN, magi, panadol, sharp and national electronics. Panadol pain relieving advert in the past states that "IF IT IS NOT PANADOL, IF FIT NOT BE LIKE PANADOL". We have God's own country (The United States of America), the Queen's own country (United Kingdom), the Samba nation (Brazil), carnival city Brazil and London, Lagos, Rio de Janeiro, Bahamas Island all connoting are positive or negative feature or the other. The focal point of this paper is to evaluate the brand Nigeria, its special features, attributes, challenges and advance solutions on how to Rebrand the nation, which is the largest secured investors destination in Africa. It uses opinion survey, conducted on respondents both online and personally. Simple random sampling was adopted in selecting respondents in the six geographical entities of Nigeria and Abuja. The results show that respondents view that Nigeria as a nation requires rebranding especially after the violent #EndSars protests and Covid19 lockdowns. These protests dented Nigeria's image locally and internationally so rebranding becomes an essential feature. The essence is to create brands that will instill patriotism, loyalty, trust and discipline among Nigerians. The paper identifies the image problems of Nigeria such as armed robbery and banditry, violent crimes, extra judicial killings, romance and advance fee frauds and scams, assassinations, terrorism by Boko Haram, kidnappings, internal insurrection etc. It advocates that through a concerted use of quality, positioning, repositioning, long term approach, being first, well blended communication, Nigeria national brand can be repositioned for greatness and to attract local and international investment, and to instill patriotism amongst the citizenry.

Keywords: Branding, Positioning, Brand, Image, Competition

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian Nation, and the government suffered image problems and security challenges, local and foreign investors were scared because of the destruction of investments and looting of properties. It is estimated that the Nigerian nation will need over ₦5 Trillion to rebuild those properties. Businesses were closed for weeks and the Nigerian image was dented locally and internationally. Locally citizens and security officers morale are very low because of the #Endsars violent protest in October, 2020.

Citizens suffered lower morale and patriotism and the police image dimmed to all time low,

with the killing of many policemen by miscreants and hoodlums, ethnic tribes started their distrust of the Nigerian nation and entity, hence the President Mohammed Buhari sent his ministers to various states and regions to calm frayed nerves and to reassure the citizens that the Government is still interested in the welfare and security of lives and properties in Nigeria. The attendant implications are that Nigeria will rely on internal restructures, public relations and marketing, strategies to reassure the local and international community, local and foreign investors and tourists, that Nigeria is still the safest and largest black Nation in the world and the investors destinations in Africa.

The recent Corona Virus popularly known as Covid19, originated from Wuhan China in 2019, with its attendant social, economic, financial, educational and religious dislocations all over the world and especially Nigeria. With hundreds of thousands of people all over the world dead, and others seriously sick in the hospital all over the world. Many quarantined and affected economically and socially, lives were disrupted.

Nigeria has recent recorded less than two thousand deaths, with many sick in the hospital and the number keeps rising. Covid19, shifted the focus of the world to this health issue, which came with it, lockdown of cities and countries, countless deaths, closures of all stratas of academic sectors (primary, nursery, secondary and tertiary institutions), social restrictions, closure of churches, mosques and social centers, ban on inter/intra city and international travelling, closure of local and international airports, quarantining of people and animals,

The world and Nigeria has not recovered from the health challenge of Covid19, when international attention was shifted to Nigeria, with the #EndSars Protest, which started in August 2020, against police and military brutality. SARS which is (Special Anti-Robbery Section) is a unit in the Nigeria police, known for its brutality, extortion of moneys, extra Judicial killings and corruption. The protests were initially peaceful not until later October 2020, when hoodlums and miscreants hijacked the protest and turned it violent in Nigeria. This resulted in over 60 dead in Nigeria as reported by national print and electronic media, both on the side of the civilians and the security forces especially the police. Various private, public and Government buildings were after destroyed, burnt or looted. Various public and government properties were burnt in all states and cities of Nigeria

This brought about attendant public relations challenges to the Nigerian Nation. Attention was shifted to Nigeria from all over the world, most especially with the December 2020 Lekki gate killing by the Army which attracted international and local outcry by the citizens, local and foreign media alike. Lockdown and EndSars violent/peaceful protests in Nigeria posed a lot of image problems for Nigeria, as it was projected as a violent nation that does not take care of its civilians populace.

Branding simply means giving a product a distinct identify. You have the name, the trade

mark, the formulation, packaging, the advertising, the reputation, the goodwill, the overall image, the satisfaction it offers its loyal customers, the feelings they have towards it (Doghuge 2004), (Ayozie 2018, Tudor, 2004).

A Nation brand is the collective sum of Nigeria's history, its culture, its products or services, its people, its customers and leadership in the African sub-region. It is a collection of perception in the minds of the customers or citizens. So just as it is with countries like China, America (USA), Japan, United Kingdom and South Africa, Nigeria can be re-branded, after the violent #EndSars protests. The green passport must be something to be proud of, and that leads to share patriotism, borne out of sense of national pride for citizens (Adekoya 2004). A brand is a bundle of benefits with a name (Ohiweri 1981, Tudor 2004). And Nigerians, especially the youths must benefit from Nigeria. Nigeria since the 1914 amalgamation and independence in 1960 and existence as an independent country has remained a hard sale to the outside world, after the civil war of 1967-70 and various violent protests. In the north and south parts, it is an important agricultural country occupying the number 40th position on the list of rich countries and plummeted down as the poverty capital of the world. Nigeria took off as a beacon of hope for Africa, which was freeing itself from the grips of colonialism (Ukapaukure 2002, Aaker 1996). Everything went too well until the bubble burst. The military entered the scene to re-define governance, almost in a negative way. A violent civil war (1967-70) was fought to keep the country united, over (2 million people died) and it ended up emphasizing the differences, such that the trust and affinity that existed among the different ethnic groups gave way to suspicion, distrust and hatred. In the midst of the war, oil was discovered. Instead of being a blessing, it paradoxically turned out to be a curse to Nigerians. It turned Nigeria from a food exporting country to one that survived on food importation and depended solely on oil export, and turned its back on agriculture which the present government of Buhari is revitalizing. Nigeria leaders were said to personify corruption, with so much vigour. In 2001 American CBS television rated Nigeria as the most corrupt country in the world and 2019 the poverty capital of the world. Efforts are being made to redeem the National image now. Transparency International rated it as the third

most corrupt country in 2004 and 2018. Corruption grew to some extent that the people affected restored to the law courts to frustrate attempts to try them for corruption and bring them to justice. Nigerians were been reported as fantastically corrupt by one time United Kingdom Prime Minister. In the brave new Nigeria, a family is unashamed by battling to keep the loof which its bread winner stole from public coffers, while a serving governors former inspector General of police, and former ministers are accused of monumental fraud. Serving and past public officers are facing various corruption cases in law courts by ICPC and EFCC in Nigeria. Branding appears to be one the most important phenomena of the 20th century although it began some decades ago that what Nigeria needs to redeem its image now. Branding is the process by which distinguish their product and service offerings and that of the competition/competitors (Jobber 2017). By developing a distinctive name, packaging and design, a brand is created. Some brands are supported by logo such as the Nigerian coat of arms. By developing individual identity, branding permits customers to develop associations with the brand or nation (e.g prestige, economy, security, strength) and this cases the purchasing decision. A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these, that identifies the maker or seller of a product, and branding can add value to a product (Kotler and Armstrong 2004). The American government and the citizens has value for each other, hence the American SEAL forces on October 31st, 2020 killed some terrorists and captured David Watonan, an American citizen, kidnapped in Niger Republic and brought to Nigeria for ransom.

Branding is about value, creating a unique identity for a product or service. A Nation comprises of people mainly of common descent and history, inhabiting a particular country under one government (Oxford Dictionary, 2020). A National of a nation is a citizen of that country and must be proud of its brand (the nation). In order to stimulate customer's emotional attachment to the brand or nation. It is about creating brand that satisfies the desire of the citizens in this case Nigeria are the end users (Tudor 2004). The focus of branding is always on creating on Brands that end up giving the consumer/citizens an emotional appeal. If there are no emotional benefits, the consumer will not be loyal to a brand (Tudor 2004). American are

very loyal to other government and the other government very loyal to its citizens, hence the SEAL forces, recapturing David Waton from terror groups in Northern Nigeria on October 31st 2020. Even with the November 3, 2020 election defeat by President Donald Trump and his reluctance in accepting defeat, Americans still have faith in their Democracy and the country at large. But minding the political differences between the Democrats and the Republicans.

THE BRAND NAME NIGERIA

A brand is a bundle of benefits with a name (Ohiwerei 1980). It is a product with name or distinct identify. In generic terms, a brand is a country called Nigeria, there is no other nation on earth called Nigeria. It is different from Niger Republic, a border country with Nigeria. In Marketing the features or attributes of a brand are bestowed on the product by both the consumers, and the producers/manufacturers. For a country like Nigeria, the attributes evolve with time through the actions of the government and its citizens. Nigerians need freedom, good governance, restructuring, peaceful and orderly Nation, equal rights and freedom of speech for all, and provision of basic amenities for all its citizens.

Nigeria is a brand, and has suffered so much from its negative image. Some of these negative perceptions come from the internal activities of government and citizenry and from the external actions of government, citizenry, foreigners, and the powerful western media. Recently with the violent #ENDSARS protests and Covid 19 lockdown and restrictions the Nigerian image was dented and went all time low. Efforts must be made to assure and reassure other local and international populace that the Brand Nigeria is strong and reliable and big.

THE CHALLENGES OF THE BRAND NIGERIA (NAIJA), WHAT SHOULD NOT BE IN A GOOD BRAND

Doghudje (2004) in his article Re-branding Nigeria, some thoughts and non-thoughts enumerated the problems of brand Nigeria as thus: how about the poor state of our roads, how about the sorry state of hospitals, police and prisons? How about the internal violence, kidnappings, armed robbery, Boko Haram insurgency, how about the ethnic and religious crisis in the north and the Niger Delta areas? How about the inept Independent National

Electoral Commission of Nigeria that finds it too difficult to conduct democratic free and fair elections and the mistrust by the Nigerian electorates, how about the secret extra budgetary allocations? How about the indiscipline, and lack of accountability on the part of the government? How can Nigerians be patriotic, when the youths cannot freely express themselves. How about the prolonged ASUU (Academic Staff Union of Universities) strikes that has kept many students idle at home for months, the underline ineffective funding of the universities, the poor remuneration of the teachers and lecturers (Ayozie, 2020).

The citizens cannot openly protests for their rights without violent and armed crackdowns and killings by the military especially that of the Lekki October 2020, killings and other extra judicial killings in all parts of Nigeria by the security forces. How can people be patriotic when Nigerians cannot have steady electricity supply, good roads and pipe borne water? How can patriotism come, when the cost of transportation is so high and government, through it agencies increases the pump price of fuel from time to time without recourse to the feelings of the citizenry? How can people be patriotic when there are no jobs for the educated and well trained youths who are clamoring for effectiveness and change? When unemployment is increasing, and there is no good shelter, or housing over the citizens? (Doghudje 2004, Ayozie 2020). How can patriotism come when political leaders refuse to consult with the people in order to determine their needs, as the result is evidence policies made on the run, or policies that are based on hunches (Obijiofor 2004). When policies are engaged that have nothing to do with priority needs of the nation? (Ayozie 2020, 2004). When the vibrant educated and non educated youths are unemployed and cannot contribute to governance of the Nation. When their votes do not count, and their voices suppressed (Ayozie 2020).

Obijiofor (2004) went further “when people say there is something wrong with Nigeria’s political leaders; you wonder why? Muhammedu Buhari spent the better part of his first term junketing around the world for assumed two reasons. “To polish and restore Nigeria’s image in the international scene, and as a consequence to attract Nigeria’s elusive international investors and investments, maintain internal security and defeat Boko

Haram”. Can we still redeem the Nation image? While at home when we have an industry that manufactures mischief, and young generations that sees no future, except by participating in get rich quick illegal deals or 419 romance, voodoo and internet scams (Yahoo yahoo). Some of the election results are contestable, as the populace alleged rigging which benefits all the political parties. This is evidenced by the moral burden and question over the election of the ex-Governor Ngige which happened years ago. A principal actor Christ Uba alleged the he rigged to make Ngige the governor. The crime rates virtually in all the states very high. The cities are very dirty and occupied with refuse dumps. Insecurity is at its all time high with banditry and kidnapping lurking the centre stage.

Tudors (2004), drew an instance from the South Africa experience and stated that “As South Africa brand icon, Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, represent certain values, maturity, integrity, stability and consistency. These are values that the citizenry can relate with and aspire to. In comparism some of our brand icons are inconsistent, dull, insensitive, docile, clueless, non-challant and has a total local of understand of the needs of the youths and citizenry. In terms of equal rights, employments, food, housing and security of lives and properties. Our brand has been totally deficient in delivering its promise to the citizenry, the masses, and now the vibrant youths of Nigeria. Hence the resort to massive looting of Covid19 palliatives by hoodlums and destruction of properties.

Brand loyalty cannot be separated from the delivery of its promises. These problems enumerated are common to all countries and not to Nigeria alone. We have terrorism and election malpractices, in even the advanced countries. For example, in the United State of America, rampant killing, kidnapping, (Damilola’s case of 2000, and the twin sister Julie Gecson’s kignap of 2004 #Blacklifematters in US). President Donald Trump in the November 3, 2020 Presidential Elections in the United States is alleging massive electoral malpractices in the states of Pennsylvania, Georgia and Alaska, also in the Democratic candidate of Joe Biden and his party. Rape, and soccer hooliganism takes place in the UK, USA, Japan and Germany, and other western nations. Even with all these problems, the western nations of USA, UK, France and Germany, and her brand attributes, represent those features in brand that makes

The Rebranding of Nigeria through Marketing Communication Strategy after EndSars and Covid 19 Lockdown

customers and the citizens to be loyal to brands (Ayozie 2004). Imagine how the American SEAL forces, recaptured David Waton in 2020 in Northern Nigeria, South Africa has its own share of AIDS/HIV diseases, violence, rape, gangsterism, Xenophobia and yet people are loyal to the brand, both internally and externally. Nelson's son died of AIDS, and violence still rampant in South Africa yet Nigeria and other nations and firms has huge investments there.

THE BRAND NIGERIA: SOME NATURAL ATTRIBUTES

The Oxford Dictionary (2020) defines a nation as a people of mainly common descent and history, inhabiting a particular country under one government. The brand Nigeria is a naturally endowed country of over 200m people. It became independent of Britain on the 1st of October, 1960, with a land mass of 923,768 – 64 square kilometers, with two principal rivers, Niger and Benue confluence in Lokoja, and strong currency named Naira. It is the largest and biggest black nation on earth, and has a 36 states structure, with over 100 cities, and a Federal Capital at Abuja and commercial cities in Lagos, Enugu, Port Harcourt, Onitsha, Kano, Nnewi and Aba. It is a country with unique tourist centres scattered all over the nation, like the Yankari National Park Games reserve created in 1936, the Gurara waterfall, which can complete favorably with the famous Victoria falls in Zimbabwe, the Jabi Dam and Horse Stable, (The Jabi Dam is a man-made lake beautifying the environment of Jabi) the popular Obudu Cattle Ranch in Cross River State, the Gashaka Gumti National park, the Old Oyo National Park, the Olumo Rock in Abeokuta, confluence rivers and mountain hills in Lokoja and Okene, the Kanji Lake National park, the White man's Grave in Akassa, the Kumuku National park, Kaduna, the Adaka Boro Statue in Kastina, the Slave trade House of Badagry, the National War Museum at Umuahia, Confluence Rivers and Colonial Sites in Lokoja, the Ikogosi Spring waterfall, and various zoos scattered all over Nigeria (Omotunde 2001, Ayozie 2006, Ayozie 2018).

EFFECTS OF THE #ENDSARS PROTESTS AND COVID19

Destruction of lives and properties, over 60 people were reportedly killed (on the side of the military, police and the civilian populace) over the week long violence in October, 2020.

- Destruction of various private and public properties all over Nigeria. It is estimated that ₦6 Trillion would be used to replace damaged burnt or looted items.
- Setting free of criminal elements in correctional centres and police stations all over the country. The resultant effect will be the increase in the crime rate and criminality all over Nigeria because criminals and bandits were released from detention centres.
- The looting of the armoury of the police units and the carting away of special arms and ammunitions (e.g. AK47 firearms). The resultant effect will be the possession of dangerous arms by criminal elements in the society resulting in criminality, armed robbery and violent crimes.
- The projection of Nigeria in the international community as insecure, lawless and with zero regard for peaceful protests and investment.
- Divesting of investments by foreign investors, because of fear that their investments will be looted and destroyed.
- The battering of Nigeria image and brand as a violent destination for investors.
- The use and misuse of the social media and the internet to fuel violence and create misinformation in Nigeria.
- Ethnic mistrusts, and fueling of ethnic cleansing by various Nigerian tribes and ethnic units.
- The setting up of SWAT Unit (special weapons) was approved and immediately set up to regulate the dreaded SARS.
- Various judicial commissions of enquiry were set up by the various state governments to address police/SARS Brutality and extra judicial killings, so as to make recommendations to the government on how to forestall a future occurrence.
- The recognition of the voice and yearnings of the youths and the masses in Nigeria, that they are hungry, angry and isolated the various tiers of government have mapped out programmes to ameliorate the economic hardships by the masses.
- Recognition of the fact that peaceful protests are special requirements of the democratic norms and exercise in Nigeria and worldwide.

LOCADOWNS

Positive Effects

The Rebranding of Nigeria through Marketing Communication Strategy after Endsars and Covid 19 Lockdown

The various tiers of government in Nigeria (local, state, federal) recognized the disenchantment by the public, i.e. A neglect by the government at all levels and set up measures towards ameliorating the effects of joblessness especially amongst the youths of Nigeria, “N-power project” by the Federal Government and others to register free the businesses in small and medium scale by the Corporate Affairs Commission is a viable project.

- The special anti robbery services, a unit of the Nigerian police forces was abrogated and all the officers re-assigned to other arms of the police force.
- Restrictions in movement both inter and intra state movements and international flights were disrupted.
- Economic restrictions and economic loss, as a businesses did not open all through this violent protest time.
- Increase in crime and criminality as looted firearms are now with the criminals and criminal gangs in Nigeria.
- Looting of Covid19 palliatives and other government and private business items.
- Arson, vandalism, destruction of private and foreign investments in Nigeria, Thus will cause trillions of naira to replace.
- Projection of brand and image Nigeria in the international media negatively and as a country of lawlessness.

Negative Effects

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY (OPINION POLLS SURVEY)

GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF RESPONDENTS SUPPORT FOR PROJECT NIGERIA

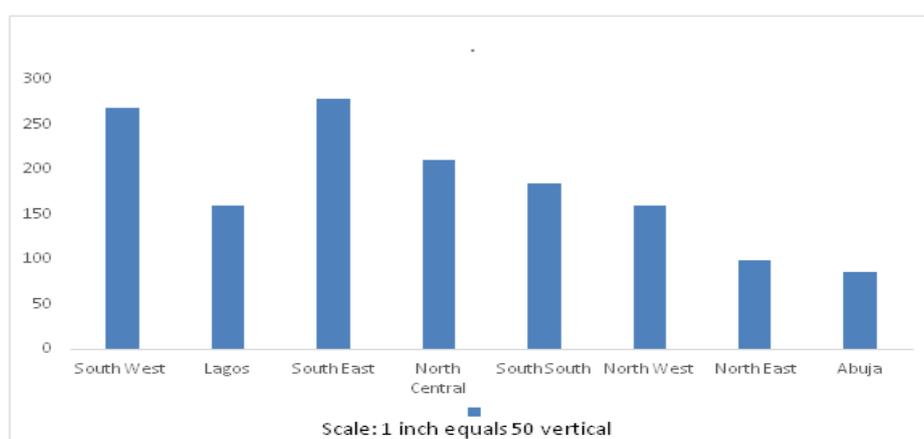


Figure1. Graphical representation of Respondents support for Project Nigeria

Source: Author's Field work, October/November, 2020.

In the zones, Southeast topped the list of those that picked important, with 72.1 percent,

In a survey by the Author carried out online and physically immediately after the #EndSars and Covid 19 Lockdown on Nigerians, perception of Nigeria's image, the project Nigeria image received the blessings of Nigerians especially online. The initiative aimed at projecting, protecting, and promoting Nigeria's image, both locally and internationally, will through a massive media campaign, expose the country's rich culture, tourism, sports, economy, business and showcase other sectors that Nigerians have excelled in and around the world, before and after the #Endsars protests and Covid19 lockdowns.

The opinion poll, conducted through Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, including Lagos and Abuja as special centres, ask the question "How important do you consider, project Nigeria and the Nigerian government to improve Nigeria's image after the #Endsars protest and Covid19 lockdowns?"

A cumulative majority of 1637 respondents or 73.5 percent out of 2000 respondents stated that the exercise was important to improve on the country's battered image below immediately after the violent #EndSars protests, Lekki Gate Killings of October 20 2020 and Covid Lockdowns of 2020 has indicated below. 594 or 19.4 percent choose unimportant, while 962 or 34.7 percent chose "not sure". About 3.4 percent were unstable for the survey, and did indicate that its not important.

Southwest garnered 67.1 percent, south-south 48.5, Northwest 41.7 and Lagos polled 41.3

The Rebranding of Nigeria through Marketing Communication Strategy after Endsars and Covid 19 Lockdown

percent, Abuja scored 35.2 and Northeast recorded 53 percent. The Researchers relied on Questionnaire survey and questionnaire of respondent both on and offline. Questions were sent out on the internet and personal interviews via simple random sampling.

South West	269
Lagos	160
South East	279
North Central	210
South South	184
North West	160
North East	99
Abuja	86

Source: Author's Field work, October/November, 2020.

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SURVEY STUDY: NIGERIA'S IMAGE POSITIVELY RE-BRANDING NIGERIA NEEDED NOW

The high response rate of the survey justifies the author's intended resolve and advice in re-branding Nigeria, so as to positively project Nigeria's image abroad, especially after the violent #EndSars protests and Covid19 lockdowns of 2020.

Hence in December, 2020 the Minister of Information and National Orientation, Alhaji Lai Mohammed has complained of the negative effects of the social media and influencers in increasing the violence and ethnic mistrust amongst Nigerians and dented Nigeria's image, reassured that the youths should be in the vanguard of improving Nigeria image now and in the future.

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE REBRANDING NIGERIA'S IMAGE BY THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION (NEW NIGERIAN IMAGE PROJECT)

This includes ensuring that the right kind of information was received about Nigeria locally and internationally, redefining Nigeria's image and inspiring pride in the hearts of its citizens, promoting economic advancement and national progression through definite programmes. These objectives are geared towards transforming the internal and international perception of Nigeria, her people, her economy and to enhance the value placed on her products and citizens in the international market, especially after the violent #EndSars protests, and Covid19 lockdowns.

In essence, Nigeria is not the worst developing nation, as it has unfortunately been propagated

by some Nigerians, and the international media after these violent #Endsars protests. There is a great reason to be optimistic in the Nigerian project. It would substitute and properly disseminate information, by deliberately showcasing all brand assets, foreign partnership investments, push for the promotion of indigenous businesses, propagated a peaceful and prosperous Nigeria, epitomize credible Nigerians who have succeeded through enterprise and diligence both nationally and in diaspora, and exemplify practitioners of home grown values, and integrity, and faith in the brand Nigeria.

The implementation will be by identifiable major national brand assets, which would be showcased to the world through various dimensions, to project the positive image of Nigeria, and increase its chance for international economic collaboration. The Brand Assets to be identified should be cultural, entertainments, sports, competence, politics, city, location, personality, business, educational, conceptual, intellectual association and media brand (Ahmed et al 2015).

BENEFITS OF BUILDING THE NIGERIAN BRAND IMAGE NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Successful brand and nation brand building can reap benefits in terms of premium prices, achieving distribution more readily, and sustaining a high and stable sales and profit through brand loyalty. This feeds through in terms of profitable (Jobber 2018).

Branding building is not solely the province of fast moving consumer goods. All sectors of business can benefit from investing in brands, including nations like Nigeria. A brand is created by augmenting a core product with distinctive values that distinguish it from the competition (Jobber 2018). To understand brand values, we need to distinguish between features and benefits. A feature is an aspect of brand that may or may not confer a customer benefit. Branding allows marketers to create added values that distinguish one brand from another, especially Nigeria different from other nations. Successful brands create a set of brand values that are superior to other rival brands. So brand building involves a deep understanding of both the functional and emotional values that customers use when choosing between brands and the ability to combine them in a unique way to create augmented product that customers prefer (Aaker 1996, 2016).

The Rebranding of Nigeria through Marketing Communication Strategy after EndSars and Covid 19 Lockdown

BUILDING SUCCESSFUL BRANDS: IMPORTANT CRITERIA AND FACTORS NIGERIA CAN USE IN REBRANDING ITSELF

A combination of some or all the seven factors listed below can be used to build successful

nations brands (Jobber 2018). Nigeria stands to gain, if these factors are incorporated in the current image project, especially after the violent #EndSars protests, and Covid19 Lockdowns.



Build Successful Brands (Jobber 2018)

Quality

Building quality into the core product is vital. A major reason from brand failure is inability to get basic rights done and rightly too. A major study of factors that affect success has shown statistically that higher quality brands achieve greater market share and higher profitability than the inferior rivals (Jobber 2018). Many Nigerians are hardworking, honest, reliable, trustworthy and do not easily accept defeat easily. The country is made up of world champions in all strata of life (sport, academic, science, literature, business). Chimamanda Adichie (literature), Anthony Joshua (Boxing), Osimhen (Football), Ngozi Okonfo Iweala (international finance). Nigerians expect the best of loyalty and trust from their nation and its leaders.

Positioning

Creating a unique position in the market place involves the careful choice of target market and establishing a clear differential advantage in the minds of those people. This can be achieved through brand names and image service, guarantees, a packaging and delivery. In today's highly competitive global market place, unique positioning will normally rely on combinations of these factors. In the past Nigeria will seen as

the Giant of Africa, the Big Brother Africa, and now the investors destination. In the present democratic dispensation, Nigeria must be positioned as stable secured, viable and full of potentials.

Repositioning

As markets change and opportunity arise, repositioning is needed to build brands from their initial base. Lucozade was first built as a brand providing energy to children who were ill. When market research found that mothers were drinking Lucozade as a mid-day pack me up and for vitality and strength, it was repositioned. Nigeria was positioned initially as the GIANT OF AFRICA and the biggest black nation on earth, but now repositioned as the HEART OF AFRICA. A nation with natural, human and economic resources. Now the most populous peace black nation and the investors destination. A peaceful, secured, viable and prosperous democratic nation full of human and economic potentials.

Well-Blended Communication

To create a clear position in minds of a target audience requires considerable thought and effort regarding advertising, selling and other promotional activities. Awareness needs to be built, the brand personality projected and

favourable attitudes reinforced. Advertising is the major communication medium to use. Nigeria and Nigerians need a blend of marketing communication, especially with the social media and the internet to reshowcase the nation's potentials.

Being-First

Marketing research has shown that pioneer brands are more likely to be successful than follower brands (Cuban, Carter, Gasking and Muchal 1986). Being first gives a brand the opportunity to create a clear position in the minds of target customers, before the competitors enter the market. It gives the pioneer the opportunity to build customers and distribute loyalty. It also requires sustained marketing effort and strength to withstand competitors' attacks. Being first into a market can also bring potential advantages of technological leadership, cost advantage, the acquisition and control of scarce resources and creation of switching costs to later entrants. Later entry can be very costly. Nigeria should be remembered as the first nation to win the under 17 World Cup by Uduka Ugbade, the First African and Black Nation to win the Olympics gold medal in football by Kanu Nwakwo and his teammates, most populous black nation, home of Dick Tiger the boxer, and Nuke Bamidele the wrestler, Chioma Asunwa the Olympiad.

Long-Term Perspective

Brand building is a long-term activity. There are many demands on people's attention. Consequently generating awareness, communicating brand values and building customer loyalty usually takes many years. Management must be prepared to provide a consistently high level of brand investment, to establish and maintain the position of brand in the market place. The Nigerian government in all its actions needs to adopt a long-term perspective in its actions, by investing in the vibrant youths and building internal confidence in them to invest in the brand Nigerian (NAIJA) Nation. Nigerian youths are innovative, hardworking and dynamic in approaches to national issues.

Internal Marketing

A key feature in the success of a brand is its internal marketing, which involves the training and communication with the internal staff. Training of staff is crucial. Also brand strategies must be communicated to staff, (the masses and

citizens) so that they understand the company's ethos upon which the company is built. Investment in staff training is required to achieve the service level required for the brand strategy. Managers also need to be aware of the importance of the corporate brand as represented by its corporate identity. Nigerian nation needs to invest in the youths and accord them a sense of belonging and togetherness

WHAT ROLE CAN MARKETING COMMUNICATION PLAY?

Brand experts like Ries, Trout, Haig (2004) in Adekunle (2004) stated that no matter how much time, money and energy poured into a brand or corporate strategy, it ultimately depends on the behaviours of individuals especially the ones leading the brands (Tumise 2004) in this all the Nigerian Political Leaders. the people behind a brand are its main ambassadors if they are perceived wrongly internally or externally, then the brand cannot survive (Ayozie 2019). This is especially true where the citizens are the brand. The political class must establish a rapport and synergy with the vibrant youth's confidence building is an essential factor now. The youths and their lives must matter more than government. The #EndSars protests is a power of the youth.

Brands can die as a result of the words that come out of the mouth of the chief executive, in this case the President of the Nation. Our president needs to move into the mould of Thabo Mbeki, Nelson Mandela, Muritala Mohammed, Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello and Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe. These personalities represent certain values as maturity, youthfulness, integrity, stability, statesmanship and consistency. They assumed leadership positions in their youthful ages. President M. Buhari with his past position as the Chairman of ECOWAS, and President of the largest black nation in the world of Africa, and as an international statesman, commands and demands a lot of brand equity. The qualities of the other brand icons mentioned above are possessed by president Buhari but he needs to reinforce, and reengineer these attributes. The youths of Nigeria are not lazy, but hardworking and positively progressive. Nigerian youths should not be seen as lazy and unproductive, but vibrant and energetic. They are the leaders of tomorrow and tomorrow belongs to them. The nation needs to invest in them.

By international standard president Buhari is the cleanest Nigerian; he is the president of everything international. He is the best that can come out of Nigeria by international standards, yet these international communities who praise and reward Buhari find it extremely difficult to change the perspective of Nigeria. Of recent, transparency internationally adjudged Nigeria as the third most corrupt country on earth, while the African Union recognized Buhari as their Anti Corruption Ambassador. These conflicts must be reconciled confidence building must be built, and corruption reduced drastically.

Corruption must be eliminated if possible, or drastically reduced. Every nation has its own share of corruption including the developed western nations. Corrupt officials must be persecuted and penalized where found guilty by competent courts of jurisdiction. No individual or political group must be exempted. The law should not be a respecter of individuals. The corruption laws should not be selectively applied. Agencies like NAFDAC, EFCC (Economic and Financial Crime Commission), ICPC (Independent Corrupt Practices Commission) and the Anti-Corruption Agencies must be strengthened. They must work energetically and in an impartial and free manner. Nigeria must be corrupt free. Nigeria must rebirth as the most transparent country to do business with and as a corrupt free country.

A South African expert once stated that as long as your national brand has a negative reputation, whatever product you manufacture would not see the light of the day in terms of success in the world market. Why do Nigerians prefer to buy made in Italy, France or London rather than to buy the goods manufactured in Aba, Onitsha, Kano, Ibadan, or Nnewi? This is because these foreign countries have done their homework, to ensure that consumers would love the idea of Italy, London or Paris and encourage outsiders to come there. Nigerians wear T-shirts of foreign football clubs and neglect the local teams. The leaders must instill patriotism and nationalism. Think of what you can do for Nigeria and what Nigeria can do for you.

We need to disabuse people's mind. In spite of the level of institutional crime, violence and corruption in Nigeria, we can still market and brand Nigeria, as an investors' destination, free of crime, and corruption, stable and secured. This depends on the leadership and great followership. In spite shouting crime rate,

corruption, alleged electoral malpractices, drug abuse, terrorism attack, mafia families, America is the world's top most brand today. Rwanda is a brand destination in Africa now. The American sold the cowboy image of criminals yet through Marlboro cigarette, the American cowboy image universally to the world as positive. Rwanda is selling its stable peaceful polity and great tourism. We can turn negative things about Nigeria into positivity. Our soldiers and police must be seen as vibrant and strong; hence its ability to reduce banditry and Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria drastically, just like our gallant soldiers died for Sierra Leone, Gambia, Liberia and Ivory Coast in the past.

RECOMMENDATION FOR THE REBRAND NIGERIA AND NIGERIA IMAGE

Re-Branding Nigeria with Advertising

We need to promote those things that are good or positive or sellable about Nigeria. These include both our natural and human resources. Nigeria's tourist sites rank among the best in the world. Nigeria is very fortunate to produce some of the world's best individualist. They include the international statesman president Olusegun Obasanjo, Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka, famous international novelist Professor Chinua Achebe, Ace footballers cannot, Kanu Nwankwo, Christian Chukwu, Segun Adegam, Austin Jay Jay Okocha, Adichie Chimamanda, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Computer Genius Professor Philip Emeagwali, Professor Gabriel Audu Oyibo, nominated thrice for noble prize in physics for the latest discovery of God Almighty grand unified theorem, which answers some questions that Albert Einstein could not answer. Oyibo and Emeagwali who are Nigerians, are currently the toast of the scientific world. Dr. Ngozi Okonkwo Iweala is a financial expert and the expected DG of World Trade Organization and Dr. Oye Owolewa won 2020 election in District of Columbia and Esther Agbaje – Minnesota House of Representative member. The American environment prepared them for the job and successes. Just like in America, the resolve to market brand Nigeria must start with the deliberate resolve to market the country and the citizens. Nigeria must be made conducive for people to make the kind of contributions that are required to lift it from the dull drums (Ukpakure, 2004). President Buhari is seen as an Anti-Corruption Ambassador of Africa. We must promote all these internal attributes. Nigeria, and especially the youths

always refer to historic comments and quotes of the icon Nelson Mandela. How often do we quote our own national icons? What inspirations do they give for the youths to exalt them.

Re-Branding Nigeria with Public Relations (PR)

Nigeria must embark on public relations, with PR attitude. The President, Governors, Legislators, Public Servant and the citizenry must develop PR attitude. We must all be interested in the brand Nigeria and all the citizens must be seen as messiahs to salvage Nigeria. Nigerians must build bridges of understanding between each other, and each ethnic group especially after the violent #ENDSARS Protests. We can achieve more in marketing the Nigerian brand through deliberate planning and careful execution of public relations technology. The effort to market Nigeria must go beyond government activities. Private initiatives must be encouraged. Agbani Darego, the formal Miss world was the product of private initiatives by Silver Bird production that placed Nigeria on the world map of tourism, Davido is an international music star. Having tried and failed many times Silver Bird succeeded in proving that maxim that "If one tries and fails, one need to try and try again until one succeeds". That is hallmark of the Nigerian enterprise (hardwork). So it is with our national football team (the Super Eagles) until they won the Olympic gold medal in Atlanta, Georgia in USA. Marketing of Nigeria must involve formal and informal activities conscious and unconscious efforts, deliberate planning and spontaneous activities in sports, film industries, government activities and tourism, diplomacy, politics, education, economic and religion (Ayozie 2018, Aaker 2016). The government and organization can execute techniques such as seminars, press conference, anniversaries, talk shows, investment submits, courtesy visits, using vehicles as the media, brochures, books, documentaries, calendars, and film shows. The execution of these techniques and programmes must be based on real facts and activities and not propaganda. For example, its serves no purpose to deny the existence of the advance fee fraud, a.k.a 419, Yahoo Yahoo boys, in Nigeria when evidence are glaring, nor does it make sense to say that crime rate in Nigeria is the lowest when Boko Haram and Armed Banditry is very rampant. South Africans and Italians have never made any effort to deny that their countries are world capital for organized crimes (Ayozie 2018, Ahmed et al 2015, Aaker 1996).

Yet all the multinational companies have presence in Italy and South Africa. If one worries about the mafia, Italy will proudly state that it is the home of the AC Milan, Inter Milan, Guiccies, Fiat, or South Africans being the home of MTN and ECONET. Investments in South Africa even with its high crime rates, HIV/AIDS, and obnoxious post apartheid policy and xenophobia is very high. So despites the negative publicity that attend the activities of few people in Italy, South Africa or USA, these countries have something to offer to the world economy. Nigeria must move towards that line of action as a peaceful, vibrant and prosperous country (Usukume 2006, Aaker 1996).

We can tell the rest of the world, through execution of appropriate public relation campaigns that the risk of investing in Nigeria is no higher than what applies in investing in any foreign country. Even with this crime rate foreigners are taking up Nigerian citizenship. Big companies like B.A.C, Econet, MTN, Etisalat, Shoprite, Aldogroups, Just Rite, Nestle, Unilever, Globacom are high investing. Heineken international spent EUR 300m on a sixth brewery; Guinness spent 150m Pounds, Procter and Gamble is opening a ₦1billion Naira plant in Nigeria, Nestle investing ₦1billion Naira to expand and BAT is expanding at Ibadan. These are examples of something good in brand Nigeria. Shoprite's, Just Rite's and many retail outlets are investing in Nigeria because of its economic potentials. Our leaders must be transparent in their activities. Corruption must be drastically reduced or eliminated, with the commitment from the government. Individuals like the brand icons mentioned earlier on, (Emeagwali, Obansanjo, Buhari, Ngozi Okonkwo Iweala, Wole Soyinka, Davido, Kanu Nwakwo), must assist in marketing the brand Nigeria. Nigerian footballers and professionals abroad have earned decent wages with their noble activities. They have and are still living decently abroad, and have been granted foreign citizenship in most case (Ayozie 2004, Aaker 2016). A Nigerian was elected a minister of justice in Canada.

Government must take pains to educate the citizens on all new policies, especially the ones we have expected to make some sacrifices, such as constant the increases in the prizes of fuel and petroleum, the banning of some items and closures of our land borders. The public relations should be proactive not reactive. It must start and end with the citizens in mind. The

youths are no longer lazy but vibrant and resourceful (Kay, 1996).

BENEFITS OF RE-BRANDING NIGERIA IMAGE PROJECT AFTER THE #ENDSARS PROTESTS

Nigeria stands to gain from the creative application of becoming more attractive to investors and tourists. The internationally acclaimed auction of GSM licenses by the Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC) in 2001 and more now signaled a revolution in the telecommunication industry. The two South Africa telecom firms MTN and ECONET wireless international that were the most enthusiastic investors in Nigeria's mobile telephone in 2001 and succeeded within ten years in growing the industry from a subscriber base of less than 50,000 to over 20,000,000 and now over 30 million people according to the International Telecom annually reports into Nigeria. Also in the last three years several European and American EXIM Banks have granted various dollar denominated credit lines to Nigeria Banks and many companies like MTN, V-mobile, BAC, Procter and Gamble, Shoprite, Trust rite, Guinness, etc have all invested in Nigeria (Ahmed et al, 2015).

Business in Nigeria now enjoys a stamp of authenticity on goods and services (Bosede 2004). Good reputation management is a natural extension of brand care which sells goods and services as well as attracts beneficial stakeholder relationships (Aaker 2016).

A strong reputation will create a strategic advantage for Nigeria in an increasingly competitive market place (Tunmise, 2004). The country stands to gain by being distinct, such as other national brands like the UK, USA, France, Rwanda and South Africa (Bosede 2004).

Re-branding of Nigeria brings about internal trust, cohesion and belief in oneness and unity of the nation. It will lead to patriotic tendencies and actions by the citizens, which will in effect increase the productivity of Nigeria. The vibrant and resourceful youths will have confidence in Nation building and engage in patriotic acts. Tourism will be on the increase as more nationals and foreigners would like to visit the numerous tourist sites in various locations in Nigeria (Yankari, Obudu, Lokoja, Umuahia, and the Calabar carnivals).

Foreign direct investments by both multinational and Nigerian nationals living abroad will be on

the increase as a result of people's new confidence in the new brand Nigeria. Nigeria must be confident and every part of Nigeria and be encouraged must wherein (Ayozie 2006).

Nigeria in the past, precisely in the year 2004 hosted the commonwealth of Nations Head Government Conference, tagged CHOGOMN 2004, it was granted the right to host the aborted Miss world Contest in 2003. In the past Nigeria was also given the right to host the Africa Women Youth Football contest, and many other Social, Financial, Cultural and Economic events and Conference. Nigeria is becoming the Religious promised land of many nations.

The most important aspect of a re-branded Nigeria is the debt forgiveness, totaling over \$15billion by both the Paris and London Creditor Clubs. This happened in the past. The debt rescheduling was near impossible task if not for the positive efforts made by Nigerian government to stamp out corruption, bribery and other financial crimes. Efforts are equally being intensified to prosecute, jail and punish corrupt government officials in the past and now, including state governors where proven cases of corruption were established against them (Ayozie 2006).

The new improved image Nigeria will enjoy a lot of international investments, in the oil, finance, gas and telecommunication industries, totaling billions of dollars in the future. Many heads of governments and nationals have found it very worthwhile to visit Nigeria now than when it was branded a pariah nation under the late military dictator, General Sanni Abacha (Ukphakure 2002). Foreign investors have shown so much commitment, trust and participation in the privatization, liberalization and deregulation of the oil, telecommunication, finance, banking and educational sub-sectors of the economy. Nigeria and the Nigeria government must continue to re-emphasize on all these historical facts. Non must be forgotten, we must not be seen as a Nation that forgets facts too easily, most importantly the important over enumerated here. All efforts must be intensified to remind Nigeria and Nigerians of their past historic exploits, none must be forgotten.

SUMMARY

We must show sincerity and commitment to project. The Nigerian leadership must exhibit transparency and commitment to the marketing

of the brand Nigeria, with the appropriate marketing mix. A new Nigeria needs to evolve after the #EndSars protests. Good reputation generates tangible results. Until Nigeria builds itself as a powerful brand in the minds of its world in audience, it would continue to face a daunting and costly process of constantly re-establishing its right to be noticed. The project will make friends for Nigeria, attract more tourism visits and encourage foreign investors into the country. #EndSars has ended police and military brutality and ushered in a new era of peaceful and prosperous Nigeria with very energetic, resourceful and vibrant youths, to make Nigeria great again. (MNGA) this is an achievable target, Nigeria is the investors and tourists destination with a very resourceful vibrant population. This must be the mantra now and in the future. Nothing must be forgotten or neglected about Nigeria's glorious past. Make Nigeria Great Again (MNGA). Rebranding Nigeria is a task that must be achieved (Ayozie 2016).

REFERENCES

- [1] Aaker, D.A. (1996), Measuring Brands, Equity Across Product and Markets. *California Marketing Review Vol. 36: 3*, Pp. 102 – 120.
- [2] Aaker, D.A. (2016), *Building Strong Brands*, New York, The Free Press.
- [3] Ahmed, Z.U., Johnson J.P., Ling C.P., Fang W., and Bu, A.K. (2015), Country of Origin and Brand Effects on Consumers Evaluation, *International Marketing Review Vol. 19, 3*, Pp. 279 – 302.
- [4] Ayozie D.O (2006), Rebranding of Nigeria, The Chattered Marketer. *Chattered Institute of Marketing in Nigeria, Vol. 12*. Pp. 14 - 20.
- [5] Ayozie D.O. (2016), *Marketing Communication*. Danayo Inc. Printing, Gbodi, Ilaro/Adepo Publishers, Ilaro, Ogun State.
- [6] Ayozie D.O. (2018), Event Marketing in Nigeria with the Current Security Challenges, *A Journal of Advertising and Public Relations Vol. 3*, Sryahwa Publications.
- [7] Ayozie D.O. (2020), The Application of Modern Advertising Education and Professionalism in Nigeria, *Journal of Advertising and Public Relations Vol. 3: 1*, Sryahwa Publications. Pp. 28 – 30.
- [8] Ayozie, D.O. (2004), Rebranding Nigeria's Image Product, *The Chartered Institute of Marketing Journal, Lagos, Vol. 2: 2*. Pp. 10 – 20.
- [9] Ayozie, D.O. (2015), *Integrated Marketing Communication in Nigeria*, Danayo Press, Ilaro, Ogun State.
- [10] Ayozie, D.O. (2015), *Successful Advertising in Nigeria*, Danayo Press, Ilaro, Ogun State.
- [11] Bosede F.B. (2004), Exploring Opportunities in the Nigeria Image Project, *The Punch Newspaper*, July 27, P. 35.
- [12] Charnatony L. de (1991), Formulating Brand Strategy, *European Management Journal, Vol. 9 (2)*, P. 194.
- [13] Delimpe M.C., Streetkamp, E.M., Mellans M., Vanden P., Decline and Variable Unbrand Loyalty, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, Vol. 14 (2), Pp. 405 – 420.
- [14] Doghudge C. (2004), Rebranding Nigeria. Some thoughts and Non-Thought, *Vanguard*, Monday July, 20, P. 20.
- [15] Gilmore, F. (2002), *Branding for Success in Destination Branding Greeting Unique Destination Proposition*, New York University Pres, NY.
- [16] Guardian Opinion Poll (2014), *The Guardian Newspaper*, October 13.
- [17] Jobber A. (2018), *Principles and Practice of Marketing*, 7th Edition, Botherworth Heinemmen, Oxford.
- [18] Jobber D. (2007), *Principles and Practice of Marketing*, Fourth Edition, McGrawhill Publishing Company, Manchester.
- [19] Kabuk, A.G. (2004), Pathways to Effective Branding of Nigeria, *The Guardian*, Monday, July 26. P. 66.
- [20] Kay J. (1996), What is in a Name, *Financial Times*, December 12, p. 6.
- [21] Kotler P., (2018), *Marketing Management*, Prentice Hall of New Delhi.
- [22] Kotler P., Gestner D. (2002), *Country as a Brand Project and Beyond, A Place Marketing and Brand*. McGrawhill New York University, New York.
- [23] Morgan N., Pritchard A., (2002), Contextualizing Destination Branding in Morgan N., Pritchard A., and Pride R. (eds), *Destination Branding. Creating the Image Destination, Proposition*. B. Herworth Heinemann Oxford University Press Oxford.
- [24] Obijiofor L. (2004), Nigeria Rebranding and Positioning, *Financial Times Newspaper Vol. 6, No. 810*, October 2004.
- [25] Ohiwerei C. (1980), *Brand Edge Newspaper*, Lagos, Issue 10, Vol. 50.
- [26] Olims, W. (2016), Branding the National, the Historical Context, *Journal of Brand Management, Vol. 9, No. 4*, Pp. 191 – 208.
- [27] Oxford Dictionary (2002), Oxford University Press, Oxforshire.
- [28] Tudors L.S. (2004), Rebranding of Nigeria. *This Day Newspaper*, June 2004, Vol. 8, No. 2849, Pp. 39.

The Rebranding of Nigeria through Marketing Communication Strategy after EndSars and Covid 19 Lockdown

- [29] Tunmise A. (2008), Positioning Nigeria through the National Image Project Business World, *THIS DAY Newspaper*, Vol. 10, No. 3437, Monday, September 20, P. 38.
- [30] Tunmise N. (2006), Repositioning Nigeria through our Natural Assets, in Brand Destination, Business World, *Thisday Newspaper*, Vol. 12, No. 4294, September, P. 42.
- [31] Ukpakure, H. (2002), Marketing Brand in Nigeria with P.R Brand Face, Vol. 1, No. 2, October 20, Pp. 11 – 14.
- [32] Usukume, N. (2000), Branding the Nation – The Historical Context. *Journal of Brand Management* Vol. 9, No. 4, Pp. 241 – 248.
- [33] Uzukume N. (2006), Branding Nigeria – The Historical Context, *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 10, No. 4. Pp. 230 – 248.

Citation: AYOZIE, DANIEL OGECHUKWU (PhD), “The Rebranding of Nigeria through Marketing Communication Strategy after EndSars and Covid 19 Lockdown”, *Journal of Advertising and Public Relation*, 3(2), 2020, pp. 10-23.

Copyright: © 2020 AYOZIE, DANIEL OGECHUKWU (PhD). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.