

Exploring the Perspectives of Selected Public Relations Professionals on the *Made-In-Nigeria* Campaign

Ogunyombo, Oludare Ebenezer ¹
Azeez, Olakunle Yunus ²

Department of Mass Communication ¹
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, Ogun state

Department of Mass Communication ²
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, Ogun State

dareoguns2000@gmail.com ¹
olakunlepress@yahoo.co.uk ²

Abstract

This paper examined the perspectives of public relations professionals in Nigeria on the Made-in-Nigeria (MiN) campaign. The study was necessitated by the discordant tunes emanating from Nigerians about the project that indicates lack of mutual understanding of the campaign between the government and the people. Using an in-depth interview to gather data from 10 selected PR professionals in Lagos State, the thematic pattern in their responses showed that the PR professionals viewed the MiN initiative as laudable. However, they berated the lack of clear objectives with which the campaign may be measured from the project initiators. They faulted the stakeholders' engagement and communication strategies used in propagating the campaign and identified these as reasons for the poor acceptance and execution of the project. Source credibility was also a major issue as the proponents of the initiative appear not to be committed to the goal of the campaign in terms of their 'words and actions'. The study concluded that although public relations professionals perceive the MiN campaign as good, they have reservations on the stakeholders' engagement and the communication strategies used for the project. Thus, the study recommends that the government should practice development public relations by engaging public relations professionals to articulate a robust and effective implementation strategy rather than simply appointing choice individuals who may not be able to provide a sustainable programme that will generate public interest in the project.

Keywords: Communication Strategies, Made-in-Nigeria (MiN), National Development, Public Relations, Source Credibility, Stakeholders Engagement

Introduction

To address socio-economic challenges occasioned by issues of trade imbalance and over-dependency on foreign products, several governments in Nigeria, at some point or the other, have initiated different programmes aimed at informing and educating Nigerians on the need for self-sufficiency as a country. For instance, on resumption as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 2015, President Muhammadu Buhari, as part of its 'change agenda', launched the *Made-in-Nigeria* (MiN) campaign. The initiative is meant to address the issue of dwindling global prices of crude oil, which may affect the overall economic interest of Nigeria in the long run. In 2016, the Nigeria Economic Summit Group (NESG) headlined the "Made-in-Nigeria" campaign as the theme of the year's summit (Nigeria Economic Summit Group, 2016).

Amaeshi (2017) agreed that the Made-in-Nigeria campaign comes across as a very smart move to re-direct production and consumption away from imported goods and services to locally-manufactured ones. It draws attention to the possibilities and opportunities in Nigeria, as a way to reduce the incessant foreign exchange pressures on the Nigerian economy and develop national capability for sustainable economic growth. The project is a major behaviour change initiative to recalibrate production and consumption behaviours of Nigerians. Hence, the initiative requires a paradigm shift in production and consumption decisions that are influenced and informed by the long-term good of the Nigerian society through enlightened self-interest.

However, laudable as these projects are, there have been concerns about how the objectives are harnessed and communicated to the various stakeholders, who, most times, are required to change certain behaviour or attitude. The Made-in-Nigeria campaign by the President Muhammadu Buhari's administration appears to be witnessing the same challenges going by the discordant tunes from stakeholders at all levels. For instance, the concept of Made-in-Nigeria appears ambiguous. In an analysis, Saibu (cited in Iyatse, 2017) opined that understanding the concept for acceptance may require that the government should be more specific. He queried that:

First, what products are the government promoting? The discussion centred on two concepts, Made-in-Nigeria products and Made-by-Nigeria products. The Chinese companies operating in Nigeria make Made-in-Nigeria but not made-by-Nigeria products. The latter means products produced by Nigerians themselves. The question that arose during the discussion was- how do we empower Nigerian manufacturers? The Federal Government needs to come up with a list of products that are draining our foreign exchange; select the ones we can produce locally and map out strategies on how to produce them. (para. 22)

Saibu concluded that the Made-in-Nigeria campaign is a general statement that anybody can make; hence, the government needs to have specific strategies and set clear targets, otherwise, people will not have confidence in the policy statement. Yusuf (cited in Iyatse, 2016) agreed that the Made-in-Nigeria campaign is genuine, but lacking effective strategy to achieve the objectives, stating that the strategy must be properly refocused. Beyond what he describes as ‘symbolism’ which include the wearing of Nigerian fabrics among other things, there is need to engage and develop the capacity of the local manufacturers to be competitive and ameliorate the socio-economic challenges.

Abati (2016) advocated a holistic approach that goes beyond vague communication and the sentiments of any individual. He noted that:

The matter is not as simple as just buying Nigerian goods. It is not about trending hashtags, slogans or propaganda, but a decision to move this country beyond the on-going knee-jerk, desperate elite war of position within the political spectrum, and see what can work for the people’s benefit. We want to buy Made-in-Nigeria goods, and yet, every star-up business in this country is facing serious challenges; the more established manufacturing outfits are groaning. (para. 14)

In line with Abati’s position, Jemi-Alade (cited in Iyatse, 2016) alluded to the ‘lip service’ the government pays to the campaign as a major challenge. Issues such as realigning the federal government procurement policy in tandem with the campaign to boost the acceptance of Made-in-Nigeria products is still dragging. Also, a situation where public officials ignore local products for imported ones does not give a good impression about the goods manufactured in the country. He concluded that “the government should not only make a noise; it should demonstrate its commitment to the campaign. That should start with the amendment of the national procurement policy”.

From the foregoing, it is evident that there is a breakdown in alignment on the objectives of the campaign between the government and the citizens. There appears to be some disagreements among stakeholders on the objectives of the Made-in-Nigeria campaign. Stakeholders’ management appears faulty particularly in terms of mutual understanding of the policy. Evidently, this disconnect may be blamed on a breakdown in effective communication and engagement which may be achieved through effective public relations programmes.

As a profession, public relations is saddled with the responsibility of establishing mutual understanding and relationships that will promote collective good. The Mexican statement cited in Nwosu (2011) defined public relations as “the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisations leaders and implementing planned programmes of actions which will serve both the organisation and public interest”. Odunlami and Ogunyombo (2017) quoting the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) stated that “public relations is a strategic

communication process that builds mutually-beneficial relationships between organisations and their public”.

Ochieng (2015) noted that regardless of which definition of public relations that may be chosen, several factors are consistent because PR is part of an organisation’s overall marketing and communications function. It is critical in helping to engage an organisation’s (government) diverse publics across media platforms including third party and social media. It must protect the organisation’s reputation and provide crisis management where necessary. He added that:

Through public relations, formidable and mutually-beneficial relationships are created and nurtured. These relationships, which are central in the development of democracy and democratic principles, are forged through adjuncts of public relations such as public campaigns, lobbying, public participation and image building, among others. Public relations appears to be the use of communication to gain advantage in an open and competitive environment. It can be carried out by governments, corporations, celebrities, aggrieved individuals and others...PR works in the best and worst interests of society. Regardless of your perspective on it, public relations is an integral part of today’s democratic world. The faster this is understood the better. (para.10)

Keghku (2002) agreed that there can be no satisfactory implementation of any developmental project without first understanding the philosophical leanings of the publics; hence, the need for public relations. Public relations aids the success of all policies of government, organisations or individuals and helps in utilising communication as a tool for policy development by providing sensitive judgement about human relations, patterns of public opinions, weighing the probable effects of various alternatives and the best way to express the policies for acceptance.

In view of the foregoing, understanding the perspectives of public relations professionals on the Made-in-Nigeria campaign may provide insights into addressing the issues amplified by segments of the stakeholders in Nigeria. In terms of policy-based communication, it may also serve as a precursor to workable strategies for an effective policy implementation.

Statement of the Problem

Although experts agreed that the made-in-Nigeria campaign is laudable and capable of boosting the Nigerian economy, the discordant tunes in the publics’ understanding of the objectives is posing a threat to its success. The campaign appears to be experiencing apathy among the different stakeholders which the project seeks to serve. According to analysts, the indifferent attitude noticed among Nigerians towards

the project has been blamed on poor communication and stakeholders' engagement from the government and its agencies (Ogedengbe, 2009; Kegnku, 2011; Abati 2016; Jemi-Alade, cited in Iyatse, 2016). However, public relations has been established as a major aspect of policy formation and implementation to address issues of stakeholder management in any polity (Kegnku, 2002; Ochieng, 2015).

The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) at the 5th Lagos Public Relations Stakeholders Conference, 2018, acknowledged these challenges as the body discussed how to address communication and reputation challenges of Made-in-Nigeria. This move by the body highlights the relevance of public relations practice in providing directions for an effective implementation of policies. In view of these assertions, understanding the perspectives of the PR professionals on the stakeholders' management and communication strategies for the Made-in-Nigeria campaign could provide a course for enhancing the project. Thus, the focus of this paper is to probe the issues from the perspectives of public relations professionals and establish the themes with the aim of identifying areas of interventions on the project.

Research Objective

The main objective of this study is to examine the perspectives of public relations professionals on the Made-in-Nigeria campaign and establish themes on issues affecting the campaign particularly in terms of stakeholders engagement and communication strategies.

Research Questions

Based on the foregoing, this study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the perception of public relations professionals on the Made-in-Nigeria initiative?
2. What is the perception of public relations professionals on the stakeholders' engagement strategies of the Made-in-Nigeria campaign?
3. What is the perception of public relations professionals on the communication strategies of the Made-in-Nigeria campaign?
4. What is the perception of public relations professionals on the major limitations of the Made-in-Nigeria campaign?

Literature Reviews

The *Brand Nigeria* Debate

According to Okoli (2013), "brand is the tangible and intangible attributes of a product, service or place (destination) as acknowledged by the conscious consumer public. It comprises the names, logo, colour values, price packaging associated with an article of commerce" (p.83). Branding thus becomes a conscious and strategic effort to make a product attractive to the buyers. Thus, re-branding is defined as a conscious attempt to reconstruct the quintessential brand attributes of a product with a view to

restoring its uniqueness or redeeming its image/identity. In terms of national re-branding initiative in Nigeria, it is a typical instance of place or destination rebranding. It is an attempt to create a new favourable image in replacement of an extant but unfavourable one (Okoli, 2013).

Prior to President Buhari's administration, governments at different times have initiated campaigns at branding and rebranding Nigeria. Keghku (2011) noted that in July 2004, under the President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration, the Nigeria image project known as *Branding Nigeria* was launched by the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation. The aim was to promote national brand asset including business, products, people, sports, culture and cities in Nigeria to the rest of the world and position Nigeria as a leader in Africa's development through a Business Support Group (BSG). These campaigns subsequently metamorphosed under different names like *Heart of Africa*, *Proudly Nigeria* and *Re-branding Nigeria*. Incidentally, these initiatives have not gone without challenges. Igyor (2011) noted that "the *Heart of Africa Campaign* became an international showcase that targeted audiences in New York, London and Paris at expense of the Nigerians who should have been the audience". Keghku (2011) agreed that the several attempts made have been challenged by the high level of corruption, which has permeated the fabrics of the Nigeria nation, thus, hindering the nation's socio-economic growth and development.

Osho (2011) claimed that Nigeria faces the challenge of negative perception because of bad behaviour and failure at all levels of governance in the country. Although, Keghku (2011) advised that the re-branding project of Nigeria should only be seen as a means to an end and not an end in itself, Ogedengbe (2009) argued that the re-branding projects have been affected because the proponents have used more of propaganda rather than public relations strategies that would have helped. Okoli (2013) in his assessment, noted that approaches to the re-branding campaign in Nigeria are mostly reactive and propagandist. The campaigns have been more of a face-saving exercise rather than exercises meant to better the lots of the people. Kolawole (2016) agreed that "the Made-in-Nigeria project is a child of circumstance born by the oil revenue crunch and the need to protect Nigeria's forex reserves"; whereas not too much attention has been paid to the quality of the Made-in-Nigeria product resulting in scepticism among Nigerians. This opinion was reflected in the *Vanguard* editorial of March 2, 2017 which stated in part that:

It is quite disappointing that this campaign is not being majorly headlined from the office of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, perhaps as part of this regime's package of "change" ... Instead, the use of foreign-made goods and services by leading members of the regime are so obvious, even in the face of severe foreign exchange crunch. The campaign is being inchoately picked up by concerned individuals... This campaign requires a central arrowhead, and only the Presidency can provide leadership, using

all organs of the Federal Government to fan its embers to total ownership by the citizenry. Nigerians are showing their patriotic instincts and readiness to be part of it. The growing popularity of producing and consuming Nigerian rice is an encouraging case in point. We strongly believe that if all Nigerians get into this inward-looking bandwagon, Nigeria's journey to self-sufficiency and prosperity would have begun. Let the President lead us.

In summary, Abubakar (cited in Iloani, 2016) and Kayode (2017) agreed that Nigeria has to get the branding objectives right because the essence of Made-in-Nigeria (initiative) is not about running adverts, making insincere claims and paying lip-service. However, it is about creating value and harnessing resources to create wealth and competitive advantage. It is not about cameo appearance in the media and making hollow statements about a "Nigerian Dream".

Public Relations in Development Communication

Within the concept of development and social change, Moemeka (2012) defined development "as a movement (change) from existing conditions or situations that are no longer considered conducive to societal or group goals and aspirations to those that can meet expected societal or group goals and aspirations". Rogers (cited in Nnayelugo and Nwafor, 2015) described development as "a widely participatory process of social change in a society intended to bring about both social and material advancement, including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities for the majority of the people through their gaining of greater control over their environment" (p.165). Moge kwu (2015) further described social change as a situation in which members of a society replace a set of attitudes and behaviours with others. It is the extent to which a society adopts innovations that replace old ideas with new ones.

However, change programmes and efforts have always faced problems that may have tremendous impact on the objective of the change programme. Unless these challenges are recognised and addressed, no change effort can be successful (Moemeka, 2012). Hence, the role of an effective communication. Moemeka (2012b) emphasised that the change communication must be:

To discuss with, inform and motivate the people and create an environment in which target social systems can feel the need for and demonstrate their commitment to development activities and thus raise the level of their participation in development project.
(p.13)

Okuna (2002) concurred that the development process for change must be participatory for it to be referred to as development communication. In reference to the United Nations, Nnayelugo *et al* (2015) described development communication as:

The communication that stresses the need to support two-way communication systems that makes for dialogue and allows communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that relate to their development (p.151).

Okuna (2002) further explained that:

Effective development communication has to do with creating awareness and providing knowledge about a development project as well as winning the acceptance of the people whom the project is meant for (the target audience) in terms of getting them to accept and support the things being done by the development agents to solve their development problems. (p.292).

However, Nwokefor (2015) argued that communication alone cannot bring about the right attitude towards a development programme in any society in terms of the expected social changes. He asserted that inadequate communication may slow down the development efforts as no government can function well in driving at development without adequate and effective communication. In view of this, he concluded that “a country’s communication systems, institutions and practitioners constitute a valuable instrument for the attainment of the nation’s development goals and objectives”. (p.117)

Within Nigeria’s communication systems, institutions and practitioners that constitute valuable instruments for the attainment of the nation’s development goals and objectives is the public relations profession. Osuji (2012), in his assessment of public relations in government activities, stated that by the definition of public relations, the organisation becomes the government or political parties while the publics are the citizens of the country to whom the government is trying to sell its initiatives, programmes of manifestos as the case may be. It thus makes sense that for any government who wants to succeed in getting the buy-in of the people into its developmental programmes, it must employ the use of public relations principles.

The British Institute of Public Relations (BIPR) defines public relations as “a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation as its public” (Onabolu, 2013., p. 142). Nwosu, cited in Touitou & Lawojunta (2016), stated that Public Relations “is the profession that influences public opinion or attitude in such a positive direction, understanding and acceptance. It establishes a two-way communication to ensure mutual understanding, or resolve conflicts of interest between individuals, organisations and their publics. Black (2000) added that the mutual interest and understanding must be based on truth, knowledge and adequate information. Thus, the process of economic growth and development in Nigeria cannot be completed without the active role of public relations, which informs, educates and mobilises for mass support (Keghku, 2002; Imor, 2013).

Since this kind of understanding is what discerning governments desire for their development programmes, they cannot afford not to engage in what, within the context of this paper, is termed *development public relations*. *Development public relations may be defined as the aggregate of all deliberate and strategic planning, communication and efforts to advocate, promote and gain the mutual understanding of the target audience (populace) in order for them to accept, imbibe and support developmental programmes within a particular society. Development public relations is the purposeful, truthful and progressive engagement of stakeholders within a social system by development agents to analyse the trends in developmental challenges, predict the consequences of the challenges on the well-being of the populace while collectively agreeing on initiatives to address the challenges.*

To succeed with development public relations, Onabolu (2013) agreed that the project managers must be sensitive to their environment and conscious of every aspect of life and human endeavour around them before taking decisions.

Stakeholders Engagement and Communication Strategies in Project Campaigns

The desire of any organisation is to ensure its stakeholders are in tune with its plans. This requires strategic thinking and implementation. Johnson *et al* (2008) defined strategy as “the direction and scope of an organisation over the long term, which achieves advantage in a changing environment through its configuration or resources and competences with the aim of fulfilling stakeholder expectations” (p.22). McGraw (2016) defined a “strategy as a set of guiding principles that generates a desired pattern of decision making. A good strategy provides a clear roadmap to guide peoples’ actions and priorities in order to achieve desired goals”. Workotter (2016) agreed that stakeholders’ management strategy involves “everything necessary to control relationships with all the individuals a programme has an impact on or affects to ensure the achievement of the programme’s objectives. This makes stakeholders management an ongoing process that is never completed”.

For effective strategy implementation, the communication must be well managed. McGraw (2016) defined communications management plan as “a component of the project management plan that describes how project communications will be planned, structured, monitored, and controlled”. The aims of a communication plan are to support change management, address stakeholder resistance, build trust and improve decision making, drive project focus in order to manage scope and mitigate project risks. Sustained (2015) averred that stakeholder consultation and engagement typically follows a recognised three-step process which are notification, consultation, and participation. This is important because the publics of an organisation have the right to be concerned about projects that affect them, to ask questions about it, and even to oppose it. However, to stay afloat, organisations should ensure all stakeholders have the correct information to form their opinions.

Johnson *et al* (2008) noted that strategic stakeholders management has three major elements. The elements are: understanding the *strategic position*, making

strategic choices for the future and managing *strategy in action*. The external environment, internal strategic capability and the expectations and influence of stakeholders influence the strategic position of an organisation. Strategic choices include the underlying bases of strategy at both the corporate and business levels. It involves directions and methods of development to know which choices/plan will succeed or fail. On the other hand, managing strategy in action is concerned with issues of structuring, resourcing to enable future strategies and managing change.

Essentially, Sustainet (2015) affirmed that meaningful consultation that involves ongoing two-way communication with a project representative will increase understanding, clarify the community's preferences and values, and allow the proponents to understand how the public's views can and should lead policy decisions, particularly as many organisations often have challenges in communicating with their stakeholders. Johnson *et al* (2008) agreed that the practice of strategy involves critical choices about *who to involve* in strategy, *what to do* in strategising activities and *which strategising methodologies* to use in order to guide the activities. These steps involve analysing, issue selling, decision making and communicating.

However, these stakeholders' engagement processes are occasionally challenged. Sustainet, (2015) identified four factors that negatively influence stakeholders' communication which are:

1. Not understanding how to set up a stakeholder engagement project to effectively communicate the organisation's intentions.
2. Lack of focus when engaging stakeholders and failure to define the 5 Ws (who, what, when, where, and why) of stakeholders engagement.
3. Having the wrong person representing the organisation. This can be someone who is inexperienced or whose strengths lays outside the field of communication.
4. Company and stakeholder groups involving multiple representatives that change over time resulting in lost relationship and communication history that may result in lack of commitments across board.

When these challenges occur, (Abudi, 2013) noted that such projects may witness lack of or limited buy-in and commitment; misunderstanding around stakeholder expectations on what is considered project success; and conflicts between the project team and stakeholders, or between stakeholder groups. It may also experience stakeholders who may actively work against the project being accomplished which may finally result in a failed project.

To address these issues, a review of the recommendations of McGraw (2016) and Workotter (2016) provides a six-level strategic stakeholders engagement process. They include:

1. *Identifying Stakeholders*: The programme manager needs to identify stakeholders connected with the programme and its supporting projects either as

individuals or organisations. It involves simply understanding the organisational environment. It is important that programme managers ensure accountability by picking stakeholders' representatives, who are easy to work with. The members of the project team must be trained to carry out this function.

2. *Assess the Stakeholders' Power:* Once the stakeholders have been identified, it is important to assess their powers to know what, who and how they can influence opinions in favour of the project. Such powers may be positional, influence, expert, charismatic etc. An assessment of how and when the power has been used in the past will enable the project managers to know how to engage such stakeholders.
3. *Build Stakeholder Relationships:* Stakeholder relationship never ends and it must always be maintained. Programme managers must be careful not to neglect the importance of relationship building by simply focusing on the project deliverables. Strong stakeholder relationships begin by establishing trust and then continually building on that trust. This requires that project managers must be able to study the stakeholders because the more project managers know about their stakeholder, the easier it will be to engage with them. The storytelling will help the stakeholders experience the future during the project.
4. *Build Relationships Among Stakeholders:* When there is a strong relationship among the stakeholders, the project benefits more because ideological/political grandstanding will be minimised and compromises easier to achieve. The programme manager should foster positive relationships among stakeholders by always speaking positively about all stakeholders and avoid talking negatively about a particular stakeholder whether that party deserves it or not.
5. *Communication Strategies for Stakeholders:* Effective communication builds and establishes trust. The key messages must be identified. Project managers must analyse and know what the communication need of each segment of their stakeholders is and how they want the information communicated. The preferred alternative line of communication (PALC) must also be identified and documented in case such will be required. Stakeholders management involves building effective relationships and constant communication to keep programmes on track and successful.
6. *Lead the Stakeholders:* Project managers must educate their stakeholders about the project management processes that they will be adopting as well as the role each stakeholder may or may not play in those processes. Creating buy-in to the project management processes with stakeholders makes it easier to maintain the discipline necessary to follow those processes. This may be done either directly or through delegation.

Method

This paper adopted a qualitative method using in-depth interview (IDI) with an interview guide. An in-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that involves

conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme or situation. It is useful in getting detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviours and exploring new issues in depth. It helps to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view on a situation and explore interesting areas for further investigation. It provides more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as survey (Berry, 1999; Boyce & Neale, 2006; Ya'u & Nababa, 2016).

A purposive sampling was used in selecting the 10 respondents for this study. Tongco, cited in Talabi, Ogundeji and Adedowole (2016) stated that purposive sampling is the most effective when studying certain cultural domain where knowledgeable experts are involved. By the nature of their training, public relations professionals are experts in stakeholders engagement and development communication. Their role spans the social, political, economic and cultural life of people in any society; hence the need to explore their perception on the subject matter. Public relations professionals in the Lagos State chapter were selected for this study because Lagos State is the centre of commerce of Nigeria. The professionals are more likely to be dealing with segments of the stakeholders across board because Lagos State, due to its commercial viability, serves as a point of departure, transit and destination of commercial products from within and outside Nigeria. The criteria for individual selection of the professionals are based on their antecedents in terms of their leadership roles, years of work experience and recognition within the Nigeria public relations industry.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

An in-depth interview (IDI) using an interview guide was used to elicit responses from the 10 public relations professionals that were purposively selected. The average age of the respondents is 53.6 years while the average years of experience is 23.3 years. They were 6 males and 4 females. The names of the respondents have been replaced with codes to protect their identity. They are coded as follows: MiNR1, MiNR2, MiNR3, MiNR4, MiNR5, MiNR6, MiNR7, MiNR8, MiNR9 and MiNR10.

In line with the research questions, thematic analysis was used in analysing the data generated from the respondents. In thematic analysis, Anderson (cited in Meribe and Oke, 2017) stated that the researcher groups and distils from the texts a list of common themes in order to give expression to the community of voices across participants.

The purpose of thematic analysis is to identify patterns of meaning across a dataset that provide an answer to the research question being addressed. Patterns are identified through a rigorous process of data familiarisation, data coding, and theme development and revision. Thematic analysis is theoretically-flexible. This means it can be used within different frameworks, to answer quite different types of research

question. It suits questions related to people's experiences, or people's views and perceptions (The University of Auckland, 2018). The data are presented below:

RQ 1: What is the perception of public relations professionals on the Made-in-Nigeria initiative?

Made-in-Nigeria is a laudable project without clear objectives

All the interviewees agreed that the Made-in Nigeria campaign is a laudable project, particularly as the country makes a recovery from the recent economic recession. For example, respondent MiNR1 stated that "it is a laudable initiative that is welcomed especially at this time in our development". Respondent MiNR2 supported this view stating that "it is a good way to go. We all know that we need to have a product base, a real effector and that is one of the ways we can be self-sustainable". Despite these commendations, the respondents believe the objectives of the project remain abstract in the view of the intended stakeholders. For instance, respondent MiNR4 said that the campaign is "good but not sufficiently substantial". Respondent MiNR5 added that "the intentions are noble but, at best, it is a brandishing of a slogan and at worst, it is non-inclusive, without a compelling reason to believe".

The respondents further queried what makes the Made-in-Nigeria project different from previous efforts with the same intentions. For instance, respondent MiNR6 stated that "we have always had one form of made-in-Nigeria campaign. However, what are the objectives of the MiN campaign as we have it now? We have always had campaigns come and go but without clear objectives". Respondent MiNR9 further argued that "I think the campaign is gaining weight now not because its messages resonate with Nigerians but due to recession. Nigerians are simply constrained to look inward".

RQ 2: What is the perception of public relations professionals on the stakeholders' engagement strategies of the Made-in-Nigeria campaign?

Ineffective stakeholders' management

The respondents were of the opinion that the stakeholders' management strategies employed by the government on the MiN project is below par, as required for a project of such magnitude. Their assessments were majorly informed by their past and current experiences on large scale of policy engagement programmes from which they drew conclusions on what should be an ideal stakeholder's engagement strategy. For instance, respondent MiNR3 observed that "a lot needed to be done in terms of the involvement of stakeholders. Bodies like the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) should be engaged to design plans that will better capture the objectives of the campaign". Respondent MiNR4 agreed that "the government needs to do more than it is presently doing. Nigerians need to be persuaded to take ownership and this must be a top-down approach".

RQ3: What is the perception of public relations professionals on the communication strategies of the Made-in-Nigeria campaign?

Ineffective communication strategies

The respondents concluded that the content generation, framing of the narratives and choice of media for the campaign is not adequate. Respondent MiNR5 opined that “the narrative has not been framed well to compel the target audience to buy into the dream of the campaign. The communication objective in simple terms is lost”. Respondent MiNR1 agreed that “I am not aware of any stakeholders initiative adopted for the engagements on this initiative, especially as it concerns communication. There is a communication gap between the government and the people that should benefit from the initiative and that is where public relations comes in”. Respondent MiNR2 further established that “there has not been any communication strategy from the Federal government as far as strategic engagement is concerned”. Respondent MiNR7 reasoned that “you need to get the buy-in of PR professionals. Internationally, that is how campaigns are done to get the buy-in of the stakeholders”. The respondents agreed that non-public relations and communication professionals, who can only apply their peripheral knowledge, have been engaged to deliver the project to the detriment of its objectives. For that reason, respondent MiNR9 counselled that “the communication approaches appear too cosmetic. The promoters need to evolve 360° communication strategy for an effective campaign and not only concentrate the messages on the pages of the newspapers”.

RQ 4: What is the perception of public relations professionals on the major limitations of the Made-in-Nigeria campaign?

Issues with distrust, integrity and source credibility

The respondents agreed that there are issues with source credibility. By source credibility, the respondents averred that the government and its social agents are not to be trusted because they (government functionaries) appear not to be committed to the course of the made-in-Nigeria campaign. For instance, respondent MiNR7 asked that “are the leaders showing good examples to the followers in terms of their commitment towards achieving the objectives of the Made-in-Nigeria campaign?” Respondent MiNR8 agreed that “the initiative is not backed by an effective action that you know including the drivers of the project”. Respondent MiNR2 added “I believe it is not as engaging as it should be. It is almost like a mantra of the government, they are not as committed as they can be”. Respondent MiNR1 summarised it thus “I do not think the government is actually serious. Even though they are, they are not showing that seriousness. The body language of the people is not showing their consent of the Made-in-Nigeria initiative and that reflects a gap in communication”.

The respondents identified some instances which depict some of the credibility issues. Respondent MiNR6 said “the government is not sincere. For instance, the President still travels abroad for treatment”. Respondent MiNR8 also noted that the

“absence of governance integrity and not attending to the needs of the people will definitely weaken the efforts to instil in the people the sense of patriotism...There appears to be so much luxury and enjoyment within the corridor of powers but much hardship to suffer in the public space”.

As a panacea, the respondents advised that the government needs to improve its image to grow its credibility in order to engender the desired support. Respondent MiNR4 advised that “the government needs to do more than it is presently doing...There must be demonstrable and commensurate actions by the government...More will have to be done to persuade Nigerians to believe in this course. There must be absolute trust and confidence from the people regarding the campaign”. Respondent MiNR8 agreed that “if there is a sober approach from the leaders, it will be easier for followers to align with the objectives. Unfortunately, that is not happening...” Respondent MiNR2 concluded that “it is not about mouthing it, but it is about walking the talk”.

Discussion

The overall objective of this study is to explore the perspectives of public relations practitioners on the Made-in-Nigeria campaign of President Muhammadu Buhari. The aim is to examine the reasons for the discordant tunes expressed among some stakeholders on the MiN campaign as established in the literatures reviewed.

Perception of the Made-in-Nigeria campaign

From the study, it may be inferred that public relations professionals perceived the MiN initiative as a laudable project although not novel. The well-worn perception of some of them about the project is because, at some point or the other, successive governments in Nigeria had one form of such programmes, which are usually not followed through. This confirms the assertions of Okoli (2013) that an underlining attribute of most of the re-branding campaign in Nigeria is that they are mostly reactive and propagandist in their approach. They have been more of a face-saving exercise rather than projects meant to better the lots of the people.

Strategic stakeholders’ engagement for the Made-in-Nigeria campaign

The respondents perceive the stakeholders’ engagement of the MiN campaign as below standard. Generally, they believe the government is not doing enough to articulate an effective stakeholders’ engagement, which would have been better driven with strategic public relations. They were unanimous on the fact that the government should have engaged public relations/communication professionals to achieve an all-inclusive campaign. This gap is affecting the ability of Nigerians to take ownership of the campaign. This finding conforms to Ogedengbe’s (2009) argument that re-branding projects in Nigeria have been affected because the proponents used more of propaganda rather than strategic public relations to achieve the objectives. Apparently, the engagement approaches of the government has not captured the description of an effective development communication according to Okunna (2002). Okunna described

effective development communication as creating awareness and providing knowledge about a development project as well as winning the acceptance of the stakeholders in the project.

Communication Strategies of the Made-in-Nigeria campaign

The respondents argue that the communication strategy for the MiN campaign is not adequate. Apparently, among other factors, the inadequacies may have been responsible for the gaps noticed in stakeholders' engagement. Because the government appeared to be treating all stakeholders as the same, they employed a generic approach in their communications. Such approach have limited the 'customised communication' required to address the specificity of the different categories of the stakeholders. A major challenge was established in the manner of recruitment of the agents for the campaign and the credibility of the proponents of the campaign within the government. Most of the agents were found not to be professionals in the area of public relations and development communications.

More so, the proponents of the campaign within the government have been described as not sincere hence, the populace do not take their messages seriously. These findings are consistent with the observation of Keghku (2002) that most development programmes in Nigeria have not been handled by professionals who can assist with developing policies through their professional assessments of the society and weighing the possible effects of various alternatives on those policies. Taking a professional approach to development programmes is important because there can be no satisfactory implementation without first understanding the philosophical leanings of the publics that the programme is designed for.

Limitations of the Made-in-Nigeria campaign

Generally, limitations of the Made-in-Nigeria campaign as they may be deduced from the study are:

1. Lack of confidence in the ability of the government to manage the campaign objectives and tactics which has resulted in the poor management of the people's expectations;
2. Lack of sincerity on the part of the government to lead by example particularly in the areas of improving and patronising Nigeria education and health facilities. In other words, there has been a source credibility issue in the perception and adoption of the messages on the campaign;
3. Engagement of individuals who are not trained in public relations practice and strategic stakeholders management at the helms of strategies and communication for the MiN campaign;
4. Lack of customised stakeholders' engagement and communication approaches; and
5. Perceived low quality of Made-in-Nigeria products and the insatiable quest of Nigerians for foreign products.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that although public relations professionals perceive the MiN campaign as good, they have reservations for the stakeholders' engagement and the communication strategies. The professionals also questioned the sincerity of the government in pursuing the objectives of the campaign and meeting up to the expectations of the populace. To improve the perception of the MiN campaign among the various stakeholder segments, the following are recommended:

1. The government should engage professionals in all segments affected by the campaign to have a holistic approach to achieving the objectives and avoiding politically-motivated appointments of non-professionals.
2. The government should be very specific about the objectives of the campaign due to the various dimensions of the project to avoid conflicting perspectives.
3. The government and its agencies should engage public relations professionals to map out key messages and develop robust communication plans that are specific to the different stakeholder segments, to redeem and better endear the Made-in-Nigeria campaign to Nigerians.
4. The government and its agents should demonstrate sincerity to the course of the MiN campaign and not be seen as paying lip service. This may include their patronage of Nigeria goods and services.
5. The government should demonstrate commitment to the Made-in-Nigeria cause by addressing and effectively communicating policies, which appear to be hindering the smooth execution of the campaign.
6. The government should engage in *development public relations* which is the purposeful, truthful and progressive engagement of stakeholders within a social system by development agents to analyse the trends in developmental challenges, predict the consequences of the challenges on the wellbeing of the populace while collectively agreeing on initiatives to address the challenges.

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Authors

- **Ogunyombo, Oludare Ebenezer** mnipr is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Mass Communication, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, Ogun State. He is an Associate Lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, Caleb University Business School, Lagos State. His areas of interest are in public relations, journalism, media influence and development communication.
- **Azeez, Kunle Yunus** anipr is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Mass Communication, Olabisi Onabanjo Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State. He is a Deputy Manager in the Consumer Bureau Affairs Department of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC). He is a multi-award winning journalist who reported ICT/Telecoms for several newspapers in Nigeria.