Rebranding Nigeria through Strategic Library Services

Amanze O. Unagha
Dept. of Library and Information Science
Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria

Samuel K. Ibenne
Dept. of Library and Information Science
Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria is one of the most populous countries in the world, with a population of more than 140 million people. In the recent past, the image of this country has suffered because of antisocial and criminal activities. Nigeria scored 27 percent in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) in 2008 by Transparency International (Ukpong, 2008). Vietnam has banned Nigerians from entering that country because of undesirable activities of Nigerians there. Drug and human trafficking, militancy, advance fee fraud, known in the local parlance as "419," have rocked Nigeria. There is an unprecedented number of Nigerians sentenced to prison or death outside Nigeria for their involvement in criminal activity, including immigration crimes, robbery, fraud, smuggling, arms running, prostitution, and murder.

Many Nigerians have attributed these worrisome behaviors to socioeconomic and political paralysis, with sluggish economy, hunger, unreliable power supply, corruption in high places, poverty, structural unemployment, a dearth of social amenities, and electoral flaws (Onuoha, 2009, Kilete, 2009, Agbese, 2009).

It is against this backdrop that the idea of rebranding arose. The rebranding campaign was launched in 2009 by the Minister of Information and Communications, Prof. Dora Akunyili, who repositioned Nigeria’s health sector as the Director-General of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). Overseeing the Ministry of Information and Communication at this time is a hard task. One of the greatest challenges facing Akunyili was to provide timely and accurate information on the activities of the government while ensuring that Nigeria's international image reflects reality. Innocent Nigerians have been arrested indiscriminately and some have been denied visas simply because they are Nigerians (Kilete, 2009).

During the launching of the rebranding Nigeria Project, Akunyili stated that:

The rebranding is about our collective interest, our image as a country and as a people in the present and future. Even with the challenges, we do not have any other country we can call our own; we are not by this rebranding justifying whatever may be our failures.

Akunyili is calling on the government, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, civil societies, organized labour, the clergy, the media, traditional institutions and citizens to be part of this rebranding campaign. This paper examines the role of the library in the Rebranding Nigeria Project (RNP).
Collaborative Efforts at the RNP

The military's long presence in national politics has been a factor in damaging Nigeria's image and relationships. The democratic Yar'dua administration has a 7-point agenda of power and energy, food security and agriculture, mass transportation, land reform, good education, work creation and employment, and security, to reposition Nigeria (Oluba, 2009). The RNP has used slogans like “Nigeria: Good People, Great Nation,” which have been broadcast on radio and television. The same message and rebranding logo are being sent to individual mobile phones to make citizens aware of this campaign. The mass media have been called upon to ensure objective reportage of issues, avoiding sensationalism, bearing in mind that outrageous reportage produces only short-term gain.

The theatre and music industries have been urged to produce art that depicts Nigeria's cultural identity, showcases the spirit and sense of brotherhood, culture, hard work, and hospitality, and to compose meaningful songs that can change the hearts of Nigerians (Nwaugochukwu, 2009). Nigerian movie producers have been asked to produce movies that depict Nigerians as trustworthy, loving, hard working, and patriotic. Religious leaders and traditional rulers are participating in the rebranding agenda, and educational institutions are expected to take moral education very seriously and inculcate the spirit of service and excellence in the students. These collaborative efforts aim to relieve the pandemic negativism that afflicts us all, especially those who have reasons to believe that their country and its leaders have cheated them (Agbese, 2009).

Strategic Library Services in the Rebranding Nigeria Project

Libraries of all types have a unique role to play in rebranding the image of Nigeria and Nigerians. These contributions are strategic because beyond the euphoria, these services will form the bedrock for the efforts made now. It is only through such services as shall be discussed, that we can ensure, as Nigeria’s national anthem states, that “the labours of our heroes past shall never be in vain.”

Rebranding Nigeria Project (RNP) Database

Nothing ensures success like well-kept and well-managed information. Libraries are at the forefront of collating, processing, storing, and disseminating information of all kinds. To ensure the sustenance of gains made in the RNP and to create new frontiers of success, libraries must be engaged in the creation of the information base which will support the project. This is in line with Apotiade’s (2002) belief that nothing is more important than broadening our horizons, escaping from ourselves and making discoveries that make the individual a more valuable member of society, and that the only way to do this is through libraries. One particular library that will be very useful in this respect is the National Library of Nigeria, which was established to serve as an instrument for national development through ensuring the availability of a comprehensive collection of recorded material published in, about Nigeria, and by Nigerians, and guaranteeing access to such material. Nwalo’s (2000) position as cited by Apotiade (2002) is that the task of a National Library is to ensure that all who are engaged in political, economic, scientific, educational, social, or cultural activities receive the necessary information to enable them give their best contribution to the community. The National Library ensures that achievements of today’s society are made known to future generations. The National Library should champion the effort to create and maintain a functional and dynamic database for the RNP and encourage the same for all type of libraries, with particular attention to public libraries.

Strategic Enlightenment Efforts

Libraries are agencies of information dissemination for social transformation. As such, libraries should be at the forefront of the crusade to reposition Nigeria’s image. Libraries can disseminate information through such means as lectures, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), Current Awareness Service (CAS), notice boards, posters, displays, seminars, and exhibitions of newspaper and...
magazine cuttings, which may be annotated for better effect. Nwalo (2003) identifies films, conferences, lectures, and mobile library services as standard library services to communities. The success of the RNP lies to a large extent on Nigerian libraries that are close to the populace. Nigerian libraries can deliver the rebranding message to rural Nigerians, who may not have access to print and electronic media.

**Packaging and Repackaging of the New Nigeria: Information Paradigm**

Information is not independent of social practices. It is a basis for successful behaviour (Ojedokun, 2007). To combat negative practices and antisocial behaviours by Nigerians, the role of information must be recognized. In the collaborative effort to rebrand Nigeria, the library occupies an eminent civilizing role. The rebranding effort appears elitist and only understood by the literate population. There is an urgent need to bring the rebranding campaign to the attention of rural Nigerians, including those who are not literate. Through translation services, libraries, especially public libraries, can bring the message in the vernacular to the people. The library may do this by translating messages from print and electronic media and finding avenues to bring them to the attention of the public it serves.

**Web Portals**

The world is increasingly globalized, and the Internet has assumed a powerful and effective role in global information dissemination. Web portals offer a means of global information conveyance. Libraries can disseminate information on the rebranding Nigeria campaign locally and internationally through their Web portals, which will be open to millions of readers across the globe. This will serve as access point to the RNP for Nigerians in other countries.

**Conclusion**

The RNP is a high-priority project for the government of Nigeria. Libraries can make a significant contribution to this project. This paper has discussed those strategic library services that can effectively communicate about the RNP and sustain its progress.

**References**


