

Credocast

A publication of Credo Advisory

Vol. 3 Issue 3. August 2019



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About Credo Advisory

Credo Advisory is a strategic communications firm that specializes in designing and implementing strategic, operational and tactical communications initiatives. We provide a full suite of communications support to our clients, which include public communications and advocacy, government relations, community engagement, media relations, crisis communications, digital communications and capacity building.

Our mission is to develop bespoke communications products, activities and campaigns based on knowledge, research and industry insights. With our ability to communicate effectively with diverse audiences and stakeholder groups, Credo's mission is to provide impactful strategic communications advisory from inception to implementation. At Credo, we are committed to improving the way societies communicate.

www.creadoconsulting.com



“Stories are powerful, however, when it is consistently repeated, it assumes the status of truth.”

Nigeria's Global Reputation

In a world saturated with information, stories can cut through the information overload and cyber noise, however, the danger of this is “when a story is consistently repeated, it assumes the status of truth.”¹

Nigerian novelist, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, called this “the danger of a single-story.” “Show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over, and that is what they become.”² This expressly explains the global image of Nigeria where certain narratives have narrowed people’s perception about Nigeria’s polity, governance and the country in general.

A recent profile conducted on “10 countries with the highest number of scammers”, placed Nigeria at the top of the list.³ It was tied to a popular e-mail scam of elaborate messages from would-be prestigious Nigerians requesting assistance with transferring huge sums of monies or inheritances out of Nigeria. Their modus operandi was to wire transfer said funds through the foreign accounts of unsuspecting victims. A report by Megan Leonhardt of CNBC, referred to this type of scam as the “Nigerian Prince” email scam and is probably one of the longest running internet frauds.⁴

These sort of scams in Nigeria are popularly called “419” (the number “419” refers to the section of the Nigerian Criminal Code dealing with fraud, the charges and penalties for offenders) or “Yahoo fraud.”⁵

In May 2016, former British Prime Minister, David Cameron ahead of an anti-corruption summit organized by the UK Government in London, described Nigeria as “fantastically corrupt.” He stated that “we have got the leaders of some fantastically corrupt countries coming to Britain... Nigeria and Afghanistan, possibly the two most corrupt countries in the world.”⁶

JUSSIE SMOLLETT CASE : NIGERIAN BROTHERS APOLOGIZE FOR THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THE ATTACK

¹ TEDGlobal (2009) The Danger of a Single Story. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Available at: https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

² TEDGlobal (2009) The Danger of a Single Story. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Available at: https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

³ Adriana John. 10 Countries with the highest number of scammers. Available at: <https://www.wonderslist.com/countries-highest-number-scammers/>

⁴ Megan Leonhardt (2019) Nigerian prince' email scams still rake in over \$700,000 a year—here's how to protect yourself, CNBC. Available at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/04/18/nigerian-prince-scams-still-rake-in-over-700000-dollars-a-year.html>

⁵ Part 6 Offences relating to property and contracts. Available at: <http://www.nigeria-law.org/Criminal%20Code%20Act-Part%20VI%20to%20the%20end.htm>

⁶ Akintayo Eribake (2016) Nigeria is “fantastically corrupt” - UK's Prime Minister, David Cameron. Available at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/05/nigeria-is-fantastically-corrupt-uks-prime-minister-david-cameron/>



Photo Credit: Fox News

“Stereotypes are usually over generalized beliefs about a category of people, place or convictions.”

In March 2019, when news about a homophobic and racially motivated assault on actor Jussie Smollett made rounds in the international press, focus yet again was on two persons of interest identified during the investigation. The headlines read, “Jussie Smollett attack: Two Nigerian men arrested over attack on Empire actor released without charge.”⁷ The global media reports went agog, focusing on the Nigerian identity of Smollett’s would-be attackers. They were no longer American born citizens, but Nigerians.

“Nothing Works in Nigeria”

These single stories of poor leadership, lack of governance, fraud, corruption, crime, broken systems, insecurity and poverty about Nigerians create stereotypes. Stereotypes are usually over generalized beliefs about a category of people, place or convictions.

Over time, these have been repeated consistently both locally and internationally and has become the “single-story” of Nigeria.

As Chimamanda Adichie stated; *“I’ve always felt that it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all the stories of that place and that person. The consequence of the single-story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar...”*⁸

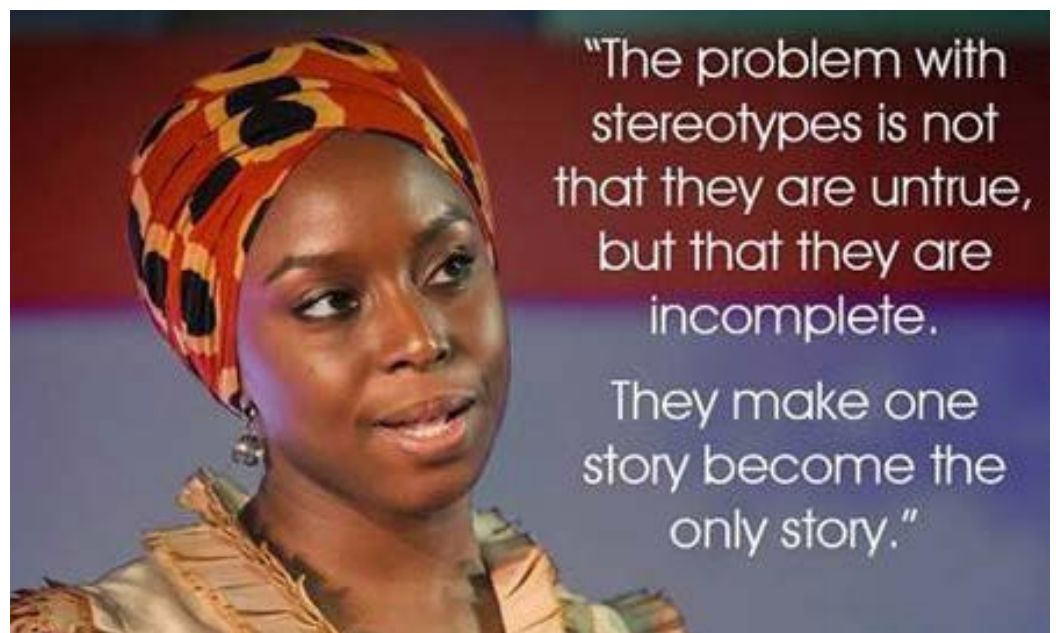


Photo Credit: TEDGlobal 2009

⁷ Don Babwin (2019) Jussie Smollett attack, Two Nigerian men arrested over attack on Empire actor released without charge. Independent. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/jussie-smollett-attack-nigerian-brothers-arrest-chicago-empire-maga-noose-a8782331.html>

⁸ TEDGlobal (2009) The Danger of a Single Story. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Available at: https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

⁹ TEDGlobal (2009) The Danger of a Single Story. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Available at: https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

Changing Stereotypes

Goal of communications in changing the narrative

Nigeria needs to play a proactive role in changing its “single-story” narrative. Celebrated Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe calls this “the balance of stories.” How then can the stereotypes and the single-story narrative be changed?

“ It is just as important to talk about the creativity and innovations happening in Nigeria as much as it is important to talk about the problems of the country. ”

Stories That Should Matter



Focus on what needs to be articulated. It is just as important to talk about the creativity and innovations happening in Nigeria as much as it is important to talk about the problems of the country.

What if the world knew that Nigeria has an “Establishment Act” that mandates the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to combat financial and economic crimes, prevent, investigate, prosecute and penalize economic and financial crimes and also to enforce the provisions of other laws and regulations relating to economic and financial crimes?

What if the world knew of the ongoing transformation in the off-grid power sector by the Federal Government of Nigeria with the goal of providing access to clean, affordable and reliable electricity supply to Nigerians to sustain economic growth?¹⁰

What if the world knew of Aba, the commercial center of Abia State, Nigeria with industrious Nigerians manufacturing made-in-Nigeria handcrafts, bags, furniture, textiles, clothing and cosmetics from one of the largest markets in West Africa?¹¹

What if the world knew of Dike Chukwumerije, Titilope Sonuga and Wanna Udobang, three of the many Nigerian spoken word poets who weave stories of individual experiences across the world as well as of the ‘authentic’ Nigerian experience?

¹⁰ Africa Development Bank Group. Nigeria Economic and Power Sector Reform Program (EPSERP) Appraisal Report. Available at: <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/west-africa/nigeria>

¹¹ Aba is Manufacturing, Business Centre of Nigeria, says Osinbajo. Available at: <http://www.abiastate.gov.ng/news/aba-is-manufacturing-business-centre-of-nigeria-says-osinbajo/>

“The responsibility of changing a country’s single-story narrative should be a collective effort of both the private sector and government.”

What if the world knew of Ozoz Sokoh, the “Kitchen Butterfly”, who makes authentic Nigerian concept dishes with the look and feel of international cuisine, fusing science and natural herbs to produce nostalgic Nigerian recipes like masa sliders, akara brick toast, jollof rice, etc.?¹²

What if the world knew about Kajuru castle in Kaduna State Nigeria, a luxury villa built between 1981 and 1989, located about 45 kms from Kaduna on a mountain top in Kajuru village? It’s a popular vacation and honeymoon getaway with local tours to showcase the beauty and culture of Nigeria and its people.¹³

What if the world knew of Tara Durotoye, the dynamic Nigerian top beauty entrepreneur who is the founder and CEO of the prestigious make-up brand, House of Tara International and one of the pioneers of bridal makeup, who has risen to a respected height in the cosmetics industry?¹⁴

What if the world knew of Wizkid, Tiwa Savage and Burna Boy, Nigerian artists featured on Beyoncé’s Lion King soundtrack for the movie remake of the Lion King? What if the world knew about the fusion of afrobeat and pop-culture and the many diverse languages in Nigeria’s mainstream music? What if the world knew of the many upcoming Nigerian music artistes signed to international music labels gradually placing Nigerian music on the global world charts?

What if the world knew of Ugo Monye, Mai Atafo, Deola Sagoe, TopeFNR, Nigerian fashion designers taking Nigerian fashion to the global stage?

Promoting ‘Brand Nigeria’



Photo Credit: www.artxlagos.com

The responsibility of changing a country’s single-story narrative should be a collective effort of both the private sector and government; in the case of Nigeria, its Federal Government and private sector institutions. As a country with multiple ethnicities, rich cultural heritage, over 520 languages and approximately 200 million inhabitants, it is important both public and private sectors create and promote positive narratives and position a global “Brand Nigeria” to the world.

How then can communications be leveraged in changing these single-story narratives about Nigeria?

¹² Kitchen Butterfly. Available at: <https://www.kitchenbutterfly.com/>

¹³ Kajuru Castle. Available at: <https://hotels.ng/hotel/1002301-kajuru-castle-kaduna>

¹⁴ Biography and Business Journey of Tara Fela-Durotoye. Available at: <https://www.entrepreneurs.ng/tara-fela-durotoye/>

“Public and private sector collaboration produces better and more sustainable social and economic impact.”

Public & Private Sector Collaboration

Public and private sector collaboration produces better and more sustainable social and economic impact. Services and products that promote a collective brand identity and culture should be encouraged and promoted by relevant government agencies and departments, in collaboration with private sector entities. After all, it is the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Information & Culture, according to their mandate, to focus on the “management of the image, reputation and the promotion of the culture of the people and Government of Nigeria through a dynamic public information system that facilitates access by the citizens and the global community to credible and timely information about our nation.”¹⁵

Private sector institutions such as financial service institutions, currently organize and sponsor fashion shows, food and drinks festivals/fairs and art exhibitions. For example, the GTBank Food & Drink fair is an annual food exhibition featuring local Nigerian chefs and cuisines from fast foods to local delicacies. Nigeria’s food is a major identity and cultural element, one that should be promoted on a global platform. The Federal Ministry of Information & Culture should utilize platforms such as these to collaborate with private sector institutions especially on initiatives that promote a collective and positive cultural identity to the world.



Photo Credit: www.foodanddrink.gtbank.com

In addition to this, fashion shows like the ‘Lagos Fashion Week’ “GTBank Fashion Week” “Africa Fashion Week” should gain as much popularity as that of the celebrated New York Fashion week. The New York fashion week is broadcast globally and features both local and international designers from all over the world. The visibility and publicity generated from these events serve as platforms to set global trends, a great opportunity to reinforce evolving cultural fashion trends as well as to market fashion lines to target consumers.

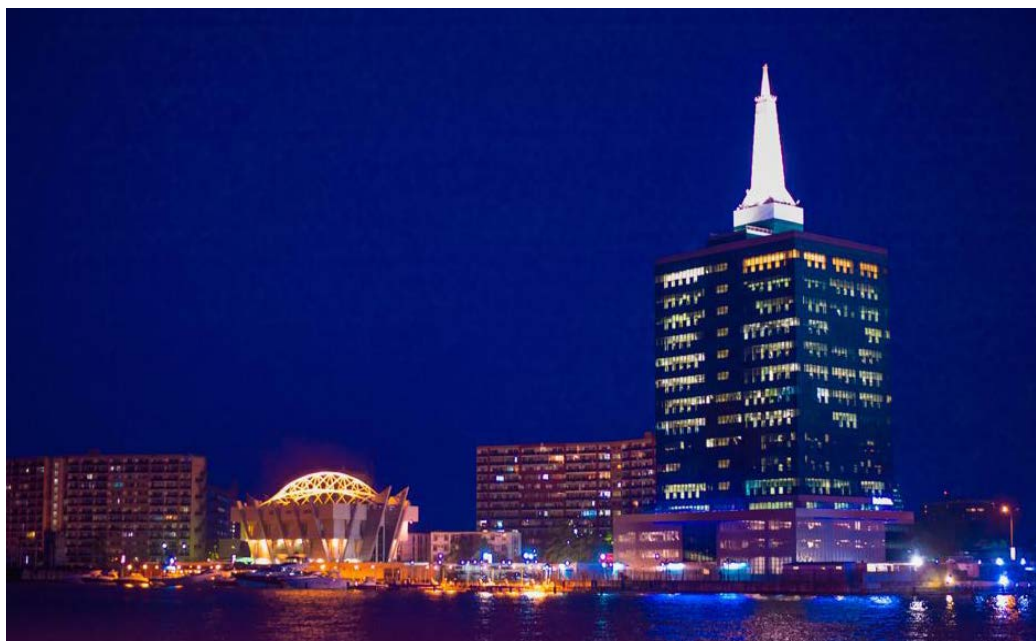
Events such as the Lagos Fashion Week, if properly leveraged by both private organizations, sponsors and relevant government ministries (Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc.) can foster a Nigerian fashion movement, dynamic enough to set-off global fashion trends with Nigerian cultural influences in collaboration with social media influencers and national and international media.

¹⁵Mission of the Federal Ministry of Information & Culture. Available at: <https://fmic.gov.ng/about-us/>

“The Ministry of Information and Culture’s mission is to establish and maintain a robust information dissemination mechanism that promotes our tourism potentials and enhances Nigeria’s cultural values.”

The Federal Ministry of Information and Culture in collaboration with the private sector and other MDAs has a significant role to play in promoting the culture, lifestyle and image of Nigeria on a global scale. Its activities, partnership and support of the private sector initiatives can strategically counter the prevalent negative brand plaguing Nigeria.

Tourism



Victoria Island, Lagos

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. However, Nigeria still isn’t maximizing the benefits of this trend due to challenges ranging from changing global perception of under-development to risks of insecurity.

While Nigeria has a lot of tourist attractions, one of its biggest problems is visibility. The Federal Government, in partnership with private hospitality and tourism businesses, needs to encourage the publicity of Nigeria’s cultural events and landscapes as well as create the enabling environment for tourism.

The Ministry of Information and Culture’s mission is to establish and maintain a robust information dissemination mechanism that promotes our tourism potentials and enhances Nigeria’s cultural values.¹⁶

Much of the new developments in Nigerian arts, tourism, film and music can be marketed beyond the local media by involving international media, bloggers, influencers and travel enthusiasts to promote and showcase Nigeria to the world.

Government Transparency and Accountability

To rebuild the Nigerian global image, government transparency and accountability is key. The government must take decisive steps to mitigate its corruption persona by implementing the laws that currently exist in curbing corruption. For Government to be deemed as credible, it must be intentional in openness and accountability but importantly, implementing strong governance frameworks across all branches of government. This is at the heart of how citizens hold their public officials accountable. With a steady stream of public communications and evidence of corruption mitigation, the needle will begin to move towards a more positive Brand Nigeria; however, a credible government is integral.

¹⁶ Biography and Business Journey of Tara Fela-Durotoye. Available at: <https://www.entrepreneurs.ng/tara-fela-durotoye/>

“If Nigeria does not promote its economic, technological and cultural attractions, the global media would keep focusing on the single stories of fraud, crime and corruption; further re-enforcing the negative stereotypes.”

Credo Advisory developed a “Gender Mainstreaming” program for a client to counter the perception that Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) are technical disciplines less suited for women; specifically in industries like the power sector. To mitigate this, at every opportunity, Credo developed counter messaging that promoted the roles and achievements of women professionals. Amplifying their successes as project managers, site engineers, financial analysts, developers and much more, helps create a new narrative about gender inclusion in a historically male oriented sector.

For a particular client milestone, Credo developed strategic messaging and creatives to promote female STEM students who completed technical and practical training on the installation and maintenance of solar hybrid power plants across Nigeria. These stories were shared with influencers, local and international media and boosted on a multitude of social media platforms. Narratives such as these help alter the single-story of gender bias.

Conclusion

The difference in Nigeria’s single-story narrative is in the cultural and economic image projected to the world. Ghana currently enjoys a strong global brand centered on its positive economic and cultural benefits as an emerging African brand thanks to marketing campaigns centered on Ghana as a cultural and investment destination.

If Nigeria does not promote its economic, technological and cultural attractions, the global media would keep focusing on the single stories of fraud, crime and corruption; further re-enforcing the negative stereotypes.

Nigeria must tell its story in its wholeness; stories of its rich cultural heritage, stories of its technological innovations, stories of its writers, artists, business titans, chefs, musicians, fashion designers, heritage, history, food and many more success stories achieved within and outside the country. Only then can it counter its negative reputation with one of being industrious, resilient, innovative and creative.

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Hélène’s Food Company
www.thechefemeka.com*