



# Public relations and nation branding in Nigeria: an Examination of image laundarying narratives and foreign lobbying (1999 - 2026)

Sunday Eze Ikeokwu

Ph.D. Student in Public Relations, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Choba, River State, Nigeria.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.68050/JAMS.2026.259>

Received: 31 Aug 2026; Accepted: 01 Sept 2026; Published: 09 September 2026

## ABSTRACT

The study interrogates public relations and nation branding in Nigeria between 1999 and 2026, focusing on the contested concept of image laundering and the role of foreign lobbying. Drawing on a sequential mixed-methods design (QUAN1 → qual → QUAN2), and analyses 120 government-sponsored campaign advertisements. Despite 27 years of uninterrupted civilian rule, Nigeria's international image and domestic legitimacy remain weak, with SBM Intelligence showing nearly 80% believe country headed in wrong direction as of 2026 (Reuters, 2026). The researcher examines why successive public relations driven campaigns such as Heart of Africa (2004) \$6m, Good People Great Nation (2009) \$14m, Change Begins With Me (2016) \$5m, Renewed Hope (2023) \$12m — failed to translate procedural survival into the sustainability, success substantive legitimacy or failure, and evaluates newest innovation of the alleged nine million USD foreign lobbying contract through the office of national security adviser Nuhu Ribadu via USA lobbying firm, Aster legal to Washington based DCI Group on 17<sup>th</sup> Dec., 2025 to enable DOJ FARA filing on 18<sup>th</sup> Dec., 2025 on a monthly reframe of seven hundred and fifty USD to change the argued narrative of Christian genocide in the country after United States government redesignated Nigeria as country of particular concern on November 2025.

Findings shows that 71% adverts brand promotion dominant, 89% vague dividend, banks 32% telcos 22% dominate, government specific project evidence improved 0% Wave2 to 40% Wave4, governance rated lowest 2.1/5 culture highest 4.3/5, police respect experience strongly correlates with overall nation brand  $r=.62$   $p=.01$   $R^2=.384$ . DCI contract \$9m exceeds all previous branding budgets, structured via private law firm intermediary rather than transparent procurement, described by firm as experts at re-framing external narratives. This approach was condemned by one of the leading opposition party African Democratic Congress (ADC) as scandalous and indefensible misplaced priorities. The study proposes Authentic Democratic Branding Model, indicating experience at touchpoints at 60%, consistent narrative at 20%, citizen co-creation at 20% and transparent external communication not lobbying. The study argues based on other studies by established scholars that Nigeria inverted sequencing a narrative and foreign lobbying first, an experience that indicates to propaganda gap. therefore, Fan (2010) and Nye (2004) argues that credibility deficit is where hard power is threaten and poor touchpoints destroys soft power.

**Keywords:** Public Relations, Nation Branding, NIPR, FARA, DCI Group, Foreign Lobbying, Democracy Day Advertising, Governance Touchpoints, Renewed Hope,

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background

Public relations(PR) is the strategic management of communication aimed at building mutual understanding



(for the purpose of this study), between the state and the citizens. When the actor is the state or a country. This becomes nation's communication channel, branding, management of competitive nation's identity (Anholt, 2007). Therefore, the researcher examines public relations and nation branding in Nigeria through shift from slogans to touchpoints and foreign lobbying. The fourth republic from 29<sup>th</sup> May 1999 till date (2026) is the longest civilian rule. Accordingly, it has survived seven elections alternation, yet eighty percent of public opinion says it's in the wrong direction (Reuters, 2026). Another Afrobarometer argued that satisfaction is 84% between the year 2000 to 23% in the year 2022. BusinessDay (2025) argues that democracy thrives when institutions are strong and not untouchable strongmen such as president, governors, political leaders and elites using police, judiciary as intimidation tools. Within these uninterrupted years of civil rule, Nigeria has used different slogan waves such as Heart of Africa (2004), Good People Great Nation (2009), Change Begins With Me (2016), Renewed Hope (2023) (Ani, 2014; Agali & Abimbola, 2025). Commercial brands leverage Democracy Day to promote themselves while democratic quality declines (Ayo-Obiremi et al., 2022). The Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) under the leadership of Dr. Ike Neliaku outlined agenda reposition global image through Nigeria reputation summit, youth fireside chat, hosting world public relations forum with 126 countries in attendance, (Voice of Nigeria, 2025). The current administration launched Renewed Hope which they use to promote their projects such as Lagos-Calabar coastal road, Sokoto and Badagry, 6,000MW plants (Onanuga, 2025). He argues that Nigeria has now become attractive brand that is sellable global market.

However, the new development currently, 2025-2026 is a diverted attention in foreign lobbying as public relations and image laundry. Beyond domestic tour, federal government pursued external image laundering through United States lobbying firms. DOJ FARA filing Dec 18, 2025 shows office of national security adviser Nuhu Ribadu via Aster Legal Kaduna executed contract Dec 17, 2025 with DCI Group Washington for 4.5m USD within the initial six months plus \$4.5m USD second six months total \$9m USD, spread monthly 750USD, which is about ₦12.8bn (as at the time of the contract signing) to nurture ties with president Trump administration and counter alleged misinformation from Christian evangelical groups and communicate efforts to protect Christians (Reuters, 2025; BusinessDay, 2025). DCI describes itself seasoned political operatives' experts at re-framing external narratives delivering right message to right audience.

The context is that President Donald Trump of USA redesignated Nigeria as country of particular concern on November 2025, threatening military action if the Tinubu lead government of Nigeria failed to crack down the killing of Christians and he followed it up with Christmas day launching airstrike targeting Islamist militants. Nigerian government denies systematic persecution of Christians, stating violent groups attack both Muslim and Christian civilians. The US lobby firm confirmed filing that was structured through a private law firm intermediary, was not transparently structured through diplomatic channel or foreign ministry and was not parliamentary debated. This 9M USD exceeds Goodworks International 1.5m USD first year during Obasanjo's era via Andrew Young ex-UN ambassador (Corpwatch, 2003) and all previous branding budgets. The Opposition parties NDC and ADC described it as scandalous indefensible and no government in the history of Africa have ever committed such obscene sum to short-term lobbying exercise, said the PR is a misplaced priorities and moral blindness (BusinessDay, 2025). The former vice president of Nigeria Abubakar Atiku and 2027 presidential candidate of ADC also hired 1.2m USD lobbying Von Batten-Montague-York March 2026 via the cable 5<sup>th</sup> April 2026 FARA filing. This development makes the Nigerian public relations practice and body's (NIPR) examination very urgent. Is paying seven hundred fifty thousand USD monthly to reframe narrative in Washington DC priority? While there is NNIPR body, illegal police checkpoints, airport extortion and lack of power supply remain brand killers' professional reputation management crisis and propaganda strives, Fan (2010)?

#### **Four Public Relations Problems.**

First sequencing error Anholt (2007) places must first become better not just claim better Nigeria inverted narrative first experience last. SERVICOM promised timely service electricity 4h Good People demanded citizen virtue governors unaudited security votes Change demanded discipline government disobeyed court orders Twitter ban \$1.2bn loss. Now DCI contract exemplifies inversion — paying to tell Washington Christians protected while citizens experience insecurity daily. Secondly, commercialization and foreignization



of legitimacy. Banks 32% telcos 22% together 54% dominate democracy day adverts federal govt 18%. Now foreign lobbyist \$9m dominates external PR budget. Rentier state theory (Beblawi & Luciani, 1987) explains external rents buy external legitimacy. Focus 71% brand promo dividend 89% vague citizen 64% absent. PR uses democracy to sell products and now foreign firms to sell image rather than fixing governance. The third institutional gap elite's summits vs lived experience. NIPR WPRF 126 countries laudable professionalization but interview Fellow: We spend millions on summits but one video police slapping youth at checkpoint destroys everything on TikTok. Survey police respect 2.42 64% disagree respected airport proud 2.35 electricity 2.18 benefited 2.01 11% agree governance 2.1 lowest culture 4.3 highest police respect correlates  $r=.62$   $R^2=.384$  38.4% variance. Not quantified before. Fourthly, transparency deficit in foreign PR. FARA requires registration but Nigerian public not informed via FAAC or National Assembly debate. Structure via Aster Legal private firm intermediary rather than Ministry Justice raises procurement questions CADVOCATE (2025). Value-for-money: did \$9m change CPC designation? Did it improve FDI? \$750k monthly could fund 1000 body cams or CCTV at MMA.

## Statement of Problem

Problem therefore, despite four waves and new innovations tour and WPRF, public relations practice subtitled branding, remains just a slogan and foreign lobbying becomes first touch point in the latest leading propaganda of the federal government of Nigeria. Hence this study examines, interrogates, investigates and as well study the gap between lobbying, public relations and image laundry.

## Research Aim

To examine public relations and nation branding in fourth republic (1999 -2026) through shift slogans to touchpoints and foreign lobbying, using Democracy Day advertising as corpus, evaluating Renewed Hope Tour and 9mUSD, DCI Group contract and NIPR WPRF 2026, to propose authentic democratic branding model that prioritizes good governance, dividence of democracy and experience over external reframing.

## Research Objectives

1. Trace evolution PR and nation branding campaigns 1999-2026 four waves plus foreign lobbying history GoodWorks 1.5m USD to DCI 9m USD.
2. Evaluate role state and non-state PR actors including NIPR, agencies, govts, corporate brands, and foreign lobbyists DCI Group under FARA.
3. Assess branding-governance gap between promises in adverts and FARA filings and lived experiences at touchpoints.
4. Examine effectiveness recent innovations Tour and WPRF 2026 and DCI contract 9mUSD return on investment.
5. Propose evidence-based authentic democratic branding model for rentier democracies that caps foreign lobbying and mandates touchpoint fixing first.

## Research Questions

Main RQ: To what extent has PR-driven nation branding including foreign lobbying contributed to democratic legitimacy and what authentic model improves it?

RQ1 How branded 1999-2026? Slogans visuals narratives distribution advertisers Democracy Day? How messaging shifted heart to Renewed Hope to DCI reframing narrative?

RQ2 Why failed to improve legitimacy? Relationship governance indicators brand perception? Why 71% brand promo? Does \$9m foreign lobbying address root cause or symptom?

RQ3 Role PR institutions particularly NIPR in repositioning global image? Does hosting WPRF 126 countries and University PR represent professionalization or re-packaging? How differentiate propaganda from reputation management when paying \$750k monthly to reframe?



RQ4 How leverage touchpoints for authentic branding? Extent police airports power correlate brand rating  $r=.62$ ? What framework ensures citizen co-creation and transparent external communication not secret lobbying via intermediary?

### Hypotheses

H1 Positive correlation touchpoints experience police respect and overall brand perception  $r=.62$   $R^2=.384$ .

H2 Government adverts under Renewed Hope more likely provide specific project evidence 40% vs previous 0% but DCI filing provides no specific domestic touchpoint evidence.

H3 Banks telcos more likely brand-promo-dominant than federal govt  $\chi^2=18.34$   $p<.001$ .

H4 Believability lower among citizens who have not benefited from advertised project and among those aware of \$9m lobbying spend.

H5 Foreign lobbying spend negatively correlates with perceived transparency of PR practice.

### Significance

Theoretical: Applies Anholt to durable procedural democracy with substantive deficit plus foreign lobbying. Extends Nye soft power with credibility deficit when hard power threat and FARA lobbying coexist. Applies Fan ethical critique branding may be unethical when masks failures, 9m USD case study. Extends rentier state to explain external legitimacy purchase. Methodological: Pioneers Democracy Day adverts corpus plus FARA documents analysis mixed methods. Quantifies touchpoint effect extends Ekwonna 2021. Practical. For NIPR informs reputation audit recommending evaluation 9m USD ROI did CPC change? . For state house recommends tour include unannounced airport 2am checkpoints. For Ministry of Justice, recommends publish all FARA contracts quarterly FOIA cap foreign lobbying 20% of domestic touchpoint budget.

### Scope and Study Period

The study covers Nigeria's Fourth Republic from 29 May 1999 to 31 December 2026. Delimited Fourth Republic 1999-2027 English dailies Punch Vanguard Daily Trust federal focus plus FARA DOJ filings Dec 2025 analysis. Online survey skews educated youth.

### Operational Definition of Key Terms

All the operational definition are defined here for the purpose of this study as follows: -

1. Image Laundering Narratives: For this is defined as public claims and media frames alleging that state actors use PR, nation branding campaigns, and foreign lobbying to obscure negative international perceptions, particularly regarding religious freedom. Used as an analytical lens, not a legal finding.
2. Nation Branding: Following Anholt (2007), deliberate efforts to manage international reputation.
3. Foreign Lobbying: Engagement of U.S. FARA-registrable firms to influence U.S. policymakers and public opinion.
4. Public Relations: Management communication mutual understanding.
5. Nation Branding: Competitive identity Anholt six dimensions.
6. Democratic Legitimacy: Belief institutions rightful beyond elections.
7. Governance Touchpoints: Moment's citizen interacts with state.
8. Branding-Governance Gap: Discrepancy promise vs experience.
9. Democracy Day Advertising Economy: Adverts 29 May/12 June mentioning democracy.
10. Renewed Hope Tour: Media tour organised by surpoters of President Tinubu, Onanuga 2025 verification.
11. DCI Group Contract: \$9m FARA filing Dec 18, 2025, via Aster Legal on behalf NSA Nuhu Ribadu monthly \$750k to reframe Christian protection narrative.



12. FARA: Foreign Agents Registration Act US requires registration lobbying on behalf foreign entities public filings DOJ.
13. Foreign Image Laundering: Paying foreign lobbyists to reframe external narratives while domestic touchpoints remain poor analogous to money laundering.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE

#### Theories

Anholt Competitive Identity (2007): Nation Brands Index six dimensions Exports Governance Culture People Tourism Investment. Warning places must first become better not just claim better (p.5). Sequencing error central. Fan (2010) branding may be unethical when masks failures — DCI \$9m case. Adapted domestic legitimacy Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015. Nigeria inverted narrative first experience last now external reframing first domestic fixing last. Nye Soft Power (2004): Hard coercion vs soft attraction via culture values legitimate policy. Public diplomacy requires credibility consistency listening. Nigeria historically reactive crisis-driven (Ekwonna, 2021). Credibility destroyed when hard power threat exists Trump CPC designation military threat Christmas airstrike plus paying \$750k monthly to say Christians protected while insecurity persists. Van Ham (2008) social power domestic cohesion needed before external projection. DCI contract illustrates credibility deficit.

Dahl Procedural vs Diamond Substantive: Dahl Polyarchy participation contestation Nigeria satisfies procedural minimalism Diamond distinguishes electoral vs liberal democracy rule of law accountability Nigeria hollow democracy BusinessDay 2025 institutional subservience governors' untouchable strongmen police tool intimidation judiciary subservient security votes unaudited.

Rentier State (Beblawi & Luciani, 1987): Oil rents 80% forex weaken accountability Ross 2001 branding becomes external legitimacy tool. GoodWorks \$1.5m Obasanjo era to DCI \$9m 2025 shows rentier external legitimacy purchase escalating. Explains banks/telcos dominate adverts and foreign lobbyists dominate external PR — corporations and government benefiting oil rents use state symbolism and foreign firms to maintain market/access. Propaganda vs PR Ethics (Fan, 2010; Grunig & Hunt): Grunig two-way symmetrical vs press agency. Fan argues nation branding unethical when used to mask failures. \$9m DCI experts at re-framing external narratives without fixing touchpoints falls under press agency/propaganda not symmetrical. FARA transparency requirement conflicts with Nigerian opacity via private intermediary Aster Legal. FARA and Foreign Lobbying Theory: Under FARA individuals lobbying on behalf foreign entities register Justice Department semi-annual reports public information. African governments latecomers 1980s Angolan govt and rebels spent millions Washington (Corpwatch, 2003). GoodWorks contract \$500k initial \$60k monthly not to exceed \$1.5m first year to reverse negative image via Andrew Young ex-UN ambassador. Current \$9m DCI represents six-fold increase inflation-adjusted. Literature on foreign lobbying ROI low when domestic governance poor (Kotler & Gertner, 2002).

#### Empirical Review

Ekwonna (2021): Governance public diplomacy FDI interviews strong correlation negative image crimes of few 419 financial crimes drugs trafficking terrorism corruption lack transparency uneven wealth failed leadership insecurity. Did not include foreign lobbying cost. Ani (2014): Mass media rebranding failed policy media agenda-setting central but politicians sought legitimacy via media without reforming themselves inability leadership to rebrand themselves corruption insecurity education collapse personality dependence collapsed when Akunyili left Senate. Predicts DCI failure — leadership unwilling to rebrand themselves at touchpoints paying foreign firm to rebrand externally. Ayo-Obiremi et al. (2022): Punch Vanguard Daily Trust Democracy Day banks telecoms dominate celebratory messages persist while Freedom House declines concluded democracy declining while celebration continues used to promote brands (p.205). Limited one year no dividend coding no foreign lobbying.



Agali & Abimbola (2025): Handbook 55 contributors rebranding became elite archival exercise ends 2023. Contemporary FARA Evidence: Reuters (2025) Nigeria hires US lobbyists to nurture Trump ties communicate Christian protection efforts DCI Group \$4.5m initial six months similar amount subsequent six months Dec 18 filing DOJ. BusinessDay (2025) \$9m total ₦12.8bn ADC scandalous indefensible no government Africa committed obscene sum short-term PR misplaced priorities moral blindness. CADVOCATE (2025) alleged \$9m undertones corruption procurement via intermediary. Corpwatch (2003) GoodWorks International \$1.5m year. TheCable via Medium (2026) Atiku \$1.2m Von Batten-Montague-York March 2026 shows bipartisan lobbying arms race. Onanuga (2025) Tour shift slogan to verification. Voice of Nigeria (2025) NIPR agenda WPRF 126 countries University PR. Reuters (2026) 80% wrong direction. Democratic Dividends: Daily Trust (2025) Olubadan Fourth Republic failed dividends. BusinessDay (2025) institutional subservience. Afrobarometer 84% 2000 to 23% 2022.

## **Image Laundering**

Academically and for the purpose of this study, image laundering is conceptualized, following Browning (2023) and Kunczik (2016), as the strategic use of public relations, nation branding campaigns, and third-party advocacy to deflect negative international framing. The term is used as an analytical construct to interrogate, investigate and examine allegations in public discourse, and not as a legal determination of wrongdoing.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Branding-Governance-Foreign Lobbying Gap Model Authentic Democratic Brand = (Governance Experience 60%) + (Consistent Narrative 20%) + (Citizen Co-creation 15%) + (Transparent External Communication 5% not lobbying). When narrative + foreign lobbying > experience = legitimacy declines. DCI contract \$9m 100% narrative 0% experience + secrecy via intermediary destroys transparency 5%. Hypothesis police respect explains 38% variance, foreign lobbying awareness explains additional 10% negative variance believability.

## **Gaps**

No longitudinal 1999-2026 including \$9m FARA, no advert of empirical economy growth, no evaluation Tour WPRF DCI ROI, no quantification touchpoint, no model rentier democracies with foreign lobbying. Hence this study is to fill gaps.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY WITH FARA ANALYSIS**

#### **Philosophy, Pragmatist mixed-methods.**

This explains the design adopted in this study as a three-phase sequential mixed methods design QUAN1 to qual to QUAN2 (Creswell). QUAN1 is content analysis of 120 ads, qual is 18 interviews to explain QUAN1 patterns, QUAN2 is survey of 400 respondents to test perceptions. The integration points specified that population, sampling frame, with the verified data from Punch, Daily Trust, ThisDay, NYT and Washington Post archives. Stratified by administration 30 per administration and systematic random sampling, final N=120. Variables include image laundering frame present or absent, lobby attribution and religious freedom rebuttal. Nation branding frame, inter-coder reliability Cohen kappa 0.83 on 20 percent overlap. While purposive plus snowball, inclusion criteria of five years experience, direct involvement, saturation at 16 plus 2 confirmation, thematic analysis Braun and Clarke 6 steps using NVivo 14. Adapted from Rawlins Transparent Communication Scale and Buhmann Ingenhoff Nation Brand Image scale, 5-point Likert, pilot n=30, Cronbach alpha 0.86, S-CVI 0.90, analysis SPSS 28, CFA, SEM.

#### **Research Design**

The study adopted a sequential three-phase mixed-methods design: QUAN1 → qual → QUAN2.



Phase 1 QUAN1 , Content Analysis: N=120 government-sponsored nation branding advertisements (1999-2026). Stratified sampling by administration: Obasanjo (30), Yar'Adua/Jonathan (30), Buhari (30), Tinubu (30). Source: Punch, Daily Trust, ThisDay, New York Times, Washington Post archives. Coding for presence of (a) Image Laundering counter-frames, (b) Religious freedom rebuttal, (c) Lobby attribution.

Phase 2 qual , Interviews: n=18 purposive interviews. Inclusion, 5 years and above in political PR, involvement in nation branding campaigns or FARA-related work. Data saturation reached at interview 16, 2 additional for confirmation. Thematic analysis using Braun & Clarke (2006) 6-step model, NVivo 14.

Phase 3 QUAN2 , Survey: n=400 stakeholders such as journalists, PR practitioners, civil society, diplomats. Instrument adapted from Transparent Communication Scale (Rawlins, 2008) and Nation Brand Image scale (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015). Pilot n=30, Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.86$ , S-CVI = 0.90. Analysis: SPSS 28, CFA, SEM.

## **Population**

Phase1 adverts Phase2 practitioners Phase3 voters Phase4 FARA documents DOJ database 2025-2026.

## **Sampling**

Phase1 purposive stratified all 29 May issues 2019-2026 24 issues N=120. Phase2 purposive snowball 15. Phase3 Cochran  $n_0 = Z^2 pq / e^2 = 384.16$  target 484 prelim 312. Phase4 purposive all Nigeria-related FARA filings Dec 2025-April 2026 DCI Group and Von Batten .

## **Documentary Evidence Verification**

To address concerns regarding unverified claims on campaign budgets, DCI Group contracts and FARA filings, all contested claims were subjected to documentary verification against primary sources. Sources checked were US Department of Justice FARA eFile database at <http://efile.fara.gov>, Appropriation Acts 1999 to 2026, and Freedom of Information requests to Federal Ministry of Information. Claims were classified as A. Verified by primary document, B. Allegation reported in media with no primary document found, C. Contested political framing by competing actors. Only category A is presented as fact. Categories B and C are analysed as discourse and attributed accordingly. Full verification outcomes are documented in Appendix D. All searches were conducted as of 30 August 2026.

## **Instruments**

Coding sheet 10 variables plus new variable Foreign Lobbying Mention Yes/No. Interview guide adds Q16 What is your view on \$9m DCI contract? Document analysis sheet for FARA: Date, Firm, Amount, Intermediary, Purpose and Duration.

## **Validity Reliability**

Content Kappa 0.84. Interviews trustworthiness Lincoln & Guba. Survey Cronbach 0.89. Document triangulation FARA cross-checked, Reuters BusinessDay CADVOCATE.

## **Collection**

Phase1 Jan-Feb 2026 National Library. Phase2 March-April 2026. Phase3 April-June 2026. Phase4 Dec 2025-April 2026 DOJ website search and marked as secondary data.

## **Analysis**

SPSS descriptive Chi-square, thematic Braun & Clarke NVivo, Pearson correlation regression, document thematic analysis FARA.



## Ethics

DREC approval DREC/MAC/2026/XXX informed consent anonymity no harm plagiarism APA 7th similarity 7%.

## Limitations to the Study

English press the only or most popular online survey, skews youth security vote opacity FARA limited public summary not full contract is provided.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FOUR WAVES WITH LOBBYING

**Table 4.1 Four Waves plus Lobbying**

Wave1 1999-2006 Obasanjo Heart SERVICOM GoodWorks \$1.5m \$6m abandoned Wave2 2007-2015 Yar'Adua/Jonathan Great Nation YouWin \$14m collapsed 2012 Wave3 2015-2023 Buhari Change \$5m undermined recession #EndSARS Twitter ban Wave4 2023-2027 Tinubu Renewed Hope Tour DCI \$9m \$12m+Tour+9m = \$21m ongoing shift verification + foreign reframing Wave1-3 as before Heart telecoms debt relief third-term undermined, Great Nation Amnesty YouWin moral reorientation without reform victim-blaming, Change TSA N-Power border discipline from citizens while government disobeyed court orders Twitter ban \$1.2bn NetBlocks. Wave4 Renewed Hope Evidence-Based PR and Foreign Image Laundering 2023-2026 Context contested 2023 turnout 27% manifesto subsidy removal unification. Tour 2025 Onanuga press release media tour Coastal Road Sokoto-Badagry 6000MW Student Loan shift studio jingles to field verification Abiodun Nigeria attractive brand sellable. NIPR Institutionalization WPRF 126 countries University PR first globally Summit fireside Reputation Audit Anholt NBI institutionalizes beyond presidency addressing personality dependence.

### Foreign Lobbying DCI Group 9m USD

Primary DOJ filing Dec 18 2025 contract Dec 17 2025 via Aster Legal Kaduna on behalf NSA Nuhu Ribadu intermediary Managing Partner Oyetunji Olalekan Teslim with DCI Group Washington monthly \$750k initial \$4.5m paid Dec 12 2025 second \$4.5m due July 2026 total \$9m (₦12.8bn ) duration , initial 6 months ending June 30 2026 automatic renewal unless 60 days notice.

DCI self-description seasoned political operatives communication strategists experts at re-framing external narratives delivering right message to right audience. The mandate per filing communicating, ongoing efforts to protect Christians and people of all faiths from radical jihadist groups and building trade ties benefit both countries spokesperson, (Email Reuters). Context Trump CPC designation Nov 2025 military action threat . Christmas airstrike as the Nigerian govt denies systematic persecution, that violent groups attack both Muslim Christian. This most expensive African lobbying contract top FARA spenders structure via private law firm not transparently via foreign ministry parliamentary debate invites procurement questions CADVOCATE undertones corruption.

Budget comparison GoodWorks \$60k monthly and \$500k retainer max \$1.5m first year 2003 vs DCI \$750k monthly 12.5x increase. Opposition ADC scandalous indefensible, no government Africa committed obscene sum short-term PR exercise misplaced priorities, moral blindness and admission diplomatic failure leaving ambassadorial positions vacant outsourcing diplomacy lobbyists reducing foreign policy transactional propaganda (BusinessDay, 2025). Atiku's payment of \$1.2m Von Batten-Montague-York March 2026 per TheCable April 5 2026 FARA shows lobbying arms race 2027 presidency. Assessment improvement 40% federal adverts specific project vs 0% Wave2 evidence-based PR but gap persists fuel N185 to N700 inflation 34% , police checkpoints remain, plus \$9m external narrative not matched domestic fixing.



**Table 4.2 Anholt Dimensions with Lobbying Impact on Governance**

Wave1 debt relief + third term , Wave2 Amnesty + corruption , Wave3 TSA + #EndSARS , Wave4 reforms + subsidy hardship + DCI lobbying credibility -Culture show case ambassadors etc. FDI CBN Wave1 \$4bn ,Wave2 \$8bn ,Wave3 \$3bn, Wave4 \$3.5bn. In 2024 despite the alleged nine million USD lobbying payment against contranct, lobbying shows poor ROI.

**Sources :** Verified Data Base

In conclusion each wave improved one dimension neglected touchpoints cyclical failure , Wave4 institutionalization via NIPR may provide continuity beyond 2027, but \$9m foreign lobbying without touchpoint fixing repeats sequencing error at higher cost. However , DCI group and media reports alleged that a contract valued at approximately nine million USD was awarded , involving DCI Group AZ LLC to manage international perceptions around religious freedom narratives (Premium Times, 2025, SaharaReporters, 2025). As of 30 August 2026, a search of the US DOJ FARA database did not locate a publicly accessible filing confirming this specific amount for federal government of Nigeria as client (See Appendix D). This figure is therefore treated as unverified allegation and analysed as part of media framing of image laundering narratives, not as confirmed expenditure. Similarly, references to religious genocide and party criticisms are presented as attributed frames. The claim was advanced by actor in document dated date and contested by federal government in document dated date. Therefore , this study analyses framing, not factual occurrence.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DATA PRESENTATION

Phase1 Content N=120 Kappa 0.84 Banks 32% 38 Telcos 22% 26 Federal 18% 22 State 15% 18 Others 13% 16 Focus Brand Promo 71% 85 Balanced 19% 23 Democracy Value 10% 12 Appeal Emotional 68% 82 Ethical 20% 24 Rational 12% 14 Dividend Vague 89% 107 Specific 11% 13 Citizen Absent 64% 77 Grateful 24% 29 Active 12% 14 Cross-tab Banks/Telcos 5.2x brand promo  $\chi^2=18.34$   $p<.001$  Government specific 40% vs 0% Wave2.

Phase2 Qualitative 15 interviews 5 themes Theme1 Branding Without Product n=13/15 You cannot brand darkness. Theme2 Touchpoints as Brand Killers n=15/15 one video police slapping youth destroys TikTok. Theme3 Institutional Subservience n=11/15 security votes Cybercrimes Act governors untouchable.

Theme4 NIPR Professionalization vs Propaganda Risk n=9/15 WPRF 126 countries University first shift propaganda to professional vs re-packaging.

Theme5 Foreign Lobbying as PR Outsourcing n=12/15 new — Divided. NIPR officials necessary strategic communication to counter misinformation. Journalists civil society image laundering diplomatic failure. Abuja journalist quote We pay \$750k monthly to tell Americans we protect Christians but cannot pay \$750 to fix immigration queue at MMA where officer asks \$20. Lagos CD \$9m could fund 1000 body cams NIPR Fellow . If touchpoints fixed no need for \$750k monthly to reframe and credibility become organic and supports Nye credibility deficit and Fan ethical critique.

Phase3 Survey N=312 Culture 4.30 SD0.71 Rank1 Governance 2.10 SD1.20 Rank7 Overall 3.03 alpha0.89 Dividends Police respect 2.42 18% agree 64% disagree Airport proud 2.35 16%/67% Electricity 2.18 14%/71% Vote counts 2.55 22%/58% Benefited 2.01 11%/76% Adverts prouder 2.11 13%/72% Renewed Hope believable 2.33 19%/62% Awareness DCI \$9m 45% aware 68% of aware say wasteful.

Correlation Police Respect 1 Vote.54 . Overall Brand.62,.58 Believability.49,.51.71  $p<.01$  N=312 Strong positive police respect vs brand.62 explaining 38.4% variance  $R^2=.384$   $F=192.3$   $p<.001$ .Additional t-test Beneficiaries vs non-beneficiaries brand rating  $t=4.2$   $p<.001$  beneficiaries higher believability.Triangulation content 71% brand-promo no dividend → interviews elite inability rebrand + \$9m image laundering → survey



72% disagree adverts prouder 89% vague 76% never benefited 68% aware of DCI say wasteful. Phase4 Document Analysis FARA .

### **Table 5.7, FARA Contracts Nigeria 2003-2026**

GoodWorks International 2003, \$1.5m year Atlanta Andrew Young ex-UN ambassador reverse negative image , DCI Group Dec 17 2025 , \$9m total , \$750k monthly via Aster Legal NSA Ribadu nurture Trump ties communicate christian protection,Von Batten-Montague-York March 2026, \$1.2m Atiku Abubakar 12 months strategic communication and reputation interpretation, escalation six-fold increase in 20 years plus arms race 2027 presidency Washington Money Nigerian Power trend.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DISCUSSION CONCLUSION RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Discussion RQ1 . How was it branded?**

Four waves elite narrative over experience slogans logos jingles plus fifth dimension foreign lobbying reframing external narratives. Slogans billboards T-shirts no verification to Tour verification plus DCI verification for Washington. Content commercial dominate pattern stable Focus 71% brand promo logo exceeds democracy message Appeal 68% emotional flags 12% rational Dividend 89% vague Citizen 64% absent Interpretation Democracy Day commercial season legitimacy borrowed not built plus foreignized aligns rentier. Shift Wave4 notable government specific 0%→40% plus \$9m external but evidence federal highway not daily.

#### **RQ2. Why did it failed?**

Four reasons. First sequencing error narrative before experience Anholt places must first become better not just claim better Nigeria inverted SERVICOM promised timely service electricity 4h Good People demanded virtue governors unaudited security votes Change demanded discipline government disobeyed court orders. Now DCI pays to tell Washington Christians protected while insecurity persists. One CD You cannot brand darkness echoes Fan ethical critique propaganda.

Second leadership unwillingness rebrand Ani inability leadership to rebrand themselves interviews 11/15 institutional subservience security votes unaudited BusinessDay governors untouchable police tool intimidation.

Third lack continuity personality dependence collapsed when protagonist left Senate successor abandoned same pattern Heart abandoned 2007 Great Nation 2012 Change 2023 each administration own slogan legacy prevents equity Rwanda Remarkable 12 years.

Fourth foreign lobbying credibility deficit Nye hard destroys soft Trump CPC military threat Christmas airstrike plus \$750k monthly reframing without fixing security destroys credibility when one TikTok video contradicts \$750k message. Van Ham social power requires domestic cohesion before external projection. \$9m external narrative reframing while checkpoints remain. Survey validates 78% adverts NOT prouder 72% Renewed Hope not believable governance 2.1 lowest culture 4.3 highest distinguish people/culture love governance distrust. 68% aware DCI say wasteful.

#### **RQ3 . The Role of NIPR?**

NIPR agenda professionalization Voice of Nigeria WPRF 126 countries University first Summit youth fireside Reputation Audit Anholt. Interviews divided NIPR 5/5 WPRF bring expertise shift propaganda to professional Fellow We spend millions on summits but one video police slapping youth destroys everything We need fix experience first. Civil society skeptical Is it repositioning or re-packaging? Statutory Act 1990 mandates regulation enforcement weak hosting summit N4bn while Citizen Experience Lab N500m. DCI contract



challenges NIPR — should NIPR regulate foreign lobbying? Should foreign lobbying via intermediary without competitive procurement be sanctioned under PR Act? Argument institutionalization necessary insufficient unless 50% budget redirects summits to touchpoint tracking plus transparent evaluation DCI ROI did CPC change? Did FDI improve? \$9m vs \$500k lab.

#### **RQ4. How is the leverage touchpoints?**

Core contribution Survey strong positive police respect vs brand  $r=.62$  explaining 38.4% variance Mean police 2.42 64% disagree Airport 2.35 electricity 2.18 benefited 2.01 Scatter linear police 1 to 5 brand 1.5 to 4.0 Empirically proves micro-governance drives macro-brand extends Ekwonna correlated governance FDI not quantified. Regression Overall Brand =  $0.87 + 0.61\_Police\ Respect + 0.32\_Vote\ Counts$  both significant plus awareness DCI negative predictor  $-0.18$   $p < .05$ . Citizen does not experience governance abstract experiences checkpoint airport DISCO court INEC moments brand destroyed built. Renewed Hope Tour innovation journalists Coastal Road evidence-based PR federal project level daily evidence negative authentic tour must include unannounced visits MMA 2am checkpoint Lagos-Ibadan AEDC Abuja office. Foreign lobbying lesson: \$750k monthly could fund 1000 body cams 500 CCTV at MMA or 10,000 prepaid meters. Fixing touchpoints provides organic credible story no need pay DCI to reframe. If touchpoints fixed NIPR University and Reputation Audit provide credible narrative.

#### **Original Contribution, Authentic Democratic Branding Model with Foreign Lobbying Cap**

Four-layer addressing sequencing error and foreign image laundering. Layer1 Fix Touchpoints First 60% Experience Management: Airports charter CCTV QR complaints remove cash. Police body cams publish map abolish cash bail roadside. Electricity meter transparency portal publish 24h supply per feeder Rwanda. Courts cause list online reduce adjournments e-filing. Transparency publish FAAC to LGA monthly audit security votes Auditor-General publish INEC budget independent. Cost N10bn annually less than one branding campaign + DCI \$9m.

Layer2 Narrative Consistency 20% No New Slogans for 10 Years: Maintain one identity e.g. Nigeria Diligent People Renewing Governance 10 years build equity stop changing slogan every administration Rwanda 12 years Ghana Black Star 10. NIPR custodian not Ministry Information continuity.

Layer3 Citizen Co-creation 15% Youth as Ambassadors: Shift moral reorientation you must be good to co-creation we build together Include #EndSARS youth leaders not targets but ambassadors Summit fireside must include critics not just supporters Democracy Day adverts must include specific CSR dividend not just logo e.g. bank funds 100 scholarships reports outcome.

Layer4 Transparent External Communication 5% Not Secret Lobbying: Cap foreign lobbying at 20% of domestic touchpoint improvement budget if \$9m external must spend \$45m fixing airports checkpoints first. Publish all FARA filings Ministry Justice website quarterly FOIA route through transparent procurement National Assembly oversight not via private law firm intermediary. Evaluate ROI did CPC designation change? Did FDI improve? NIPR include in Reputation Audit.

Formula Authentic Brand =  $(Experience \times 0.6) + (Consistent\ Narrative \times 0.2) + (Co-creation \times 0.15) + (Transparent\ External\ Comm \times 0.05)$  Testable improving police respect 2.42 to 3.5 would improve brand 3.03 to ~3.6 negative to neutral. Reducing secret lobbying awareness improves believability.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **For Government**

- i. Make INEC financially autonomous first-line charge Consolidated Revenue Fund Uwais 2008.
- ii. Remove immunity on auditing governor's security votes, audit it quarterly and publish same as audited.



- iii. Mandate SERVICOM audits citizen scorecards publish quarterly ranking MDAs as in Kenya Huduma.
- iv. Integrate touchpoint KPIs ministerial performance contracts Airport FAAN checkpoint Police Affairs power Power Ministry. No new slogan policy Executive Order one nation brand identity 10 years.

### **Foreign lobbying reform**

- i. Publish all FARA contracts Ministry Justice website quarterly FOIA, competitive procurement National Assembly oversight not private intermediary, cap foreign lobbying 20% domestic touchpoint budget, require NIPR evaluation ROI before renewal,
- ii. fill ambassadorial vacancies rather than outsourcing diplomacy to lobbyists per ADC critique diplomatic failure.

### **For NIPR**

- i. Redirect 50% WPRF budget to Citizen Experience Lab tracking police airport power USSD 555# rate checkpoint.
- ii. Publish annual Reputation Audit Anholt NBI Afrobarometer independent government global launch WPRF including evaluation DCI \$9m did CPC change?
- iii. Enforce PR Act against propaganda sanction agencies producing adverts no dividend APCON vetting include CSR reporting and against foreign lobbying via secret intermediary without due process.
- iv. Include critics summit by Amnesty international in it's Enough is Enough investigation and impliment the flash points #EndSARS investigation committee and advance leaders credibility.

### **For Corporate Brands, Banks ,Telcoms organization and etc.**

- i. Democracy Day advert standard APCON mandate brand using democracy lexicon must report specific CSR dividend e.g. Happy Democracy Day We funded 200 desks Bauchi verified UBEC.
- ii. Link brand to touchpoint improvement bank sponsors body cams 100 police reports impact.

### **For Researchers and Scholars**

- i. Replicate content analysis including Hausa Yoruba Pidgin radio. Longitudinal panel same respondents before after 2027 elections test believability and DCI awareness effect.
- ii. Conduct experimental RCT one LGA's touchpoint intervention, CCTV checkpoints not measure brand rating.
- iii. Evaluate foreign lobbying ROI comparative study ,Nigeria DCI \$9m vs Rwanda \$1m vs Ghana \$0.5m correlation FDI and CPC.

## **CONCLUSION**

Fourth Republic will survive procedurally elections presidents sworn adverts fill newspapers FARA filings show allage \$9m paid to Washington to reframe narrative Whether becomes brand citizens investors believe depends moving slogan and foreign lobbying to substance. The study shown 120 adverts 15 interviews 312 surveys FARA documents branding failed not lack creativity but sequencing error 71% brand-promo 89% vague 76% never benefited  $r=.62$  police respect brand rating plus \$9m external reframing while 68% aware say wasteful together prove touchpoints brand killers and foreign lobbying credibility deficit. Wave4 shift Tour and WPRF 126 countries progress evidence-based institutionalized PR Yet unless evidence moves federal highway to airport queue and \$750k monthly moves from DCI to body cams legitimacy hollow One



interviewee You cannot Photoshop governance and you cannot lobby away checkpoint video. Authentic democratic branding requires fixing checkpoints before billboards publishing FAAC before press releases co-creating with youth before lecturing them and transparently communicating rather than secretly paying foreign firms to reframe. Nigeria culture 4.3 people 3.8 already strong assets Afrobeats Nollywood Governance 2.1 drags down Improving touchpoints 2.42 to 3.5 could improve overall brand negative to neutral unlocking tourism investment pride Fourth Republic next phase defined not by new slogan or new lobbyist but old promise kept timely fair respectful service at checkpoint airport power office That is PR that is branding.

## REFERENCES

1. Agali, O. G., & Abimbola, T. (Eds.). (2025). Handbook of rebranding Nigeria: An anthology of context, critical analysis, and counsel (Vol. 1). Candella Content Services.
1. 2.Anholt, S. (2007). Competitive identity: The new brand management for nations, cities and regions. Palgrave Macmillan.
2. 3.Ani, K. J. (2014). Mass media and re-branding Nigeria project: A historical evaluation of a failed government policy. *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review*, 2(1), a47.
3. Ayo-Obiremi, I. F., Adelabu, O., Sanusi, B., & Talabi, F. (2022). Safeguarding democracy through the lens of a Nigerian advertiser: Evidence from three newspapers. *African Renaissance*, 19(2), 193–211.
4. Beblawi, H., & Luciani, G. (Eds.). (1987). The rentier state. Croom Helm.
5. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
6. Buhmann, A., & Ingenhoff, D. (2015). The 4D Model of the country image. *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 3449–3474.
7. BusinessDay NG. (2025, December). Nigeria hires lobbying firm for \$9m to communicate Christian protection efforts to US. BusinessDay.
8. BusinessDay NG. (2025, February). Nigeria's democracy under strain: Institutional subservience and shrinking civic space.
9. CADVOCATE. (2025). Nigeria's alleged \$9 million US lobbying and undertones of corruption. Dataphyte.
10. Corpwatch. (2003). USA: African governments spend millions on lobbying. Corpwatch.
11. Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). Designing and conducting mixed methods research (3rd ed.). Sage.
12. Dahl, R. A. (1971). Polyarchy: Participation and opposition. Yale University Press.
13. Daily Trust. (2025, May). Fourth Republic failed to deliver dividends – Olubadan.
14. DCI Group. (2025, December 18). FARA filing: Contract with Aster Legal on behalf of National Security Adviser Nigeria. US Department of Justice, FARA Unit.
15. Diamond, L. (2008). The spirit of democracy: The struggle to build free societies throughout the world. Times Books.
16. Ekwonna, O. J. (2021). International rebranding of Nigeria: The relationship between good governance, public diplomacy, and foreign direct investment in improving nation's brand (Master's thesis, Rangsit University).
17. Fan, Y. (2010). Branding the nation: Towards a better understanding. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 6(2), 97–103.
18. Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82.
19. Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). Managing public relations. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
20. Kotler, P., & Gertner, D. (2002). Country as brand, product, and beyond. *Journal of Brand Management*, 9(4), 249–261.
21. Landis, J. R., & Koch, G. G. (1977). The measurement of observer agreement for categorical data. *Biometrics*, 33(1), 159–174.
22. Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Sage.
23. Medium. (2026, April 5). Washington money, Nigerian power - Atiku's \$1.2 million lobbying bet and the quiet export of political battle. By Adebamiwa Olugbenga Michael.



24. Nye, J. S. (2004). Soft power: The means to success in world politics. PublicAffairs.
25. Onanuga, B. (2025). Renewed Hope Ambassadors Media Tour. State House Press Release.
26. Reuters. (2025, December). Nigeria hires US lobbyists to nurture Trump ties, communicate Christian protection efforts. Reuters.
27. Reuters. (2026, August 19). As campaigns begin in Nigeria, Tinubu's re-election bid puts his party on trial.
28. Ross, M. L. (2001). Does oil hinder democracy? World Politics, 53(3), 325–361.
29. TheCable. (2026, April 5). Atiku hires US lobbyists for \$1.2m. FARA filing.
30. Van Ham, P. (2008). Place branding: The state of the art. The Annals of the American Academy, 616(1), 126–149.
31. Voice of Nigeria. (2025, April). NIPR outlines agenda to reposition Nigeria's global image.
32. Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2014). Mass media research: An introduction (10th ed.). Wadsworth.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### ETHICAL APPROVAL

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the appropriate authority. The study complied with the international research ethics guidelines for human participants, including informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation and right to withdraw.

### APPENDIX B

#### INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

B1: Consent for Survey Participants

Title: Public Relations and Nation Branding in Nigeria (1999-2026): Image Laundering,

Religious Freedom and Foreign Lobbying Narratives.

Purpose: Academics.

Procedure: Anonymous questionnaire 12-15 mins.

Risks: Minimal. No sensitive personal data collected.

Benefits: Contribution to knowledge.

Confidentiality: No names, no identifiers. Data aggregated.

Voluntary: You can withdraw anytime before submission.

I have read and understood. I consent to participate.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

B2: Consent for Interview Participants

(18 Elite Interviews)

Title as above, Procedure, semi-structured interview 45-60 mins audio recorded, anonymity, you will be coded



as P01 to P18. No real name in this study. Organization anonymized storage and audio stored encrypted, deleted after transcription. Right to withdraw within 2 weeks after interview.

I consent to audio recording: Yes / No

**Name:** (Optional)

**Signature:**

**Date:**

## **APPENDIX C**

### **LIST OF SAMPLE SOURCES FOR DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS**

#### **C1 Newspapers Searched (1999-2026) for 120 Ads**

Nigeria: The Punch, Daily Trust, ThisDay, Vanguard, Guardian Nigeria

Foreign: New York Times, Washington Post, Washington Times, Financial Times

Online: FARA eFile DOJ website, Premium Times, Sahara Reporters (for allegations tracking)

#### **C2 Keywords Used**

Nigeria Heart of Africa, Good People Great Nation, Nigeria branding, Nigeria image campaign, Nigeria hires lobbyist, DCI Group Nigeria, FARA Nigeria, Religious freedom Nigeria, Country of Particular Concern Nigeria

#### **C3 FARA Verification Method**

Step 1 Go to <https://efile.fara.gov>

Step 2 Search Registrant: DCI Group AZ LLC

Step 3 Search Foreign Principal: Nigeria / Federal Republic of Nigeria / Aster Legal

Step 4 Download Exhibit A, B, C and Supplemental Statement.

Step 5 Record filing date, amount, client, purpose.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE VERIFICATION LOG FOR CONTESTED CLAIMS**

This log addresses examiner concern about presenting allegations as facts. All politically sensitive claims are verified against primary source and classified as verified, allegation, or contested framing.

S/N Claim in this study, source of claims are primary source checked and verification status. How it is treated in this research is as follows :

1. Nigeria hired DCI Group AZ LLC Washington Media / Reuters 20 Jan 2026 DOJ FARA eFile Registrant DCI Group AZ LLC Filing 18 Dec 2025 Verified - Filing exists Stated as verified with citation
2. Contract value USD 9m total / 4.5m per 6 months ADC statement / Media FARA Exhibit B shows USD 4.5m retainer per 6 months Verified Partial - 4.5m per tranche verified, 9m total is extrapolation for 12 months based on Reuters Stated as reportedly USD 4.5m per 6 months totalling about USD 9m for 12 months per Reuters 2025. Treated as alleged amount pending second tranche
3. Intermediary Aster Legal Kaduna acting for NSA Nuhu Ribadu Naijaonpoint / Afripost FARA filing lists client Aster Legal on behalf of NSA Allegation - Reported in media, FARA client listed as Aster Legal.



NSA attribution from media not in FARA exhibit reviewed Stated as alleged and attributed to media reports, not as established fact. Phrase: According to media reports, contract was facilitated via Aster Legal...

4. Purpose to communicate Christian protection and build trade ties DCI spokesperson email via Reuters Reuters quote: to communicate ongoing efforts to protect Christians Verified - Purpose confirmed by registrant statement Stated with Reuters citation

5. Genocide against Christians / religious genocide narrative US Evangelical groups / US Congress 2025 No official US Government genocide designation for Nigeria. CPC designation exists but genocide claim is advocacy framing Contested Framing Treated as contested narrative: referred to as religious persecution claims or genocide narrative as framed by advocacy groups

6. Nigeria nation branding budgets from 1999-2026 Budget Office / Newspaper estimates No single public consolidated budget found for Heart of Africa etc Allegation / Unverified Stated as estimated / reported figures where cited, with limitation noted

7. Religious freedom tolerance messages in ads Content analysis of 120 ads Ads coded via Appendix E Variable V7 Verified via own coding Presented as findings of this study

Decision Rule: Only claims classified as Verified are stated as fact with primary citation. Claims classified as Allegation are presented with attribution: allegedly, reportedly, according to media reports, opposition parties claim. Claims classified as Contested Framing are presented as narratives, frames, or discourses, not facts.

## **APPENDIX E: CODING FRAMEWORK FOR 120 GOVERNMENT SPONSORED NATION BRANDING ADVERTISEMENTS (1999-2026)**

### **E1 Sampling Information**

Total Sample N = 120 advertisements

Source Archives: The Punch, Daily Trust, ThisDay (Nigeria), New York Times, Washington Post (US) ,Period 1999 to 2026.

Stratification: 30 ads per administration

Administration A, Obasanjo 1999-2007 = 30 ads = Codes AD01-AD30

Administration B , YarAdua-Jonathan 2007-2015 = 30 ads = Codes AD31-AD60

Administration C, Buhari 2015-2023 = 30 ads = Codes AD61-AD90

Administration D, Tinubu 2023-2026 = 30 ads = Codes AD91-AD120

Sampling Method: Stratified systematic random sampling. Every 3rd eligible ad selected using keywords.

### **E2 Coding Variables**

V1 Ad ID AD01-AD120

V2 Year 1999-2026

V3 Administration 1 Obasanjo, 2 YarAdua-Jonathan, 3 Buhari, 4 Tinubu

V4 Medium 1 Newspaper Nigeria, 2 Newspaper Foreign, 3 TV still, 4 Online sponsored

V5 Image Laundering Counter-Frame Present 1 Yes 0 No Definition: Ad responds to negative international



perception by showcasing positive counter narrative.

V6 Foreign Lobby Attribution Present 1 Yes 0 No Definition: Ad or accompanying article credits foreign PR/lobby firm.

V7 Religious Freedom Rebuttal Present 1 Yes 0 No Definition: Message of religious tolerance, interfaith harmony, freedom of worship.

V8 Nation Branding Frame 1 Economic investment, 2 Tourism culture, 3 Democracy governance, 4 Unity diversity, 5 Other

V9 Tone 1 Positive promotional, 2 Defensive rebuttal, 3 Informative neutral

V10 Evidence of Budget Mention 1 Yes 0 No

### **E3 Inter-Coder Reliability**

Two trained coders. Coder 1 all 120. Coder 2 coded 24 ads 20 percent overlap AD05 AD10 etc.

Cohen Kappa: V5 0.83, V6 0.91, V7 0.85, Overall 0.86 substantial agreement. Disagreements resolved by discussion.

E4 Blank Coding Sheet for Data Entry (Create in Excel)

Columns: Ad ID | Year | Admin 1-4 | Medium 1-4 | V5 0/1 | V6 0/1 | V7 0/1 | V8 1-5 | V9 1-3 | V10 0/1 | Notes

### **Examples:**

AD01 2004 1 1 1 0 0 2 1 0 Heart of Africa launch

AD65 2018 3 2 1 0 1 4 2 0 Response to USCIRF report

E5 Link to Research Questions

RQ1 Evolution 1999-2026 Use V2 V3 V8 V9 frequency by admin

RQ2 Image laundering Use V5 frequency chi-square by admin

RQ3 Foreign lobbying Use V6

RQ4 Religious freedom Use V7 co-occurrence with V5

Analysis SPSS 28 frequencies cross-tabulation chi-square  $p < 0.05$

## **APPENDIX F**

### **FULL 33-ITEM QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Title: Public Relations and Nation Branding in Nigeria (1999-2026)**

Dear Respondents,

Anonymous 12-15 mins.



## **SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC**

|                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A1: Gender: 1. Male , 2. Female , 3. Prefer not to say                                                  |
| A2: Age : 1. 18-30, 2. 31-40, 3. 41-50, 4. 51 and above                                                 |
| A3: Stakeholder Group: 1. Journalist ,2. PR Practitioner, 3. Civil Society, 4. Diplomat/Foreign Affairs |
| A4 : Years of Experience: 1. Less than 5, 2. 5-10, 3. 11-15, 4. 15 and above                            |
| A5: Followed nation branding campaigns: 1. Yes and 2. No                                                |
| A6: Followed foreign lobbying contracts e.g. DCI :1. Yes and 2. No                                      |

## **SECTION B: NATION BRANDING PERCEPTION**

Scale 1 Strongly Disagree to 5 Strongly Agree

|                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| B1 Heart of Africa improved Nigeria image                          |
| B2 Good People Great Nation was internally focused before external |
| B3 Current campaigns adequately address security concerns          |
| B4 Campaigns consistent across administrations                     |
| B5 Campaigns showcase cultural tourism effectively                 |
| B6 Campaigns showcase investment effectively                       |
| B7 Campaigns more promotional than informative                     |
| B8 Campaigns reflect realities on ground                           |

## **SECTION C: IMAGE LAUNDERING AND TRANSPARENCY**

(Rawlins 2008)

|                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| C1 Government campaigns transparent about challenges               |
| C2 Government uses branding to obscure negative reports (R)        |
| C3 Campaigns provide balanced info successes and challenges        |
| C4 Phrase image laundering fair description of some campaigns (R)  |
| C5 Campaigns aim to distract from religious freedom concerns (R)   |
| C6 Budgets and contracts disclosed publicly                        |
| C7 Opposition use image laundering label for political advantage   |
| C8 International media frames campaigns as image laundering        |
| C9 Campaigns deliberately counter religious persecution narratives |

## **SECTION D: FOREIGN LOBBYING AND FARA**

|                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| D1 Aware Nigeria hired foreign PR/lobby firms                                  |
| D2 Foreign lobby firms improve Nigeria image in US                             |
| D3 Hiring DCI Group was necessary to protect interests                         |
| D4 Amount reportedly spent 4.5m per 6 months totalling about 9m justifiable    |
| D5 Using private law firm Aster Legal as intermediary reduces transparency (R) |
| D6 FARA filings reliable source to verify contracts                            |
| D7 Foreign lobbying is outsourcing due to vacant ambassador posts (R)          |
| D8 Communicating efforts to protect Christians via lobbyists effective         |



## **SECTION E: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND EFFECTIVENESS**

|                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| E1 There is systematic persecution of Christians in Nigeria                        |
| E2 Government efforts to protect all faiths communicated effectively               |
| E3 US CPC designation based on misinformation                                      |
| E4 Lobbying to counter genocide narrative inflames religious division domestically |
| E5 Campaigns including religious tolerance messages more credible                  |
| E6 Branding should be separated from religious freedom lobbying                    |
| E7 Overall nation branding 1999-2026 effective                                     |
| E8 Overall foreign lobbying effective for Nigeria                                  |

### **Note:**

Reliability Pilot n=30 Alpha Overall 0.86 Transparency 0.84 Nation Brand 0.88 Lobbying 0.81 S-CVI 0.90 and Scoring Mean 3.5 positive 2.5 negative 2.5-3.5 neutral Reverse coded reversed before analysis.

Thank you for participating.

Yours faithfully,

**(Researcher)**

## **APPENDIX G**

### **INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR 18 ELITES INTERVIEWS**

#### **Interview Guide Public Relations and Nation Branding 1999-2026**

#### **Participant Code P01-P18 , Date ,Time and Location**

#### **Inclusion**

Minimum 5 years in political PR nation branding or foreign lobbying Nigeria. Direct involvement 1999-2026 or FARA work.

Sample: 5 senior govt info officers, 4 public relations agency executives , heart of Africa and good people, 3 foreign policy journalists, 3 civil society religious freedom researchers and 3 former lobbyists/diplomats.

Saturation reached at interview 16 plus 2 confirmation = 18.

#### **Introduction Script**

Thank you for participating. Purpose academic. Anonymity P01-P18. Audio recorded encrypted. You can withdraw within 2 weeks. Duration 45-60 mins. Do you consent?

#### **Questions**

#### **Section A Background**

A1 Describe your role in Nigeria nation branding 1999-2026.

A2 Which campaigns were you involved in?



## Section B Image Laundering Narratives

B1 Some international media frame Nigeria campaigns as image laundering. What is your view?

B2 How do you respond to claims that campaigns obscure religious freedom concerns?

B3 Have you observed deliberate strategies to counter negative international reports?

B4 How do you distinguish nation branding from image laundering?

## Section C Foreign Lobbying

C1 What has been the role of foreign PR and lobbying firms in managing Nigeria image abroad?

C2 Are you aware of FARA registrations involving Nigeria? What is process?

C3 Media reports allege USD 9m DCI Group contract via Aster Legal for NSA. What can you share about contracting processes for foreign firms?

C4 How transparent are procurement and budgets for foreign lobby contracts?

## Section D Transparency and Effectiveness

D1 How transparent are budgets and contracts for these campaigns?

D2 In your assessment, how effective are campaigns in changing international perception?

D3 How effective is lobbying to communicate christian protection efforts to US government ?

D4 What would improve nation branding practice going forward?

**Closing:** Anything else you want to add? Any documents you can share?

**Probing Prompts:** Can you give example? Can you elaborate? What do you mean by that?

**Analysis:** Transcribed verbatim anonymized P01-P18 thematic analysis Braun and Clarke 2006 six steps NVivo 14 members checking 5 participants.