

THE INVISIBLE 'GIFT': THE CHIBOK BRAND AND BOKO HARAM

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DOI: 10.24193/subbeuropaea.2019.2.06

Published Online: 2019-12-30

Published Print: 2019-12-30

Abstract

Branding has become an essential activity in international relations as states require ways of distinguishing themselves from one another. A similar trend has emerged with non-state actors such as terrorist groups. Following the Chibok Kidnappings of April 2014, the 'Chibok Brand' emerged affording Boko Haram considerable international notoriety as the abduction of 276 schoolgirls by a non-state actor was unprecedented. Despite the success of the 'Chibok Brand', little research has been done to explain the dual usage of the 'Chibok Brand.' Hence, this paper seeks to explore the emergence and continued relevance of the 'Chibok Brand' using a combination of desktop research and Twitter analysis. The 'Chibok Brand' is explored from three different angles, namely: Boko Haram, the Nigerian government and the West. This paper finds that while the brand is still of relevance in the present time, it only remains so in relation to Boko Haram and the West. The absence of the reference to this brand by the Nigerian government suggests that it underestimates the value of the 'Chibok Brand' in sustaining Boko Haram, which could further impede counter-terrorism efforts.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Branding, Terrorism, Nigeria, Chibok Girls

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Introduction

In the immediate wake of 9\11 a group of American firefighters erected the American flag in what was left of the World Trade Centre. This event was a clear illustration of how a nation used its national brand to confront vicissitudes brought on by al-Qaeda.¹ As the Global War on Terror took shape and the menace of radical political Islam become commonplace, research has revealed that terrorist groups have undertaken their own initiatives of brand formation and brand management to set their ideological interpretations and methods apart from one another. This paper will add to this body of literature by investigating the continued relevance of the 'Chibok Brand' five years after the Chibok Abductions by Nigeria's Boko Haram in April 2014. Following this unfortunate event, mass outcry followed placing global pressure on the Nigerian government to employ swift action so as to ensure the safe return of all 276 kidnapped schoolgirls. This pressure stimulated the formation of the 'Chibok Brand.' By investigating the continued relevance of the so called 'Chibok Brand', it is not only argued that the Chibok Abductions have allowed Boko Haram to add a gender profile\dynamic to its brand, but it will further be argued that, unlike existing terrorist brands, the Chibok Brand is not in the control of Boko Haram and is instead subject to a tricycle of influence encompassing: Boko Haram, the international community and the Nigerian state. Following the introduction, the article will examine the use of branding in international relations before providing a brief historical account of Boko Haram and the Chibok Abductions. Prior to concluding, the three above-mentioned influencers will be applied to the Chibok Brand to achieve the two objectives of this paper. Finally, the conclusion will summarise the aim arguments and ponder some of the future implications for the future of Boko Haram and its interactions with the Nigerian state.

¹ Tim Marshall, *A Flag Worth Dying For: The Power and Politics of National Symbols*, New York and London: Simon & Schuster, 2016, p. 1.

Branding and International Relations

The state

According to Matusitz a brand “is a symbol that differentiates one product or service from another. [A brand] serves to elicit a specific style or genre in the viewers’ mind and is generally easily recognizable.”² Borrowing from marketing literature, a brand exists for a verity of reasons with, among others, includes: ensuring customer loyalty, improved perception so as to say preferences with audiences, ease of communication and opportunities for expansion.³ The characteristics and criteria mentioned above are all true of the modern-day state. From this perspective, states manufacture and maintain brands to ensure the loyalty of both their citizenry and transnational partners. It is imperative to note that the direction and shape a brand may take is not always up to the state from where the brand originates as a state’s activities, cultures and histories are perceived differently by the various actors within the international system.⁴ As a result, is often up to the brand’s proliferators to correct the ‘negative’ perceptions by engaging with domestic and foreign publics. For example, following the dark era of Apartheid in South Africa, the New South Africa sought to rebrand itself through a cultural and political lens. From a cultural perspective, the government used music, sport and multiculturalism to reintroduce itself to the world. However, relying totally on normative elements is risky as music, cultures and sports are distributed by multiple actors that the government has little to no control over.⁵ Hence, the New South Africa segued their normative re-branding approach with a more empirical one that was within its control, that of conflict resolution.⁶

² Jonathan Matusitz, *Symbolism in Terrorism: Motivation, Communication and Behavior*, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, p. 240.

³ Kevin Lane Keller, “Building Strong Brands in a Modern Marketing Communication Environment” in *Journal of Marketing Communications*, no. 15(2-3), 2009, p. 140.

⁴ Jeremy Youde, “Selling the State: State Branding as a Political Resource in South Africa” in *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, no. 5(2), 2009, p. 131.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 133.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 134.

From this perspective the New South Africa was able to harness its turbulent past coupled with its transition to democracy as a beacon of hope and guiding light for others to follow; a history of being able resolve adverse civil conflict was marketed as South Africa possessing insights and abilities rarely held by other states. Therefore, South Africa was able to present\offer an alternative to what was already on the market. South Africa's political branding paid off in some respects, particularly in relation to nuclear non-proliferation whereby South Africa was perceived as having a unique diplomatic edge not help by other nations due to the fact that the Republic voluntarily and verifiably dismantled its nuclear weapons programme. South Africa's brand further expanded in 2010 when the Republic joined the BRIC grouping. Being the only African country within the bloc gave Brand South Africa additional features such emerging as an African leader and \or voice for Africa on the global stage.

A brand is evident when the following three criteria are evident, namely: differentiation, credibility and authenticity. Differentiation refers to the ability to stands out and provide an alternative to what is already in existence.⁷ Credibility refers to a brand's ability to install faith in its viewers; this is most notably achieved by the brand's proliferator living up to the promises and standards it has set for itself.⁸ Lastly, authenticity refers to the establishment of a permeant campaign which ensures continues transformation even after the brand has achieved its ultimate goal⁹; from the perspective of political actors this means maintaining a process of engagement even after coming into power or establishing a new relationship.

The Non-State (Terrorist) Actor

While states have been a leading proliferator of brands and branding in international relations, terrorist groups have caught onto the

⁷ Jonathan Matusitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 241, 242.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 242.

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 242, 243.

trends of branding and brand management. Hezbollah is one such long-standing example. Hezbollah differentiates itself from other terrorist groups in four main ways, namely: being the first modern day Islamist terrorist group to deploy suicide bombers in the Middle East, delivery of a victims narrative that promises victory in the face of weak leadership, the usage of a militant logo and the existence of a firm geopolitical home in Lebanon by claiming to represent the Shi'ites. All of these activities are symbolic. From this perspective the use of a green flag with an AK47 coupled with the deployment of suicide bombers distinguishes Hezbollah from other Islamist groups as militant group committed to violence.¹⁰ Similarly, making Israel look weak coupled with their geopolitical home distinguishes Hezbollah from other Islamist terrorist groups as it is the only group that has identified a foreign enemy that is detested by a legitimate actor of international relations, which in turn could give Hezbollah's actions greater legitimacy thereby making the group, and what it stands for, more credible to its audiences.¹¹ Additionally, Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah uses the techniques of ethos and pathos to increase the group's credibility. For example, in 2006 during the Second Lebanese War Nasrallah employed ethos by emphasising that Hezbollah has successfully identified Israel's allies. In doing so Hezbollah is perceived to possess considerable capacity as it has the strength and bravery to physically confront not only Israel, but its allies too, thereby giving Hezbollah notoriety as an organisation that recognises both domestic and international threats facing the cause it claims it advocate for.¹² Now that the enemy has been successfully identified via ethos, Nasrallah proceed to pathos by manipulating its audiences. This was made considerably easy now that Israel has been identified as the enemy as Hezbollah managed to convey that Israel would never defeat the so-called Party of God. Now that

¹⁰ Jonathan Matusitz, "Brand Management in Terrorism: The Case of Hezbollah" in *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism*, no. 13(1), 2018, p. 9.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 12

Hezbollah has been shown to be both different and credible, it solidified its authenticity by following through on its commitments and establishing a sense of permanence. From this perspective, in 1992 Hezbollah deployed two suicide bombers on a military base killing 241 Americans and 58 French troops.¹³ The nationality of the troops is significant as both America and France are allies of Israel thus showing that Hezbollah can confront both domestic and international enemies. Hezbollah has ensured the permanence of its brand by establishing a political party and administrative wings that deliver key medical and educational services in addition to a militia. By doing so, Hezbollah has secured a favourable image with the greater Middle Eastern community even in times when direct conflict is not ongoing.

Boko Haram And Chibok: Essential Components¹⁴

Jamā'a Ahl al-sunnah li-da'wa wa al-jihād (JAS, Sunni Group for Preaching and Jihad) or Boko Haram started out as Muslim advocacy group for Nigeria's Muslim population by Mohamed Yusef. Yusef founded the group in response to the proliferation of Western values in Nigerian life and how these values supposedly resulted in poor governance as Abuja's Western-style governance structure and style was classed as illegitimate. The air of illegitimacy arose following a let down Yusef had suffered at the hands of the northern political elites. Yusef became increasingly popular as his preaching and teachings resulted in the emergence of a community that was self-reliant; it provided education, food, small business loans and helped to establish family networks by means of arranged marriages.¹⁵ This communal structure bettered the quality of life of several northern

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ The history of Boko Haram is broad and contested. It is not within the scope of this paper to provide a comprehensive discussion the history of the group. Instead, the author will focus on the key points covering cause, gender and factionalism.

¹⁵ Alexander Thurston, *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018, pp. 89, 90.

Nigerians. As a result, Yusef obtain considerable social, economic and political capital. This reality came to the attention of the northern politician, Ali Modue Sheriff, who sought to exploit Yusef's influence to prolong his political lifespan.¹⁶ Yusef agreed to assist on condition that two conditions were met, namely: ensure that Boko Haram was represented in the Borno State Government and by fast-tracking the implementation of Sharia Law in Nigeria. Yusef followed through on his promise by publicly endorsing Sheriff; doing so gave Sheriff a new sense of legitimacy, which solidified his political fate. Upon taking up the governorship, Sheriff appointed Buji Fori, a key Boko Haram financier, to his cabinet.¹⁷ Unfortunately, the second promise was not upheld. In retaliation, Yusef used his position on the Supreme Sharia Council of Nigeria to make the Nigerian government and governance system look illegitimate and weak.¹⁸

As a result, Boko Haram's legitimacy grew considerably within northern Nigeria. Yusef encouraged critical reactions to Nigerian government. As a result, many of Yusef's students physically confronted the Nigerian police and military which resulted in many skirmishes. It remains unclear if Yusef encouraged his students to physically confront Nigeria's institutions of security. However, an interview Yusef gave to the British Broadcasting Commission (BBC) in 2008 suggested that he was swayable. The BBC questioned Yusef on his view on arrest of his followers. In response Yusef stated¹⁹:

I will follow the due process and legitimate means prescribed by Allah to secure their release because we [Boko Haram] do not take illegal steps unless it becomes necessary. The people have misunderstood use as a set of people phorone to fighting. We are only aghast the government and not the people. Indeed if truly we

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 121.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 126, 127.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 127.

¹⁹ Abulbasit Kassim, "BBC Hausa Service Interview with Muhammad Yusef" in Abulbasit Kassim and Michael Nwankpa (eds.), *The Boko Haram Reader*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 75.

are prone to fighting, the opposition from the government is enough to spur us to start fighting.

The above statement suggests that Yusef would have taken Boko Haram down the path of insurgency had the government's response to Boko Haram continued to be hostile. Unfortunately, this remains a counterfactual foresight as Yusef met his end while in police custody. The death of their founding father at the hands of a so called 'illegitimate' government drove Boko Haram underground only to remerge in 2009 to declare a jihad against the Nigerian government. Since then Boko Haram has become responsible for the disappearance of 22, 000 people²⁰ and has undergone several transformations including operational expansion to include the wider West African region, formulating international linkages to leading players in the international jihadist movement, including of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)²¹ as well as introducing a unique gender dynamic which is would change the way terrorist groups brand themselves, this paper's central focus.

On the evening of the 14th of April 2014, a gang of Boko Haram members stormed the dormitories of Chibok Secondary School abducting a grand total of 276 schoolgirls. This unfortunate phenomenon resulted in the emergence of the Bring Back Our Girls Movement (BBOGM) both locally and internationally, which would serve as the foundations for the Chibok Brand, something we will return to below. A total of 57 schoolgirls escaped shortly after the abduction with an additional abductee joining the group

²⁰ 22,000 missing in Nigeria because of Boko Haram, Red Cross Says, *South China Morning Post*, 12 September, 2019 <<https://www.scmp.com/news/world/africa/article/3026965/22000-missing-nigeria-because-boko-haram-red-cross-says>> accessed on 19 October 2019.

²¹ Boko Haram currently consist of three major factions, namely: JAS which desires its intendance from international jihadi groups, Ansaru which has linked to al-Qaeda and ISWA which is linked to ISIS. For more information see: Jacob Zenn and Zacharias Pierri, "How Much Takfir is Too Much Takfir? The Evolution of Boko Haram's Factionalism" in *Journal of Deradicalization*, no. 11, 2017, pp. 281-308.

on the 17th of May 2016.²² The Nigerian government in collaboration with civil society actors has managed to secure the release of 21 schoolgirls on the 12th of October 2016 with the help of the Swiss Government and the International Committee of the Red Cross while another abductee escaping on the 5th of November 2016. An additional group release of 82 schoolgirls occurred on the 6th of May 2017; this release was aided by Nigeria's Mustapha Zanna. At the time of this writing 112 of the Chibok schoolgirls still remain unaccounted for.²³

While much of what constitutes the facilitation of Boko Haram's gender dynamic is often associated with the Chibok Abductions of 2014 and while this notion is understandable, given the unfortunate nature of the Chibok Abductions, it is imperative to note that Boko Haram has incorporated women into its ranks\operations during its formative years. Yusef's lecture series is proof of this as field research indicates that Yusef held separate lectures for men and women in which he would address gender-centric issues.²⁴ This shows that the issues of gender and gender inclusivity was already an issue prior to the emergence of the Chibok Brand.

The Three-Dimensional Chibok Brand

The Nigerian State

As has already been indicated above, the BBOGM served as the foundations for the emergence of the Chibok Brand. Following the abductions an Abuja based lawyer founded the BBOGM to emphasise the plight of the Chibok Girls. The BBOGM took on red and white as its theming colours; red stands for the danger the girls in while with Boko Haram as well as the passion the domestic and international communities

²² Abulbasit Kassim, "Message about the Chibok Girls by Abubakar Shekau" in Kassim and Nwankpa, *op. cit.*, pp. 311-312.

²³ *Ibidem*, p.312.

²⁴ Hilary Matfess, *Women and the War on Boko Haram: Wives, Weapons and Witnesses*, London: Zeb Books, 2017, p. 57.

have in seeing them returned alive.²⁵ On the other hand, white symbolises innocence meaning that the girls had no part to play in Boko Haram conflict. Instead, they were acquiring education as a means to improve their quality of life.²⁶ The BBOGM adopts *humaniteeds* (humanity in English) as its core value which broken down into nine sub-core values (see Table 1).²⁷

Despite the Nigerian government's best efforts to quell the BBOGM, it still remains active at present with daily solidarity gathering at the Unity Foundation from 17h00-18h00 in Abuja as well as solidarity gatherings at Falomo Roundabout every Saturday and 64 Adewae Adenuga Street every second Saturday of the month, both in Lagos.²⁸

Letter of core value corresponding with sub-core value	Meaning of sub-core value
H	Hope
U	Unity
M	Motivation
A	Affability
N	Nationalism
I	Integrity
T	Transparency
E	Empathy
E	Equality
D	Discipline
S	Sacrifice

Table 1. The core values of the Bring Back Our Girls Movement

The International Community

The BBOGM took the international community by storm by becoming a hashtag on Twitter. The popularity of the BBOGM hashtag grew so rapidly that 2.3 million tweets using the hashtag had been posted

²⁵ Bring Back Our Girls, 2019 <<https://bringbackourgirls.ng>> accessed on 2 October 2019.

²⁶ *Ibidem.*

²⁷ *Ibidem.*

²⁸ *Ibidem.*

by the 11th of May 2014.²⁹ This ardent proliferation was in part assisted by prominent figures such as: Michele Obama, Malala Yousafzai, Sa'ad Abubaker III of Sokoto and 'Abd al-'Aziz Al al-Shaykh of Saudi Arabia whose global profiles elevated the campaign. This potency emanated from across the world, key contributors included: Nigeria, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Israel, France³⁰ and South Africa. South Africa's participation was particularly interesting. The African National Congress (ANC) via the ANC Women's League planned and coordinated a number of events that included: the Social Solidary Patrician, lighting of 230 candles to ignite the Flame of Hope outside of the Nigerian High Commission in Pretoria on the 19th of May 2014, a Moment of Silence on the 21st of May 2014, staging mass protests from the 21st to the 23rd of May 2014 as well as placing an emphasis on the plights of the abducted schoolgirls on Africa Day and Children's Day.³¹ Meanwhile, in the United States of America, Becky and Paul Gadzama, a Nigerian couple from Yobe State, founded a non-governmental organisations called Education Must Continue Initiative, an organisations that plays host to several young Boko Haram victims in the United States of America thereby offering them a place of safety to recover and continue their education. The Gadzama would also go on to play a critical role bring some of the Chibok Girls to Abuja at the request of a United States delegation led by Republican Senator Christopher H. Smith so that the Americans could obtain first-hand accounts of life with Boko Haram.³² These interactions would later result in some of the girls addressing the American Congress and addressing charity

²⁹ Matt Collins, #BringBackOurGirls: The Power of a Social Media Campaign in *The Guardian*, 2014 <<https://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2014/may/09/bringbackourgirls-power-of-social-media>> accessed on 29 September 2019.

³⁰ Adekalu S. Olutokunbo *et al.*, "Bring Back Our Girls Social Mobilization: Implications for Cross-Cultural Research" in *Journal of Education and Practice*, no. 6(6), 2015, pp. 65-66.

³¹ ANCWL: Statement by ANC Women's League on the #BRINGBACKOURGIRLS Programme of Action, Polity 19.05.2014, <<https://www.polity.org.za/article/ancwl-statement-by-the-anc-womens-league-on-the-bringbackourgirls-programme-of-action-19052014-2014-05-19>> accessed on 11 October 2019.

³² Helon Habila, *The Chibok Girls*, London: Penguin Books, 2016, pp. 100-101.

events, often wearing sunglasses so as to make it harder for Boko Haram and Boko Haram sympathisers to know their identity.³³ This international activity angered the Nigerian authorities as some noted that the Chibok Girls were being taken overseas by Emanuel Ogebe to raise money and awareness without being allowed to continue with their education.³⁴ This prompted Nigeria's Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development to revoke Ogebe's pilferages of guardianship and transfer them to the ministry.³⁵ In addition to playing host to an awareness campaign, the Americans furthered their support of the Chibok Girls by granting 21 of them scholarship to attend the American University in Nigeria.³⁶ The 21 Chibok Girls turn scholars were given military protection so as to safeguard them from Boko Haram and unwanted scrutiny.³⁷

Using Twitter Binder the author determined the present-day popularity of the BringBackOurGirls hashtag. A six day analysis (15th-20th of October 2019) revealed that the hashtag was used by 343 Twitter users with each of them having an average following of 4, 190,18 followers. This highlights the continued and on-going reliance of the campaign thus highlighting how the Chibok Abductions have become a brand, even five years after the phenomenon.

Boko Haram

The international hype surrounding the Chibok Girls did not go unnoticed by Boko Haram with group releasing videos on the 5th and 12th of May 2014 to take advantage of the international media attention it was receiving. In fact, the group now had an ideal platform to take advantage of the situation to prolong its public relevance as a terrorist group; it achieved

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ A Stage Battle is Going on Over the Girls who Escaped Boko Haram and Came to the U.S., *Time*, 2016 <<https://time.com/4378328/boko-haram-chibok-us-bring-back-our-girls>> accessed on 11 October 2019.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ Vesna Markovic, Interview, 10 July 2019.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

this a gendered angle from four different ways. Firstly, as mentioned above, Boko Haram is a fractured terrorist group with conflicting loyalties. Following the Chibok Abductions, it was speculated that Boko Haram's various factions were collectively responsible for the abductions.³⁸ However, with emergence of ISWA on the 3rd of August 2016 allowed Boko Haram to adopt gendered differentiation making it clear that JAS was responsible for the abductions. From this perspective, it is imperative to note how JAS and ISWA have differing views on the role of women and young girls in war. While JAS deems it permissible to use female suicide bombers, ISWA deems it impermissible which made a gender a key reason as to why this factional schism exists.³⁹ The treatment of women and girls even extends to how they join Boko Haram. On the 19th of February 2018 110 schoolgirls were kidnapped from Dapchi, Yobe State, Nigeria; suspicion immodestly darted to Boko Haram. However, what fascinated many about this abduction was the raid release of the Dapchi Girls in comparison to the Chibok Girls given that the former was released only a month after their abductions. It is believed that ISWA abducted the Dapchi Girls with the hope of recreating the hype experienced with the Chibok Girls. Shortly after the abductions discord emerged within ISWA over how the faction would be perceived both within and outside of Nigeria.⁴⁰ Fearing public backlash, the group released all the girls on condition that they convert to Islam. Therefore, it the acts of differentiation and credibility are evident as ISWA wanted to ensure that it portrayed an image of 'respect' for the female gender as well as been seen as a proliferator and custodian of what it constitutes to be 'true' Islam.

Secondly, Boko Haram has deployed women and young girls in conflict. Boko Haram deployed its first female suicide bombers in June

³⁸ Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram and the Kidnapping of the Chibok Schoolgirls" in *Counter-Terrorism Centre Sentential*, no. 7(5), 2014, p. 5.

³⁹ Elizabeth Pearson, "Wilayat Shahadat: Boko Haram, the Islamic State, and the Question of the Female Suicide Bomber" in Jacob Zenn (ed.), *Boko Haram Beyond the Headlines: Analyses of Africa's Enduring Insurgency*, New York: The United States Military Academy, 2018, p. 33.

⁴⁰ Jasmine Opperman, Interview, 24 June 2019.

2014. Since then 53% of all suicide bombings associated with Boko Haram between 2011 and 2018 were undertaken by a woman or a girl.⁴¹ Some would argue that this occurrence is due to the fact that the female gender is expandable, however, this argument is rendered moot when one considers that Boko Haram is the first modern day jihadist terrorist group to use female dominant suicide squads⁴², which have been found to be less effective in heightening the death toll than individual suicide bombers⁴³; this suggests that Boko Haram, and JAS in particular, is more concerned with showcasing the female gender as opposed to killing enemies. Thirdly, Boko Haram has acquired extensive funds in return for releasing hostages. The group received 3 million and 5 million Euros for the release of the Chibok and Dapchi Girls respectively.⁴⁴ The nexus between schoolgirls and high ransom payments suggests that female abductees have an added brand-like quality given that increasing the value of a product is a purpose of a brand.⁴⁵

Thirdly, Boko Haram authenticated its Chibok Brand by staying true to its preference for female hostages overtime. Following the Chibok Abductions, Boko Haram attacked a village in the Kanuri Homelands; a female saviour noted that: “we all know what Boko Haram does to the men it captures. They shoot them dead. They just kidnap us women.”⁴⁶ Another mass abduction occurred in the town of Demask, Nigeria where an estimated 500 people were kidnapped. It remains unclear how many of the abductees were female as the Nigerian government tried to cover up this

⁴¹ Vesna Markovic, “Suicide Squad: Boko Haram’s use of the female suicide bomber” in *Women and Criminal Justice*, no.29, 2019, p. 12.

⁴² Jessica Davis, Interview, 17 June 2019.

⁴³ Jason Warner, Ellen Chapin, Hilary Matfess, “Suicide Squads: The Logic of Linked Suicide Bombings” in *Security Studies*, no. 28(1), 2018, p. 24.

⁴⁴ Jessica Davis, *op. cit.*.

⁴⁵ Kevin Lane Keller, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

⁴⁶ Wolfgang Bauer, *Stolen Girls: Survivors of Boko Haram Tell Their Story*, New York: The New Press, 2016, p. 88.

event.⁴⁷ In February 2018, in addition to the Dapchi Abductions, an addition 10 women\girls were kidnapped and returned to Maiduguri.⁴⁸ Between the 15th and 16th of July 2019, the Nigeran military rescued 500 women and young girls from Boko Haram in Bama Local Government Area; this prompted Boko Haram to issue a statement saying that it would rescue its wives.⁴⁹ Finally, and most recently, on the 29th of July 2019 Boko Haram raid a village in Kalagari, Far-North Region, Cameroon. An eye-witness reports: "they arrived during the night, entered the houses one by one and kidnapped women. Only women."⁵⁰ All of the above-mentioned events illustrate that Boko Haram continues to favour women and young girls in its attacks thus creating a sense of authenticity for the group's gender-centric Chibok Brand. The brand is further authenticated by group's international control mechanism. Terrorist groups are known for using symbols and behaviours to present an 'us versus them' narrative, which is usually accomplished by using symbols such as flags and other related symbols.⁵¹ This is also evident how Boko Haram has come to use the term Chibok as a control mechanism. From this perspective, Boko Haram would decapitate unwilling and uncooperative female members\hostages and then showing this head to the rest of the camp often saying that if other failed to campily, they would end off like this Chibok Girl who never associated with Chibok.⁵²

⁴⁷ Boko Haram Kidnapping Civilians to Use as "Human Shields", *The Voice*, 2015 <<https://www.voice-online.co.uk/article/boko-haram-kidnapping-civilians-use-human-shields>> accessed on 13 July 2019.

⁴⁸ James Okolie-Osemene, Rosemary Okolie-Osemene, "Nigerian Women and the Trends of Kidnapping in the Era of Boko Haram Insurgency: Patterns and Evolution" in *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, no. 30(6-7), 2019, p. 1159.

⁴⁹ Jasmine Opperman, *op. cit.*.

⁵⁰ Women Maimed as Boko Haram Strikes Terror in Cameroon, *Zenit*, 2019 <<https://zenit.org/articles/women-maimed-as-boko-haram-strikes-terror-in-cameroon>> accessed on 22 August 2019.

⁵¹ Tim Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-142.

⁵² Hilary Matfess, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81.

Discussion And Future Implications

At this point the reader may question the inclusion of the Nigerian state and the international community in this study given that the characteristics of a brand (differentiation, credibility and authenticity) were met when discussing the Chibok Brand in relation to Boko Haram. Accepting this premise would result in a negation of how the Chibok Brand emerged. From the above discussion we can see that Boko Haram did not desire for gender to become such a symbolic element of what Boko Haram has to offer. However, after witnessing the mass attention the Chibok Abductions attracted both domestically and internationally, the group sought to adopt a gendered brand so to sustain itself. Moreover, the annoyance the BBOGM caused the Nigerian government prompted the group to take advantage of BBOGM's portrayed narrative so as to further hurt its enemy, the Nigerian government. The above discussion shows that a considerable amount of symbolic thought has gone into establishing the BBOGM; therefore, it can be argued that the BBOGM can be classified as a kind of counter-narrative, one that speaks of loyalty, unity, nationalism and resilience. In return Boko Haram felt that it could use the hype of the Chibok Abductions to adopt a gendered brand. In response, key members of the BBOGM, albeit unsuccessful, ran for office during Nigeria's 2019 elections.⁵³ This is significant on two fronts. Firstly, the BBOGM's entrance into Nigeria's political fray signals that the movement was frustrated with the progress of responding to the Chibok Abductions that they need to take matters into their own hands. Secondly, the zealous nature with which the BBOGM was received turned the Chibok Girls into a political symbol; the entrance of the BBOGM into the political fray further significant as it illustrates a desire to become a counter-symbol, one that translates the core values of the BBOGM into political and/or legislative action.

The entanglement of a brand such as the one discussed in this paper, carries some implications. For one, it tells us that while terrorist

⁵³ Ini Ekott, "Facing Down the Political Establishment" in *Africa In Fact*, no. 48, 2019, p.101.

groups may not want to adopt particular brands or elements thereof, they are sometimes forced to do so, so as to ensure their sustainability in the long-term. This was the case with the Chibok Abductions. As a consequence, Boko Haram has shown itself to be a sophisticated terrorist group that is adaptable. As a subsequent consequence, state and international actors should exercise care to not place too fine a point on a circumstance so as not to provide terrorist groups with ammunition to build upon their brand so as to prolong its existence. This consequence is already beginning to show as the United Nations Children's Education Fund has, with good intention, tried to highlight the plight of children within the context of the Boko Haram conflict by using the hashtag *BringBackOurChildhood*. This is clearly a play on the *BringBackOurGirls* hashtag, which if not managed with care can result in Boko Haram adapting its brand again to include children. In some respects, this is already happening as the suicide bombers are becoming younger with girls making up 75% of Boko Haram's suicide's bombers.⁵⁴

Conclusion

This paper's objective was twofold. Firstly, the paper attempted to show that the Chibok Abductions of April 2014 became a political brand for the terrorist group Boko Haram. Secondly, the paper aimed to illustrate, unlike other brands adopted by terrorist groups, Boko Haram had little to no control over how the Chibok Brand emerged; thus, the Chibok Brand owes its existence to a three-dimensional sphere, namely: the Nigerian State, the international community and Boko Haram. The first objective was achieved by showing how the Chibok Abductions met the triangular criteria to be classed as brand. The brand has differentiation on two fronts as it allows factions within Boko Haram to showcase their preferences

⁵⁴ United Nations Children's Fund, *Beyond Chibok*, 2016 <https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/Beyond_Chibok.pdf>, accessed on 11 October 2019.

towards gender as well act as a counter-narrative and counter-political symbol for the BBOGM. Therefore, both Boko Haram and Nigerian civil society were able to offer their viewers something different as to what already existed on the market overtime. Credibility was proven as ISWA has stayed true to its doctrine by not using female suicide bombers or conducting mass abductions of schoolgirls so as to not hurt its favourable image. The BBOGM also retained its credibility by living up to its promise to never stop campaigning. Finally, the Chibok Brand obtains its authenticity by means of sustaining a sense of permanence. From the perspective of Boko Haram, attacks and subsequent eye-witness testimony has shown that women and girls remain a favourable target of group even 5 years after the group's mass incorporation of the female gender into its ranks. On the opposite side of the spectrum, one saw that the BBOGM has recently taken on political qualities by allowing its leaders to run for office thereby making its civil demands politically actionable.

While this paper has met its research objectives, its findings are limited by fact that it interrogates Boko Haram's branding initiatives from a gendered angle; by doing so, other important factors such as choice of weaponry, choice of clothing and style of leadership are all neglected. Henceforth, further research needs to address Boko Haram's branding from a much wider angle; by doing so scholars and policy makers should be able to paint a clear picture of how the factions seek to distinguish themselves, which of the factions is strongest and how one could go about engaging Boko Haram so as to aid the latter in making insightful and meaningful counter-terrorism policy adjustments.

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