

A Review by
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AGENCY:
Image Merchants Promotion

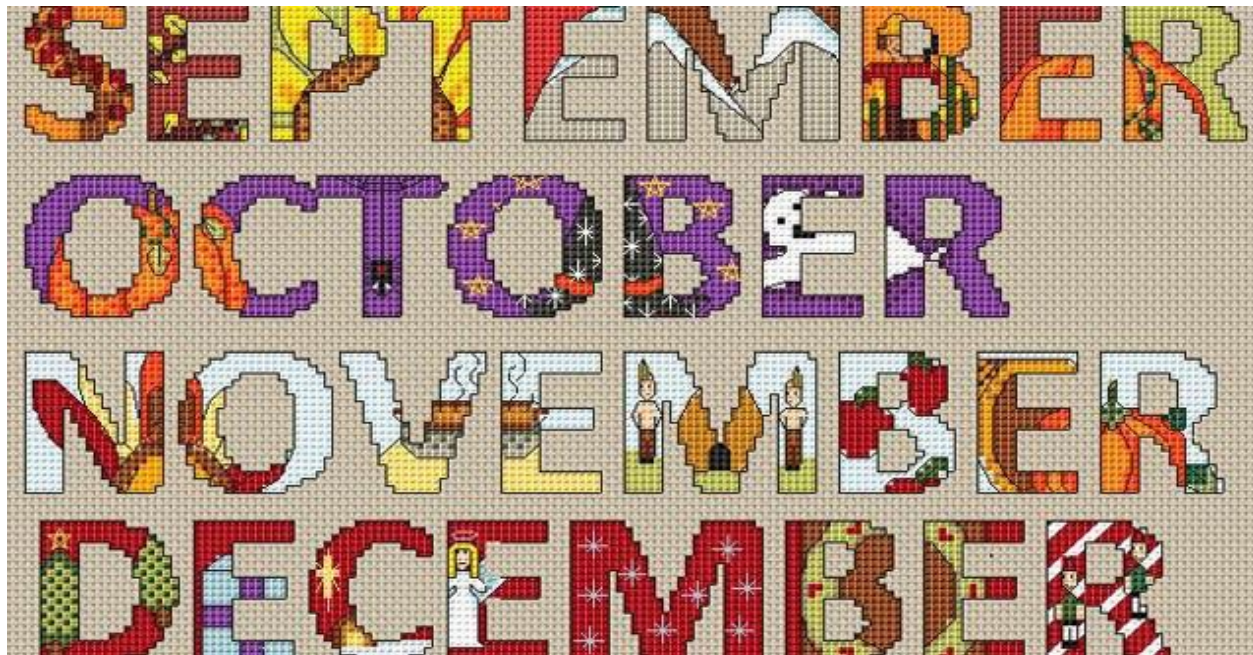
CLIENT: *Department of State Security (DSS)*

TITLE: *Tackling Fuel Scarcity in Ember Months*

SUMMARY

Summary: When fuel scarcity was lingering threatening the **Ember Months** (*September to December*) when holiday and merry makers do travel, the Nigeria secret Police, the Department of State Security (DSS) observed the activities of profiteers and saboteurs in the crisis.

Realizing the importance of crisis communication, DSS adopted proactive PR measures in addressing and tackling the lingering fuel scarcity.



Ember Months in Nigeria

The months in the last quarter of the year, generally referred to as the ember months starting from September, are often known to generate anxieties as a result of a heightened hustle and bustle with many Nigerians hurrying to meet targets and deadlines.

It is the final four months of the calendar year (September to December) considered together as a very busy period.

BACKGROUND

- The Ember Months are very significant in Nigeria as the final four months of the calendar year, September to December considered together as a very busy period for travellers and holiday makers to celebrate Xmas and New Year. It was therefore shocking when Nigerians, especially in Abuja, the capital city of the country were confronted with unprecedented fuel scarcity with long queue of vehicles at petrol/gas stations.
- Though the scarcity was attributed to some factors but in reality, there was a deliberate economic sabotage perpetrated by profiteers and racketeers over the agonising dilemma of the non-availability of the product.
- Concerned about the frightening development that was detrimental to the national security, the Department of State Services, DSS, (secret police), engaged stakeholders in the downstream sector and later gave them 48 hours ultimatum to end the lingering fuel scarcity across the country.
- Realizing that the importance of crisis communication, DSS adopt proactive PR measures by issuing press release, addressing the press and providing convincing reasons on why the fuel should be available.



PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

1. Profiteers and saboteurs exploit the system in ensuring the shortage of fuel supply that led to long queues at the fuelling stations
2. Black marketers also jerked the cost of fuel so high and unbearable for common men and women
3. Rising cost of transportation as fare increased by over 100 percent.
4. Hiking in the cost of food, living and doing businesses that rely on energy from fuel generators.
5. Worsened traffic on major roads as vehicle owners block lanes at filling stations.
6. Lack of proper communication towards tackling problems



OPPORTUNITY:

- Opportunity: DSS is alive to its primary, statutory mandate of surveillance, intelligence gathering, detection, prevention, and arrest of persons whose actions pose danger to public or national security.
- The intervention of the secret police in fuel scarcity is to ensure normalcy was restored and observed that demands were met while distribution and check of hoarding and diversion of fuel by oil marketers were monitored.



OBJECTIVES OF THE PR CAMPAIGN

1. To ensure that the lingering fuel scarcity did not degenerate into a national risk that can endanger peace and security of the country.
2. To deploy pre-crisis engagements with critical stakeholders;
3. To respond with that concise and comprehensive early warning against those involved in fuel scarcity.
4. To provide security for seamless distribution of the petroleum products across the country.



LOCATION AND ENDORSEMENTS

Geographic Location:

Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria

Targets of the Campaign:

- Oil marketers
- Downstream Stakeholders
- Media
- Nigerian citizens

Theme:

Tackling Fuel Scarcity in Ember Months

Communication Tactics:

- Media Relations
- Criss Communication
- Stakeholders Engagement
- Social media

STAGES

During the campaign, DSS accomplished four phases of Crisis management.

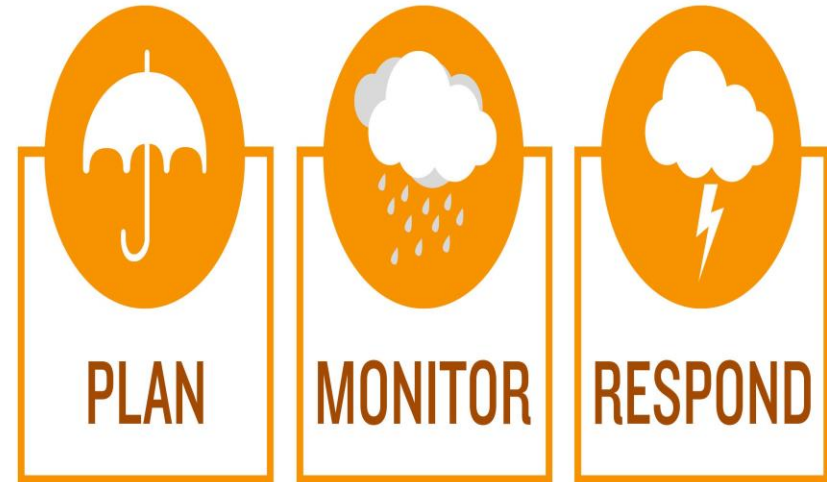
Pre-crisis stage: The DSS was alive to its responsibilities of surveillance, intelligence gathering and studying the trend of events and factors responsible for the scarcity and discovered the activities of economic saboteurs

Crisis stage: The agency observed that the fuel scarcity in the Ember Months when citizens were planning to travel for Seasonal holidays was worsening and taking alarming situations that could easily undermine national security through likely mass protests and demonstrations. The DSS therefore summoned an emergency meeting with stakeholders where the service provided it findings on the security situation and activities of the saboteurs.

Response stage: At the stakeholders' engagement, NNPC agreed to decentralize distributions to marketers. DSS agreed to provide security for the seamless distribution of the products. With the commitments from the stakeholders, the service issued a press release on a 48-hour ultimatum to oil marketers to put an end to the fuel scarcity or risk security sanctions. The DSS sustained the campaign with spontaneous and timely media chats to get the buy-in of the media and the citizens.

Post-crisis stage (resolution phase): A Day after the DSS' 48-hours ultimatum to oil industry stakeholders, 23 filling stations in Abuja commenced 24-hours operations as NNPC decentralised distribution of the products. The long queues at fuel stations also miraculously disappeared.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS



◦ **Creative Solutions:**

The timely release of the handed down of a 48-hour ultimatum to marketers through strategic press briefings and strong warnings was desirable.

◆ **Difficulty eliminated:**

Since broadcast media could not rely on the official release alone, the DSS provided opportunities for them to have physical as well as live media chats for the benefit of audiences of the electronic media



OUTCOMES

Full Compliance: The Nigerian oil regulators and marketers immediately complied with the directive that decongest fueling stations of long queue of motorists with some fuel station operating 24hrs.

Reversal of Fare: With the availability of fuel at the stations, it curtail black market, while transportation fare was reversed to affordable rate

Media Buy-in: Realising the import of the crisis to commuters in Ember Months, the media amplified the DSS' 48-ultimatum which exerted pressure on marketers and saboteurs on the consequence of the anticipated clampdown.



OUTCOMES

- **Blissful Xmas/New Year:** The fears of many families were allayed as they could afford to travel for Xmas and New Year with the availability of fuels.
- **Public Trust:** The image of DSS was enhanced as a responsible security agency that ensure and sustain peace, security and harmony in Ember month.
- **Awards of Recognition:** The service received several awards of recognitions for making impact to the life of citizens



BEFORE AND DURING THE CAMPAIGN

Unending Burden of Fuel Scarcity Impact in the FCT

<https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/07/18/unending-burden-of-fuel-scarcity-impact-in-the-fct/amp/>

Nigerians in limbo over fuel scarcity, poverty, other miseries as 2022 winds down

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/dailypost.ng/2022/11/30/nigerians-in-limbo-over-fuel-scarcity-poverty-other-miseries-as-2022-winds-down/%3famp=1>

Real reasons fuel scarcity persists across Nigeria –

Marketers <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/567808-real-reasons-fuel-scarcity-persists-across-nigeria-marketers.html#:~:text=The%20Independent%20Petroleum%20Association%20of,accessing%20foreign%20exchange%20by%20marketers.>

Fuel scarcity worsens across Nigeria, grounds economic activities <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/515707-fuel-scarcity-worsens-across-nigeria-grounds-economic-activities.html>

NNPC meets marketers as petrol scarcity bites

harder <https://www.google.com/amp/s/punchng.com/nnpc-meets-marketers-as-petrol-scarcity-bites-harder/%3famp>

DSS Gives Nnpc, Ipman, Nupeng, Others 48 Hours To End Fuel Scarcity

<https://guardian.ng/life/spotlight/dss-gives-nnpc-ipman-nupeng-others-48-hours-to-end-fuel-scarcity/>

Nigerian regulators, oil marketers agree to end prolonged fuel scarcity after SSS threat

<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/business/569761-nigerian-regulators-oil-marketers-agree-to-end-prolonged-fuel-scarcity-after-sss-threat.html>

Fuel scarcity: Situation improves after DSS ultimatum

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.vanguardngr.com/2022/12/fuel-scarcity-situation-improves-after-dss-ultimatum/amp/>

Fuel Scarcity: After DSS Ultimatum, Marketers and NNPC Comply

<https://economicconfidential.com/2022/12/fuel-scarcity-after-dss/>

Fuel scarcity: Following DSS 48 hours ultimatum, NNPC releases 1.9bn litres

PMS <https://nigeriannewsdirect.com/fuel-scarcity-following-dss-48-hours-ultimatum-nnpc-releases-1-9bn-litres-pms/>

Fuel Scarcity: NAPGCO Commends NNPC For Slashing Pump Price To Ease

Queues <https://independent.ng/fuel-scarcity-napgco-commends-nnpc-for-slashing-pump-price-to-ease-queues/>