

Indigenous Music as a Strategic Resource in Corporate Branding and Digital Public Engagement in Nigeria

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Abstract

In recent years, the convergence of culture, digital communication and corporate branding has gained much research interest. The use of cultural resources has become a key communication practice in a competitive environment as organisations look for innovative methods to connect with diverse audiences in a digital space. This study explores the contribution of indigenous music to corporate cultural communication, and examines how indigenous music has been adopted by corporate organisations in Nigeria for the creation of brand image (between 2018 and 2026) to promote the participation of digital public in the music embodied in their advertisements. The study is qualitative, drawing on Cultural Identity Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory. It undertook content analysis of select corporate advertising campaigns, and in-depth interviews of communication practitioners, ethnomusicologists and media audiences in Lagos, Abuja and Ibadan. Results show that indigenous music can serve as a symbolic communication tool that can be used strategically to improve emotional resonance, cultural authenticity, audience recall, and participatory interaction. The research also shows that audiences' emotional bonds and engagement with a corporate campaign are more profound when the campaign incorporates indigenous music than when it does not. But the findings also highlight some issues around the commercialisation of culture and its tendency to symbolise and superficially represent indigenous culture in the commercial communication process. The paper posits that the music of indigenous people has transcended their traditional and ceremonial roles to become a strategic tool in corporate communication in the digital media space in Nigeria. The study concludes that organisations that incorporate indigenous musical traditions into their branding activities are more successful in their audience localisation, and culturally relevant to digitally active Nigerians. The paper recommends that the deployment of ethnomusicological resources, in the context of branding and public engagement strategies, should be culturally ethical and context-sensitive.

Keywords: Brand localisation; corporate communication; digital culture; indigenous music; public engagement.

Introduction

Communication technologies and digital media culture have undergone a dramatic change, which has profoundly influenced the organisation of business communication in the present-day world. Organisations have to work in a competitive landscape in which media convergence, fragmentation of audiences, and pressures to maintain public relevance through emotionally charged communication strategies have come into play. As such, corporate communication has turned from the mere transfer of information to the creation of a multi-dimensional process that includes symbolic interaction, identity negotiation and cultural representation (Cornelissen, 2020).

In a multicultural society like Nigeria, cultural identity is deeply enmeshed in the communication process and in understanding audiences. The use of culturally resonant elements in the branding campaigns and public engagement activities of corporate organisations is becoming more common to increase emotional connections and symbolic familiarity of consumers. Music has a strategic role to play within these cultural resources due to its emotional, mnemonic and symbolic offerings.

Music serves not only as entertainment, but as a communicative device that helps communities keep collective memory alive, establish identity and share social norms (Merriam, 1964). In African societies, music has traditionally served communicative roles in the context of ritual, political organisation and mobilisation, oral tradition and social communication and social regulation (Nketia, 1974).

In spite of the growing exposure of Nigerian peoples to the world's "media culture" and "digital modernity", the indigenous musical cultures of Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Tiv and other ethnic groups continue to affect social interaction. Ethnomusicology being, in its broadest sense, the study of music in the context of society and culture, gives valuable insight into the symbolic communication of indigenous music. Titon (2009) argues that meaning is created in music as a result of participation, collective experience and social interaction. Indigenous music is, therefore, more than an art form - it is a cultural communication system that is deeply rooted in the collective consciousness and identity of any people.

In the period between 2018 and 2026, Nigerian corporate organisations embraced indigenous music more than ever in their branding efforts, digital advertising campaigns and public relations campaigns. Talking drums, folk chants, praise poetry, indigenous percussion and multilingual musical structures have often been deployed by telecommunications companies, beverage brands, financial institutions and entertainment brands in audiovisual campaigns to bolster audience localisation and emotional connections. The growing use of locally sourced music within a corporate branding strategy is part of the ongoing global communication trend of localisation, authenticity and emotional branding.

Digital communication environments promote more active audience engagement with culturally known content that can fulfill emotional and symbolic requirements

(Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Likewise, Dijck (2013) notes that through digital culture, communication shapes based on identity, familiarity and participatory interaction, which are becoming more popular.

Indigenous music in Nigeria has a symbolic meaning: it reminds people of their own history, culture and feelings. Corporate campaigns that incorporates indigenous musical sounds often feels more real and relatable to audiences because they aligns with their cultural experiences. These campaigns tend to drive a significant amount of engagement on Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Facebook, typically by encouraging dance recreations, remixes and audience-generated engagement.

The increasing rivalry in business has also prompted organisations to come up with communication approaches that are able to engage audiences better and maintain public relevance. Indigenous musical instruments in Nigeria are now being used in wider dimensions to capture audience attention in branding efforts, digital ads and public relations programs due to the cultural diversity. While they have grown more visible since 2018 and are projected to be even more so through the end of 2026, communicative consequences and cultural validity of such practices are still unclear.

There are several organisations that seem to use traditional music as a way to profit from it and don't seem to be very careful of the significance of such music. This sometimes makes indigenous music into a marketing symbol instead of a culture expression. Thus a question is raised about the cultural appreciation of the use of indigenous music in corporate settings or whether it is a mere commercialisation of indigenous identity to catch the audience's interest. In addition, digital media environments have further spread culturally infused campaigns through Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Facebook. The use of local music for corporate campaigns often receives a lot of attention online, reflecting in dance recreations, remixes and audience participation. Yet, there exist few empirical studies on the specific ways that indigenous music can affect the process of corporate identity formation by impacting public engagement with communication environments in Nigeria.

Current research on communication in Nigeria has focused mainly on digital marketing, convergence of media and persuasion in advertising, and has often given lesser importance to the ethnomusicological aspect of corporate branding. Likewise in Africa, ethnomusicology has concentrated mainly on performance traditions and cultural preservation instead of strategic communication practices. This gap justifies the need for this study since it contributes to ethnomusicology, corporate communication and cultural studies. It offers empirical insight into the role of indigenous music in branding processes and the impact on audience engagement and brand identity in Nigeria.

The aim of this study is to analyse the use of indigenous music in corporate cultural communication in Nigeria from 2018 to 2026. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to investigate: How Nigerian corporate organisations use indigenous music to build their brands; The effect of indigenous music on digital public engagement with corporate brands; Audience perceptions about the incorporation of indigenous

music in corporate communication; and Challenges of incorporating indigenous music in branding and public engagement.

This study is significant because of the contributions to ethnomusicology, corporate communication and cultural studies. The paper offers an understanding of the role that indigenous cultural resources play in contemporary branding contexts, and how organisations ensure balance in cultural identity within digitally mediated communication systems. It also helps to clarify the importance of indigenous music in the construction of emotion and participatory interaction in contemporary media culture.

Literature Review

Ethnomusicology and Indigenous Communication

Ethnomusicology focuses on music as a social and cultural phenomenon embedded in a community experience. Among the more recent studies, Merriam (1964) views music as a symbolic behavioural system that embodies collective identity, social interaction and cultural values. Ethnomusicology is more concerned with music and society than the traditional musicology, with a particular focus on the communicative role of musical expression.

In African societies, indigenous music continues to serve as a means of maintaining oral tradition, social control and community cohesion (Nketia, 1974). Nigerian indigenous music also serves communicative roles not confined to entertainment but also in the context of ritual activity, conflict resolution, political mobilisation and communal participation.

There is a certain amount of scholarship in recent years to show that the place of indigenous music in digital media environments is strategic. Aloysius et al. (2021) notes that the use of digitisation has increased the communicative importance of indigenous music from Nigeria in the current media ecology. Likewise, Moshugi (2022) contends that the study of African music is more and more focused on embodiment, participation, and digital mediation in the current communication landscape.

Indigenous Music and Corporate Branding

Corporate branding is the strategic communication, symbolism and emotional building of an organisation's identity. Currently, more and more contemporary organisations utilise culture in their branding strategies to deepen the bonds between participants and symbolic familiarity. Indigenous music is an important tool for corporate branding in Nigeria given the fact that cultural musical sounds have a nostalgic effect, making one feel a sense of belonging and emotional identification. Ojo and Smith (2024) believe that incorporating indigenous cultural symbols can greatly enhance audience engagement and bolster local acceptance of corporate brands.

African beats and multilingual musical forms are now being used more and more in corporate advertising campaigns to emphasise cultural inclusiveness and emotional impact, with MTN Nigeria, Globacom and Maltina becoming some of the latest companies to use the indigenous rhythms and musical forms. These practices illustrate how more and more indigenous culture is being integrated into strategic branding.

Digital Public Engagement with Indigenous Music

Audiences have influenced the outlook of corporate communication due to the enabling nature of digital media environments. Social media allows audiences to re-interpret, remix and re-distribute communication materials in an interactive way, rather than just being solely consumers.

The contribution of indigenous music to participatory communication is that it brings familiarity and symbolic identification. The ethnomusicological resources promote reciprocity and participatory interaction in digital communication spaces (Bruinders, 2022). Indigenous music-inspired corporate campaigns often result in increased online engagement in the form of dance recreations, remixes and audience-generated material.

Nwagwu (2024) notes that digital media platforms are increasingly playing a significant role in increasing participation of Nigerians in indigenous music. Indigenous music is thus not only used in a ritualistic way, but also within the environment of contemporary digital branding.

Cultural Commodification and Symbolic Appropriation

Although music has communicative value, there are ethical issues with the introduction of indigenous music in the context of branding, such as commodification and symbolic appropriation. There are several organisations that make use of indigenous musical forms in a superficial manner, with little regard for their historical and cultural values.

According to Okpeki (2025), as commercialisation of indigenous music traditions grows, younger generation of Nigerians are facing an authentic challenge. Likewise, Eke and Adeyemi (2024) warn that sometimes the digital culture of indigenous communication focuses more on commercial attraction rather than preservation. These concerns are indicative of the need to promote culturally ethical communication practices in corporate branding contexts.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural Identity Theory

Cultural Identity Theory suggests that people create and present their identities with reference to common cultural symbols, values, experiences and communicative practices. Cultural identity is not static, but it is being produced and reproduced within systems of representation that allow people to identify themselves as being members of a specific cultural community (Hall, 1997). Communication symbols

such as language, music, rituals and cultural artefacts are thus important in the formation of collective identity and a sense of belonging.

This theory is based on the premise that listeners and receivers of communication messages understand them in terms of their cultural experiences. Familiar cultural symbols lead to identification, emotional attachment and positive responses from the audience because they evoke shared meanings and collective memories. Thus, when communicating in a way that uses cultural elements that are understood and appreciated by the recipient, the communication is more effective.

The theory is useful for comprehending the strategic application of indigenous music in the branding and engagement activities of corporations. Indigenous music represents cultural significance, historical experiences and values that are deeply rooted in the Nigerian society. It is also a cultural symbol that can be used as a medium to transmit messages which audiences can see as authentic, familiar and socially relevant to them.

This study corroborates the assumptions of Cultural Identity Theory. The analysis showed that MTN Nigeria, Globacom Nigeria, Airtel Nigeria, MTN Live, Maltina, Guinness Nigeria and Access Bank Nigeria strategically integrated indigenous musical components like talking drums, indigenous chants, folk songs, and indigenous percussion to localise their messages and enhance audience brand identification. The positive comments on the part of the audience during the interviews suggest that they perceived these musical aspects as not only creative advertising tools but a symbol of cultural identity as well.

The study revealed that the audience experienced feelings of cultural pride, nostalgia, familiarity and belonging when listening to indigenous music. The emotional reactions, thus, show the capacity of cultural symbols to trigger collective memory and strengthen cultural identification. Additionally, the regular use of indigenous music and its associations with authenticity and trustworthiness indicate brands using culturally familiar sounds are generally perceived as being more attuned to social realities and to cultural experiences.

The theory also provides an explanation as to why indigenous music is more captivating when placed in advertisements. Indigenous music is embedded in their common culture experiences and has the power to enable audiences to connect with campaign messages, engage in communication processes, and build greater emotional ties with brands. The amount of participation in the sing-along, in social media, in dance recreations and in recalling messages can then be read as results of the process of cultural identification mediated via symbolic communication.

Cultural Identity Theory also offers some information to explain the concerns addressed about cultural appropriation and superficial representations. Cultural symbols have strong social and emotional connotations, and therefore can be seen as problematic when they are used without cultural understanding and respect. Most of the participants' concerns about the commercialisation of indigenous traditions

indicate that it is expected that cultural resources organisations engage with cultural resources in ways that maintain cultural meaning and authenticity.

Cultural Identity Theory presents a very useful theoretical tool for explaining the results of this study. It shows how local music can be used as a symbolic communication tool to improve the localisation of the brand, create more emotional connections, consolidate culture and foster audience participation. The theory thus sets a strong relationship between strategic use of native musical features and successful corporate branding and public engagement campaigns in Nigeria.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and Gratifications Theory, developed by Katz et al. (1974), suggests that audiences seek out media content that can fulfil their emotional, social and psychological needs. Nigerian audiences respond to cultural musical themes; therefore, indigenous music is a good medium to use for communication campaigns. In other words, campaigns with indigenous musical components are more likely to be accepted and participated in by audiences because they embody the cultural values and lived experiences of the target audience. Williams & Ekwueme (2022) opine that indigenous music is a vital means of sustaining cultural heritage and strengthening communal identity among Nigerians. Indigenous music elicits feelings of belonging and cultural pride through traditional rhythms, local languages and culturally familiar stories. This means that listeners are more likely to connect with messages in communications that are set to culturally appropriate musical structures. The emotional bond between Nigerians and indigenous musical genre is manifested by the continued use and utilisation of the traditional genres of music in the various regions of Nigeria.

Styles like apala, juju, fuji and sakara are still popular among the Yoruba people. Likewise, the Igbo highlife culture and Hausa folk music are still in existence and still popular in the world even with the rise of popular culture. Hence, they are very relevant in Nigerian societies as they have been witnessed during festivals, religious activities, political gatherings, and social gatherings (Omojola, 2020). Studies also indicate that culturally relevant music can be used to increase the effectiveness of messages in development and public communication campaigns. Manyozo (2019) believes that when communication interventions are based on symbols and artistic expression that are familiar within a particular culture, it is likely to be more successful because it involves people in the conversation and causes them to feel involved.

While many contemporary Nigerian artistes incorporate global influences with local sounds, there are several artistes that have made a successful career using indigenous languages, traditional instruments and cultural motifs. This study notes that people become very attached to songs that portray their cultural values and social realities (Adedeji, 2021). Afrobeat, Afropop and indigenous gospel music are the current trends that are being embraced, reflecting how cultural authenticity is still influencing public taste. The sentimentalism of cultural themes for music in Nigeria can also be explained using the cultural identity theory.

Hall (1997) argues that culture is created by the shared history, symbols and culture practice. One way in which music plays a significant role in the expression of a people's identity is through the links with their heritage and shared experiences. In Nigeria, songs sung in indigenous languages have a tendency to stir up memories, feelings and cultural connections - songs that go beyond entertainment.

Transmission of messages via familiar cultural frames is more authentic than via unfamiliar or foreign cultural frames. Development communication efforts are more successful if they are based on local cultural contexts and community values (Servaes, 2020). Indigenous music thus is a connector between the messengers and the hearers, assisting them to comprehend and accept the messages of the campaign. Nigerians' sensitivity to cultural themes in their music has also been confirmed by evidence provided in the political communication arena. Indigenous songs, praise chants and traditional musical performances are frequently used to mobilise supporters and establish emotional links between political parties/candidates and voters during election campaigns. Both of these strategies have continued in practice, in line with the understanding that music is still a potent medium for shaping public opinion and mobilising masses (Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2022).

Methodology

The design for this study was qualitative research to look at the strategic use of indigenous musical elements and their effect on the audiences of corporate branding campaigns in Nigeria. Qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviews were used to gather data. Content analysis was on the 24 Ads of the six leading brands in Nigeria (MTN Nigeria, Globacom, Guinness Nigeria, Maltina, Airtel Nigeria, and Access Bank) for the period of 2018 to 2025.

Advertisements were pre-selected using the criteria of national dissemination, visibility of the audience, and use of talking drums, folk songs, praise poetry, traditional percussion and chants in indigenous languages. Musical content, lyrics, visual cultural symbols, cues to involve the audience and integration of the brand and culture were the units of analysis. A coding framework was devised based on themes to detect patterns and themes around cultural symbolism, emotional resonance, audience engagement and localisation strategies (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted with a purposive sample from the participants in the content analysis, from Lagos, Abuja and Ibadan. The sample included advertising/marketing professionals ($n = 6$), communication practitioners/brand strategists ($n = 4$), ethnomusicologists/cultural scholars ($n = 4$), and consumers who were exposed to the chosen campaigns ($n = 6$). Participants were chosen based on their professional background and their cultural knowledge and familiarity with music-based advertising campaigns.

Data collection continued until thematic saturation was reached in which no further insights were gained from subsequent interviews. Interviews transcripts and advertising material were analysed using the Braun and Clarke's (2022) thematic analysis approach. The emerging themes from the datasets were compared and

combined to give a comprehensive idea about the use of indigenous music as a cultural branding tool in present day advertising in Nigeria. In order to provide credibility, methodological triangulation was used by combining the data of the content analysis and interview. Issues about informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity were satisfactorily addressed in the study.

Analysis and Findings

The analysis of 24 advertisements and 20 in-depth interviews revealed that indigenous music performs several strategic functions in corporate branding campaigns in Nigeria. The data generated four major themes: cultural localisation and identity construction; emotional resonance and audience recall; audience participation and digital engagement; and concerns relating to cultural appropriation and authenticity.

Localisation and Identity Construction

The content analysis showed that 20 of the 24 advertisements employed indigenous music primarily for cultural purposes, enabling brands to localise their messages and reinforce cultural identity. Common musical elements included folk chants, traditional percussion, indigenous songs and performances in local languages.

The use of culturally responsive musical forms was consistently evident in campaigns by MTN Nigeria and Globacom. For example, MTN incorporated talking drums and indigenous rhythmic patterns into festive campaigns, while Globacom used similar musical traditions in promotional advertisements to establish familiarity with local audiences.

Interview participants similarly regarded these musical elements as effective in strengthening the relationship between brands and consumers. One of the participants observed that "People can hear a talking drum or a familiar folk rhythm and there is a cultural connection there right away; the brand instantly feels closer and more relatable." (Marketing Executive, Participant 4). An ethnomusicologist expressed a similar view: "Indigenous music provides a cultural context to the commercial music which is easily recognised by audiences and can be understood from their daily life experience." (Ethnomusicologist, Participant 12).

These findings suggest that indigenous music functions as an important marker of cultural identity, enhancing perceptions of authenticity and local relevance. The indigenous musical elements identified in the selected campaigns are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Indigenous Musical Elements Identified in Select Campaigns

Musical Element	Frequency(n= 24)	Brands
Talking drums	9	MTN, Globacom, Access Bank
Folk songs	6	Maltina, Guinness
Traditional percussion	5	Airtel, MTN

Praise poetry	2	Access Bank
Indigenous chants	2	Globacom, Malta

Emotional Resonance and Audience Recall

The second theme relates to the emotional influence of indigenous music on audience engagement. Interview participants consistently associated indigenous musical themes with nostalgia, cultural pride, belonging and emotional attachment. Consumers frequently reported that culturally familiar music enhanced both the memorability of advertisements and their emotional appeal. Reflecting this perspective, one consumer stated:

"When I hear traditional sounds in an advert, I instantly think of home. That's a very powerful feeling that's going to stay in my mind much longer than any kind of advert." (Consumer, Participant 17). Another consumer similarly remarked: "It makes you feel proud of the music; it reminds you of your culture, so you remember the brand." (Consumer, Participant 19)

The content analysis further showed that advertisements featuring indigenous music frequently combined cultural symbols, local language expressions and communal settings. Together, these elements can strengthen emotional engagement and improve message recall. The emotional responses most commonly associated with indigenous music were:

- i. Cultural pride
- ii. Nostalgia and memory recall
- iii. Sense of belonging

The dominant emotional associations identified are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Dominant Emotional Associations Identified

Emotional Theme	Number of References
Cultural pride	18
Nostalgia	15
Sense of belonging	14
Excitement	11
Community attachment	10

Audience Participation and Digital Engagement

The analysis also indicated that indigenous music influenced audience participation in both offline and online contexts. Several campaigns incorporated sing-along formats, repetitive choruses and call-and-response structures that encouraged audiences to participate actively.

Advertisements produced by Maltina and Globacom frequently employed musical formats that encouraged viewers to participate in social media challenges, recreate dance routines and generate user-created content.

According to a communication practitioner: "Music invites people to be involved in the campaign, not just watching, and it becomes part of their daily life when people start to sing along or recreate a dance." (Communication Practitioner, Participant 8). A consumer relayed a similar observation: "I have shared adverts primarily because of the music; sometimes the music is remembered before the product." (Consumer, Participant 20).

The campaign analysis showed that advertisements featuring indigenous music promoted audience engagement through:

- i. Dance challenges
- ii. Social media reposts
- iii. Sing-along participation
- iv. Community discussions

The principal forms of audience engagement are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Audience Engagement Features

Engagement Feature	Frequency
Sing-along elements	10
Dance participation	8
Call-and-response structures	4
Social media challenge formats	2

Indigenous Music as a Sign of Brand Authenticity

Another recurring theme was the perception that indigenous music enhanced brand authenticity. Many participants associated culturally grounded musical expressions with trustworthiness, familiarity and corporate social responsibility. A brand strategist commented: "Consumers are now demanding that brands look like them, and indigenous music can be a good indicator of a brand that is beholden to its consumers." (Brand Strategist, Participant 6). These perceptions were particularly evident in campaigns associated with national celebrations, festive occasions and community-based initiatives. Such campaigns were generally viewed as being more culturally sensitive and socially relevant. Despite these favourable perceptions, participants also expressed concerns regarding the commercialisation of indigenous music.

Several interviewees argued that some brands appeared to exploit indigenous musical traditions primarily as marketing tools rather than engaging meaningfully with the cultures they sought to represent. A participant explained "There is a difference

between celebrating culture and exploiting culture. Some of the campaigns are using traditional music as a mere decoration without the cultural significance of those traditional elements being taken into consideration." (Ethnomusicologist, Participant 13). Similarly, a communication practitioner observed that "Consumers are becoming more discerning. They recognise when a brand is genuinely engaging with culture and when it is simply attempting to appear culturally relevant." (Communication Practitioner, Participant 7).

The content analysis identified instances of symbolic appropriation and superficial representation where indigenous musical elements were incorporated without sufficient cultural context. Table 4 summarises participants' perceptions of the principal challenges associated with the use of indigenous music in advertising.

Table 4: Perceived Challenges Associated with the Use of Indigenous Music in Advertising

Challenge	References
Cultural appropriation	9
Superficial representation	8
Commercialisation of tradition	7
Cultural stereotyping	5

Summary of Findings

The findings demonstrate that indigenous music serves as a strategic instrument of cultural communication in contemporary branding campaigns in Nigeria. Four principal functions emerged from the analysis - cultural localisation, emotional resonance, audience participation, and the construction of brand authenticity. Further, the study highlights concerns regarding cultural appropriation, superficial representation and the commercialisation of indigenous musical traditions. Overall, the findings suggest that indigenous music can strengthen connections between brands and consumers; however, its effective use requires cultural sensitivity, authenticity and meaningful engagement with the cultural heritage from which the music is derived.

Discussion of Findings

Indigenous Music as a Corporate Brand Building Tool among Corporate Organisations in Nigeria

The result indicates that indigenous music has emerged as a great strategic tool in the branding process of corporate organisations in Nigeria. Talking drums and folk songs, indigenous chants and traditional percussion were used in many of the campaigns analysed, reflecting the growing awareness of organisations about the use of cultural resources to reinforce the brand and audience connection. Brands use indigenous music elements to 'localise' their messaging, add cultural relevance and establish deeper emotional connections with consumers. This observation aligns with

Salawu's (2023) assertion that indigenous cultural expressions are still strong tools for communication as they bridge messages and the lived experiences, values and identities of local audiences.

The results are also congruent with the views of Owens-Ibie (2021) that communication messages created from the local cultural realities often have higher acceptability because they are more likely to relate to the expectations and social experiences of audiences. Incorporating indigenous music into the branding efforts of organisations can help them place their brand in easily understood cultural contexts, which can improve brand authenticity and credibility perceptions.

Why does Indigenous Music Matter to Digital Public Involvement with Corporate Brands?

The results show that indigenous music is an important factor in the digital public participation in corporate brands. Indigenous Music Language based ads resulted in more audience engagement in sing-a-longs, dance recreations, sharing of social media and community discussion. This implies an enabling of participatory communication through the music and the invitation for the audience to go beyond passive reception, to be active.

The results support the earlier findings of Oyesomi, Salawu and Daramola (2022) who aver that audiences respond positively to communication content that resonates with their cultural experiences and identities. From this, it seems like Indigenous music presents the opportunity for emotional and cultural connection, and encourages audiences to engage in brand conversations and activities.

The collectiveness and performativeness of indigenous music can also be seen as an explanation for the stimulating effect it has on participation. African traditional music has communal elements that involve singing, dancing and responding to the music. These can be incorporated into digital campaigns and modified into social media challenges, user-generated content or audience driven engagement activities.

The results also corroborate Manyozo (2019) who argues that culturally relevant communication approaches improve participation by making audiences feel a sense of belonging to the communication messages. This research sought to use indigenous music as a tool to engage the audience and to give the corporate message a wider reach beyond the traditional advertising medium. Thus, the use of indigenous music constitutes a branding asset and a participatory communication approach that enhances digital connection and interaction with the audience.

The perception of audience regarding incorporation of indigenous music in corporate communication

The results suggest a positive general response of the viewers towards the use of indigenous music in corporate communication. Participants continually connected indigenous music with authenticity, cultural pride, familiarity, trustworthiness and community belonging. Their perceptions about indigenous music indicate that it plays a vital role in the evaluation and response of people towards corporate communication campaign.

The reactions from the audience reinforce Oso's (2020) argument that indigenous communication forms still have significant relevance as they represent the cultural realities and social experiences of the local communities. It seems that indigenous music serves as a cultural sign that enables people to perceive and understand the communication messages more easily.

The findings also corroborate the assertion of Owens-Ibie (2021) that indigenous cultural expression-based communication messages tend to be more acceptable and credible. Often, culturally embedded advertisements were said to be more memorable and emotionally stimulating than those without indigenous cultural components. This means that indigenous music helps to embed messages thereby fostering audiences' emotional connection with brands.

Another discovery is the sense of authenticity. Often, indigenous music was reported to make brands feel more authentic and socially integrated. The observation is a further proof that audiences are more and more appreciative of cultural authenticity for corporate communication. Brands that are able to show an understanding of local cultural values are seen as more trustworthy and more relatable than brands whose strategies are based on generic or imported communication styles.

Conclusively, the results indicate that local music has positive effect in establishing the audiences's perception, which in turn is manifested by increased cultural identification, emotional involvement and trust in corporate communication messages.

Indigenous music is facing challenges in its incorporation into branding and public engagements

There are challenges around incorporating Indigenous music into branding and public engagements. While some of the benefits of indigenous music were identified, there were some difficulties found in the use of indigenous music in branding campaigns. Predominant among the challenges are the issues of cultural

appropriation, superficial representation, commercialisation of tradition, and cultural stereotyping.

The participants expressed the concern that there seemed to be instances where groups were using indigenous music as a marketing device rather than appreciating the cultural traditions that they were portraying. This reflects the increasing consciousness of audiences that cultural representation in corporate communication has ethical implications. Servaes (2020) posits that culturally driven communication should not be an imitation of local cultural symbols but an engagement with local culture. The insertion of cultural elements without understanding and respect, therefore, can result in messages that are considered exploitative.

In a similar vein, Salawu (2023) cautions that indigenous cultural resources must not be commercialised and stripped of their original social and cultural values. Audiences' concerns indicate that they are increasingly able to differentiate between genuine representation of culture and appropriation of culture.

The results also show concerns with cultural stereotyping. Representations of indigenous practices that are simplified or selective can help to foster limited understandings of cultural identities, and fail to capture the diversity of the Nigerian society. The importance of involving cultural experts, cultural stakeholders and indigenous knowledge holders in the use of cultural resources in branding campaigns is clearly emphasised.

In general, the results indicate that cultural sensitivity and ethical representation and engagement with the communities from which the musical traditions come are essential for the effective use of indigenous music in corporate branding campaigns.

Conclusion

The discussion shows that indigenous music is a meaningful tool for communication in the corporate branding in Nigeria. The results reveal that indigenous music can be used to localise brands, boost cultural identity, build emotional connection and engage audiences in digital platforms. Most audiences will view culturally embedded communication in a positive light as it communicates familiar values, experiences and identities.

Conversely, the results indicate some serious concerns that have to do with cultural appropriation, superficial portrayals and the commercialisation of indigenous practices. These concerns implicate the need for cultural sensitivity and authenticity in corporate communication.

Arising from the foregoing, the study concludes that if indigenous music is used respectfully, authentically, and with sensitivity to its cultural importance, it could play a significant role in effectively achieving the expectations of a brand in engaging with audiences.

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