Trends in Advertising and Cultures in Nigeria

Rotimi Williams Olatunji, PhD
Professor of Public Relations & Advertising, and Dean, School of Communication, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper tracks the evolution of Advertising in Africa and especially Nigeria. It covers advertising’s journey across African culture and how this negates the widely held belief that advertising began with the establishment of western agencies in the continent. Using a historical review of literature, the paper examines the timelines of communication forms within the context of the evolution and development of advertising. The town crier was the most popular advertising tool and is still being used in the form of hawkers calling out their wares today. This example of oral advertising which has existed in Nigeria long before Western influence, confirms that it has survived alongside the more traditional and foreign but now integrated forms of advertising. It transitioned into the introduction of classified ads with the first newspaper in 1859 – Iwe Iroyin fun awon Yoruba ati Egba“ and became recognised with the establishment of the West African Publicity Company in Nigeria in 1928, which went on to become Lintas, one of the major advertising agencies due to the promulgation of the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion (Indigenisation Decree of 1972), which in Nigeria, prevented direct foreign ownership of advertising agencies amongst other ventures. As a result more agencies sprung up to work the opportunities and it led to the establishment of regulatory agencies like the Association of Advertising
Practitioners of Nigeria in 1973. Creativity has been the main factor for the continuous survival of the industry mentioning great copywriters and business men like Ogilvy, Leo Burnett and Mukoro a veteran who started his career in broadcasting. His ability [and that of other writers] to position consumers in the brand story has accounted for the success of the industry as it employs advertainment to continually push the boundaries of what is possible. Today, the industry which is worth billions employs celebrity advertising to get the attention of its consumers. The industry has come a long way and adverts like Guinness’s “My friend Udeme is a Great man” or Indomie’s “Mama you too good o – Indomie” or even 7up’s “Fido Dido” or Miranda’s “Three Orange Men” will not be forgotten.

**Key words: Indigenous advertising, Advertainment, Copywriting, Celebrity.**

**Introduction**

Advertising is a component of communication, media, and creative industries. It is a tool, not only for business promotion, but also a strategic weapon for advancing socio-economic changes and development in all ramifications. It is one of the agents of socialisation, just like the family, educational, religious, political institutions, and other socialising influences including elements of the media. Advertising is a critical strand of the creative industries that provide education, entertainment, information and communications to lubricate and sustain other agents of socialisation. Accordingly, “advertising impacts and is subject to the influences of different (or other) institution(s) in societies” (Olatunji, 2010, p.18). Olatunji and Thanny (2011, p. 26) submitted that, properly utilised, advertising is “a socializing institution to cultivate, promote and project the best of the material, philosophical, religious, political and sociological aspects of the nation’s culture”.

Quoting a 1998 document by the British Department of Culture, Media and Sports, Deuza, (2007, p. 243) refers to culture and creative industries as “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property”. Cultural and creative industries include disciplines and professional practices such as advertising, public relations architecture, the arts, antiques markets, crafts, design, design fashion, fashion and video, interactive leisure software, music and performing arts, publishing, software and computer games, radio and television. This article presents trends in the advertising cultural and creative industries in Nigeria.
Historicism of advertising

Regardless of the economic phase of human development, advertising and cultural institutions have remained relevant, although the degrees of sophistication of the institution vary from one epoch to another. Automation of production processes which marked the transition from agrarian to industrial society led to mass production of goods and services. This gave rise to the formalised form of advertising and consequent institutionalisation of advertising in Europe and North America.

Traditional advertising in Africa, as in other parts of the world, was essentially oral in nature. It came by word-of-mouth; that was before Westernised forms of advertising. In pre-writing societies, advertising may have taken a visual form, going by the paintings we encounter in prehistoric caves, on rocks, and in such other archaeological deposits. In virtually all known civilizations, traditional forms of advertising were through visual or oral channels. Bhatia (2000, p. 68) recalls:

In ancient times the most common form of advertising was by word of mouth; commercial messages and political campaign displays have been found in ruins of Pompeii. Egyptians used papyrus to create sales messages and wall posters, while lost but found advertising on papyrus was common in Greece and Rome. Wall rock painting for commercial advertising ... is present to this day in many parts of Asia, Africa and South America. The tradition of wall paintings can be traced back to Indian rock-art paintings that go back to 4000 BCE.

Traditionally, oral form of advertising is that which persists in African contexts. Apparently, such practices were not restricted to Africans who hawk goods and services. Olatunji, (2010, p.29) submits: “the practice [of using] . . .town criers for advertising purpose was so elaborately developed that governments gave them formal recognition”. For example, in 1258 AD, King Philip Augustus of France promulgated a Decree compelling every shopkeeper to employ a town crier (Sandage & Fryburger, 1991, p.18).

Based on the above, I submit that:

It will be quite inappropriate to refer to the indigenous forms of advertising in Africa as backward. The evolution of advertising in Africa followed a similar pattern of development as witnessed in ancient European societies. In Africa, (as elsewhere), there existed the practice of ‘Town criers’ (Olatunji, 2012, p. 229).
The foundation for modern advertising was laid with the invention of printing paper, first by the Chinese in about 1000AD, later adopted by Europe in 1275, and utilised for mass printing with the invention of Gutenberg’s Printing Press in 1455. The first English advertisement in print appeared in 1472 when William Caxton printed the first advertisement in England; it was a handbill to sell his prayer books. However, the first newspaper advertisement appeared in the Boston Newspaper in the United States of America in 1704 (Sandage & Fryburger, 1991, Olatunji, 2003 & 2010).

The earliest forms of advertising agencies in America were mere space brokers; they purchased space from newspapers and re-sold the same to advertisers. The initial motive was not to help the advertiser fix his marketing challenge, but to assist newspaper owners sell advertising spaces. Thus, historically, the advertising man was a mere agent, whose stock in trade was to buy media space (first the print media space) and then re-sell the same for a mere commission. Although a parasite at origin, the ad agent was filling a critical gap- serving the interests of media owners, and sellers, as well as buyers of goods and services.

**Indigenous advertising in Nigeria**

Traditional advertising in Nigeria took the form of hawking, word-of-mouth, and the engagement of dance drama. The Town Crier was also the traditional ‘broadcaster’, ‘spot announcer’, political advertising channel for the traditional rulers, and the salesman. “The Town crier was the news reporter, correspondent, news agent, messenger, spokesperson, envoy, contact person, courier, postman, and broadcaster” (Olatunji, 2012, p. 230).

Indigenous advertising in Africa was also very rich in the use of signs and symbols such as colours, emblems, flags and so on. Equally, dance-drama, drums, flutes, horns, and whistles were employed in the forms of advertising prevalent in different societies at the time. These constituted entertainment that was aligned with the cultures of the people and used to gain attention, and to sell goods, services and ideas to the people. As a result, it can be argued that what we now widely celebrate as edutainment, advertainment, or infotainment represents a re-birth of indigenous advertising techniques used earlier on in Africa (Olatunji, 2017a). Yet when considering accounts of advertising practice, it is the Westernised full agency practice that is cited.

Volney B. Palmer is acclaimed to be the first full service advertising agency in the United States of America (USA). Holland confirms this, noting the convenience in the service offered; that Volney “served the advertiser by providing counsel on media selection that he handled the physical detail of production and billing, that he wrote, or counselled on advertising copy, and that he did all this at no cost to the advertiser.
The agency was established in 1841 (Harris and Seldon, 1962, p. 17). Going by the imperative of formal advertising in the era mentioned above, it may seem that the single most important factor accounting for the spread of media advertising was economic - the era of capitalism propelled through the industrial revolution in Britain. This is how I captured the picture in an earlier piece of writing:

Capitalism led to mass production of goods, urbanisation and consequently, improvement of living standards (at least for some). There was (therefore) the need for mass production of goods..., which created the need to create mass awareness” (a task that was beyond the capability of the town crier) (Olatunji, 2010, p. 30).

Be that as it may, the wide acceptability of the practice should be seen as weighty. Though agencies consist of a range of expertise to ensure this, the messages and by inference, the work of the creative types who produce them should be the focus here - since the people’s acceptance of the messages is what counts.

Advent of western-type advertising in Nigeria

Western advertising agencies followed European corporations into Africa, just as European colonialism accompanied trade and missionary activities. The first printed newspaper in Nigeria came in 1859. It also featured classified advertisements of imported European goods by the trading missions, particularly the United Africa Company (UAC).

In Nigeria, the Royal Niger Company (RNC), later known as the United African Company (UAC), and Lever Brothers International, incorporated the first advertising agency that ever operated in Nigeria. The company was incorporated in Britain on August 13, 1928 and called West African Publicity Limited, headquartered in Lagos, Nigeria (Bel-Molokwu, 2000; Olatunji, 2003). It later became Lintas (Lever International Advertising Services) operating in the entire British West Africa, with Nigeria as its base. Nigeria’s Lintas maintains global connection even now. It is a member of the SSC & B Lintas Worldwide; the Interpublic Group; and now Ammirati Puris Worldwide, a group with offices in more than 80 countries (Olatunji, 2013, p. 34).

Other foreign advertising agencies also held sway in the Nigerian marketing environment during the colonial era. Ogilvy, Benson and Mather (OB&M), Graham and Gills (G&G), Advertising and Marketing Services (AMS), Grant Advertising, Auger & Turne, and S. H. Benson have featured over the years (Olatunji, 2003; 2005; 2010; 2013 & 2017). So strong was the foreign domination in this early period that the very few Nigerians who operated advertising agencies were excluded from the elitist club.
that Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (AAN) the umbrella body guarding operations of advertising agencies at the time, turned out to be.

Okon (2018, p.32) reports in The Punch Newspaper that Ogilvy, a member of the WPP Worldwide, recently made a debut, into the Nigeria advertising industry in response to the need to generate for global clients, content that is relevant to the Nigerian environment. This was made possible after Ogilvy acquired a 24.9 per cent stake in First Primus Group, a Nigerian marketing communication company. With the affiliation, Ogilvy Nigeria joins the vast network of the global advertising agency, with its 131 offices in 83 countries around the world. But describing this as a ‘debut’ masks the fact that this is a re-entry of Ogilvy into the Nigerian market several decades after it wound up operations arising from the Federal Government of Nigeria’s indigenisation policy of 1973. For other examples of agencies with such affiliations between Nigerian and foreign advertising agencies, see Olatunji, (2003, 2005, 2010 & 2013).

The exclusive hold of foreigners on the advertising industry in Nigeria was broken with the promulgation of the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion (Indigenisation Decree of 1972), which prevented direct foreign ownership of advertising agencies amongst other ventures. In 1972, there were about ten advertising agencies in operation in Nigeria; owned mostly by foreigners. By 1973 when Nigerians took their fate in their hands, the number of advertising agencies doubled. Ten years later (in 1983), the number of agencies jumped to 53, increasing to 88 registered agencies in 1995. There are currently about 75 officially recognised advertising agencies in Nigeria. This steady growth does not reveal fluctuations in the fortunes of registered agencies in Nigeria. Such fluctuations are partly explained by dips in the nation’s economy but the industry has now been sanitized unlike days of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced into Nigeria in 1986, when many advertising agencies owners operated offices from their briefcases.

Indigenisation of advertising in Nigeria

No sooner had professionals taken over the advertising industry in Nigeria, than the Association of Advertising Practitioners of Nigeria (AAPN) was established in 1973. It was later rebranded as Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (AAAN). The pioneering roles of Messrs I. S. Moemeke, Banjo Solaru, Olu Falomo, Dotun Okubanjo, Olu Adekoya, Leye Adedoyin, Prince Kunle Adeosun, Biodun Sanwo is worth noting. These and many other patriots worked hard to establish and advance the advertising practice. Along with those who came immediately after them, these were the shapers of modern advertising in Nigeria.
There are others whose contributions to the development of the industry in Nigeria were critical. A few of them are Outdoor Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (OAAN), Media Independents Association of Nigeria (MIPAN), Advertisers’ Association of Nigeria (ADVAN), Independent Television Producers Association of Nigeria (ITPAN), Association of Voice over Artistes (AVOA), and the association for models. Also on the media side are the Newspapers’ Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN) and Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON).

The role of regulatory agencies in Nigerian advertising must be mentioned in view of their contributions towards a standardised practice of advertising. More importantly, they were established to protect consumers of advertising against unwholesome practices. These include bodies with broader remits than advertising practice like the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC), Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC), Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Consumer Protection Council (CPC), and National Agency for Foods, Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC). Many of these were established much later in the history of Nigeria’s advertising. Advertising Practitioners’ Council of Nigeria (APCON) was that agency with monitoring duties exclusive to advertising practice. It was established through the APCON Act 55 of 1988, with amendments in subsequent years. APCON’s mandate is to regulate and control the practice of advertising in all aspects and ramifications. It does this through scrupulous adherence to The Nigerian Code of Advertising Practice and Sales Promotion. The Code, first adopted in 2005 has also been subsequently amended.

**Trends in copywriting**

Reputation of advertising agencies is often built on the levels of creativity evident in advertisements. Wright (2000) opines that advertising agencies can either rise or fall, based on levels of creativity of advertisements churned out. Since consumers are often inundated with competitive advertising messages, “a performing brand needs to distinguish itself from the ‘maddening crowd’ in terms of product packaging and message presentation” (Olatunji, 2011, p.263). This underscores the importance of creativity in copywriting. Copywriting is arguably a lucrative aspect of advertising agency practice, because those who possess the skills, art and science of copywriting are few. For instance, Claude Hopkins, a copywriter with Lord and Thomas (now Foote, Cone & Belding) advertising agency, as early as 1908 earned as much as $185,000.00 per annum (Bendiger, 1988).

The goal of advertising creativity is to produce messages that will sell brands. “In advertising, creative messages are not only those with beautiful expressions, snappy (or catchy) slogans and clever phrases, but messages that sell products and services” (Olatunji, 2003, pp. 34-35). Likewise, it is of great importance that messages are also legal, truthful, credible, honest, believable, sincere, and culturally relevant by
respecting audience sensibilities and sensitivity. The legal and ethical components of creativity are important in copywriting. Above all, advertisements must adapt to consumers’ changing demographics, psychographics and other variables.

Early copywriters focused on texts and copy-heavy advertisements were common. This form began with the era of classified advertisements, when ‘Wordsmiths’ held sway as copywriters in the industry. At that early stage, the copywriter was highly celebrated in the advertising agency. Good writing (or literary) skill was a must for them to succeed. Subsequent improvement witnessed the inclusion of visuals in advertisement (Pic 1)

Pic 1. Press Ad on ‘Nescafe Instant Coffee’ featured in Nigeria in the 1960s
Source: Google Image accessed on 28/8/17.

With the realization that advertisements need to incorporate visual appeals, there was an ascendancy of art directors within advertising agencies. To engage audiences better, art directors promoted visualization; use of visuals and imagery became dominant. This practice was essential with the adoption of film, television and radio. It was also relevant for outdoor advertising – particularly billboards which like radio (and supportive of it) were also prominent at the time. Use of entertainment based approaches soon became dominant within advertising campaign strategy thereafter. In time, animation was introduced into the creative mix (so was digital advertising and a variety of information communication technologies (ICT) applications in the era of digitisation and widespread uptake of social media).

Pic 2: Animation in advertisements

Source: Google image (Accessed 28/8/17)
The advent of computer and up-to-date software is impacting on advertising copywriting and production, with increasing dominance of animation schemes. Prevalence of digital media are facilitating digital advertising and revolutionizing the advertising processes. This calls for additional knowledge and skills by scholars and professionals alike.

In its infancy, advertising copywriting in Nigeria was strongly inclined towards the use of logical appeals. Advertisements that are rich in texts often emphasize ‘reasons-why’ consumers must buy a product or patronize a service. But this changed as some consumers seem impatient with such logical orientation of advertisements. It has been acknowledged that “Emotional advertisements are probably the most effective. The reason is that emotional advertisements are more interesting, more easily remembered, more prone to lead to action, and less likely to arouse consumers’ defences than are argument (or logical) advertisements” (Tellis (2005, p.8). Advertainment is an approach which has since become dominant; it combines the powerful appeal of the logical and the emotional or psychological appeals that move prospects to action (Olatunji, 2017a).
Above ad cited by Segun Akande (2018) ‘These 5 adverts from the 70s and 80s tell a Hopeful Story of Nigeria’ in Pulse.ng Published Online: 12.04.2018 It was reported as being first published in the Nigerian Edition of Reader’s Digest Volume 8, in December 1966 and republished on Facebook/The Nigerian Nostalgia 1960-1980 Project/Funmilade Yisa-Adebanjo

Vintage ads from Nigeria (70s – 90s) from online collaborative memorialising / discussion sites

Pic 4. Vespa Scooter

Pic 6. Omo detergent – Super Blue Omo washes Brighter and it shows campaign mid 70s (Lever Brothers Nigeria)

Pix 7 & 8:
Planta advert 70s and Blue Band (Pulse Ng) circa 2000
Both products from Lever Brother Nigeria

Pix 9 & 10:
Joy beauty treatment & Venus de Milo range of beauty (products of PZ Industries Nigeria)

Advertising copywriting has evolved. Skills required now transcend good literary and graphics skills – to include dexterity in the use of words and artist tools. Copywriting encompasses the dramatist ability, and the savviness of computer design/animator. Copywriters must be highly knowledgeable in psychology, sociology, the humanities and the sciences as well. It is therefore not surprising that advertising creativity is now a cooperative effort of experts from diverse backgrounds and professions. This justifies the need for flexibility in admission criteria for candidates seeking enlistment on programmes of study in the field of communications, specifically those seeking to pursue postgraduate programmes in advertising and public relations (Olatunji, 2017a).

Earle (2011, p. 1), while paraphrasing an earlier work of Reid, King, and Delorme (1988), observes that “creativity is one of the least scientific aspects of advertising and at the same time one of its most important criteria”, adding “creativity in advertising is in many ways still shrouded in mystery”. Earle (2011, p. 6), concludes:

Today, it is difficult to get an audience’s attention, let alone have them remember a message. While many clients worry about sales, many advertising creatives know that in order to build a brand, you must have messages that stand out and break through the clutter, [with] ideas which are novel and appropriate. But another critical factor is finding an important truth, one that is based on a product, a consumer, or a way of life... these truths should be self-evident.

Another copywriter, Raymond Rubicam, who later founded Young and Rubicam (Y & R) advertising agency is credited to have done much to change the face of advertising. He broadened the scope of the creative process in advertising by making it a social process and by incorporating research and development into it. He hired Professor George Gallup of Northwestern University in the US to conduct advertising readership surveys and also incorporated insights of art directors into the copywriting and advertising production processes. “The result was ads that set new standards for readership and graphic quality”, reported Blinder (1988, p. 24).
Earlier, Rosser Reeves of Ted Bates and Company in the 1950s had introduced the concept of the Unique Selling Proposition (USP). To this has been added the concept of Unique Selling Personality (USP) (Blinder, 1988). The two concepts brought about the need for advertising to present a most singular benefit that a brand offers like no other, and the uniqueness of brand’s personality and or image which the consumer invests in.

**Legacies of the creative revolution**

The 1960s is often described as the decade of “The Creative Revolution”, with the coming on board of creative icons like David Ogilvy, Leo Burnett and Bill Bernback (Blinder, 1988, p. 28). David Ogilvy, who authored three landmark books that dramatically changed the theory and practice of advertising — *Confessions of an Advertising Man; How to Advertise; and Ogilvy on Advertising* — also established the agency which eventually became known as Ogilvy and Mather (O & M). Its office in Nigeria (in the 70s – 80s) was a major force, rivalling Lintas Lagos. Its formal presence in Nigeria has recently been re-established with the investment in First Primus Group spawning a fresh incarnation of Ogilvy Nigeria. While Ogilvy operations is now worldwide as noted above, Ogilvy Africa with headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya currently operates out of 27 countries across the continent. Its network of affiliates reaches even farther than these.

Leo Burnett, founder of Leo Burnett advertising agencies, turned an innocuous cigarette, Marlboro, to a global brand by employing the dramatic style which in his view could be applied to every product or service. Key factors in Leo Burnett’s pursuit of success were fourfold - the need for his agency’s personnel to work as a team; need for solid and productive partnership between the agency and its clients; need to undertake long term campaigns to build brand equity; and the need for sustained hard work in ad agency activities. Burnett’s corporate mission was anchored on the need for advertising to be: “so interruptive, so engaging, so human, so believable and so well-focused as to themes and ideas that, at once and the same time, it builds a quality reputation for the long haul as it produces sales for the immediate present” (Ferrell & Hartline 2017, p. 31). But in all of this, Burnett believes that advertising should respect audience sensibilities and sensitivities. His belief that advertising should honour and respect its target audiences can be expected to run through its agencies which now exist worldwide; in the USA, Europe, Middle East and North Africa, and in sub Saharan Africa. Leo Burnett also works through affiliates such as the previous alliance with Rosabel Nigeria. The current affiliate Leo Burnett Lagos, Nigeria is a member of the Insight Communications Group under Troyka Holdings.
The contributions of Bill Bernbach to advertising creativity are noteworthy. In the 1960s, he was Creative Director of the US based agency Grey Advertising. He went on to establish the agency, called Doyle, Dane and Bernbach (DDB). His creative works were described as “Smart”, “Intelligent”, “Honest”, yet spiced with fun and class (Blinder, 1988, p. 35). A man who believed in the power of ideas, Bernbach’s agency was built on the philosophy of creating advertisements that are “genuinely entertaining, involving or dramatic”. To him, advertising should get people’s attention and their affection as well. DDB agency has evolved too, with operations worldwide. Information on its website show that its Middle East and Africa operations consist of offices in twelve countries, including the following in sub-Saharan Africa: Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique, Cameroon, Mauritius, and Nigeria.

Back in the 1980s when emphasis in creative designs shifted to visualisation, illustrations, and framing good shots, rather than straight copy and logical appeals, Doug Warren, described as an endangered copywriter at the time, observed:

> We now live in a nonverbal society. Impressions are made on a visual basis. Language mainly serves to reinforce preconceived stereotypes. Nothing new you say? I disagree. The change over the past ten years (from 1970s to 1980s) is extreme and will grow stronger.... We respond in an ever increasing degree on a strictly emotional level by visual stimulation. Talk all you will about your product’s advantages but the verbiage had better conjure up acceptable visual recall. People no longer have the time (and there is growing inability) to isolate or critically examine facts (Blinder, 1988, p. 50).

There are lessons to be learnt about the manner in which audiences respond to messages; what is inherent in human nature. Copywriters, should note if there are differences in the physiology of people, or how they are affected by sociological factors. Is it necessary to know how humans process stimuli – for instance which side of the brain controls the logical, verbal, rational and conservative side or what prompts the imaginative, visual, liberal, and entertainment side of life. Agencies may want to note gender and individual differences that determine how messages are processed. This calls for research from a range of the academic disciplines. The lesson of the foregoing is that logical appeals are hardly enough to promote brand equity. In fact, emotional appeals are often considered to be more effective, while a combination of logical, sociological and emotional appeals are best (Olatunji, 2011). Moreover, research is required to take out the guesswork from planning what will work in advertising.

The Nigerian advertising industry has also produced its own iconic copywriters - the likes of Ted Mukoro. Born in 1928, the same year that Lintas, the first advertising
agency was incorporated in Nigeria, the man is Nigeria’s respected icon in the creative strategy department. His career profile made him well rounded. Ted Mukoro was a pioneer staff of Western Nigeria Television/Western Nigerian Broadcasting Service (WNTV/WNBS), the first television station in Africa. He was the premiere headmaster in what was then the longest-running Nigerian television serial—The Village Headmaster. He distinguished himself as a copywriter of all times when he joined Lintas advertising. His classic copy include work done for Star Lager Beer “Shine Shine Bobo” and Guinness Stout “Black Thing Gooood o”. In an era when Lintas dominated the Nigerian advertising industry, Ted Mukoro served competing brands without betraying the secret of one to the other. Such professionalism is remarkable. His knowledge of the local customs and audience preferences distinguished his messages even when the expatriates dominated the industry. They learnt to trust his call.

Pic 7. Guinness is Good for You (Press & Outdoor) from the 60s - 70s
Segun Akande in These 5 adverts from the 70s and 80s tell a Hopeful Story of Nigeria on Pulse.ng Published: 12.04.2018)

Ted Mukoro advocated for the use of proverbs, indigenous languages including Pidgin English when copy is being written for Nigerian audiences. For dramatized messages, he tapped into imagery familiar to local audiences. In an interview with Marketing Edge, (2017) Mukoro noted that the use of our indigenous languages allows us “to be truly idiomatic and therefore more penetrative, more convincing and more persuasive communication (in our clime)”. He recalled some of his legendary works: “I have had the unusual distinction of writing advertising both for Star and for Guinness. I did a lot too for Vono in particular, and for Vitafoam as well”.

Changing trends in advertising copywriting discussed above should indicate foundations of advertising practice and demonstrate the multi-disciplinary nature of advertising. Advertising has its fibrous roots in human communication, mass communication, writing, the social sciences, including marketing, psychology, sociology and anthropology, philosophy, law, and the pure sciences including the medical sciences. They are also in theatre arts, music and the languages. Advertising is thus firmly rooted in extinct and extant cultures of societies.
Language for advertising in Nigeria

Across the African continent, use of indigenous languages in the broadcast media has grown in importance as evident in the use of Swahili as the official language in Tanzania; Afrikaans in South Africa; and the use of Pidgin English along with dominant indigenous languages in Nigeria (Olatunji, 2017b). Broadcast media channels such as Wazobia Fm; Nifaaji Fm that broadcast in indigenous languages in Nigeria; Kass TV is broadcast in Kalenjin in Kenya; Uganda has a Bukkede TV station that broadcast in Lugande language; and Wolof in Senegal are popular. As of 2010, there were about 107 radio stations in Kenya which communicate more in indigenous languages outside official settings; they are popular among about 81 per cent of Kenyans aged 15 and above.

In a study which involved the use of Pidgin and the English language for disseminating an SMS advertising campaign in Nigeria, it was found that in terms of popularity, Pidgin English secured a higher level of response than the English language. The study was carried out in Nigeria and reported in the Balancing Act (2014, p.6). Thus although in Africa, English, French, Portuguese or other foreign languages may be considered most effective languages for reaching educated people, one or more indigenous languages may be needed to reach a majority of others who may not be privileged to have received Western education.

A British actress and entertainer in Nigerian circles fondly called Oyinbo Princess recognises this. When interviewed by Bayo Akinloye (The Punch, 12 February 2017, p. 49) she had this to say:

I only speak Pidgin English, knowing that it is understood throughout Nigeria and in fact, a few other countries also (in Africa). I felt that concentrating on Pidgin English would allow me to reach out to my audience and appeal to all. Using my almost fluent understanding of pidgin language has enhanced my acting performance. Pidgin English is a wonderful dialect of English and should be proudly promoted throughout Nigeria. It has traditional values and even if it is not someone’s preferred choice of language, with understanding, it can be used from time to time and by our future generations.

There is growing recognition of indigenous languages by Western nations as epitomized by teaching of Yoruba and other African languages in universities in Europe and America. Institutions like the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), with its Hausa service and recently its Pidgin and Yoruba service, and Google sites for Yoruba, Hausa and some dominant African languages also affirm this. Unfortunately,
through our individual and collective errors, some Africans consider the indigenous languages as being substandard. Many parents discourage their children and wards from speaking indigenous languages at home; there is outright prohibition of the same in many schools, and the mother tongue is pejoratively labelled as vernacular. There is a danger of extinction of our indigenous languages in the near future, if care is not taken.

Nigeria’s comparative advantage in the committee of nations lies in its multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual structures. While preserving our indigenous languages from extinction, over the years we have also evolved a peculiar kind of pidgin English, a language that works well with advertising, particularly radio and television commercials, even in reaching across cultural and linguistic spaces. Consequently, I had advocated elsewhere that:

For advertising institutions, agencies and stakeholders to remain relevant in a globalising context, there is need for increasing sensitivity to Africa’s diverse languages, values, and cultures, along with the changing media landscape, highly segmented and increasingly sophisticated audiences (Olatunji, 2017b).

Advertising, advertainment and the creative industry

The survival, growth, development and sustainability of digitalized broadcasting rest squarely on the shoulders of the cultural and creative industries, particularly advertising. This points to the full potentials of the industry to address the critical challenge of youth unemployment in Nigeria. The Sahara Reporter, accessed on 14th May 2017 reveals that as at July 30th 2015, the Nollywood industry was valued at $5 billion (Five billion dollars) (https://themarketmogul.com/hollywood-nollywood-nigeria/)

The concept of ‘edutainment’ is well known to scholars and social workers across broader fields such as development communication, theatre for development, social marketing, among others. Edutainment refers to both the theory and practice of engaging audiences with messages and images, through the entertainment media to champion social change and development, a technique that has become popular since the 1980’s among development-oriented multilateral, national and non-governmental social agents in Asia, Africa and Latin America. But this concept is not altogether alien to the field of advertising. Russel (2007), in a review of previous studies showed that as far back as the 1930’s when traditional media including film became popular, advertisers and advertising agencies had recognised the effectiveness of using entertainment as content to showcase their brands.

Advertainment “refers to promotional practices that integrate brand communications within the content of entertainment products” (Russell, 2007, p. 1).
advertising, what is now known as advertainment was referred to by terms including ‘tie-in advertising’; ‘co-operative advertising’; ‘trade-outs’; ‘exploitation’; ‘hybrid advertisement’; or ‘Madison and Vine’ (Russell, 2007, p. 3). These terms reflect a cooperation in the ventures between the advertising agency, media content makers, advertisers, off-screen endorsement by actors, or a combination of those creative types whose final product advances ideas to be sold. The advertainment represents the synergies between both paid advertising and unpaid promotions. Russell (2007, p. 15) concludes that “Entertainment and advertising are not just intersecting. They are fused”.

Advertainment has evolved in response to increasing advertising clutter, rising cost of media, multiplicity of media channels, decreasing importance of traditional media channels, new media technologies that empower audiences to selectively attend to, or entirely avoid attending to media messages in media channels. Thus it threatens the traditional position and relevance of advertising. The relevance of advertainment to education, information dissemination and other aspects of development are well demonstrated and documented in Olatunji, (2011); Aladeyomi & Olatunji (2011); and Olatunji & Aladeyomi (2013).

The advertising institution, like others in the mass media, performs a variety of functions simultaneously; it provides information, education, entertainment, space for fun and escape. The following are a few noteworthy examples from the Nigerian industry. When Etisalat Telecommunications (now 9 Mobile) made its debut in Nigeria it relied on successful characters drawn from the entertainment scene. The 0809ja commercial featured the music star, Bankole Wellington, also known as Banky W. The spot adopted the format of a music video with a montage of urban street scenes. Like the “Wa jo Ijo Banky” it began with an invitation to the audience to dance to the music of Banky - and closed with the distinctive number for the Etisalat Telecommunications network “0809ja for life…Etisalat”. The jingle, characteristic of Banky’s music and performed by him was complemented by compelling visuals reflecting personalities of youth (the demographic group being targeted) and symbols of the product. For instance, the closing sequence featured the number 0809ja tattooed on Banky W’s admirable biceps. Other artistes such as Jude Orhorha and Hafiz Oyetoro (also known as Saka) both stars in their own right have been featured in other Etisalat adverts, thus drawing on their appeal and followership. Banky W’s commercial was well in sync with the younger generation, and may explain at least (in part) why early adopters of Etisalat were youths (Olatunji and Thanny, 2011).

Similar reliance on Nigerian stars was observed in campaigns by a competing telecommunications firm - Glo Telecommunications. Prolific Nollywood industry provides an array of talents which advertisers can work with. By using the drama
format Glo has featured some of these popular stars from the Nigerian entertainment industry. In fact, Dbanj, Ramsey Noah, Kunle Afolayan, Funke Akindele, Jim Iyke, Basket Mouth, King Sunny Ade, Daddy Showkey, P-Square, Kate Hensaw-Nutall, Ini Edo, have been adopted as Glo Ambassadors (Olatunji and Thanny, 2011).

Airtel, another telecommunication network was not left out of producing entertaining messages relying on an array of personalities, ideas and initiatives trending in popular culture to promote its products and services.

Conclusion

Thus it is that advertising in Nigeria has come a long way. From modest beginnings where expatriates dominated the industry, local participation thrives and is now globally recognised. Local players collaborate with global players and their affiliates worldwide, and advertising service is made locally relevant. The synergy between advertising and creative industries in Nigeria is remarkable. Advertising messages have been indigenised using local languages and local performers. Commercial speech on radio and other media and variety of communication initiatives for development in the African context have helped the growing relevance of indigenous language broadcasting, Pidgin English and its other variants that embed African entertainment cultures.

Hard-sell, straight logical or reason-why approaches are being displaced or subsumed by a combination of entertainment cum-emotion laden commercials that resonate well with increasing number of media consumers, particularly children and youths. The Indomie Noodle commercials bring out this stark reality, particularly the never-to-be- forgotten “Mama do good o” commercial. The TV commercial, rendered in Nigerian Pidgin English means: ‘Mother has done well by cooking Indomie Noodles for us; Indomie is delicious, Indomie is good for us. . .’ In reviewing this trend, Olatunji and Aladeyomi conclude that:
“Unlike the current global trend [with] overdose of entertainment at the expense of advertisers’ commercial motive, advertisements in Nigeria reflect a perfect blend of marketing (informational) and non-marketing (or entertainment) [motivations for audience] uses and gratifications” (2013, p. 254).

The use of entertainment in advertising represents a renaissance of indigenous advertising techniques in Nigeria. The practice builds on the initiatives of the pioneering indigenous advertisers who adapted these forms. Contemporary emotion laden entertainment commercials, rather than the purely informative or those with a logical appeal play to the strength and character of indigenous advertising media in Africa. By adopting the traditional African story-telling approach in commercials (e.g. Guinness’ “My Friend Udeme is a great man”; or Indomie Noodle “Grandma tell me a Story”) advertisers do more than demonstrate the uniqueness of indigenous African advertising approaches:

The relevance of Africa within the global (advertising) community lies in its ability to salvage the best of its cultural practices, while at the same time adapting to changing environment. Interestingly, advertising practice is effective not only when it is globalized or standardized; effectiveness in advertising also lies in its being able to adapt to changing trends without (necessarily) discarding its indigenous flavour. This means that advertising should be adapted to cultural environment under which it operates. Adaptation of indigenous advertising media (and methods), rather than its abandonment, holds prospects for the development of advertising theory and practice in Africa (Olatunji, 2012, p. 233).

Beyond the narrow view of advertising, there are lessons here that offer hope for Nigeria’s development. It is in adapting – leveraging on what we have - rather than wholesale adoption of global trends that nations, even the African continent, can develop and be great. Commercial messages need to be ethical, culturally relevant and sensitive to the diverse cultural groupings that exist in African societies. They also need to cut across regional and global spaces since this is how markets tend to be constituted. So, rather than creating ‘standardised’ messages, advertising messages and accompanying visuals need to be ‘glocalised’.
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Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria for the Award of PhD (Advertising as Communication) Degree, 28 August, 2003.


