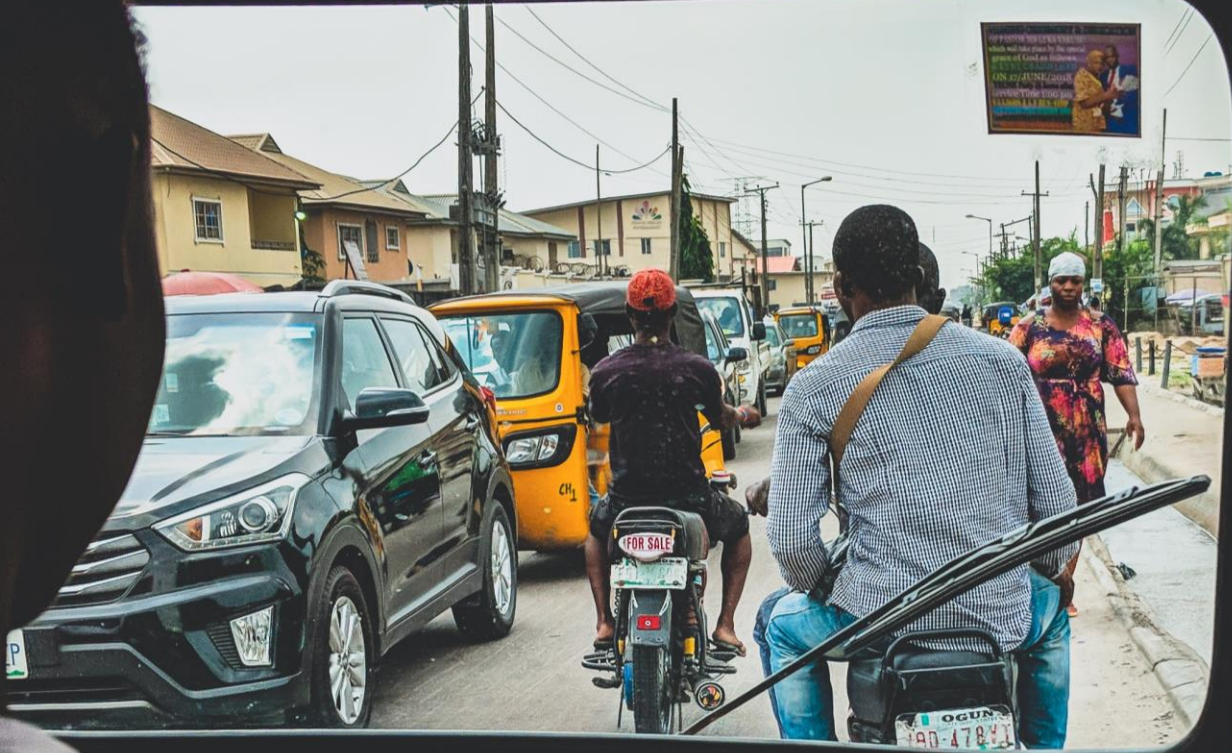




CREATIVE
CULTURE



CULTURE AND COMMUNITY: INSIGHT INTO NIGERIA

March 2019



INTRODUCTION

WHY DO BUSINESS IN NIGERIA?

It goes without saying that Nigeria is a country facing immense challenges. The CIA estimates that around 62 percent of the population still live in extreme poverty and the WHO puts the average life expectancy for a baby boy born in 2016 at just 55. The extent of the political tension within the country was underscored in February 2019 when the national elections had to be postponed for a week at the last minute, with both sides blaming each other for the delay. And, of course, we cannot overlook the terrorist group Boko Haram, which has wrought havoc in the north-east of the country in recent years.

And yet, despite these challenges, it is easy to see why a company would – and arguably should – consider Nigeria as a target market. For a start, it is the most populous country in Africa, the seventh most populous country in the world and home to the world's tenth largest labour force. If current trends continue, the population of Nigeria will surpass that of the United States to rank fourth in the world by 2050. Despite still being officially classified as an emerging market, the country experienced impressive average GDP growth of 5.7 percent per annum from 2006 to 2016 and is now bouncing back after recession struck in 2016. These mixed fortunes underscore Nigeria's dependence on oil revenues, although this is something that President Buhari is committed to tackling. Nigeria is also a predominantly young country where the average age is just 18. As the millennial generation matures, contributes to the economy and enters the country's burgeoning middle class, the opportunities for business are self-evident. To cite just one example, commodity manufacturer Dangote Industries, based in Nigeria, achieved annual revenue of over \$4 billion in 2017

and secured its founder's spot as the richest person in Africa and the world's richest black man.

Foreign companies may be eager to replicate this home-grown success story, but they will find that doing so is no mean feat. As one would expect for a country of its size, Nigeria's demographic and consumer landscape is incredibly complex. In some ways, it may be more accurate to think of Nigeria as a patchwork of nations rather than just one.

The country is split into a number of ethnic groups, the largest of which are the Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Fulani and Tiv peoples. Cultural differences between these groups matter, as does the fact that Nigeria is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world. English may be the country's official language, but it is estimated that around 500 languages are spoken every day by Nigerians. It is also important to consider the disparities of wealth that exist across the country and the different life experiences and expectations these differences represent. As in any market, the brands that do best in Nigeria are those that tailor their messaging to their target consumers and truly tap into the cultural zeitgeist.

In this White Paper, we will take a closer look at two key characteristics of the Nigerian consumer landscape: Naija spirit and the importance of collective identity. These are two of the major cultural touchstones we believe that brands should consider – whether they are entering the market for the first time or launching the latest in a string of campaigns. We will also showcase a few examples of brands that got it right.

Special thanks to Feyi Olubodun and Esosa Osagiede for their specialist cultural insight.

CULTURE

THE UNBREAKABLE NAIJA SPIRIT

A national psyche is one of those intangible forces that defies description – especially in a country as vast, complex and diverse as Nigeria. That said, brands seeking to do business there should bear in mind the passionate, hard-working, optimistic and resilient ethos that characterises the country and its people.

Nike explored this in depth in a piece entitled *This is Naija: A Nigerian Football Story*, whose release was timed to coincide with the 2018 World Cup. In the 20-minute film, Nigerians from the worlds of football, photography, music and fashion describe “Naija swag” as “edgy”, “rugged” and “authentic”, hailing the “unbreakable Nigerian spirit” and claiming that Nigerians’ passion for football was even strong enough to halt fighting in the civil war for the duration of an important match in the 1960s. The story may be apocryphal, but the fact that Nigerians themselves recount it tells us something important about how they see the national character.

Naija spirit also dovetails with a major African diaspora trend: Afropolitanism. Coined in 2005 in a piece by Taiye Selasi entitled “Bye-Bye Babar”, “Afropolitanism” is a portmanteau word combining “Afro-” and “cosmopolitanism”. The term refers to a greater sense of pride in and willingness among people of African descent to celebrate pan-African identity and cultural difference. Selasi argues that: “What distinguishes this lot [Afropolitans] and its like (in the West and at home) is a willingness to complicate Africa – namely, to engage with, critique, and celebrate the parts of Africa that mean most to them. Perhaps what most typifies the Afropolitan consciousness is the refusal to oversimplify; the effort to understand what is ailing Africa alongside the desire to honour what is

wonderful, unique. Rather than essentialising the geographical entity, we seek to comprehend the cultural complexity; to honour the intellectual and spiritual legacy; and to sustain our parents’ cultures.”



Trends spread quickly in today’s globalised world, especially among the millennial generation. In Nigeria, as elsewhere, members of the country’s immense youth population are able to engage in dialogue and shape trends via social media unimpeded by national boundaries. This technological advance, coupled with the international Afropolitanism trend, has fostered a greater sense of cultural confidence in countries across Africa – led by Nigeria and South Africa in particular – and a rejection of the idea that modernisation has to mean Westernisation. Let’s now consider a few examples of brands that have successfully tapped into these concepts.

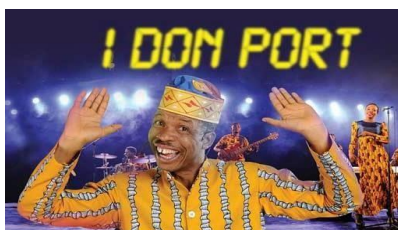
CAMPAIGNS

HOW BRANDS GO ABOUT IT

MTN: I don Port

One example we wish to highlight is a campaign entitled “I don Port”, produced by the telecoms operator MTN in April 2013. The ad features a popular Nigerian comedian known as Saka who had previously served as a brand ambassador for MTN’s rival. At the start of the ad, the décor and Saka’s clothes are green (the colour used by the competitor) but then there is a switch to MTN yellow, and Saka explains in a catchy Pidgin song how easy it was for him to switch to MTN while keeping his existing mobile number. The success of this ad demonstrates the importance of connecting with viewers by making the right linguistic choices, by using colour, music and dance to reinforce the message and – above all – by creating a humorous campaign built on shared cultural references. Humour is particularly important in Nigerian marketing and brands would be well-advised to make their output as entertaining as possible.

<http://bit.ly/2FndaD5>



Airtel: Blender

This ad, part of a wider campaign by telecoms company Airtel, clearly demonstrates how the process of modernisation is changing daily life in Nigeria. Two women (we assume that they are mother-in-law and daughter-in-law) are in the kitchen preparing food. The older woman is using a range of traditional methods, whereas the younger woman is preparing everything with an electric blender. There is a friendly rivalry between the two and a touch of comedy. The message is then

reinforced by on-screen text and a voiceover saying “Life evolves. You should too”. This ad was successful because it reflects a key aspect of viewers’ current experience: the fact that globalisation and modernisation are having a profound effect across society but that the sense of tradition and family ties still prevail.

<http://bit.ly/2ugcl3b>



Heineken: Lagos Fashion Week

As we previously saw, Nigeria has a growing sense of cultural confidence. This is manifesting itself as a greater willingness on the part of Nigerian creatives (in the worlds of fashion, music, photography, filmmaking and more) to celebrate their unique identity, outlook and experiences rather than adapting to Western models. One example of this is Lagos Fashion Week, which has been held annually since 2011 to showcase talented Nigerian designers and models. By sponsoring LFW 2018, beer brand Heineken positioned itself as a supporter of Nigerian culture and creativity and boosted its profile with the event’s numerous attendees and observers. As the headline sponsor, the brand had its name attached to the name of the event (officially called “Heineken Lagos Fashion Week”) as well as producing merchandise and running print ads such as the example below.



NATIONAL IDENTITY

THE COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Another aspect of Nigerian culture that brands should bear in mind when entering the market is the importance of collective identity – i.e. seeing oneself firstly as a member of a community and secondly as an individual. This may seem like quite a subtle point, but it represents a profoundly different outlook compared with how a consumer would typically think about themselves in countries such as the UK and the USA (cultures that attach a lot of importance to individuality).

The influence of a person's wider family and community setting is reinforced throughout their life in customs such as permitting older family members to pick a spouse for a younger family member and then name the couple's first child. As Feyi Olubodun argues in his book *The Villager: How Africans Consume Global Brands*, "The African is raised in an extended family and formulates his view of life and his behavioural patterns out of the

Airtel: Lil'Extra

The concept of collective identity is also closely connected with respect for one's elders: in a society in which people's sense of self is linked to their community, the leaders of that social



raw material of his responses to social cues he will experience until, and even beyond, adulthood. Since everyone around him had a stake in his development, contributing in one way or another, he is obligated for life to give consideration to their positions on issues concerning him. This is the African story, the African way of living. The fundamental difference from the West is that the role of the group to which one belongs is weightier than the role of one as an individual." In this section, we will take a look at examples of how this distinctive social lens affects advertising campaigns in Nigeria.

structure enjoy particularly elevated status. This commercial from October 2018 by telecoms operator Airtel leverages this cultural norm by showing a heart-warming story of a young boy helping an older man (we assume that they are grandfather and grandson) in his shoemaking business. The older man is able to reward the boy for his help because he has 250 MB of data to use. The ad ends on a humorous note as the boy accidentally silences two phone calls from the man's landlord.

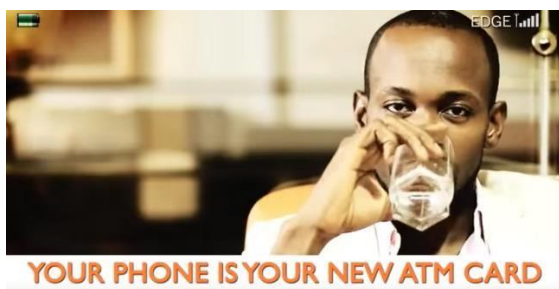
<http://bit.ly/2CukXx0>

CASE STUDIES

GTBank: Simple Money Transfer

In this ad from 2014, GTBank shows a young man receiving calls from his mother, a younger relative, his aunt and his home decorator asking him to send them money. He is able to help all of them using the bank's Mobile Money service. As a commercial, this concept was effective because it reflected an experience many Nigerians could recognise: the expectation that working people will use their income to support not just themselves but also their wider social network.

<http://bit.ly/2TONg>



Maggi: She Makes a Difference

While the importance of collective identity has been a core element of Nigerian culture for generations and is likely to remain so, it is very important for brands to recognise and adapt to the ways in which Nigerian society is modernising and evolving. The pace of change is particularly rapid at present, since social media acts as a catalyst and a platform for debate.



Access Bank: Going the Extra Mile

Another example comes from Access Bank. In a 2017 commercial, the bank shows an employee going the extra mile by travelling a long distance in person to find a customer who has forgotten to sign an important document. The employee must travel from the city to a more rural area and ask a lot of people for help before he finally locates the customer on his fishing boat. The customer is grateful and the two bond as the customer shows the bank employee how to cast the fishing net. The core message of the ad is clearly the dedication shown by Access Bank staff, but it also highlights the strength of community ties within the country and the fact that people tend to know their neighbours.

<http://bit.ly/2JoESDH>



The food brand Maggi found this out to their cost in 2018 when an advert entitled "She makes a difference" sparked a backlash online. The ad shows a woman taking on a wide variety of different roles both inside and outside the home in a voiceover that runs: "Who am I? I'm a caregiver. A slayer. A boss lady. A foodie. I am the chief quality inspector and chief organiser. And when I'm cooking with my Maggi Star, I become a kitchen grand master [...] I am the chief enjoyment officer and I am the magnet that brings my family together." The ad was criticised for depicting a woman as solely responsible for the kitchen and home, on top of having a successful career, and for promoting unrealistic expectations for women.

<http://bit.ly/2ObmCfy>



CONCLUSION

As we have seen, there are many reasons a company might want to do business in Nigeria. These include the sheer size of the consumer base and the vast potential for future growth. Before taking the plunge, however, brands should make sure that they have understood how forces such as Naija spirit and collective identity shape consumer behaviour and spending. They should also bear in mind the pace of change within the country and the ways in which the millennial generation will shape the culture in the future. It is only by arming themselves with such knowledge that brands can create campaigns that truly engage with the target audience.

“If you work for a company based in the old ‘West’ [...] you are probably missing opportunities in the largest expansion of the middle-income consumer market in history, which is taking place right now in Africa and Asia. Other, local brands are already establishing a foothold, gaining brand recognition and spreading throughout these continents, while you are still waking up to what is going on. The Western consumer market was just a teaser for what is coming next.”

– Hans Rosling, *Factfulness* (2018)



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