

## An X-Ray of Product Placement in the Nigerian Movie Industry

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Product placement becomes increasingly common, not much research has been carried out as regards to its practice in the Nigerian film industry. The study examines the level to which Nigerian companies make use of product placement to create brand awareness in movies. The theory of semiology as well as the social cognitive theory is applied to this work. Textual analysis is the methodology utilized to derive and examine the data acquired. The study shows that foreign brands operating in Nigeria are ahead in using the advertising strategy of product placement while the local companies are still sluggish in making use of the opportunity it provides to reach consumers nationally and internationally. The recommendations are that Nigerian companies should capitalize on showcasing their product and services through movies in order to maintain brand recall, loyalty and fidelity. This brings about the needed opportunity to reach a larger audience (potential consumers) with lesser amount of money than what advertising agencies or advertising practitioners require for producing and showing an advert in Nigeria movie industry*

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**Keywords:** *Product placement, Branded Entertainment, Integrated Marketing and Brand Recall*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Product placement in film and television is gaining importance increasingly because of the several benefits that it offers to all the parties/agents involved in the process. It can be said to be a paid inclusion of branded products or brand identifiers that is placed in a movie aimed at influencing movie (or television) audiences through the planned and unobtrusive entry of a branded product into the film/video production or a television program. It is a promotional tactic used by companies or marketers in which a real commercial product is used in fictional or non-fictional media. Product placement is a subtle and discreet way of promoting a brand without disrupting the flow of a film. It involves strategic placement of the choice brands (Belch & Belch,2012)/

Billions of dollars are spent globally on product placement. Brands can approach movie producers to have their products placed in films and also funding can be sought by filmmakers by approaching brand owners and companies which are capable of funding films or at the least giving out certain products as props for a movie. This may come as clothing, cars for use throughout the movie, food items, beverages, lodging at a resort, to mention but a few. It is most achievable when the film producers have developed a reputation for producing commercially successful films or block busters. Product placement is also a cheaper form of advertising for companies hence it is an opportunity that should be met with enthusiasm.

The Nigerian movie industry also known as Nollywood is rated among the largest in the world after the American film industry(Hollywood) and the Indian film industry popularly known as Bollywood. As a country which primarily depends on oil exportation for sustenance and intends to drive towards exporting other indigenous resources, it is vital to take advantage of the widespread of the Nigerian film industry around the world to showcase Nigerian products and expose her culture to the outside world. Certain products can reflect the culture of the country of its origin when creatively placed in a film. Bollywood movies as well as east asian film productions have been very efficient in selling their culture as well as certain products which reflect their society. It is evident in the impact which Indian and East-Asian fashion has on African societies via consistent consumption of contents from these geographical zones.

The role of Hollywood influence as regards to social, cultural and product consumption on countries around the world cannot be overemphasized.

The success of the industries in these countries with a thriving film industry relies to a reasonable extent on their ability to use their film industry to exhibit their goods, services and richness of their culture. One very obvious aspect which these afore-mentioned film industries have used the medium of product placement to successfully capture the Nigerian market is through depicting their fashion industry in their films. It has been so successful that many Nigerian films even (consciously or subconsciously) portray American, Indian and Asian outfits.

This paper involves looking into the role which product placement occupies currently in the Nigerian movie industry and how it can be maximized to enhance the Nigerian exporting power industrially, socially and culturally.

The new superman movie (man of steel) which costs about \$150 million to make already made over \$100 million from an astonishing 94 commercial deals even before its premiere, it was already well on its way to recouping much of its colossal budget through product placement and merchandising more than for any other film in history according to experts. According to Gene Garlock, the senior vice president of world-wide promotional partnerships at warner bros, there were a total of 84 international promotional partnerships and 10 US ones. Companies such as Nokia, seeking to promote its new phone known as the Nokia Lumia 925, spent £30 million to be a part of the popular superman block buster. Others involved were Chrysler, Budweiser, sears stores, Toshiba, Gillette,(Collins,2013).

Hollywood exporters were aware that as early as 1912, where U.S films travelled, It brought about a demand for American goods. Every film sells \$1.00 worth of manufactured goods some place in the world ( Branston 2001).

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The Nigerian movie industry has been reinventing itself recently with the emergence of a new generational movement of Nigerian filmmakers tagged as New Nollywood. But like its older state known as old Nollywood, the industry has not been utilized properly as an advertising medium to showcase and sell Nigerian products and also in the process enrich her film industry during the period from its inception and metamorphosis into its current state of an internationally recognizable level of success. Certain elements may have contributed to such inadequacy such as quality of production genres and storylines which do not prove attractive for advertising products.

The issue of directors in the industry not being creative enough in knowing how to skillfully, subtly and creatively infuse certain products into their storytelling in a way that positively showcases indigenous goods, services and societal ideology to the foreign market still lingers.

They go as far as consciously or unconsciously advertising foreign goods and culture in Nollywood movies and not efficiently seizing the opportunity to maximize the industries capacity to further the countries culture and economy to a higher potential. The issue still remains as to how much indigenously produced goods are placed in Nigerian movies presently and to what extent is the Nigerian culture and products simultaneously packaged and presented in these films in a way that will attract foreign recognition and patronage of Nigerian brands.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To identify how product placement is applied in Nigerian films
2. To understand the usefulness of advertising Nigerian products via the film industry
3. To find out if product placement is properly utilized in Nollywood in portraying Nigerian products
4. To find out if indigenous brands and socio-cultural factors are depicted though product placements

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How is product placement applied in Nigerian films?
2. What are the benefits of advertising Nigerian products via the Nigerian film industry?
3. Is product placement properly utilized in Nollywood to portray Nigerian products?
4. Are indigenous brands and socio-cultural and economic factors evident in product placements?

## **THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

Due to the broad components of advertising and film, many theories can be applied to this study, however, two theories are used which will do justice to this work. The theory of Simiology as well as the Social cognitive theory.

Semiology can also be referred to as semiotics, it is essential towards acquiring the necessary information and processing of details in the study because it is usually applicable in research related with advertising and film which have a lot of visual attributes and involves signs and symbols. Brand logos and products are visually displayed in films explicitly and implicitly so semiology theory is instrumental in observing how they are placed.

Semiotics is a study of signs and symbols and it is an interdisciplinary mode for examining phenomena in different fields. It emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with the independent work of Swiss academic Ferdinand de Saussure and the United states of American philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce(Herbet,2019).

The social cognitive theory is mostly concerned with behavioral effects. Its application deals with the fact that in today's society, many of the things, situations and people we learn from are those we see, hear and read about in the mass media. Those people (models) can be celebrities we see on television, films, and other visual communicative mediums. The theory also suggests that the cognitive or mental representations of the environment, circumstance or situation may affect a person's behavior. This includes a persons perception of the activity, physical features and time. The people watching a movie, the celebrities behavior and environment (cinema) which the product is placed constantly influences each other(Anaeto,Onabajo &Osifeso, 2008). The theory explains how people acquire and maintain certain behavioural patterns and that behavioral change depends much on factors such as people, behavior, situation and environment.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **BRANDED ENTERTAINMENT**

Product placement can be classified as branded entertainment in films. This is a form of advertising that blends marketing and entertainment through entertainment mediums such as television,film,music,video games and other forms of technology which is used for entertainment. The objective of this integrated marketing communication process is to utilize entertainment media to gain audience/consumer attention and exposure to products or brands. The edge which product placement has presently over other traditional modes of advertising is its subtle method of showcasing various brands without distraction unlike the usual mainstream way such as television ads or commercials which tends to disrupt the

flow of the program and in some way distracts the audience attention by breaking their concentration as often noticed on television (Belch & Belch,2012).

One of the major differences of product placement especially in films as compared to other advertising media is the significance of factors such as setting and environment within which the product is covertly displayed or demonstrated. This has attracted companies as well as led professionals in advertising to key into this mode of branded entertainment (Kumar,2017).

This claim coincides with that of Belch and Belch stating that the logic behind product placement is embedded in the script or program setting, thus increasing the exposure of a brand or product being displayed(Belch and Belch, 2012). As a result of the lack of intrusiveness of the placement, audiences(consumers) may not have the same negative reaction to it as they may to a commercial which happens to be one of the major reasons people still prefer to go to the cinema theatre to watch movies especially in this part of the world.

Further research also indicates that association with a film which usually has certain celebrities may enhance the image of the product and in some instances lead to increased sales.The Presence of the celebrity helps in building brand loyalty(Jain,2015).

Experimental research found that the audience/consumers have the tendency to perceive the movie star or celebrity using the product giving the impression that the product is the celebrity's personal choice and this has proven to be very effective(Raza & Jalees,2016). The association between the lead character of a film and the brand significantly helps to increase brand recall(Patel & Patel,2015).

## **EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERGRATED MARKETING IN FILM**

The process of placing products in a film has certain cognitive measures through which the audience/consumers are affected or influenced by the ads in the film. Research has been carried out as regards to the effect on recall of brand images and there has been some support towards the notion that product placements facilitates brand memory. The level of involvement with the products by consumers also has impact on brand recall as spectators of a movie(Pantoja,Rossi & Borjes,2015 cited in Raja & Jalees,2016). Studies have also recognized the necessity of product placement regarding consumer recognition, recollection and approach(Kumar,2017).

However, how the ads are been infused and presented in the film varies and seems to be a deciding factor on its impact on the spectators. According to research, the personality of the consumer tends to affect how she or he responds to the ad which also depends on the pattern of placement of the product. Some consumers seem to react positively to prominently placed products and oblivious to the later while some react positively to subtle product placements and are indifferent to the later in the film (Noguti & Russell,2015).

Law and Brauns writing compliments that of Noguti and Russell in laying of emphasis on the explicit form of product placement and the implicit form too. While some consumers/audiences might feel convenient with a given form and exhibit an effective recall rate other consumers might react differently. Further explanation and elucidation was given considering measuring product placements effectiveness using both perspectives explicitly (prominently) and implicitly (subtly). Law and Braun claims that when brand awareness is the primary motive for the test, the best way to measure its effect is through an explicit recall test but if a researcher intends to find out how product placement can be chosen from a consideration set then implicit choice measures would best capture the placements effectiveness (Law & Braun, 2000). Certain aspects were also pored-over as regards to audio-visual display of a brand where certain product placements are heard while others are only seen. Higher or Lower recall does not necessarily determine the level of sales generated as a result of the product placement. The products that are seen in the movie without any additional audio or verbal awareness are usually least recalled during research but have proved to be more influential on choice and might actually result in greater sales.

It appears that placements may be more effective when people are not particularly aware of their influence. Kumars claims verifies the above by comparing products placements that are bold in nature, with the ones that are placed subtly (implicit). In this comparison, it was discovered that consumers showed a negative attitude towards strong and bold (explicit) brand placement advertisement that was repetitive (Kumar, 2017).

Although brand placements is fast becoming an effective and less expensive method of advertising, it is vital for media practitioners involved in advertising and film to be sensitive and creative in displaying brands in a movie due to the fact that Explicit or bold placements have a somewhat negative impact on consumer/audience who find it too intrusive and reduces escapism. A more subtle method which does not disrupt the storyline proves to be more effective

## **METHODS**

The qualitative research method is considered suitable for the study due to the fact that the study mainly involves an audio-visual form of media such as film. Since it also concentrates on the process or creative style involved in placing products visually in a movie as a way of advertising, a less generalized approach is preferable which relies on qualitative form of data analysis. It lays emphasis on the processes and meanings that relies on an intuitive and applied according to the nature of the task at hand. The researcher employs various analytical tools such as applied in semiotics dealing with reading and scrutinizing of visual images and texts in their interpretative efforts (Berger, 2014).

This approach takes qualitative content or text and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings. The objective is to collate relevant themes and categories within a body of text, towards the provision of meaning (Zang & Wildermuth, 2009). Qualitative (textual) analysis is seen as the interpretation and argumentation which is not based solely on statistical relations involving variables by which observational components are described. Whatever substantiations derived from the rate or reoccurrences is not always enough to

be accepted as an end rather, studies dealing with visual content or text should be carried out by keen participant observation. It is vital to make use of an approach which can be expanded upon during the research process. Field research is essentially a matter of immersing oneself into the circumstance being studied in order to gain first-hand knowledge of the situation (Silverman, 2005).

Selected popular and current Nigerian films which were screened in cinemas in from 2016 to 2019 were looked at by the researcher and four other persons who are educated in the field of mass communication and have acquired the required knowledge and understanding of modalities of film and advertising.

The film texts were analyzed to pick out where brands or products are displayed or placed in each of the selected movies. The kind of products/brands was taken into consideration as well as the creative process applied in inducing the ads as a part of the story or how these products were made to be a part of the script. Certain scenes which have brands shown in them are analyzed and the brands were checked to see if they are foreign or Nigerian made products, how the products are presented to the consumers implicitly or explicitly, and if the brands have only visual display, only audio presentation (that is if a product is mentioned only verbally) or both audio-visual placement in the sense that the product is displayed as well as audibly mentioned by characters.

## **FILM REVIEW/TEXTUAL ANALYSIS**

Six Selected Nigerian films are textually analyzed to understand how Brands/products are placed into the storyline. Emphasis of this research is not to discover the impact or influence of the brands on consumer patronage and sales of the products evident in the movies. Rather the contents in the film(text) are cautiously observed in order to understand what nature of brands, the socio-economic traits visible from these product placements designed by the producers and directors towards the spectators and how these brands are infused into the scenes in the script.

The Selected films are The wedding party, Up north, King of boys, Merry men 2, Chief daddy,

### **THE WEDDING PARTY (Directed by Kemi Adetiba) 2016.**

The wedding party is a star studded romantic comedy which became the highest grossing Nigerian movie until its sequel The wedding party 2 in 2017. The film had a cast of celebrities such as Bankole Wellington, Richard Mofe Damijo, Adesua Etomi to mention but a few.

The Brands depicted in the film are The Guardian newspaper, Posh, Avenue, Roce Royce, Black label, Baileys, Guinness, Aquafina.

**1. THE GUARDIAN:** The Guardian was depicted in a scene where the wealthy father of the groom was sitting outdoors in their mansion. It can be seen as a portrayal of the Guardian newspaper as a paper for the elite businessmen.

**2.POSH;**Posh is a lingerie designer brand based in Portland Oregon in the US and are associated in the film with classy/trendy young ladies in society. Its Lingerie product placed in the scene with the bride and bridesmaids was visibly quite erotic.

**3.AVENUE:** Avenue is an online fashion franchise that and delivery service.

**4.ROLLS ROYCE;** Rolls Royce brand was shown repeatedly. Another high class or status vehicle as depicted in the film. (A foreign brand).

**5.BLACK LABEL,BAILEYS AND GUINNESS.** Black Label, Baileys Irish cream and guinness are visible in the wedding reception scene. they are all foreign brands. No Nigerian alcoholic drink was advertised in the movie.

**6.AQUAFINA;**Aquafina bottled water is also used as product placement but it is owned by Pepsi company which is a company established in the united states of America (Foreign brand).

#### **KING OF BOYS (Directed by kemi Adetiba)**

**1.ORIGIN ALCHOHOLIC BEVERAGE:** At the opening scene, in a party hosted by the protagonist. origin alcoholic beverage is evident on the tables in important scenes. It is a drink that was conceived in Nigeria but it is owned by Guinness Nigeria plc. (Exported).

**2. SMIRNOFF ICE VODKA:** Smirnoff ice is also portrayed in the same party in the opening scenes but it's still owned by Guinness Nigeria Plc.

**3. ACCESS BANK:** Access bank advertisement is shown on the television briefly before the news about the arrest of the protagonist. Access bank is a Nigerian multinational commercial bank.

**4.BRABUS G700:** Mercedes Benz bullet proof vehicle used by the protagonist when her life is being threatened.

**5.MERCEDES BENZ:** Mercedes Benz jeep used by the protagonist at the church scene when meeting a senator.

#### **MERRY MEN 2 ( Directed by Moses Iwang)**

**CHANNELS TV:** In the Hospital scene , Channels TV is visible during the news broadcast (Nigerian brand).

**EKO HOTELS:** The merry men's meeting at the Eko Hotels suits (The Second Nigerian Brand).

**LAMBORGINI:** Lamborgini car is driven to the Hotel( Eko Hotels placement was visible



in the scene when they were trying to figure out their attackers and strategizing. It is visible again at the last scene

Apple Laptop and desktops was used regularly throughout all the scenes that required computers. This occurred especially during hacking, tracking and strategizing scenes (Foreign brand).

**TRANSCORP HILTON HOTEL ABUJA:** Was used for the senator's party scene as well as another scene towards the end of the movie showing establishing shots, Showcasing Nigeria (Abuja) as a city for tourism. The Hilton Brand of hotels is international and one of the most recognized.

**BMW :** The BMW brand advertised a motorcycle and did not show the brand logo(probably the directors oversight). Instead placement was done verbally when one of the Merry men mentioned the brand of power bike that the female rider whom they were after escaped with. he further emphasized that it is the fastest bike in the world.(foreign brand)

**WELLS CARLTON HOTEL AND APARTMENTS:** This is a hotel located in Abuja. It is owned by a Nigerian philanthropist. The Hospitality industry in Nigeria is depicted through this placement (The 3<sup>rd</sup> Nigerian brand).

#### **UP NORTH (DIRECTED BY TOPE OSHIN)**

A young graduate born with a silver spoon returns from schooling abroad and is made by his wealthy father to go for national service in the northern part of Nigeria.

**ACCESS BANK:** Access bank turns out to be the dominant brand in this film. The first time it is portrayed, the ATM card is given to the lead character. The bank signage is shown explicitly in the long shot when his ATM card is blocked. (Nigerian brand)

**YANKARI GAME RESERVE:** The Yankari game reserve is infused into the script which reveals a renowned tourist location in Bauchi state. However, this resort depicted the tourism potential of the northern part of Nigeria. The Durbar festival was also used to enrich the story. The tourist attraction Durbar festival and stadium served as locations and entertainment services which showcases Bauchi State as a rich tourist site to audience/consumers.

These sites served as more or less an opportunity for public service advertising. Evident here is a form of social responsibility to foreign audience showing Northern Nigeria as a peaceful place good for tourism.

#### **CHIEF DADDY (Directed by Niyi Akhinmolayan)**

**KEYSTONE BANK:** One of the early scenes shows two sisters who are daughters of the chief attending to clients in their fashion shop where they sell traditional outfits. keystone credit card is made obvious during the payment for the materials purchased.(Nigerian

brand)

**RED LABEL/JOHNNY WALKER:** This brand of alcoholic drink is displayed on the tables during the funeral party. (Foreign brand)

**ELTV:** EL TV is used during the news scene but the brand is behind the production of the movie (A Nigerian brand).

**ROLLS ROYCE:** This brand of vehicle was clearly showcased at the last scene of the film when a very wealthy looking woman drives to the gate of the late chiefs mansion and comes out to stare intensely at the house(foreign brand).

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

From the ads discovered in the selected films in this study, it is clearly evident that non-indigenous (Foreign brands) seems to dominate the New Nollywood and are more aware of the advertising potential of the Nigerian movie industry as seen from the amount of foreign company owned brands placed in these select films exhibited in Nigerian cinemas in the past couple of years. The Nigerian banking industry and hospitality industry seems to be at the fore-front in product placement among indigenous (local) brands involved in advertising. Access bank which is a Nigerian multinational commercial bank as well as Keystone bank (a Nigerian commercial bank) have shown good understanding of the advantage in investing in advertising/sponsorship of the new Nigerian movie industry.

Access bank makes use of the film industry to advertise its brand to the local, national and international audience. It also uses the Nigerian film industry as a platform to boost the creative industry and economy. The bank goes as far as supporting film festivals, creating employment opportunities promoting investment and depicting Nigerian culture (Abiodun,2019).

The director and cinematographer were some-what too explicit in advertising Access bank in the movie Up-north. This is obvious in the scene when the lead characters account was blocked. The bank signboard was a little too vivid and distracting enabling the viewer to know that the part of the movie is paid for by an identified sponsor. Implicit choice measures would best capture the placements effectiveness (Law & Braun,2000).

The hospitality industry in Nigeria such as Carlton Wells hotel and apartments and Eko hotels ensured featured in the same movie.

Out of six products visible in the movie the wedding party, only one Nigerian brand is seen which is The Guardian newspaper. The King of boys film does not show any local brands from the five noticeable placements. Although Origin beverage is the closest to a local brand, it is owned by Guinness which is a foreign brand.

The broadcast TV advert is conspicuous but EL TV happens to be part of the players behind the production of the film which their services was placed.

## CONCLUSION

From the data and information derived from this study, there is an encouraging growth in the awareness and practice of product placements in the new move of Nigerian movies in cinemas. However, it is evident that while foreign brands are at the fore-front in product placement investment, local brands may not have properly understood the importance of patronizing this type of branded entertainment. As more cinemas are built in the country more Nigerian contents dominate Nigerian film theatres which should be a more affordable way for integrated marketing of local goods and services. The New-nollywood film industry will prove to be a most effective means of advertising Nigerian products and culture to the global market and consumers.

## RECCOMENDATIONS

Local brands need to embrace the growing potential of product placement in the Nigerian film industry. Nigerian companies should invest in advertising in Nigerian movies that carry mass appeal and the new wave of Nigerian films in theatres seem to be achieving the desired mass appeal in a shorter period of time than the old Nollywood movement. And when the film viewing rights are finally bought over by Television stations, the brands will continue to be viewed in these films over decades and even generations.

Nigerian companies should capitalize on showcasing their product and services through movies in order to maintain brand recall, loyalty and fidelity. This brings about the needed opportunity to reach a larger audience (potential consumers) with lesser amount of money than what advertising agencies or advertising practitioners require for producing an ad and Television channels demand for advertising slots. The filmmakers do the creative aspect as well as the distribution of the brand awareness through the films.

Films should be seen as an avenue to increase patronage of the tourism industry in the country as well as representing the Nigerian culture in a way that will attract foreigners whereby laundering the image of an already dented society.

Movie producers, directors and screen writers should bear in mind the responsibility of infusing product placement as part of the storyline right from the inception of the pre-production process of film-making instead of a fire-brigade approach of sourcing for sponsorship from brands during the production process which results in half-hazard product showcasing in the movie.

There is the advantage of numerous quantities of products that can be placed in a film. The Hollywood movie "Man of steel" which had over 100 brands as promotional partners has shown that as many products as possible can be placed in a film. This should be taken as a win-win situation for brands as well as film producers.

It is possible for income made from product placement to carry the total cost of producing a movie; for instance, "Man of Steel" which cost about \$225m had already earned \$170m before its theatre release.

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