

INDIGENOUS COMMERCIAL ANIMATION PRACTICE IN NIGERIA: LOCAL CONTENT AND REBRANDING OF THE PALM WINE

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Abstract

This paper explores the dynamics of animation in product advertising and commercials. Despite the growth of animation in Nigeria's advertising industry, the study shows that local animated media often lacks indigenous cultural symbols, limiting its effectiveness in promoting local brands in native markets. This gap has widened with the influx of foreign animations, leading to cultural drift among millennials and Generation Z, influencing their product preferences. This study examines the current state of product animation in Nigeria with particular reference to the indigenous palm wine brand, the importance of cultural content in animated advertising, and how it can shape consumer behaviour in indigenous markets. Being practice-led research, the study provides insights into the integration of indigenous cultural symbols from Ife, Uli and Nsibidi in design elements to create a remanded package and an animated media for the local palm wine brand, using tools such as Blender 3.5, Photoshop Suites, and Filmora 9 - focusing on indigenous brand identity, personality, and loyalty. It explores how local products can be rebranded to meet global standards while reflecting native cultural elements. Utilising a mixed-methods approach with qualitative data and a practice-led research process, the study creates an animated advert concept for promoting the indigenous palm wine beverage. This is based on theories such as Symbolic Interactionism in Media Effects, and the Brand Identity Prism Theories. Findings show that incorporating cultural symbols into the branding and animation design of palm wine enhanced its visual and aesthetic appeal more than the old traditional packaging methods. The study suggests further exploration of safe packaging options, such as branded aluminium cans, for promoting the beverage in both local and international markets. Additionally, future research is recommended to further examine how rebranding indigenous products influences product choices and consumer behaviour in local markets amidst the strong presence of foreign brands and values.

Keywords: Animism, Commercial animation, Indigenous content, Semiotics.

Introduction

Advertising has been described as a way of being in the world and has continued to support the dissemination of products and media globally. From Africa to the developed West, animated media—the illusion of movement created by displaying a series of static images or frames in rapid succession—brings advertising to life by adding depth, emotion, and personality that static images or text alone cannot achieve. This has become a tool for conjuring sensations that captivate and hold consumers spellbound. From the famous Fido Dido ads of the 1980s to the more complex animated commercials now impacted by technology, advertising and animation have grown to become intertwined as a medium of active expression, captivation, and attention, one that invites our affection for product promotion (Lears, 1994; Cook and Thompson, 2019).

The above connotes that the synergy between animation and advertising fosters creativity and innovation, offering new ways for advertisers to highlight product information. Current literature asserts that Animation provides endless possibilities to experiment with different styles, techniques, and narratives, which helps tell brand stories more effectively. This creative freedom not only enhances the visual and aesthetic appeal of adverts but also allows brands to share authentic stories that resonate with their audience. Lear (1994) believes that this modern approach to advertising draws heavily from historical practices from the 1500s to the 1800s, rooted in the animistic worldview, which blurs the boundaries between nature, culture, matter, spirit, self, and the world, thereby creating an 'Animated world.' Since the primary goal of advertising is to persuade people to buy products, it follows that commercial

animation and advertising could appear anywhere to emphasize private fantasies and validate various forms of power capable of impacting life at major points of beauty and utility (Jenkins 1989).

In Nigeria, contemporary literature suggests that in 2013, the Nigerian animation industry gained global recognition with the creation of "Ovie and Wale" by Tayo Fasunon and Richard Oboh, which took the internet by storm and heralded the coming of age of the Nigerian animation industry (Fasunon, 2018). Animated commercials, such as Mr. Chef's Seasoning (2016), Dangote Salt (2017), Visco Static engine oil ad (2014), Hollandia Slim Milk (2020), and *Nutri Yo* (2024), produced by Orange VFX Studios Lagos, further highlight the rise of a unique and emerging advertising language in Nigeria. This creative wave is now rapidly reshaping the cultural landscape and influencing ways of promoting Nigerian products and other indigenous goods.

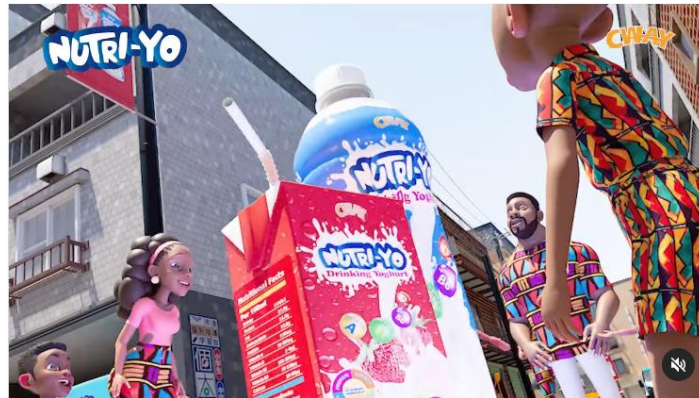


Plate 1: Nutri Yo commercial animation, Orange vfx, 2024

In addition, Baldwin (n.d., as cited in Cook and Thompson, 2019) clarifies that people find animation campaigns appealing for several reasons: Animated cartoons are enjoyable, play a role in creating addictive attractions, establish unique brand identities, interpret complex ideas with simple forms, and generate fantasies and exaggerated concepts. Ultimately, the narrative of animation cannot be accurately recounted without acknowledging the role of advertising (Cook and Thompson, 2019)

Statement of the Problem

While contemporary research on animation practice in Nigeria exists, few studies have documented and explored the significant integration of indigenous content into commercial animation for the advertising and promotion of indigenous brands. This gap is further widened by the reliance on foreign animated advertisements, which continues to influence Nigerian consumers, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, to favour foreign goods over indigenous alternatives. This study thus contributes to the existing literature on the milieu by exploring how Nigerian traditional symbols and motifs can be adapted for commercial animation and design elements for the Nigerian palm wine brand to promote it more effectively. The study refers to animation for brand and product advertising as commercial animation and uses this term interchangeably with animation in advertising.

Literature Review and Theoretical Anchorage

This section reviewed the literature and vital pieces of information about the study with the intent of obtaining broad-based information from renowned authorities on the subjects related to indigenous product rebranding and commercial animation practice in Nigeria. Below is the breakdown of the section:

- Conceptual Framework
- Theoretical Framework
- Theoretical Studies
- Summary of Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

Commercial animation

As defined by PRIXUNE (2024), commercial animation is the use of animated content for marketing and advertising. It entails generating animated movies, commercials, and other visual content to market products, services, or brands. This style of animation can take several forms, including 2D, 3D, motion graphics, explainer videos, and more. DREAMFARM (2025) equally point out that not all kinds of commercial animations are suitable for brands and thus listed the following as types of commercial animations that could be chosen from:

- Explainer videos- which could be whiteboard animations are characterized by hand-drawn appearance, sequential storytelling, clear visual progression and an engaging educational style. They are mostly used for complex concept explanations, educational content, training materials, process demonstrations, and service explanations.
- 2Dimensional animations- A traditional low-production time kind of animation that involves the use of hand-drawn art on celluloid sheets or frame-by-frame digital drawing apps. They are characterised by flat, artistic representations, flexible styles ranging from simple to complex, familiar and accessible to most audiences and highly adaptable for various platforms and best used for brand storytelling, educational content, social media campaigns, explainer videos or logo animations.
- 3Dimensional animations- 3D animations are characterised by depth and dimensional accuracy, photorealistic capabilities, complex movements and camera angles and enhanced visual impact. It involves the use of computer-generated images (CGI). 3D animations have astounding images that are visually appealing but require a high budget to produce and are best suited for producing product demonstrations, architectural visualization, technical explanation, virtual tours and High-end marketing campaigns.
- Motion graphics- This type entails creatively moving graphic elements (images or text). They are typography-focused, often abstracted, clean and attractive and engage data visualization capabilities. Motion graphics are best used for corporate presentations, statistical data representations, social media advertisements, brand identity videos and interface animations.
- Stop Motion Animation- This creative animation approach brings tangible objects to life using frame-by-frame photography, resulting in a distinct and unforgettable watching experience. It is characterized by tangible, realistic textures, handcrafted appearance, unique attractive appeal, and authentic feel, stop motion animation is best suited for product launches, artistic brand campaigns, social media content, behind-the-scenes stories, and creative advertising.

On the authority of MORPHIC (2025), the target audience, business objectives, budget consideration and distribution strategy need to be considered before adopting either of the above for brand promotion. MORPHIC also presented a table of comparison to show how the different animation styles vary from one another in terms of complexity and application. (See table 1 below)

Table 1.

Comparison Table: Animation Types and Their Applications

Animation Types	Cost Range	Production Time	Complexity	Best Platform	Engagement Magnitude
2D Animation	\$\$	Medium	Medium	All Platforms	High
3D Animation	\$\$\$\$	Long	High	Web, T.V	Very High
Motion Graphics	\$\$	Short - Medium	Medium	Social Media	Medium High
Stop Motion	\$\$\$	Long	High	All Platforms	Very High
Explainer Whiteboard Animation	\$	Short	Low	Web Training	Medium

Commercial animation practice in Nigeria

According to documented media and literature on commercial animation practice in Nigeria, the majority of the products advertised were foreign in origin- animated television commercials like the Super Viscos static oil, Michelin tyres and Elephant detergent commercials, which aired on Nigerian television in the early 1980s and established the

affinity between animation and advertising practice, all showcased foreign brands, and although the practice gave rise to a wave of commercial animation that began in Nigeria by the late 1980s, especially with the Seven-Up Bottling Company Limited's promotion of the animated Fido Dido character, this study reserves that no evidence of indigenous animated pieces officially predate Wole Aduwo premier animation attempt in 1996, and Ibrahim Ganiyu's satirical political animated musical meme piece - *Surulere*, which officially became a model for other emerging animators (Fasunon, 2018).

The study through literature findings further observed that Nigerian successive socioeconomic and political upheavals and military coups that greeted post-independence Nigeria pushed artists and illustrators to intensify using cartoons as a tool for addressing Nigeria's sociocultural, and political challenges, and for protesting against oppressive military and civilian regimes (Jimoh, 2019) while foreign advertising agencies featured predominantly in the advertising landscape of the country. Prominent among them was West African Publicity Limited, the innovation of United African Company (UAC) and Lever Brother International, which later became "Lever International Advertising Services" (LINTAS), They serviced international brands both home and abroad as advertising contractors, with a base in Lagos (Olatunji, 2018) and (J. Amifor, personal communication, April 20, 2024). The study observed that the advertising landscape was dominated by foreign advertising agencies around this period- namely: "Ogilvy, Benson, and Mather (OB&M), Graham and Gills (G&G), Advertising and Marketing Services (AMS), Grant Advertising, Auger & Turne, and S. H. Benson" before the emergence of indigenously owned animation and advertising studios in Nigeria.

Fasunon (2018) wrote that the pioneering efforts of people like Wole Aduwo, Ibrahim Ganiyu, Stanley Ohikuare, Ibrahim Ganiyu, and Obinna Owuenwu helped sustain and promote the animation industry in Nigeria up until 2013 when Tayo Fasunon and Richard Oboh viral animated character of *Ovie and Wale*, - a 3D commercial animated character designed to push product advertisements and attract big-budget animation deals from corporate firms found its way to the internet (Fasunon, 2018). This marked the emergence of indigenous commercial animation in the advertising landscape in Nigeria and was followed up by many other product and brand commercials by Nigerian-owned studios who deliberately began integrating indigenous content into animated product content.

Product branding and rebranding

Branding and rebranding products are global concepts within advertising and branding. Product branding plays a crucial role in marketing by helping businesses distinguish their products from competitors and establish a unique identity in the marketplace. Effective branding involves much more than just a logo or a catchy tagline; it entails creating a comprehensive identity that resonates with consumers and builds loyalty. (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Kapferer, 2012).

Aaker (1991) and Klimchuk and Krasovec (2012) highlighted that the importance of branding lies in brand differentiation, customer loyalty, and perceived value. They also suggested that key elements such as brand name, logo and design, and brand management (including taglines, slogans, and overall communication strategy) should be integrated into product branding. These insights reinforced the study's adoption of these elements for rebranding the palm wine beverage.

Rebranding on the other hand as stated by Muzellec and Lambkin (2006), involves altering the corporate image of a company or product. This process includes updating key brand elements like the logo, name, symbols, or other significant aspects to create a new, distinct identity in consumers' minds. Rebranding can rejuvenate a product, attract new customers, and reposition the brand in the market. For example, during rebranding, a company may change its visual identity and messaging to reflect a new mission, values, or market strategy.

On the authority of the above statement, it is safe to submit that the rebranding of the Nigerian traditional palm wine is essential to rejuvenate it as an indigenous beverage brand that could compete favourably with its international counterpart, especially in local markets and among indigenous consumers.

Kapferer, (2012) with Moriarty, Mitchell, and Wells (2009), agree that a brand is a name that influences buyers but avows that the brand name isn't enough to sell itself and thus must project other values. They suggested that when it comes to branding or rebranding, brands must emphasise the core values that they seek to promote which should

include: brand identity, personality, position, loyalty, image, promise, and preferences and that a brand identity must be uniquely distinctive to ensure its mental impression (brand image) remains valued regardless of the promotion platform.

According to Muzellec and Lambkin (2006), rebranding efforts can either be evolutionary or revolutionary. Evolutionary rebranding involves gradual and minor changes in the brand's positioning and aesthetics, which may go unnoticed by outsiders while Revolutionary rebranding involves significant, noticeable changes in both positioning and aesthetics, which essentially redefine the brand. This transformation is typically marked by a change of name and serves as a key indicator of revolutionary rebranding efforts. The notion of revolutionary rebranding is adopted in this study to redefine the pal wine brand.

Uli and Nsibidi symbols as indigenous semiotics

Uli and Nsibidi are traditional symbolic systems utilised in southeastern Nigeria, with each having a considerable impact on the region's cultural, artistic, and linguistic activities. While diverse, both systems reveal profound cultural relevance and a sophisticated understanding of semiotics in the communities that created them. Nelson (2016) argue that in pre-independence Nigeria, these played as visual codes which were part of socio-cultural and religious syntaxes among social groups.

Mostly utilized by Igbo women, uli designs, are linear and flowing motifs placed on the body or walls for ceremonial and aesthetic reasons. In Igbo cosmology, these patterns frequently represent ideals of harmony, balance, and beauty, representing concepts like spirituality, unity, or fertility. Despite being largely ornamental, Uli also uses identifiable motifs to convey social and cultural information. Visual rhythm and simplicity are emphasised by Uli's semiotic grammar, which results in compositions that are aesthetically pleasing and culturally meaningful (Okeke-Agulu, 2006).

On the other hand, Nsibidi is utilised by the Ekpe society and kindred communities like the Ejagham, Efik, and Igbo peoples. Its symbols are used for anything from personal expression to political and legal communication. Nsibidi symbols, which frequently stand for ideas like power, authority, love, and conflict, are employed in Ukara textiles, sculptures, and ritual areas. In contrast to Uli, Nsibidi symbols can be graphic or abstract, and deciphering them requires cultural understanding (Effiong, 2014).

Souad (2012) therefore refer to the presentation of such in animation as a complex process of coding/decoding and appropriating cultural meanings, noting that Disney animated films' cultural symbolism serves not only as entertainment media but also as ideological apparatus for promoting and propagation of dominant ideologies.

The study therefore opines that Uli and Nsibidi encode cultural knowledge through visual forms, acting as archives of tradition and identity while linking art and communication. These systems, thus sustain relevance by influencing modern Nigerian art and adapting to new contexts and media. (See Figure 2) for illustration and meanings of selected Uli and Nsibidi ideograms selected in this study).

Theoretical Framework

Symbolic interactionism theory

The symbolic interactionism theory postulated by George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) and re coined by Herbert Blumer (1937), based on Libraries (2016), proposes that the self is derived from and develops through human interaction, this implies that humans ascribe meaning to objects depending on how connected they are to them and that symbols with shared cultural interpretation improve effective communication, (Libraries, 2016). Symbolic interactionism, which is closely linked to semiotics theory, highlights the significance of symbols, which can be words, signs, objects, or representational concepts. These symbols and their meanings are employed in conversations to establish common understandings and suggest that cultural emblems composed of traditional components can unite people.

The study adopted emblems from the Uli and Nsibidi traditions of Eastern Nigeria and symbols from the Yoruba Western culture to illustrate symbolic interactionism in this research. These symbolic adoptions were based on the belief that Nigerians have a strong affinity with cultural symbols and hold strong interactions with them hence the researchers hoped that such might provide the needed animism required to project the indigenous palm wine beverage.

Brand identity prism theory

Jean-Noël Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism Theory from 2008 provides an invaluable framework for visualising and understanding the essential elements of a brand and their interactions, to establish a cohesive brand image and communication strategy. According to Kapferer (2008), brands should possess unique characteristics and values that allow consumers to discover their own identities and self-worth.

Barrer (n.d., as cited in Moriarty, Mitchell, & Wells, 2009) supports this idea of brand personality, suggesting that a brand needs to exhibit familiar human traits such as love, competence, trustworthiness, and sophistication to remain viable. This view aligns well with the broader objectives of the Brand Identity Prism, which focuses on creating a multifaceted and relatable brand identity.

Consequently, the Brand Identity Prism Theory was instrumental in effectively branding the primary package of the study output. The theory prompted the researchers to develop a new brand identity, personality, and culture that could enhance the self-image of the indigenous products and, conversely, that of their consumers.

In essence, incorporating the principles of Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism Theory, along with Barrer's insights on brand personality, can significantly bolster a brand's ability to effectively communicate its unique values and characteristics. This, in turn, helps to establish a strong brand image and fosters enduring relationships with consumers, who perceive the brand as a reflection of their own identities and aspirations.

Theoretical Studies

The integration of indigenous content in Nigerian artistic media expression

Chijioke Onuora, a contemporary artist from the Nsukka Art School, in his art piece titled "Mkpulu Nkwo Na Ego Ayolo" (pebbles and cowries)- Plate 2, wood, 83 x 30 inches, exemplified the richness of indigenous semiotics in conveying cultural meaningfulness and symbolic messages in visual arts. In the wood carving, the artist's use of traditional cowries along with indigenous Uli signs as the central theme suggests his ties to indigenous contexts and philosophy. This expression seeks to leave viewers in contemplated interpretation and recall.



Plate 2: Mkpulu Nkwo Na Ego Ayolo (pebbles and cowries), 2022, wood carving, 83 x 30 inches.
Image source, the artist, 2022.

Moreover, Ozioma Onuzulike's art display at the Marc Straus Gallery in New York, United States, also illustrated the use of semiotic symbolism in visual communication. Onuzulike, a ceramist, used indigenous clay combined with discarded glassware to enhance the visual representation of decay in his ceramic sculpture "Harvest and Scorched Earth"- (Plate 3). This piece depicts how yams deteriorate when neglected on farms and when cultivated under harsh conditions. The researchers argue that the artist's choice of yams as the central symbolic element draws its significance from their important role in Igbo ontology.

Harvest and Scorched Earth addresses both climate change and migration issues, focusing on the declining well-being of Africa's youth, who are metaphorically planting themselves like yams in unfamiliar environments, hoping for a better future.

The above submissions reveal that Chijioke Onuora and Ozioma Onuzulike's indigenous semiotic approach and use of symbolic elements are crucial in arguing the central ideology of this research because they depict indexes, symbols, and icons as agents of information transmission and influences through art expressions that draw attention to the research's scope – the adaptation of Nigerian traditional symbols, motifs and cultural icons for commercial animation practice and product branding in Nigeria indigenous market.



Plate 3: *Ozioma-Onuzulike Harvest and Scorched Earth (48 x 86.2 x 5.1 in). Image source: the artist and Marc Straus Gallery in New York, United States, 2023*

Other works include but are limited to El Anatsui's use of the circle of life spiral symbols in his "Human Wall" wood panel (2023), Gabriel Oluwasegun Akinola's Nigerian 20k crocodile African reptile stamp (1986), Nigerian pottery stamp (1990) and Hilda Toritsereju Woods African chameleon reptile stamp, (1986). (Woods, 1986). Mention must also be made of the textile works by Nike Davis a renowned Nigerian adire, embroidery and batik artist whose adire and batik styles exemplify semiology and symbolism.

Despite the above as a contemporary adaptation of indigenous content for promotional uses, there still exists limited inquiry into the integration of indigenous symbols, especially for the rebranding and promotion of the indigenous palm wine found in Nigeria, thus the findings of this study were aimed at presenting an adoption of indigenous traditional symbols, motifs, and cultural icons for use in the promotion of palm wine (rebranded) for the indigenous market through the medium of commercial animation.

Nigeria's indigenous palm wine as a brand

Traditionally in Nigeria, Palm wine is an alcoholic beverage that is consumed across Nigeria, it possesses a shared cultural value of communal fellowship, love, royalty and spiritedness. Indigenously, palm wine is stored in calabash and served in smaller bows and gourd cups in Nigeria, over the years people began to store it in bottles and plastic containers. Although contemporary literature suggests that attempts have been made to repackage the indigenous beverage into canned beverage products for promotional purposes across the country as seen on <https://www.nairaland.com/2032509/palm-wine-now/3> pages; there exists a gap in promotional content relating to animated commercials and the integration of traditional signs, symbols, and cultural motifs for the Palm beverage branding for commercial animation. This is the core of this research work.

As noted by Onuegbu, Obiajulu, and Nnaji (2015) the palm wine beverage is considered sacred among Nigerian diverse cultures and often used during traditional rights and cultural celebrations. They argued that in Igbo tradition, palm wine promotes unity while the Yorubas see it as the drink of the gods. Subsequently, the indigenous drink sourced from the sap of the palm tree species (palm wine beverage), popularly called "Mmanya Ocha, Mmanya Ogolo or Mmanya nku" in south-eastern Nigeria, "Emu" or "Oguro" in western Nigeria, and "Bammi" among Northern Nigerians, was designed for promotion using commercial animation medium. The design process involved the examination of indigenous motifs, illustrating, and rendering them with 3-dimensional media for animated commercial advertisements.



Plate 4:
Palm wine Tree prepared for beverage extraction. Image source: Ezugwu Nnamdi Levi, 2023.



Plate 5:
Palm wine beverage being extracted using plastic bottle Image source: Ezugwu Nnamdi Levi, 2023.



Plate 6:
Extracted Palm wine beverage stored in plastic keg Image source: Ezugwu Nnamdi Levi, 2023.



Plate 7:
Extracted Palm wine beverage stored in bottles and being served Image source: Ezugwu Nnamdi Levi, 2023.

Summary of Literature Review

The aforementioned literature study illustrates the effectiveness of animation as a medium and its impact on brand marketing and product recall. It highlights the gaps in the cultural integration of indigenous content into brand promotion for indigenous markets like the indigenous palm wine and expresses the concerns of a foreign-overran indigenous market if no caution is exercised.

The significance of developing creative homegrown semiotic media content to further the identity of homegrown brands is further underscored in these reviews by the efforts of indigenous artists who are promoting culturally influenced products through various artistic mediums to the world. Literature findings also indicate that while there have been some achievements in this area, the majority of expressions have remained confined to fine arts such as painting, sculpture- wood carvings, and Applied arts such as Graphic design, Textile, Ceramics, or animation for entertainment and foreign animated adverts that lack indigenous semiotics.

Consequently, there exists a gap in the integration of traditional symbols, motifs, and cultural icon contents for the commercial animation of Nigeria's indigenous Palm wine beverage rebranding as a homegrown product, as noted in the research problem thus hindering indigenous products from thriving in the indigenous market space.

In light of the above, the adoption of dynamic visuals with integrated regional traditional symbols, motifs and cultural icons of Nigerian origin to create a rebranded palm wine brand and an animated commercial for the indigenous palm wine beverage may address the current gaps identified by this study and bring more visibility to other indigenous products nationwide.

Methodology

Data Collection Processes

Primary and secondary data were used in this study. The practical approach involved the generation of visual and animated media content using the Computer Generated Imagining (CGI) algorithm of Blender 3.6.5, Adobe Photoshop, and Filmora 9 video editor applications. While the research population consisted of 500 people, 250 persons were found to be actively engaged online and live across different states and Local Government Areas (LGA) in Nigeria, they also constitute the group living as Millennials or Zoomers domiciled in clustered design, academic and Adverts WhatsApp groups thus a homogenous purposive survey sampling technique was used to determine the focused group population (250) and questionnaire recipients. 72 respondents emerged from the questionnaire recipients which constitutes 60% of the sample population that attempted the online distributed questionnaire.

Table 1:

Description of the purposive sample of this research, 2023. Image source: Toluwani (2023)

Gender	%	Age	%
Male	33 (45%)	16-21	13 (18.1%)
Female	39(54%)	22-26	9 (12.5%)
		27-31	2 (2.8%)
		32-36	7 (9.7%)
		37-42	21 (39.9%)
		others	20 (27.8%)
Total	72		72
By Occupation	%		
Campus Students	15 (20.8%)		
Animation sector	4 (5.6%)		
Owners of brands	4 (5.6%)		
Graphic designers, Enthusiast and Researchers	16 (22.2%)		
Advertisers	33 (45.8%)		
	72		

Questionnaire Sample and Responses

The questionnaire sample comprised twenty inquiries which had two closed responses (Yes or No feedback) and eighteen, 5 Likert scale questions as expressed in (See Appendix 1)

Method of Data Analysis:

In this study, the researchers employed a mixed method analysis technique involving the use of qualitative and quantitative data analysis. While quantitative data expressed the statistical data and analysis of questionnaire responses, the qualitative approach piloted the practice-led explorative research (PLR) outputs. The quantitative data analysis was based on the observation of the highest occurring frequency (Mode) within the data series which returned an unimodal summary of all frequencies in the data set (Likert scale items). The qualitative data analysed the visual communication design approaches and production procedures used in arriving at the research output- these included concept studies, the creation of creatives from computer-generated images, and animation designs.

Emotional Value (EV), which addresses the perceived value that respondents (in context-consumers) attribute to service -in this case commercial animation and how it impacts their choices of product based on the feelings it evokes in them was also analysed in some of the questionnaires.

Visual Communication Design Processes

Practice-led approach

This section describes the analysis of the studio research methods that complemented the qualitative research approach, creative processes, and visual communication design elements used in addressing the research topic and questions. Since the research is practice-led, studio work and engagements were crucial in generating and compiling creative qualitative data (a portfolio of design evidence), which were executed in Blender 3.6.5, Adobe Photoshop and Filmora 9 video editor applications.

Visual studies

The first part of the creative concept was dedicated to the visual studies of cultural symbols that were adopted and infused into commercial animation and 3D design digitization. The researchers used a combination of illustrated symbols adopted from the Nigerian *Uli* and *Nsibidi* indigenous patterns to create the palm wine primary package logo design (see Figure 1 below). *Fly-whisk* which connotes “royal might and status” and the Nsibidi symbols for “Unity” and “a table set for meat and drink” symbols were used to create the palm wine brand logo. Other symbols adopted

by the researchers for the palm wine primary package exterior inscriptions included the *Circle of Life, Beauty, Congress, Love, King and Music symbols* from the Uli and Nsibidi semeiology (see Figure 2 below).

It is important to acknowledge that logos are integral to a brand's identity, encompassing the brand's symbol, font type, colours, and slogans (Moriarty, Mitchell, and Wells, 2009). Consequently, the logo designed by the researchers and the selected colours (black, grey, and earth brown) collectively establish the identity of the palm wine brand. The colour black symbolises the power and strength of the black race, grey signifies balance, conservatism, formality, and sophistication, while earth brown represents sustainability and nurturing.



Figure 1: Digital Illustration of Logo for the palm wine beverage. Image source: Toluwani, 2023

Jansson-Boyd (2010) in Libraries, (2016) believes that symbols with shared cultural values like the above possess the capacity not only to influence societal interactions and the development of self but also to stimulate consumer behaviour towards products. Thus the Nsibidi and Uli patterns were adopted in this study because they are considered symbols, logograms and syllabograms traditionally used by people of Nigeria origin.

SYMBOLS	MEANING	SYMBOLS	MEANING
	Unity		King
	Congress		Beauty
	Love		Tree
	Table set for meat and drink		Music
	Circle of life		Flywhisk;

Figure 2: Meanings of selected Uli, Nsibidi patterns from Eastern Nigeria. Image source: Toluwani, 2023

Digitization of studies and derived meaning

The researchers digitised the study symbols using adobe illustrator 2020- a vector based design software, to give them a more vector form. This was achieved by importing the images into Adobe Illustrator and manipulating the software vector tools to achieve the needed vector format (geometric shapes defined on a two-dimensional coordinate plane and formed by the intersection of the X and Y axes, such as points, curves, lines, and polygons), this was saved as Portable Network Graphics (PNG) and exported into Photoshop for refinement.

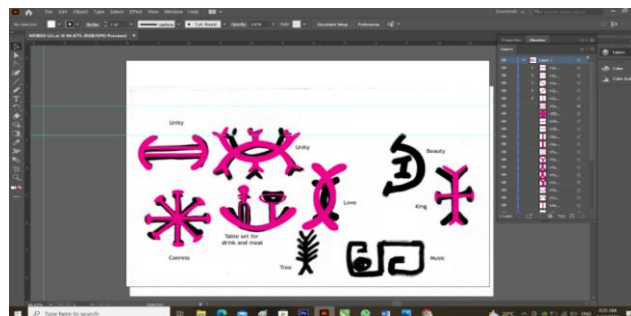


Plate 8: Digitised illustration of selected traditional symbols, motifs and cultural icons using the Adobe Illustrator application. Image source: Toluwani, 2023

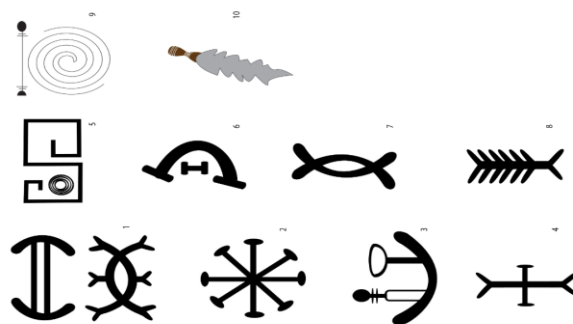


Figure 3: Digitised traditional symbols, motifs and cultural icons from Uli, Nsibidi and Nigerian Western culture with meanings. Image source: Toluwani, 2023

The symbols above represent the adopted traditional symbols, motifs and cultural icons used in this study, their meanings below, illuminate the collective ideas deduced by people across Nigerian major ethnic groups. They include:

Figure 3: Unity, 1. Congress, 2. Table set for drink and meat, 3. King, 4. Music, 5. Beauty, 6. Love, 7. Tree, 8. Circle of Life, 9. Flywhisk, 10.

The above symbols depicted cultural and communal unity, love, festive spirit, and a sense of royalty, which are the cultural attributions given to the palm wine drink among Nigerians as claimed by oral tradition. The consumption of palm wine beverage also cuts across several cultures in Nigeria, hence the above indigenous symbols project cohesive semiotics for shared social interactionism among the people within the research scope and geographical space. Symbols from Northern Nigeria were however dropped because of their intolerance for alcoholic beverages -because alcoholic beverages are considered *Haram*- proscribed by Islamic Laws.

Conceptual product design study and layout

The researchers created a study illustration of the proposed product in stages (visualization, embellishment and conceptualizing using Adobe Photoshop and a graphics tablet to visually represent the primary package (Can) of the palm wine beverage. Blender design software was then used to model it into 3 dimensions.

- **Stage 1:** Visualization of the aluminium can for the palm wine beverage.



Figure 6: Artist impression (study) -Illustration of palm wine beverage primary package stage 1, Image source: Toluwani, 2022

Afterwards, Adobe Photoshop - a renowned professional raster graphics tool, editor and digital art software created by Thomas and John Knoll in 1987 was adopted by the researchers to create the concept art of the palm wine product before modelling it in Blender.

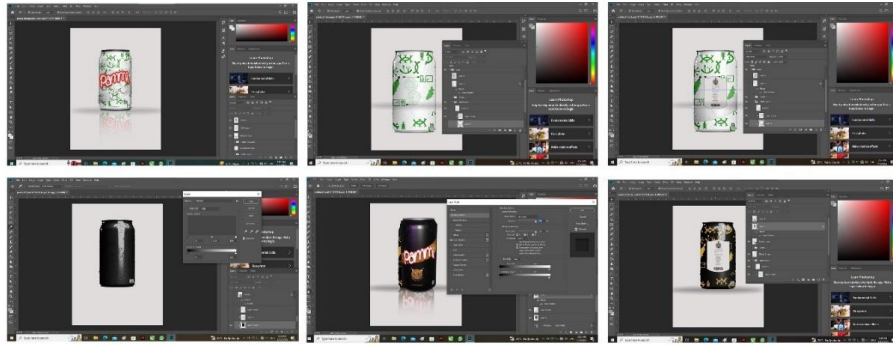


Plate 9: Design study and workflow in Adobe Photoshop for Palm Wine primary package.
Image source: Toluwani,, 2023.

The study produced two design concepts, and the researchers chose conceptual art sample 2 for the final modelling in Blender. This design was selected for its representation of the "black strength and spirit" among Nigerians. The brand name "Pammi" was adopted for the modelled concept, drawing on Moriarty, Mitchell, and Wells' (2009) argument that a distinctive brand name is crucial in a dynamic advertising environment to establish identity and personality, differentiate products, and enhance visibility and loyalty. The name "Pammi" was chosen to imbue the palm wine brand with personality and cultural traits, aiming to connect with consumers and influence their decisions.



Plate 10: Designed conceptual art sample 1 and 2 for the research output. Image source: Toluwani, 2023

- **Stage 2:** Modelling in Blender's 3-dimensional (3D) design environment.

Similar to Autodesk's Maya animation and modelling software, the Blender 3.6.5 version suite is a three-dimensional modelling environment that supports animation and is compatible with Python, C, and C++ programming languages. It is an open-source 3D programme that can handle most design requirements—2D, 3D sculpting and modelling, animation, architectural modelling, video editing, interior design, and UV mapping editing (the process of projecting a 3D model surface into a 2D image for texturing)

Consequently, a 3D model of the Photoshop-designed concept art was created by manipulating Blender tools. The following are blender object mesh work process screenshot clips. (Plate 11)



Plate 11: Object mesh items, vertices modelling and UV editing in blender by Toluwani, 2023



Plate 12: Final 3D rendering of the palm wine (Pammi) Can model in Blender 3.6.5. Image source: Toluwani, 2023

- **Stage 3:** 3D product lighting effect

The researchers were able to simulate lighting – an integral part of image rendering and presentation using the Blender 3.6.5 lighting effect lamp tool, (3-plane and 2-point lights) which improved the product's form and surroundings. Lightening in 3D animation and rendering gives sculpted images solidity and feel of realistic mass.



Plate 13: 3D image lightening effect of research output primary package (Pammi). Image source: Toluwani, 2023

- **Stage 4:** Storyboarding and animation pre-production directing

The researchers created a digital production storyboard outlining the shot and scene, panel, sequence, description, and camera movement of the palm wine beverage product. Commercial animation. Storyboarding in animation production is essentially a sketch or digital illustration that shows the visualization of an animated project, it provides a roadmap and visual guide of expected characters, movements, colours, environments and voiceovers needed for the animated project outcome.

Table 3: Production script for research output product (Pammi). Image source: Toluwani, 2024

Animation Timeline – 60 seconds		Audio/Voiceover
Summary: The indigenous Palm wine beverage primary package with the brand name “Pammi” is animated and ends in dynamic motion while a text overlay animates with the word ...naturally brewed for you” appears as the catchphrase		Accompanying Music instrumental is played in the background timeline.
Scenes 1 (the opening scene)	Shot 1,2,3,4,5,6 and 7 (0:00:00 - 02:16) A two-second reverse video media is played, then an overlay of panned palm trees -the intro/opening scene is shown with the text “ A Commercial Animation Project”	Camera The motion camera pans across the palm tree plantation.
Scene 2	Shot 1 (0:00:03 – 0:00:13) The Palm wine beverage Can emerge from the dark scenery into the lighted scene with an overlay text “Nature’s got a new Brew” Shot 2 (0:00:15 – 0: 00:016) As the text overlay fades - the Pammi primary package gains more reveal in the background. Followed by an animated text “Specially packaged for you”.The product is further lit up in reveal-image mode.	Music and voice-over Motivational-corporate-medium1-mp3 by “pixabay plays in the background as an audio sound effect.
Scenes 3	Shot 1-2 (0: 00:016 – 0: 00:016) Two Pammi primary packages slide in opposing parallel angles before giving way to a Y-axis flow. The camera then pans to reveal the primary package surface inscriptions (symbols), brand name and brand logo. Shot 3-4 (0:0018 – 0:00:26) The Pammi product can be seen to repose at the top with flowing content amidst two palm leaves. This transitioned into another primary package and liquid background simulation.	Camera The camera follows the diagonal and Y-axis panning with a focus on the indigenous motifs, symbols and inscriptions. Audio Motivational-corporate-medium1-mp3 by pixabay plays in the background as an audio sound effect.
Scenes 4	Shot 1 (0:0027 – 0:00:27) The camera pans a group of Pammi primary packages to symbolise the surplus supply and availability of palm wine in the environmental context.	Camera The camera pans to a follow-through view. Audio Motivational-corporate-medium1-mp3 by pixabay plays in the background as an audio sound effect.
Scenes 5	Shot 1 (0:0028 – 0:00:28) The Pammi primary package animates away from a repose position – away from a static palm wine calabash illustrating the flow/movement from the old to a new form of product branding and packaging.	Camera Motivational-corporate-medium1-mp3 by pixabay plays in the background as an audio sound effect.

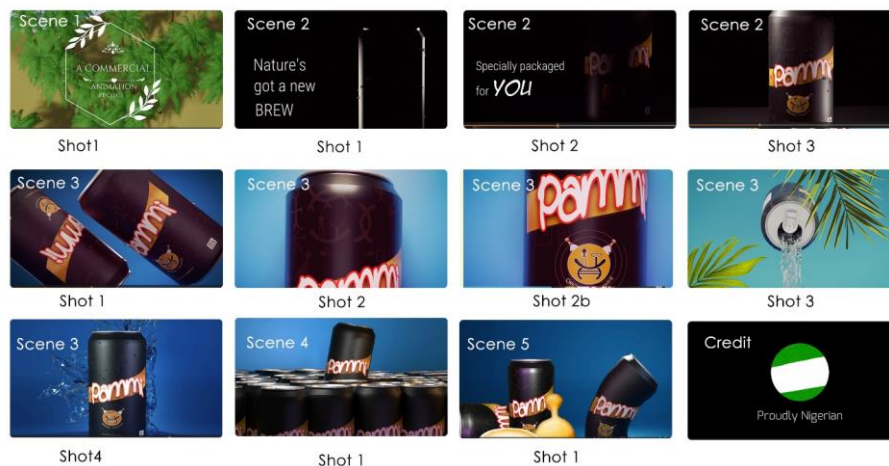


Plate 14: Digital storyboarding of research outcome (Pammi) derived from Table 3. Image source: Toluwani, 2023

- **Stage 5:** Animation workflow and viewport for rendering

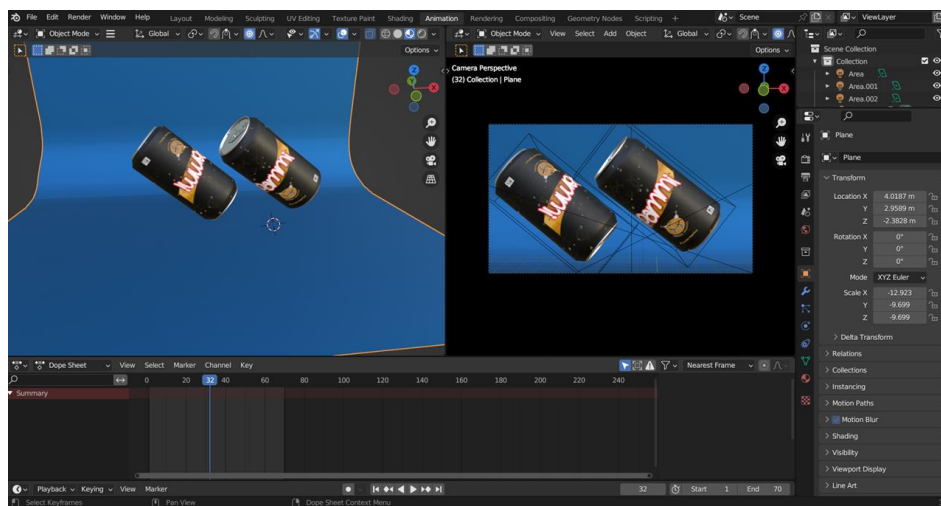


Plate 15: Animation rendering of research output (Pammi) in blender render engine. Image source Toluwani, 2023

In Plate 15, Blender: Eevee, Workbench, and Circles were used in the rendering of the research output. The researchers chose to employ a combination of the Circles and Eevee rendering engines due to their compatibility with the researchers Computer Random-Access Memory (RAM) architecture, while the Circles rendering engine produces more vivid 3D realistic images but consumes more rendering time and computer processing Unit (CPU) space, the Eevee rendering engine, on the other hand, takes lesser time to render but outputs a lesser hyper-realistic model. The researchers system was unable to efficiently run the Circles rendering engine for all renders because the Circles render engine required a greater amount of video card and processor space hence frequently failed while running. After several rendering crashes which led to the damage of the researchers hard drive, the researchers was forced to adopt a lower max sample ratio of less than 500 in the Circles render engine and complemented with the Eevee rendering engine.

After the research product (Pammi) was successfully rendered in the Blender 3.6.5 program, the researchers employed the Filmora 9 video editor software to execute the video content and combine them. Audio instrumental (Motivational-corporate-medium1-mp3) music, was downloaded from *Pixabay.com* and used as an audio overlay. The final output

was a 60-second digital animated commercial media output –Pammi which showed traditional symbols, motifs and cultural symbols digitally wrapped around the Pammi primary package in an animated sequence.

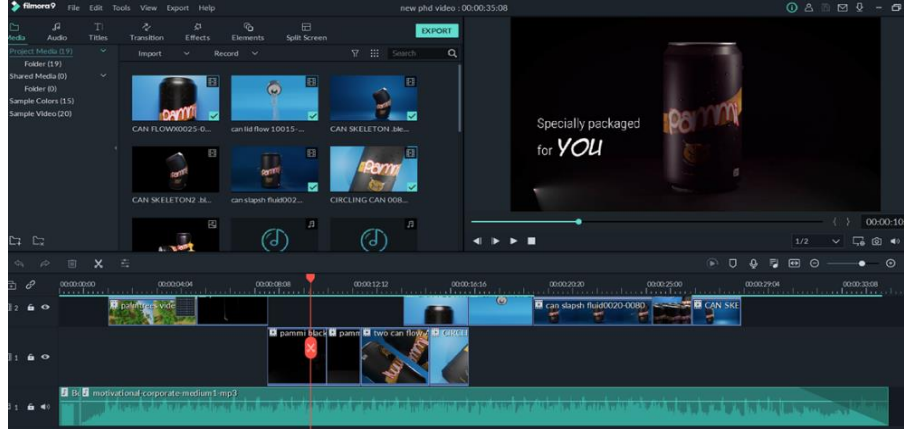


Plate 16: Screenshot from the commercial animation video for “Pammi” edited in Filmora 9.
Image Source, Toluwani, 2024

Results and Discussions

Quantitative Data Overview:

While the research population consisted of 500 people, 250 were discovered to be actively engaged online. A homogenous purposive survey sampling technique was used to determine the focused group population (250) and questionnaire recipients. 72 respondents came from the questionnaire recipients, accounting for 60% of the sample population who attempted the online disseminated questionnaire.

Research Questions and Insights:

1. Incorporation of indigenous symbols in product advertising (QRE 5-7):

Key Findings: (see Appendix I)

- 59.7% of respondents had purchased indigenous products advertised using commercial animation, though this fell short compared to the 95.8% who reported online advertisement exposure.
- Respondents rated online exposure to animated ads positively (Likert scale average: 3.75/5), indicating that shifting indigenous product advertisements online could improve consumer engagement.
- Recommendations include modernizing branding for products like palm wine to incorporate cultural symbols in packaging and design.

2. Efficacy of commercial animation for indigenous products (QRE 8-14, 16-18):

Key Findings: (see Appendix I)

- Commercial animation was found effective in enhancing product visibility and emotional appeal, with respondents agreeing (Likert scale average: 4.2/5) that animation conveys cultural and traditional aspects effectively.
- Participants trusted and preferred animated advertisements, which they found more captivating than live-action ads.
- Proposed strategies include leveraging the animism of object concepts and cultural motifs to emotionally engage consumers, as seen in the palm wine branding case study.

3. Influence of foreign animated media on Nigerian millennials and Gen Z (QRE 15):

Key Findings: (see Appendix I)

- Foreign animated media significantly impacts consumer culture and values, encouraging a preference for foreign goods over indigenous alternatives (Likert scale: 4.2/5).
- This underscores the need for competitive indigenous branding incorporating cultural symbols to counteract cultural shifts caused by foreign media.

4. Designing semiotic commercial animations for palm wine (QRE 19):

Key Findings: (see Appendix I)

- There was strong support for animated advertisements for indigenous products (Likert scale: 4.3/5), reflecting their potential to effectively communicate product qualities.
- A symbolic interactionism approach was employed to design animations that harmonize traditional Nigerian symbols with modern branding.

Qualitative Data and Research Outcome

The qualitative data are outcomes from the practice-led approach employed by the researchers, they show evidence of the product design processes in Blender 3.6.5, Adobe Photoshop CC-2019 and Filmora 9. These processes convey how brand identity, brand name, brand personality, brand preference, brand position and brand loyalty were created .

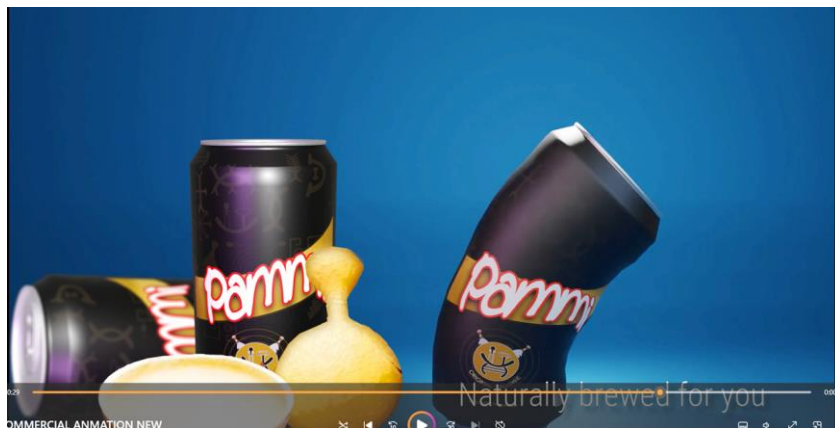


Plate 17: Clip of rendered video (ending clip) created in Blender 3.6.5 and Filmora 9. Image source: *Toluwani, 2024.*

Hence, to appropriately discuss the qualitative data outcome, the following sub-themes stemming from the research questions and findings are outlined.

The effectiveness of Indigenous content and the research outcome

The Symbolic Interactionism theory of Media Effect played a crucial role in shaping the context for the commercial animation developed in this study. The researchers contend that if "media effects" encompass the diverse ways in which mass media contents, such as movies, TV shows, radio, newspapers, books, magazines, websites, video games, and music, can influence people and society, then the research findings (which convey cultural symbolism and values) could potentially influence viewers' perceptions and attitudes towards indigenous palm wine patronage. This influence, the researchers noted would be particularly significant when traditional and cultural motifs, symbols, and icons with shared values are incorporated into indigenous executed media as exemplified in this research.

The researchers equally noted that the symbolism and cultural narratives incorporated in the newly developed palm wine animated commercial video signify the identity and personality of the commodity in the Indigenous markets and provide it more cultural space to create further relationships with Indigenous consumers -while posing competitiveness with other contemporary brands.

The effectiveness of animism in the research outcome

Animism, as described by Lear (1994), was a prevalent advertising approach between 1500 and 1800, linking the physical and spiritual realms. The researchers focused on the effectiveness of animation in conveying the emotional appeal of the palm wine package.

As stated by extant works of literature, animism posits that all objects, places, and creatures possess a spiritual essence. This belief resonates with the animistic symbolism of palm wine, which holds spiritual significance in many African cultures.

Oxford Reference (2024) describes an instance where Obatala, a deity in Yoruba cosmology, was lured with palm wine by Esu, the divine trickster in Yoruba mythology, leading to Obatala creating flawed humans in his drunken state. Obatala was subsequently replaced by Oduduwa, who completed the task of creating humans and founded Ile Ife. Contemporary literature also connects palm wine to Ogun, a Yoruba deity associated with iron and war, and his worshippers, depicting it as a sacred drink.

In Igbo traditions, palm wine is believed to promote unity and harmony between the celestial and terrestrial realms. Onuegbu, Obiajulu, and Nnajiolor (2015), noted that palm wine originates from above the earth's surface, symbolizing a vertical connection between humans and God. As such, it carries a natural unity that links and energizes the heavens and the earth.

The above ideology therefore is significant in interpreting and grounding the symbolism of the new palm wine brand developed in this study for indigenous markets.

The effectiveness of commercial animation as a medium for promoting the research outcome

During this investigation, the researchers discovered important untapped potential in using commercial animation to promote indigenous products. This exploration highlighted how animation can evoke make-believe perceptions and animism, while also maintaining high recall rates and product visibility. The concept of commodity fetishism, as discussed by Cook and Thompson, (2019), was also noted by the researchers, the researchers adopted this notion in suggesting that commercial animation can create a strong product association by placing the commodity in a fantastical world that suspends disbelief. Implying that people respond to components of their environments in line with the subjective meanings they attach to them. Allowing meanings to be formed and modified through social interaction involving symbolic communication with other people.

In addition, the "Pammi" commercial (Timeline 0:00:01–0:00:30—motion media) served as a case study on how the incorporation of indigenous traditional symbols, motifs, and cultural icons in visual communication design and advertising, synchronized with animation, could result in a media that could influence consumer behaviour and product choice.

Furthermore, the researchers, like Explain-Ninja (2022), described this approach used in this research as an entertaining, discreet, and innovative commercial that stimulates imagination and creativity, the research outcome thus represents a contemporary advertising approach that uses animated practices to tell compelling stories about indigenous product, its origin, and the animism it conveys.

The researchers thus suggest that this commercial animation media could illuminate social-cultural archetypes of the Nigerian populace, and could create an aura capable of influencing consumer behaviour and appealing to their palm wine preferences when adequately promoted. The research output can be accessed from the link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WIZ-ST9fOuz53_VRyE7h1x4mSf9xuwVM/view?usp=drive_link



Plate 18: Video timelines showing product reveal and Pammi's new primary package: Image source: the Researcher, 2024

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

Summary of Findings

The study investigated the use of commercial animation to promote indigenous products, with an emphasis on Nigeria's palm wine beverage. It demonstrates how the indigenous palm wine beverage could be rebranded for better market visibility and how commercial animation can elicit cultural symbolism and animism for increased consumer engagement and product. The practice-led aspect of the study yielded a creative package model for the palm wine beverage (see plate 34) which could be used for both online and offline, Out-of-home (OOH) and Digital-out-of-home (DOOH) promotional platforms.



Plate 19: Final output of *Pammi's* new primary package designed for indigenous palm wine.
Image source: Toluwani, 2024.

The study equally emphasizes:

- I The significance of using indigenous traditional symbols, themes, and cultural icons in contemporary commercial animation to connect with indigenous audiences.
- II The findings indicate an underutilization of traditional semiotics for indigenous product promotion and advertising.
- III The study poses that cultural migration and cultural shift as a result of foreign media induce a lack of patronage for indigenous products, and consumer perception of indigenous goods,
- IV Adapting indigenous content for indigenous markets through commercial animation can create a compelling and culturally relevant media narrative that influences consumer behaviour and product choice.
- V The study calls for a more contemporary approach to packaging and promoting indigenous items, in line with modern advertising methods that use animated media to tell fascinating stories about products and their cultural value.
- VI The study shows that technological-mediated marketing platforms (online and offline) are essential for effective brand promotion
- VII The study shows that understanding advertising theories is a great way of approaching advertising design and media content development

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that cultural symbolism and the adoption of traditional symbols in product promotion can play a significant role in endorsing indigenous products when anchored on commercial animation. These cultural elements could enhance the media environment for advertised indigenous products, making promotional campaigns more effective and relatable.

Product animation, otherwise known as commercial animation, as a contemporary advertising medium and promotional tool, was adopted as a vehicle in this study due to its capacity to provide animism for indigenous content like culture, traditional motifs and patterns. Therefore, the research findings suggest that cultural symbolism is essential in the animation, branding and promotion of indigenous products for indigenous markets.

Additionally, technological advancements will continue to impact and simplify the animation and product promotional channels for online and offline advertisements thus, online platforms, which are deemed viable tools for product

promotion, and cultural migration among Gen Z and millennials in Nigeria could be harnessed as a media promotional tool to reduce dependence on foreign product advertisements.

These findings thus highlight the importance of leveraging indigenous content for effective product promotion using commercial animation, especially in the Nigerian market context which has hitherto remained underserved and overran with foreign goods.

Ethical and Social Implications of Finding

The research highlights the ethical use of cultural symbols in visual communication design. It underscores the need for respect and authenticity in using indigenous symbols, ensuring unbiased social impacts, and providing ways to maintain ethical standards in such integrations. By addressing these areas, this research has made contributions to both academic knowledge and practical applications in visual communication design, marketing, animation, and cultural studies.

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APPENDICES I

Preliminary Data Analysis

Table of the questionnaire and quantitative responses. Image source: Toluwani (2023)

SN	Closed Question	Responses				
		Yes	No.			
5	Have you ever purchased indigenous products promoted through commercial animations?	43 (59.7%)	29 (40.3%)			
6	Are you actively exposed to online and offline adverts/media?	69 (95.8%)	3 (4.2%)s			
SN	5 Likert Scale questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
7	Consumers with active online presence, get better exposure to commercial animated adverts	6 (8.3%)	2 (2.8%)	9 (12.5%)	33 (45.8)	22 (30.6%)
8	The use of commercial animation is an effective way to promote indigenous products	2 (2.8%)	-	3 (4.2%)	37 (51.4%)	30 (41.7%)
9	I find commercial animations engaging and attention-grabbing	6 (8.3%)	1 (1.4%)	4 (5.6%)	34 (47.2%)	27 (37.5%)
10	Commercial animations are suitable for conveying the uniqueness of indigenous products.	2 (2.8%)	1 (1.4%)	6 (8.3%)	44 (61.1%)	19 (26.4%)
11	Commercial animation is now a trend in contemporary product advertising in Nigeria	2 (2.8%)	3 (4.2%)	8 (11.1)	45 (62.5%)	14 (19.4%)
12	Animated commercials for products are judged to be more captivating than life-cast (Model) commercials	1 (1.4%)	5 (6.9%)	12 (16.7)	45 (62.5%)	9 (12.5%)
13	Commercial animations have influenced my purchase decisions for indigenous products.	2 (2.8%)	8 (11.1%)	18 (25%)	39 (54.2)	5 (6.9%)

14	I am more likely to trust and buy indigenous products that are promoted through commercial animations.	2 (2.8%)	7 (9.7%)	30 (41.7%)	27 (35.5%)	6 (8.3%)
15	Commercial animations effectively convey the cultural and traditional aspects of indigenous products.	2 (2.8%)	7 (9.7%)	15 (20.8%)	40 (55.6%)	8 (11.1%)
16	Commercial animations help me better understand the benefits and features of indigenous products.	2 (2.8%)	6 (8.3%)	21 (29.2%)	36 (50%)	7 (9.7%)
17	Overall, I am satisfied with the use of commercial animation for promoting indigenous products.	2 (2.8%)	5 (6.9%)	9 (12.5%)	36 (50%)	20 (27.8%)
18	I would recommend using commercial animation to promote indigenous products to others.	1 (1.4%)	3 (4.2%)	7 (9.7%)	34 (47.2%)	27 (37.5%)
19	Foreign animated media today is influencing a cultural shift among Nigeria's millennials and Gen Z.	-	1 (1.4%)	10 (13.9%)	33 (45.8%)	28 (38.9%)
20	Commercial animation for product marketing in Nigeria is currently underserved	3 (4.2%)	2 (2.8%)	21 (29.2%)	34 (47.2%)	12 (16.7%)
21	I would not recommend using commercial animation to promote indigenous products to others.	25 (34.7%)	20 (27.8%)	13 (18.1%)	10 (13.9%)	4 (5.6%)
22	In the last two years, I have seen up to five animated commercials for indigenous Nigerian products that include traditional iconography, symbols, or patterns.	9 (12.5%)	14 (19.4%)	21 (29.2%)	24 (33.3%)	4 (5.6%)
23	I would love to see more animated commercials of Nigeria's indigenous products.	1 (1.4%)	-	6 (8.3%)	35 (48.6%)	30 (41.7%)
24	I prefer animation for entertainment (movies and cartoons) to commercial animation (product promotion)	3 (4.2%)	15 (20.8%)	23 (31.9%)	19 (26.4%)	12 (16.7%)
	Frequency Count	71	100	236	605	284

APPENDIX II

Research Outcome Poster Samples

