

Digitalization and New Trends in the Nigerian Music Industry: The Social Media Angle

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Abstract: It is evident that the evolution of digital technology has created an apparent and drastic shift in the way the music industry operates. Social media as an important tool in music digitalisation is also bringing further transformation to the way artistes, producers and other music industry stakeholders conduct their business. Adopting the qualitative research method with digital ethnography and consultation of relevant literatures, this study examines the Nigerian music industry and the popular music scene through the current Afrobeats sub-genre against the backdrop of social media deployment. The paper argues that the social media has contributed positively towards the popularity of Afrobeats and the Nigerian music industry, and through social media new trends and novel way of music production, promotions and dissemination is being witnessed in the Nigerian popular music scene.

Keywords: Popular Music, Social Media, Digitalization, Music Industry, Afrobeats, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Music has always been of tremendous importance in the African cultural space. From time immemorial music is an important aspect of life fulfilling more than an entertainment piece. Music is a spiritual entity that has serves various functions, for emotional (psychological) upliftment and balance, political cum economic functionality, for rite of passage, for expression of love and celebrations including festivities. These primordial or cultural purpose and functionality of music transcended into the modern music practises and the Nigerian popular music scene has been a potpourri of various music genres and styles that has been the driving force of the country's creative industry.

The Nigerian popular music scene parades such genres as fuji, juju, reggae, afrobeat and hip hop among others. As it is often said that there is time and season for everything so also is applicable here as various genre of music at one time or the other enjoyed the mainstream attention as the music of choice representing the Nigerian popular music scene. Early post-colonial Nigeria of the 1960's upwards witnessed the popularity of highlife and juju and later music on the mainstream transiting into the period of the oil boom era with music predominant hero worshipping traits through the Yoruba *oriki* a strong point of juju and fuji music. The greater part of the military rule in the country also witnessed the popularity of the message driven and protest dominated music of Afrobeat pioneered by Fela Anikulapo-Kuti and later Reggae music from the late 1980s to the end of the military regime in 1999.

The dawn of the new millennium was characterised by a lot of attendant changes when the music scene gradually shifted to the youthful oriented and dominated style of Hip hop – a music genre that originated from the Bronx in New York and having a sweeping effect across the world as a result of globalization coupled with the arrival of technological driven music production techniques among other factors. It should be noted that hip hop music domiciled in Nigeria also passed through various transformation and re-definition. These transformations include appropriation of existing popular music styles like afrobeat, juju and fuji and performing style re-defined with heavy dependent on codeswitching through infusion of Nigerian

languages and pidgin for acceptance (Adedeji 2014). This earned it a new appellation as Afro- Hip hop that enjoyed a resounding success translating into international acceptance and recognition. Following the success of D'Banj's Afro hip hop hit single "Oliver Twist" which made it to the UK Charts in 2012 - the new moniker "Afrobeats" became the widely used term in classifying the Nigerian variant of hip hop music in the international space.

The Nigerian music industry over the years have witnessed various transformations having its own share of boom (prosperity) and low times. It has utilized different methods and mechanism in terms of production, performance, marketing and distributions while transiting from the analogue to digital, vinyl to CD's and the internet driven distribution through streaming and download which is the highlight of the current music industry globally. The advent of technology and its advancement in terms of applications from time to time has been of tremendous impact in all aspects of human endeavor. Within the music industry the discussion about technology in recent times centered around digitalization and the impacts it is having on the industry, in terms of production, performance, distribution, consumption and remuneration generation for the practitioners.

It is quite evident that the Nigerian music industry and its stakeholders have successfully tapped into the global trends in terms of digitalization and employment of same through transformation from the traditional distribution channel into the online platform. This has enabled new opportunities on how music is consumed and how artistes are able to utilize the power of social media for their creative and artistic advancement, This paper thus examines critically the Nigerian music industry and the new wave Afrobeats artiste against the backdrop of digitalization and the opportunities it provides through the social media in terms of the new trends deployed for promotions, branding and sustenance of their fan base.

This study is divided into five parts. This first part provides the background of the Nigerian popular music scene and the layout of this paper. The second part discusses the process of digitalization in the music industry vis -a -vis the current Afrobeats music sub-genre. Part three gives an in-depth discussion on the concept of social media, its evolution and various categories of social media platforms. Part four of this contribution discuss how the Nigerian music artistes utilize the Social Media with analysis of the new trends associated with it while the last part summarizes and concludes the findings to show that the opportunities and the advantages digital technology –by extension social media offers stakeholders in music business is huge however it also comes with its downside in terms of digital piracy.

2. DIGITALIZATION, AFROBEATS AND THE NIGERIAN POPULAR MUSIC SCENE

Digitalization in a simple term portends a shift in the analogue traditional way of performing a task into one being driven by technological innovations. Digitalization reduces the time, the stress and efforts taken in performing a task and in most cases also saves space and renders some personnel redundant as technology now take over their jobs. In the music industry through digitalization 'we saw the decline of physical mediums on which music was recorded [or stored] and an increase in types of devices on which music could be played.' (Hviid, Izquierdo-Sanchez, and Jacques 2018: 246). Globally this brought unprecedented changes to the industry by rendering some players redundant while it also created avenues for new players to come on the scene as their point of entry is made easier through the innovation of digitization in terms of music production, promotion and dissemination. With its attendant shift from analogue to digital, there is an alteration to the hitherto existing music business model, however this created new opportunities for revenue and value creation (Kaimachia 2022). It erased the physical methods of storing music in vinyl, cassettes, and CDs with compression of music into virtual files like mp3 which can be played on various electronic devices including the mobile phone.

Digital technology has made it possible for Nigerian musicians to promote their music without necessarily having to work with traditional record labels. In the past, musicians had to sign record deals with established record labels for their music to be promoted. However, with the rise of social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Tiktok artistes communicate globally with their fans and also share audio-visual file of their music and activities. Likewise with distribution of music that have shifted from physical space to virtual through streaming platforms, musicians can now promote their music without signing record deals. This have succeeded in putting artistes in control of their career in terms of music publishing and marketing (Ofochebe 2020) encouraging independency from established recording labels that hitherto controlled the market. This have led to more growth in the Nigerian music industry with the current crop of Afrobeats artistes.

It is quite evident that the Nigerian music industry have witnessed an unprecedented growth and global recognition through the Afrobeats movement and it will be right to say that apart from the resilience of Nigerian artistes, digitalization is one

of the driving force behind this success. The current Afrobeats sub-genre is an offshoot of Nigeria's Afro-hip hop that evolved out of the mainstream global Hip hop music in Nigeria from the late 1990s. Evolution of Hip hop on the Nigerian music landscape was gradual and being noticeable from around 1999 while the incursion of computers and digital music production application like Fruity Loops (FL) makes music production less stressful. Earlier youthful hip hop artists then made appropriation of existing styles like juju, highlife fuji and afrobeat a significant feature, with dissemination in a mix of English, pidgin and the Nigerian mother tongues like Yoruba and Igbo for popular appeal. This worked tremendously putting Hip hop on the mainstream of Nigerian entertainment scene from the new millennium assuming the name Afro-hip hop. (Adedeji, 2013, 2014, 2022, Omoniyi 2006, 2009). Maintaining the African roots identity linguistically and also evolving new sounds heavily laden with the African performance style, dance and statement have also been the highlight of the current Afrobeats movement which is a scion of the old block having evolved in terms of this nomenclature from Afro hip hop from around 2012 following the success of D'Banj's single "Oliver" in the UK music charts.

Through the use of African rhythms, beats, and languages, Afrobeats is contributing to the growth of the Nigerian music industry which in turn have helped to promote African culture and identity on the international stage. This has enhanced the reputation of Nigerian artists and have helped raise the profile of the Nigerian music industry. The genre is also constantly setting new trends, while also creating new sound that is unique through which the genre has won the hearts of many fans both home-grown and global. A typical example here is Asake- the Afrobeats artist that came to limelight in 2022 with the single "Omo Ope" (featuring Olamide) but has won the hearts of music enthusiasts globally with his blend of unique hip hop style heavily laden with Yoruba language and sublimity of the fuji music genre. The popularity of Afrobeats has opened doors for Nigerian artists to perform on international stages, gain global recognition (with credits of Grammy Awards among other international accolades for Nigerian artists), and collaborate with international artists. As a result, the industry has grown and has become more profitable, with Nigerian artists having multiple streams of income.



Figure 1: Asake- London O2 Arena Concert Poster (www.bobcruisejist.com)

The recognition of Afrobeats and the success the artists are able to achieve in this current dispensation is also traceable to the enablement through digitalization. Digital technology availed the music industry stakeholders the right platform to showcase the talent and the uniqueness of this new sound unto the world stage. Digital technology has fused the world into one global village via the cyber space where nothing is no longer obscure as long as it gets online. Through streaming platforms like Apple Music, Spotify, Boomplay or YouTube Music which operates as digital or virtual music stores

Afrobeats music is made available worldwide without hindrance of location. Through the social media Afrobeats music and its artists are even brought closer to their fans worldwide. Access to the artists' lifestyle and activities are readily available through showcase across various platforms where communities are built, fan base sustained and interest in Afrobeats music stimulated. Enthusiast can view, comment and interact with artists and their music in real time thanks to platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Tiktok and others.

3. SOCIAL MEDIA: CONCEPT, DEFINITION AND DISCUSSION

Conceptualising social media brings about three major keywords. These are interaction, networking and communality. The Merriam-Webster dictionary online, describes social media as “forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other contents (such as video)”. In this vein they are “channels created electronically for real time interaction, communication and dissemination of information both among individuals, group or group of person” (Erhiegeke et.al 2022).

It is imperative to note that this networking or interactive aspect of social media greatly relies on the internet technology being powered electronically making the platform an important aspect of digital technology. These social media platforms operate as a form of mobile applications or software that are easily accessible on phone or computer desktop. Through creation of user-generated contents (UGC), social interaction and networking occurs virtually among users with similar interests and ideas. Jari Salo et al (2011) in their study of the Finnish music industry presents, how the stakeholders deploy the power of the social media positively for the advancement of music business through Myspace, Facebook and YouTube social media networks. It is evident in their study that the social media offers opportunity in creating UGC being used effectively for artists marketing and the recording companies are able to create online communities for their artists to maintain brand visibility and eventually sell more songs, merchandise and concerts online.

Highlighting the importance of social media in the communication process of the 21st century Dunu and Izochukwu (2015) identified three key elements which make the social media an effective tool for social mobilisation which are:

- Personalisation: that is content are tailored towards individual needs.
- Presentation: contents are timely relevant and accessible in multiple formats.
- Participation: there is avenue for the public to partner through participation and interaction with the content in a meaningful way.

These three key attributes highlight the advantage of immediacy where interaction and participation becomes the key, with users being able to take part in the social media communication process as opposed to the traditional communication apparatus. Here the audience is active in participating by interpreting the content through adequate feedbacks with apparatus provided in the social media networks. Charles Effiong (2018) also examines the social media in terms of its borderlessness, whereby the communication process through social media is borderless and in turn advances the positivity of globalisation. In essence placing globalisation and the social media side by side one can isolate their commonalities in terms of their ingredients or key elements which are integration, communality engagement, involvement and borderlessness. This portends that social media through contents and post break boundaries to integrate people, engage them and also involve them in issues.

At present social media have become an integral part of our daily living and it is practically impossible to imagine live without them as its mobility (through apps) portends fluidity in sharing ideas information or messages on the go, and without inhibition through popular platforms like Facebook, Instagram, , Twitter or WhatsApp among others. Apart from easy accessibility, social media also offers the advantage of wider reach with an instant feedback mechanism which makes it distinct from the traditional media forms. Social media provides users with an opportunity to review or analyse their posts through the numbers of likes, views and comments that are visible which makes it instantly interactive or “two way dialogic” (Walsh 2022).

-Evolution of Social Media

The birth of Social Media is an advanced technological precursor of the traditional form of written communication traversing from the primordial form of communicating across distance from the earliest postal services in 550 BC through

the invention of the telegraph in 1792 that made delivery of messages faster. The invention of the telephone (1890) and the radio in 1891 was phenomenal and both platforms enabled people to communicate across great distances through phone lines and radio signals. Technology changed radically in the 20th century especially when computers came on board in the 1940s leading to the birth of the internet and the World Wide Web thereafter. The evolution of computers and the internet actually birthed the Social Media in the real sense with experimentation into interactive networking through the ‘first recognisable social media site Six Degrees launched in 1997. The platform allowed users to upload a profile and make friend with other users. Known as the father of social networking, Six Degrees founder Andrew Weinreich who applied for the first social networking patent described the platform as “a networking database containing plurality of records for different individuals in which individuals are connected to one another in the database by defined relationships” (Lile 2023).

Six Degrees died a natural death around the year 2000 due to many factors among which is the low subscription rate which made it unsustainable coupled with the slow internet rate at that period. Myspace actually came on board in 2003 to define social media and networking as we know it currently with features like customised profile with photos, video and even music. “At its peak, MySpace boasted 25 million users, and it was the most visited website in the United States. Unfortunately for Tom, Myspace was eclipsed by Facebook in 2008. It since attempted to rebrand itself as a social network focused on music, but mainly has been relegated to the history books.”(Lile 2023)

Chronicling the death of MySpace and the birth of Facebook, Michael Ray (2023) wrote:

The spectre of online predators did little to diminish MySpace’s membership (which reached 70 million active monthly users in 2007), but it did open the door for other social networking sites to seize some of its momentum. Facebook ... [came on board as] a network that was initially open only to students at universities. After its 2004 launch by founders Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes at Harvard University, Facebook at first was an academically oriented alternative to MySpace, but in 2006 it opened the service to anyone over 13 and surpassed MySpace as the most popular social network in 2008.

From the evolution of Facebook as the most popular social media platform in 2008 till the present time, the cyberspace have witnessed an unprecedented rise in the establishment and popularity of many other platforms ranging from Instagram, WhatsApp to TikTok among others. It is quite evident that social media is here to stay as part of our daily life and popular culture.

Here are the figures for the most popular social media websites as of January 2023:

1. Facebook (2.96 billion users)
2. YouTube (2.51 billion users)
3. WhatsApp (2 billion users)
4. Instagram (2 billion users)
5. WeChat (1.31 billion users)
6. TikTok (1.05 billion users)
7. Facebook Messenger (931 million users)
8. Douyin (715 million users)
9. Telegram (700 million users)
10. Snapchat (635 million users) (Source: Dollarhide, 2023)

The above data shows how enormous the impact of social media is globally and as part and parcel of our daily life. In Nigeria the SM grip is also on the rise, with an estimated population of over 200 million the digital 2023 global overview report shows that 193.9 million Nigerians have mobile (phone) connections. This represents 87.7% of the total population. There were 122.5 million internet users in Nigeria at the start of 2023, when internet penetration stood at 55.4 percent while Nigeria has a total of 31.60 million social media users in January 2023, equating to 14.3 percent of the total population. (DataReports 2023) This is in no means a small feat despite the myriads of issues associated with digital technology in the country, especially the high cost of procuring internet data which is the pivot on which social media access rotates.



Figure 2: The Social Media Platforms (www.sporcle.com)

-Categories or Types of Social Media Platforms

Social Media platforms has been categorised often into four to six types or more based on their focus and functionalities. As more and more platforms emerges daily with variation in use and functions it is constantly becoming extremely difficult to have clear cut categorisation. For the purpose of this study social media is classified into five categories thus:

(i) *Social Networking*: These are platforms or networks that creates avenue for people to connect with each other and share information, thought or ideas. The major focus being on the user and their profile which helps participants identify other users with similar interests or ideas .In essence through these types of social media platforms people can maintain and develop personal and business relationships. Major examples in this category are Facebook and LinkedIn.

(ii) *Media Sharing Networks*: These are social media platforms that focuses on user generated contents (UGC) like videos and pictures that they create to share and interact with others online within the platform. Here users can easily assess their reach, popularity and effectiveness of the message passed in their shared media through likes and comments and in some instances by going live. Instagram, Tiktok and YouTube are major platforms in this category.

(iii) *Online Community Forum*: These types of platforms are online meeting space where people engage with others to share knowledge, debate and communicate on a wide range of topics of interests. Nairaland -the Nigerian popular online forum and Quora are typical examples in this vein.

(iv) *Microblogging Networks*: These are SM for instant messaging and content production where you can share short messages with online audience for engagements. These platforms accommodates audio, video or images with quick and direct audience interactions. Twitter, Tumblr and Pinterest are major platforms in this category.

(v) *Social (Instant) Messaging Networks*: These are platforms for instant messaging where users can easily exchange text, messages, videos, audio/voice note and locations for free. Popular platforms in this category are WhatsApp, WeChat, Telegram and Facebook Messenger.

4. SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS AND THE NIGERIAN MUSIC INDUSTRY

There is no doubt digitalization and introduction of technology has drastically changed how industries operates and the music industry has not remained the same with social media bringing even further changes to the way music business operates cutting across all stakeholders including the consumers .The impact of social media on the way music is being experienced, disseminated or consumed has been so radical, making artistes more visible, music more accessible and promotions fluid and interactive.

Social media has played a pivotal role in digitalizing music in Nigeria where artists mostly use social media platforms to share music, promote shows, and interact with fans. The platform has given music creators the opportunity to gain fame without passing through the traditional media and gatekeepers. Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook are now powerful marketing tools that allow music artists to share their music and become easily recognized. This has created a new generation of Nigerian music creators who freely showcase and share their music on social platforms. The Nigerian artists especially the current mainstream Afrobeats performers are able to employ the use of social media to secure a space in the highly saturated music scene and also maintain their grip, popularity and fan base globally. It is quite evident that the social media platform has made the task of being a music artiste easier for Nigerian acts, but as expected from any new technological innovations the issue of its downside should not be ruled out, some of which are highlighted at the concluding part of the study.

-Content Creation is the Key

Content creation is the key on which social media interaction relies. To engage the audience and get results, aspiring and established artists need to constantly create and post their users generate contents (UGC) which can be the subject of discussion, criticism and interaction. The Instagram and Tiktok has been constantly employed by Nigerian artists in this realm. The importance of content creation cannot be overemphasised as it's the most significant way for an artist to be active on the SM, which remains a crucial place to be in the music industry. Through contents the interest of fans will be continually stimulated, a basis for finding and keeping long term fans (Holsbeck 2023).

In terms of content creations and engagement with the "netizens" (online citizens) the Nigerian artist community are actually taking the advantage of this digital technological provision to advance their art and popularise the Afrobeat genre world-wide in the process. Highlighting the importance of content creation in today's music business, an active player Emeka Akumefule known musically as BlaqBones explained:

Sometime[s] in 2018, I made a video of me talking to Nasty C and it went viral, my album moved from number 19 to number 6, and this made me realize how powerful a viral video can be for marketing purposes. It dawned on me that I could reach out to people with those kinds of videos and direct their attention to the music I'm pushing. Ever since then I figured I should make more content (BlaqBonz in Laketu, 2020).

This quite sum up the credence of content creation with the evidence that proper engagement through audio and video contents on social media is an indirect marketing strategy for the artist, his brand and music. It is apparent that BlaqBones till now is an artist that is constantly on the news through his contents and music which enjoys a lot of rebroadcast and repost by bloggers and music sites on social media, this has been a positive boost for his brand and music.



Figure 3 –BlaqBonz (www.guardian.ng)

-From Obscurity to Limelight

Every Nigerian artiste want to “blow”-this is a parlance widely used in the Nigerian popular music scene to denote that an artiste has come to limelight and successful. So every artiste strive to blow. Cobhams Asuquo documented this in his song “One Hit” thus:

Dear Lord, help my destiny

Let someone invest in me

Like Otedola, 'cause I wanna **blow**

O ti pe lati SS3(it's been long since high school)

I've been blessed with the melody...

So gimme one hit song, Lord

Let me **blow** like Olamide

Gimme one hit song, Lord

Pick me up like Adekunle Gold

Lord, I want to **blow** like Simi or Small Doctor

I hope you see me

So gimme one hit song, Lord

Let me **blow** like Olamide (etc)

Here Cobhams satirically yearns for a hit song that will enable him “blow” like the established artistes mentioned in the track. However it should be noted that every song is a potential hit and the artiste a potential star if it gets to the right platform, while a lot of “good” songs and their singers never saw the light of the day because of lack of right exposure. The social media is playing and has really played a vital role in bringing most of the new waves Afrobeats artistes to limelight from total obscurity. The Nigerian popular music scene is at present saturated with hits that has gone global through Afrobeats genre and it is interesting to note that most of these stars breaking the charts actually got their big breaks through their posts and contents on SM. We can list popular artistes like Teni, Ruger, Ayra Starr to Rema or Joe Boy and still keep counting. Let us look into two instances where the social media actually brought artistes from obscurity to limelight to buttress this discussion.

Mayorkun is an award winning Afrobeats artiste whose tremendous growth has been phenomenal following the release of his debut single “Èleko” in 2016 which won him the Rookie of the Year (2017) and Next Rated Artist of the year (2018) at the Headies Award. He relead his debut album in 2018 and has his headline concert “Mayor of Lagos” same year. While Instagram and Tiktok serves as the favorite of most Nigerian artistes Mayorkun ewas actually discovered on the Twitter by Davido who later signed him to DMW records. In his own words:

I was bored at the office, a bank, one day; just while I was pressing my phone, I impulsively posted a video I had recorded, where I was playing the keyboard of one of Davido’s songs, The Money, on Twitter. I wasn’t expecting anything. It was on a Friday and I was supposed to resume work in another bank the following Monday. Well, Davido retweeted the video. And he later sent me a direct message asking if I had other things I did besides playing keyboard. I told him I had some songs. I sent like six songs. He liked one of them. He said if he came back from ATL (Atlanta, Georgia, USA) he will sign me on (Mayorkun in Blueprint.ng, 2019).

Don Jazzy is a successful recording artiste, producer and record label executive at Mavins Records. Having cut his teeth with D'Banj and the defunct Mo-Hits records his present outfit paraded a lot of chart bursting artistes from Ayra Starr, Rema, to Ruger and Johnny Drille. Most of the hit makers at Mavins and its imprint Jonzin' World were actually sourced for on the SM through the contents they posted back then. Ayra Starr who is obviously one of the leading female artiste in Nigeria with...actually got signed to Mavin with the help of Instagram, As Don Jazzy highlighted “I first saw a video of her [Ayra Starr] singing one of her original songs on Instagram. Her voice was so powerful, yet she looked so young.

Immediately, I knew I would like to work with her. I sent her a direct message inviting her to our studio with a guardian” (Don Jazzy in Itodo 2023). And the rest they say is history.



Figure 4: Arya Starr (left) and Don Jazzy (right)

Mayorkun and Don Jazzy’s Mavin instances are a testimony that the social media is a fertile ground for talents and talent hunters who understands and exploit positively the many advantages the SM networks are able to offer for business and artistic advancement. In his recent post on Instagram Don Jazzy actually highlighted the importance of the SM for any aspiring musician in Nigeria and shared the screenshot of his messages to three artistes he signed when he sent them direct messages based on their contents he saw on Instagram. To the upcoming acts he admonished:

From the 3 screenshots you can see that I reached out to Ayra, Boyspice and Bayanni myself. I wouldn’t have reached out to them if I didn’t see a sample of what they can do on their Instagram pages. For the umpteenth time showcase yourself on your page. I know it seems uncool to post a lot but then again you will be an uncool artiste if it’s only your family that get to hear your beautiful music till you give up (Instagram.com 2023)

-Brand and Music Promotions

The incursion of digital technology has changed the landscape of the music industry forever while social media in particular has continued to give musicians the opportunities they could previously have access to through recording companies traditional structure (MI, 2021). Currently the SM has availed the artiste the opportunity to bring their music and brand directly to the audience and fans without inhibition. With social media many Nigerians artistes have broken a song up into the top of the charts ladder with novel social media campaigns on various platforms. Some of the promotional trends artistes engage in for promotional purposes are: posting of video “leaks” sneak previews or snippets of an upcoming song, creating a dance challenge around a new song, or doing outright give away of cash or gifts on social media.

A typical sneek preview or video “leaks” of an upcoming song involves artistes creating a short video of themselves or with friends “vibing” to a yet to be released song. This is then posted on various social media platforms with captions that will elicit discussions, comments, criticism and likes among the netizens. The Instagram, Tiktok, YouTube shorts are fertile ground for such snippets which most of the time can become news items for online blogs and SM influencers that reposts to their followers to get traffic on their platforms for sustenance and brand presence. Most of these song previews are major contents being reposted on HipTv Instagram handle.(Figure 5 below is video screenshot of Olamide previewing a song from his yet to be released *Unruly* album billed for August 2023).



Figure 5: Video screenshot of Olamide previewing a song on Instagram

(www.instagram.com)

Creating a dance/performance challenge or doing giveaways of cash or gift to promote a song has become popular social media trend among Nigerian artistes. There has been Kukere dance challenge by Iyanya, the “Fuck You” rap challenge by Falz and the “Friends” challenge by Sound Sultan (Post humorous) and the “Buga dance challenge” by Kizz Daniel to be used here for further exemplification. “Buga” was the biggest song from Nigeria which transformed to a global phenomenon and hit in 2022. The progressive and systematic rise of the song to a global hit started with the “Buga dance challenge” created by the artiste and commissioned on SM with a one million Naira price tag in the first round. This challenge is for the fans to record themselves dancing Buga song with their own version of Buga dance and post on TikTok/ Instagram with the hash tag #BugaChallenge while tagging the artiste along.

The #Buga promotional social media challenge trended, went viral globally and achieved its digital marketing target for the song. “Buga” became the most searched song on google in Nigeria in 2022 as well as the number one - #1 song on Apple Music Top 100 chart in Nigeria, and at the end of 2022 Buga finished as number one song on streaming with 57.9 million streams –the biggest in a calendar year in Nigeria (Turntable Charts, 2022). This is an attestation to what the new trend of content creation and tactics on social media platform can achieve for an artiste as compared to the traditional music industry PR strategy of the hitherto pre-digital era.

-About Audience and Fan Base

Building a community of committed listeners and fans is one of the most important purpose for establishing a musical act. To build a community of committed audience leads to constant demand for new songs/album, live shows, merchandise and increased market value of the artiste (MI, 2021) .The SM platforms offer seamless avenue to do this. Artistes however must understand the importance of creating a consistent profile for themselves as their brand is their identity. A formidable brand brings product endorsement and ambassadorial role which in recent times is a trending fad in Nigeria where artistes can cash out and get additional revenues.

The social media platforms affords the artistes the opportunity to build communities and connect with fans online through sharing of contents that are personalised direct and tailored specifically towards advancing an artistes’ brand and philosophy. In creating a brand online musicians should ensure uniformity in terms of their profile across various platforms in terms of their name, logo, biography, photos and audio-visual contents. Harmonisation ensures a distinct and uniform identity which can reflect the artistes’ personality, style and philosophy.

Most of the current Afrobeats music practitioners are exploiting the social media positively in building and maintaining their fan base. Popular artistes creates contents regularly and engage their fans in discussion, most often go live on Instagram to engage their fans and followers community to sustain their brand and some has been known to engage SM influencers, Music and online bloggers towards brand promotions. The Instagram space for example is awash with communities and groups of Afrobeats stars that constantly engage in discussions and banter about their favourites. The most popular are the Davido (OBO) Fans and the Wizkid (Machala Fans Club). These two operates like football fans club on the social media space with steadfast support ,love and sharing of updates for their favourite artiste.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Social media has become an invaluable tool for music artists in the current dispensation and the present crop of Nigerian artistes are positively utilising all the advantages it offers. From increasing their visibility towards breakthrough in the industry, promoting their brands with engagement and interaction with fans online. The social media has been crucial in promoting Afrobeats and the industry to reach a wider and global audience. As evidenced by popular artist's successes on social channels such as Twitter, Instagram and Tiktok among others, it is clear what the social media platform can achieve for an artiste in terms of exposure and brand identity as compared to the traditional marketing methods. Extolling the positive contribution of social media platforms to the Nigerian music industry, Chinonso Ihekire also opined in the Guardian that "The current music industry space is also a more profitable scene thanks to social media. With the rise of entertainment platforms such as TikTok, Triller, YouTube shorts, Instagram and Twitter, it is easier for artistes to create trends with their music. You'd hardly see any song, today, being released without a dance challenge or some routine being used to promote it on TikTok".(Ihekire 2022)

Indeed it is evident that social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter have played a significant role in the growth of Afrobeats music while the artiste have also created a lot of new trends in production, promotion and dissemination of their music. The music industry have also received a lot of boost with many new entrants showcasing their talents through the many platforms available online without the bottlenecks of the traditional music industry process. Artistes are now able to have multiple streams of income as well as have more control on their work through independency.

However, with the rise of social media, there have been some questions about its role towards an increase in music piracy. The obvious is admissible if we consider the opportunities digital platforms offer in terms of file sharing. It is also likely that social media users with majority being young people would not hesitate to take the opportunity when they see free music downloads online and might take delight in patronizing pirate music resources than the official sources for their personal use. There is also the likelihood of re-posting and sharing such illegally downloaded music worldwide without proper copyright protection. With the high cost of internet access in Nigeria most people do not see the reason they have to pay for downloading music online after paying for internet access. In this case most will rather exploit the opportunities offered by illegal music blogs and file sharing social media site to get free music.

As a matter of fact, the discussion around music piracy and social media is a continuous one and as many people turn towards digital services for entertainment in Nigeria, there will be more concern that increased access to online platforms may lead to a higher rate of copyright infringement. The issue of piracy has always been a major hydra-headed complicated issue in the Nigerian music industry where stakeholders have been battling with copyright infringement in the physical form and shortage of remuneration for use of music for a long time. (Adedeji 2016, Okoroji 2009, Simmert 2020, Tade and Akinleye 2012). With the current digitalisation of music and the social media angle to it, one can only hope that proper machineries can be put in place to prevent unlawful copying, illegal downloading and file sharing and reduce digital piracy to the barest minimum.

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