

Convergences of Convenience among Youths and Survival Induction in the Trends of Nigerians Reality TV Shows

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Abstract: *This paper focuses on Reality TV Shows as a trending performance genre which has the capacity to unify the audience in space and idea, and also initiate financial reward to participants. The method of the research is qualitative, while Uses and Gratification Theory is the theoretical framework. The paper argues that there are many current innovations in performance and that a more friendly and enterprising one is Reality television show. Reality television shows interrogate members of the audience live without embellishment and easily stimulate immediacy and naturalness. It further argues that Reality TV shows bring youths together and that many of the shows possess a reward system which encourages the audience to have a longing for them. It concludes that a performance type that can bring a convenient unification amongst the youths and equally reward participants should be encouraged. It recommends that Reality television shows should be de-centred from cities to reach the hinterlands in order to also assist the poor in the rural areas who actually need the reward the performances are doling in their shows..*

Keywords: *Reality-Show, Performance, Innovation, Convergences, Reward.*

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INTRODUCTION

Performances are not conceived merely on the basis of leisure currently. The emerging trends like standup comedy and Reality TV shows have been synergized as tools for socio-psycho harmonization in which the audience, his mindset, level of thinking and dream are fused into leisure and reward system of the performance itself. This has made Reality TV shows the nucleus of social, psychological and, above all, economic focus to the Nigerian youths presently.

One the other hand, youthfulness is filled with series of unpredictable turnouts, which in most cases result to indeterminate attitudinal outbursts and

ungovernable lifestyle. The needs to re-order the imprecise lifestyle of the youths have made studies focusing on social control, psychological insight and economic empowerment to be vital, and performances have practically bent to this uses. More so, the daily assessment of life has proved that life itself is a flux of series that can be harnessed into a credible construct for entertainment. Considering the ups-and-downs of life among Nigerian youths, the moment of relish in which fears, shocks, despairs and disappoint are gushed out, usually bring them together. Such moment can be seen in the way football or such reality shows

like *Big Brother Naija*, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, *Gulder Ultimate Search* and the rest have been synergized and presented. This presents entertainment as a hub of social interaction, especially when it is what Joseph Chaikin calls “a demonstration of self with or without disguise” (2). There seems to be some real-world experience in performances or entertainment that contains real life documentation.

Observing the current restive circumstances in Nigeria, numerous scenes that bring young people to converge are usually violent-prone or money induced come-together. According to Jesse Drew, youths “find themselves in constant struggle over gaining access to means ... trying to frame their issues, (and) protesting when their issues are ignored” (124). As M. Rymza-Pawlowska observes, the reverberation from the numerous information in the society, which are both truthful and false accumulate to a force that persuade young men and women to seek an expert knowledge, or yearn for a solution to their worries. Often times, their focus shift from personal worry to group consciousness, and it is the group consciousness that stirs situations of revolt. As it is, young people bend to pressure based on the command from the popular-will. According to Sharon Brehm, Saul Kassin and Steven Fein,

The size of a majority may influence the amount of pressure that is felt, but social norms give rise to conformity only when we know and focus on those norms. This may sound like an obvious point, yet we often misperceive what is normative – particular when others are too afraid or embarrassed to publicly present their true thoughts, feelings, and behaviours (236).

Among the social activities that bring numerous young people together, live performances, likely, without contrived issues is remarkable. Within live performance group, reality shows is a trendy entertainment which brings many young minds together and also provide opportunities for interesting be-together in the future.

Potential benefits of watching RTV (Reality TV) shows include dealing with fear, learning “somehow to live with other people, job competencies such as sociability, team-action interdependency, work organization, and innovativeness. They also shape (youths) confidence, communication skills, and expand their level of thinking” (studycorgi.com). However, two ideas are prominent in reality shows. In <http://www.quora.com> there is the unscripted one and the competitive one. A competitive one is a game, while the unscripted one is an attempt to present a slice of life. Both ideas are remarkable in the interaction of the youths and the government currently in Nigeria.

This paper is an interrogation of the social factor in Reality TV shows that acts as the instrument of positive unification for young and economic empowerment.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is an attempt to link a symbolic human nature to the influence of aesthetic, and how the harmony instituted through performance can lead to investment. Based on this notion, a media theory called Uses and Gratification Theory.

Uses and gratification theory evolved from the thought of Denis McQuail in his attempt to reflect how one can use the media for personal, group or societal advantage other than the common use for information dissemination. Thus, the theory shifts its focus from becoming a mere instrument of public address to self-development activity. According to Seema Hasan, “uses and gratification theory attempts to explain the uses and functions of the media for individuals, groups, and society in general” (165). This is expounded to suggest the essence and utility of media content by “the individual user of mass media... and to motives of benefits as perceived by media user” (McQuail 98).

Relating this theory to the import of Reality television shows in Nigeria, its import has narrowed from the viability of the medium in engaging numerous minds on a pending issues down to instituting an avenue for generating income by youths who participate in the performances. According to Denis McQuail,

The basic assumptions (are) as follows: media and content choice is generally rational and directed towards certain specific goals and satisfactions.... Audience members are conscious of the media-related needs which arise in personal utility (individual) and social (shared) circumstance and can voice this in terms of motivations.... Personal is a more significant determinant of audience formation than aesthetics or cultural factors (424).

Uses and gratification theory encourages personal vision in the midst of collective objectives; “although needs differ from person to person, from situation to situation, and from culture to culture, knowing and understanding our interpersonal (and personal) needs should help us understand how they influence our interaction with others” (William Beall 358).

Trending performances such as stand-up comedy shows, found-space exhibition on the streets and markets which are common among phone, drugs and food items brokers and Reality television shows are explored as composite factors to address both public and personal human needs in Nigeria.

REALITY TV SHOWS AND NIGERIAN SOCIETY

Reality television show is not actually a new development in the cinema/TV or screen performance idea. The Lumiere Brothers recorded the live roam-about of passersby at the initial stage of their moving

picture experimentation. It went on in such manners until the idea of narrative materialized (Baran 161-163). This was not actually a presentation of a television reality show but a reality shown on television. Therefore, the daily recording of the daily routines of people even as they are neither embellished nor unedited does not situate the term, a “Reality TV Show”. The difference is that one is intuitive while the other is purposeful. An example is drawn from Holly Peek averment that “many reality shows depict women idealizing beauty and thinness, giving the impression that a woman’s value is based on her appearance and the popularity is derived from beauty” (Mghclaycentre.org). It therefore means, Reality television shows are purpose driven activities in Nigeria.

Reality TV Show began as any other trending performance viewed on screen began. Higinus Ekwuazi remarks that “it came with that cast of mind that coined the slogan: out of Africa comes many curious things” (23). In Nigeria as elsewhere, Reality television is a genre of television programming that documents purportedly unscripted real-life situations, often starring unfamiliar people rather than professional actors. It emerged as a distinct genre in the early 1990s with shows such as *The Real World*, then achieved prominence in the early 2000s with the success of the *Series Survivor*, *Idols*, and *Big Brother*, all of which became global franchise. Reality television shows tend to be interspersed with confessionals, short interview segments in which cast members reflect on or provide context for the events being depicted on screen.... Competition-based reality shows typically feature the gradual elimination of participants, either by a panel of judges, by the viewership of the show, or by the contestants themselves.... Some shows have been accused of rigging the favorite or underdog to win... they make stars out of untalented people unworthy of fame, infamous figure, or both... (en.m.wikipedia.org).

The Nigerian conception of Reality television shows is to create interactive forum that engages minds and provide context for a focus. It raises a kind of competition in the activities carried out within the reality process within which some members are voted out. This in a way highlights human qualities that may not be admired or tolerated. Some shows, people argue that the rightful winners (that is for the competition-based) of the game sometimes are displaced for a wrong one. This heightens intrigues which may stir criticism but seldom amounts to rage. Nonetheless, those who never dreamt of stardom eventually see themselves becoming stars and celebrities. As Longinus puts, these persons gradually instill in us “the memory of which is strong and hard to efface... sublimity (that is) to be fine and genuine which pleases all and always” (79). Reality television shows reshape the idea of rising from grass to grace

and from the unknown to the popular among youths in Nigeria.

The Nigerian society, however, is a heterogeneous one. Many ethnic frontiers; many lifestyle and many ways of doing things intermingle with a single focus hustling for survival. The all-out passion to make it in life without imbuing one’s social outlook with incriminating and despicable gestures and comments has made many young men to try their hands in many trending activities. One of such activities is to be enlisted for interrogation in a reality show. It becomes a programme the audience themselves lobbied for instead of the organizers shopping for them. The difference being that the host tactically swings the content to befit their course by making the interaction a kind of a kind of philosophy unbundling an intent of a collective view. Currently “without doubt, reality shows are fast gaining acceptance among Nigerian audiences across the various socio-economic classes. A careful observation of the high audience participation recorded for these shows as well as the traction they gain in the mainstream and online media provide enough evidence... The earliest reality shows in Nigeria can be traced to 2003 when Nigerian Breweries introduced “Gulder Ultimate Search”. This opened a gateway for other fan favourites such as “Big Brother Naija, ‘Nigerian Idol; amongst others” (thisdayline.com).

The intriguing part of this trending performance is that it has become a hub for social integration, a means of gaining unprecedented popularity and above all, a means of striking a sudden economic fortune in Nigeria. On the other hand, Babatunju Adepoku and Theresa Kalu acknowledge that ideas from reality shows most times become a unifying factor capable of creating power which is “about conversational control of discourse” (390). Many young people come together to gush out their boredom while many become identifiable and marked for financial reward in Nigeria’s Reality TV shows.

Convergences of Convenience in Reality TV Shows

One of the means to bring young people, children and even older ones is a practice that contains a seed in which differentiation of thought can evolve. It makes more passionate and appealing when the idea has a universal undertone which each man interprets the development based on the active consciousness for such structure. As Anietie Udofia, Uwemedimo Atakpo and David Udoinwang put, “the way people see things depend on the way things appear to them; the way things appear show what has taken effect as a structure of reality in their mind” (47). For having a different interest in a singular activity, intrigues build effortlessly in Nigerian Reality television shows, and for having

different views of a particular thing, more and more views spring up. Nonetheless, more people easily populate a scene conveniently to throw in opinion as the feel or want it to be based on the development on screen. Convergences of convenience build from within and sustains as a conclusive pinion for a view without.

Reality TV Shows influence Nigerian youths and motivate them to view a common course alike or differ without aggression. This intermingling of emotion agrees with David Sue, Derald Sue and Stanley Sue position that "human beings are acting their behaviour and that it is an aspect of disorderliness to some culture while to some it is normal"(10). Nigerian youths use the opportunity to act out their whims by reflecting intelligible and unintelligible convictions about man, nature and the society. A good example of influence in convergence is in the *Big Brother Naija* case presented thus:

Big Brother reality show has continued to thrive and at the same time wax stronger mostly among the youth, although, the show, over the years, has been criticized for its display of obscene and vulgar scenes which is considered not to be part of the Nigerian culture and that of African in general... The level of immorality being celebrated by the Big Brother reality is adjudged short of programmes intended for education; yet many African audiences especially the youths have continued to imbibe the damaging style of the programme... Despite these outcries and the moral panics, the reality show has neither improved in moral tone nor viewership level reduced. Number of viewers that voted on the final week of Big Brother 2017 was estimated at 26 million, most of which were youths. This shows that there is a large fellowship amongst the Nigerian youth as the reality show seems to have a lasting impact on the youths (Researchbase.com).

The programme is openly decried by many Nigerians but it is a hub to converge numerous young people with their numerous selves.

Another idea of convergences for convenience can be deduced in *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. The programme was conducted by MTN and the majority of the audience is usually youths. Since it is convened in a specific locale, the engaged audience members become the co-performers with the speaker. Questions from a field of study which the engaged speaker chooses are asked. This raises anxiety and stimulates much enthusiasm. The audience reflects their joy for the numerous questions answered. The more the person gets the questions right, the higher he rises in fame as an intelligent person. Besides, each question properly answered is tantamount to additional money structurally set to the admiration of the eager audience. Each engaged speaker puts up his best or develops an attitude that endears him to the crowd and places him at the mercy of the brand agent. For one thing, "biologically, man as well as animals develops a mechanism to protect his deeds and defends his actions

in all situations" (Udofia 654). Youths convene to test their intellect or defend their assumptions as aspect of fun and entertainment in one bulk.

Reality TV shows open new friendly avenues and restrict activities that engender delinquency among teens and unexplainable misdoings among young people as they get absorbed in it in Nigeria. The time young people spend following and participating in the live-dramaturgy of the reality shows content, moments of indulging in antisocial activities gradually slip. This is possible because Reality TV show absorbs the mind of the audience. When the mind is not occupied with positive things, negative ones may spring in the form of crime. In the same vein, the need to curtail crimes and antisocial practices is imminent. Eventually, one of the agents for instilling a crime-free and healthy society is the mass media and reality show is trending type. In Aniekan Brown's view, when a medium is stripped bare of crime and made to set the surveillance for curtailing it, it would effortlessly become a tool of social reconstruction, and may eventually stimulate morality (543).

Going by the above position, Reality TV programme like any other media outlet has its inherent criticism, but being that it draws more audiences who naturally skip other activities (including criminality) to conveniently converge to enjoy reality shows, reality shows, then, should become an instrument to inculcate stronger ethical factors in their minds. A programme that can easily converge many youths and sustain their interest can equally become a tool of control, and can be shaped to influence their thought to make them better and enterprising persons.

SURVIVAL INDUCTION IN NIGERIAN REALITY TV SHOWS

One aspect of the media is its capacity to serve the public and also serve the persons using them or even being used to address. Hasan clarifies how the media can also be the basis for solving the media users' personal problem (164). This is informed in the masses dependence on the agenda raised by the media, the awareness of situation around disseminated by the media and the insight they deduce from the opinion desk of the media; yet a more convincing and feasible factor of these benefits is that the media agent can make investment through the media. This factor is obvious in the operations of the Nigerian Reality TV shows.

Who Wants to be a Millionaire/Project Fame West Africa/Ultimate Limited: The coming to limelight of these instituted bodies struck Nigerians as a live-synergy to view and laugh, or likely something to expend worries with. Along the line, it was realized that the interaction between the hosts and the selected fans began to yield financial rewards. To Nigerians, getting

entertained as a starting point to be selected for a financial reward is a gold-rush. Innovation builds up gradually in Nigeria from Reality TV shows, and more entrepreneurs arise from the entertainers and the audience simultaneously. *The Guardian*, a popular newspaper in Nigeria, has documented the affiliations Nigerian Reality TV Shows producers make with some international firms in order to promote entertainment, entrepreneurship and investment amongst the youths. According to Gloria Nwafor, The Reality TV Shows, which is known as Dragon's Den and Shark Tank in the UK and USA respectively, will give bold and passionate entrepreneurs the opportunity to pitch their business or ideas in Won's Den, a business Reality TV Show brought to you by the producers of Who Wants to be a Millionaire and Project Fame, West Africa, Ultima Limited, with the support of Gold Sponsors, Ecobank Nigeria, Silver Sponsors, Chapel Hill Denham and Bronze Sponsors, Development Bank of Nigeria.... We recognize them as the engine of growth of any economy.... We believe the target group will embrace the programme and at the end of the day, we will achieve our objectives of supporting small businesses and helping aspiring entrepreneurs in the country realize their dream (guardian.ng).

Following the current outlook of performing companies and institution's objectives in Nigeria, virtually all activities in Performing/Theatre and Film Arts incorporate entrepreneurial aims to make the system glow with a steady kickbacks of progress while theatre practitioners grow from the beam of progress in financial terms. Reality TV shows provide opportunities for young people to be awarded financially for intellect, resilience, diligence or any of the needed human quality the moment requires. Audience members win some money in *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*. "The game show, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, is built around entertainment, educational values which hinges on rewards... while people enjoy the entertainment provided by the show, they advertently learn certain lessons even as they are motivated by the monetary rewards" (Isachoba and Ochonogor-academic.edu). Many Nigerian have benefited morally and financially from this programme.

The Reality television programme is executed first as a performance in which life in its aliveness is seen without artistic décor. In *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, for instance, the process it segmented to arouse curiosity and widen participants' inclination to inquire or re-harsh the recesses of their academic depth. It would latter rise to a climax in which the rational decision we would expect a character in a script to take would be placed before the person under interrogation by the host. There is usually the introduction of a commercial break which alludes to a comic relief. Finally, the decisive moment in which the prudent should decide naturally from getting the questions

correctly answered; the wisely should quit with at least an appreciable reward; as the greedily presses on by attempting to know all and lose all.

Big Brother Naija: Another remarkable survival induction is seen in the mode of operation of this annual show. Nigerians within and outside are usually selected to form the inmates of the house, and events that are considered amusing, health throbbing, romantic, bravery, intelligent, absurd, disgusting and even pitiable are inferred in the interplays of the housemates. Each housemate manages his or her attitude to avoid being evicted. Apart from the euphoria of being selected to become a celebrity or a star which would be on people's discursive daily innuendoes, the fear of being evicted also ignites some tension. The resilience of escaping eviction reflects a level of amiable dispositions or quality in a person while the glory of staying to the end or winning as the best housemates ends with a hug financial reward that can re-define the destiny of the participant. According to Emelike Obinna:

The show is borne out of the multi-choice's quest to create exciting contents for its growing from content creation to empowerment for the winners as most of them have been engaged by corporate organization for branding, activations among others. The intrigue is that some second or third runners up and even those who were evicted earlier in the show have leveraged the platform to push their careers forward... However, while the platform offers many opportunities, the major bait for potential housemates is usually the prize money, which keeps increasing every season... Trailing BBNaija prize money since inception, the prize has been always on the increase; as if the organizers are boosting it against inflation... with the N100 million at stake, Tejumola is promising bigger, more exciting and an edition of BBNaija that has not been seen before because of the high quality engagement by housemates (businessday.ng).

This is an indication that the trending performance has created opportunities for young Nigerians to survive and become wealthy as others watch the sequence with enthusiasm to gush their worries out. As saharareporter.com puts the information on *Big Brother Naija*, "teeming millions of Nigerians, as usual, who are fans of the show have been waiting for such news as the activities in BBNaija house are always among the highest trending topics across the country especially among the youths". Many Nigerians await this performance for pleasure while some make new relationship and create wealth from it.

CONCLUSION

A Performance is by necessity structured to address or put forth "thought" wound in themes to

unravel. Currently, performance trends seem to be conceptualized on the human needs which emotional, social and economic bases are paramount. Such performances are Stand-up Comedies and Reality television Shows. It is easier to get a live criticism of a nation's live tyrant and laugh over as a mere joke in a stand-up comedy. A very hard, deep and sometimes intimidating political issues are easily blurted in this genre. It evokes the mirth people yearn for and easily draws much audience; but the audience members pay for ticket to see. However, Reality TV shows still emerge within the current trends in Nigeria with two remarkable thrusts: it becomes a hub of ideas, persons and emotional convergences, bringing many people to see life in reality the same way; it provides opportunity for the audience to initiate self-development, initiate connection for stardom and get rewarded financially from participating in the performance. A performance that caters for the emotional and financial needs of a people is a deeply seated in the soul of the people. What then should be encouraged than the human faculty that can cater for the body and the soul of man?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reality shows that have intellectual values should be encouraged and competition-games should be widened to benefit the poorest-of-the-poor dwelling in the hinterland away from the city of the nation. The performances should not be allowed to be used as an avenue to introduce cultures that will endanger future of the nation.

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