

# The Youth, Reality TV Show Sponsorship and Brand Patronage: Any Nexus?

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## **ABSTRACT**

With increasing apathy to advertising by audience, especially the youth, and the need for organisations to look for way of positioning their products and services to attract new and retain old customers, organisations are turning to reality TV shows sponsorship. Reality TV shows have become one of the most popular shows on television this days. Reality TV programmes is define as programme that film real people as they live out events in their lives, contrived or otherwise, as they occur. With students of Redeemer's university as its study population, the study adopts survey design, using questionnaire as data collection instrument. A sample of 240 respondents was randomly selected from the population and test instrument administered on them, only 235 pieces of questionnaire were returned and analysed, putting the response rate at 97.9%. The findings showed that brand sponsorship of reality shows does not have any influence on brand patronage. 56.5% of respondents indicated that the effect of brand sponsorship of reality shows on their patronage of the product is neither positive nor negative; rather, it is neutral or inconsequential. This finding showed that the sponsorship of reality TV shows is not solely responsible for the increased patronage of the sponsored brand. However, brand sponsorship of reality TV programmes contributes positively to image of the brand, which might ultimately lead to increase patronage. The researcher concludes that sponsorship of reality shows by major brands and organizations might influence people's perception of the brand positively, but does not necessarily make them patronize the brand. In view of the research findings, it was recommended that organizations should not use sponsorship of reality shows as a strategy for the purpose of increasing patronage, but use it if their aim is to boost their brand image image.

**Key words:** Reality TV, Sponsorship, Patronage, Brand, Positioning

## **INTRODUCTION**

Reality TV shows have become of the most popular shows on television this days. Every year, audiences worldwide look forward to the commencement of a new episode or season of their favourite reality TV shows. Nigeria is not an exception because every year, thousands of viewers stay glued to their television screens, watching one reality TV show or the other. Reality Television shows have bombarded television programming of recent and audiences are passionate about them.

Reality TV as a genre of television programming that has grown over the years and has become an addiction of some sort for many of their viewers especially youth and female segment of the society. According to Hall (2009:515), reality programmes are now a staple of television programming. Many people watch reality shows for several reasons. Reiss and Wiltz (2004) discovered that an element of reality programmes appeal is that they 'help viewers to feel important because seeing ordinary people on the shows allows them to "fantasize that they could gain celebrity status by being on television.'" (Hall, 2009:517).

The appeals that reality TV shows have on their audiences have led to many products and organisations to explore it for their marketing communications spending and products and service placement. As viewership increased, producers have also improved on contents and come up with better packages that attracts more audiences to stay glued to their TV screens, thereby, also attracting more sponsorship from organisations.

However, studies have shown that most television viewers and radio listeners have found a way of escaping the traditional 30" spot or 45" spot commercials on radio and television by changing the channel when an advertisement comes up, or using that time to do other things (Baran, 2000:234). The advent of devices, which enable viewers to record their favourite Television programmes thereby cutting out advertisements from it, has also made adverts not reach the people it was meant for on television. There has therefore been a need for other unconventional methods of advertising, which viewers cannot escape and which would hit their target audiences squarely.

One of the unconventional methods of advertising that many organisations have embraced is reality TV shows. Major brands and advertisers in Nigeria have taken advantage of the influx of reality shows and their increasing fan base to meet their needs for other unconventional methods of advertising on radio and television. They have taken to becoming major sponsors of these reality shows, thereby bringing their products directly to their target audience.

In Nigeria, since the maiden edition of Big Brother Africa in 2001, in which for the first time a Nigerian featured in any reality show, reality TV shows have become the 'new big thing' in Nigeria. Reality shows such as Gulder Ultimate Search (GUS), Maltina Dance All, Etisalat's Nigerian Idols, Glo Naija Sings, MTN Project Fame West Africa, Three Crowns Family Game Show, Peak Talent Hunt, amongst others have filled the television airwaves.

Yearly, organisations spent several millions of naira on sponsorship of one reality TV show or the other with the hope of attracting the elusive customers to their brand and also position their brands in the mind share of the target audience. With this huge spending on reality TV sponsorship, is there any correlation between the spending and brand patronage of the company, does sponsorship of reality TV shows have any influence on patronage of the brand? What is the influence of sponsorship of reality TV shows on brand patronage? These questions will be answered in this paper.

#### SPONSORSHIP AND REALITY TV SHOWS: A REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Sponsorship is part of communication mix that constantly attract increasing focus among organisations and marketing communications professionals. Tripodi (2001) maintained that sponsorship as part of communication mix has the largest development in comparison with the rest of the communication tools. .

Sponsorship involves investments in events or causes for the purpose of achieving various corporate objectives such as increasing sales volume, enhancing a company's reputation or brand image and increasing awareness. It also means the company provides financial resources, personal services, equipment or facilities to create an alliance with the event. In return, the company obtains direct exposure to the public targeted by the event (Amoako, Dartey-Baah, Dzogbenuk and Kwesie Junior, 2002).

According to Reed (1994), cited by Amoako, Dartey-Baah, Dzogbenuk and Kwesie Junior, (2002), there are both primary and secondary objectives associated with using sponsorship. The primary reasons are to build awareness, develop customer loyalty and improve the perception held of the brand. Secondary reasons are more contentious, but generally they can be seen to attract new users, to support dealers and other intermediaries and to act as a form of staff motivation and morale building.

Sponsorship according to Lardinoit and Quester, (2001), Grimes and Meenaghan, (1998), is a multidimensional communication tool used to achieve a variety of objectives. As a communication tool, sponsorship differs from advertising. Although both tools are used for the achievement of promotional objectives, in sponsorship both medium and creative message are not tightly controlled by the sponsor ((Javalgi, Traylor, Gross and Lampman, 1994, Meenaghan and Shipley, 1999, Tripodi, 2001, Dolphin, 2003).

On the other hand, a firm uses sponsorship to support an event in order to reach a specific or a wider target group and achieve corporate and commercial objectives (Javalgi, Traylor, Gross and Lampman, 1994). The firm can sponsor an event individually or with other firms, while the duration of the sponsorship depends on the event (Javalgi, Traylor, Gross and Lampman, 1994, Dolphin, 2003). The theme of the events may concern sports, arts and any other similar activity of interest to the general public. Following this policy, the firm expects that the image transferred from the event will have a positive effect on itself (Gwinner, 1997, Gwinner and Eaton, 1999, McDonald 1991). Thus, the choice of the event is of significant importance.

There is a difference between sponsorship and patronage. However, there is usually a confusion resulting to the synonymous use of them (Meenaghan, 1983). Patronage is actually an altruistic activity or a donation with no expectation of return (Dolphin, 2003). Nowadays, "sponsorship can be regarded as the provision of assistance either financial or in kind to an activity by a commercial organization for the purpose of achieving commercial objectives" (Meenaghan 2001). Although this definition of sponsorship is rather incomplete (it includes only

commercial goals), it is a realistic view of how sponsorship is actually used. Sponsorship involves a business transaction (Thwaites, 1994) and an economic – based partnership between the sponsor and the sponsored company (Quester and Thompson, 2001).

Kitchen and De Pelsmacker (2004: 94), state that commercial sponsorship implies that the sponsoring company has the intention and takes the necessary actions to promote its interests, and to support the sponsored activity by means of integrated marketing communication efforts. Discussing the nature and structure of sponsorships, Belch and Belch, (2003: 363) state that under a sponsorship arrangement, an advertiser assumes responsibility for the production and usually the content of the programme as well as the advertising that appears within it. They further state that in the early days of television, most programmes were produced and sponsored by corporations and were identified by their name, for e.g. *Texaco Star Theatre*, *The Colgate Comedy Hour*, etc.

According to Nabi (2007: 372), although many people might have a sense of the programmes that fall into the category of reality television, there is no clear industry standard or definition of the genre of television programming. Despite Nabi's observation, several scholars and encyclopaedias have however come up with various definitions. For instance, *Wikipedia* (2011) defines reality television as “a genre of television programming that presents purportedly unscripted dramatic or humorous situations, documents actual events, and usually features ordinary people instead of professional actors, sometimes in a contest or other situation where a prize is awarded”. The online encyclopaedia states further that, “participants are often placed in exotic locations or abnormal situations, and are sometimes coached to act in specific scripted ways by off-screen “story editors” or “segment television producers”, with the portrayal of events and speech manipulated and contrived to create an illusion of reality through other post-production editing techniques”.

Barton (2007: 462) on his part defines reality shows as, “any show featuring non-actors under constant surveillance, reacting in spontaneous and unscripted ways to their environment, and ultimately seeking to outperform or outlast their opponents in some sort of competition”. Nabi et al (2003), cited by Nabi (2007: 372), define reality TV as programmes that film real people as they live out events in their lives, contrived or otherwise, as they occur. They further identify several key elements that characterize such programmes:

- a. People portraying themselves,
- b. Filmed at least in part in their living or working environment rather than on a set,
- c. Without a script,
- d. With events placed in a narrative context,
- e. For the primary purpose of viewer entertainment.

They conclude that in essence, reality programmes are “marked by ordinary people engaged in unscripted action or interaction”. Hall (2009: 515) on her part, states that the term “reality programme” has been applied by scholars to a range of material that varies widely in format, theme and subject matter. She adds that many of the early definitions of reality programmes were broad, including news programmes and traditional documentaries.

*Wikipedia* (2011) traces the antecedent of reality TV programmes to the 1940s, when Allen Funt's *Candid Camera* show, broadcasting unsuspecting ordinary people reacting to pranks. Since then, reality TV has seen tremendous growth. Gardyn (2001), states that for the past several years, reality television has dominated mainstream television programming, providing relatively inexpensive entertainment. He further adds that the premise of reality TV requires that individuals place themselves on public display, thus forfeiting all claims to personal privacy for the sake of transient fame and the possibility of monetary consideration (Papacharissi and Mendelson; 2007:355).

Barton (2009: 460), submits that within the realm of contemporary television landscape, reality based television is a force that has changed the television industry as well as the culture that surrounds it. According to research conducted by Zappia (2006) and Nielson Media Research (2007), Barton states that four of the top five prime time broadcast TV programmes (in the USA) for 2006 were reality-based programmes, outperforming perennial powerhouse shows such as *CSI*, *Desperate Housewives* and *Law and Order*.

Hall (2009: 515) identified some of the advantages of reality programmes for broadcasters. According to her, they are inexpensive to produce, they offer considerable scheduling flexibility, and they are less dependent on actors than scripted programming.

Discussing what reality shows are to their audiences and what they do to them, Stefanone, et al (2007: 510) are of the opinion that reality television makes the personal thoughts, behaviours and interactions of its characters the main focus of audience attention. Bent and Feist (2000) refer to this genre as affect TV, which presents viewers with “the most private stories of non-prominent people to a mass audience, crossing traditional borders of privacy and intimacy (Stefanone et al; 2007:510). Papacharissi and Mendelson (2007: 356) on their part state that reality TV places the audience member on the opposite side of the entertainment arena, providing all viewers with the possibility of becoming potential entertainers. In the same vein, Hall (2009: 516) postulate that what unites understandings of these shows within a single conceptual category is not their setting, format or subject matter; nor is it the perception that the shows are real in the sense that they present real life as most people experience it. Rather audiences define these shows in terms of a focus on real people playing themselves.

Genres are categories or classifications of something, in this case of any literary or artistic work. Subgenres therefore are secondary categories or classifications of that work that is being talked about. Leone, Peek and Bissell (2006: 254), present three major sub genres of reality television as:

- i. **The Docu-Soap:** In this sub-genre, the lives of the people filmed are presented as entertainment or soap operas. It is usually a combination of the documentary format and soap opera format, and usually involves the lives of celebrities, how they live every day, their houses, cars, wardrobes, etc.
- ii. **The Contest:** In this sub-genre, participants engage in competition for a grand prize at the end of the show. The competition could come in any form such as singing competitions, treasure hunts, sports competitions, etc., and at the end, the best man or the contestant with the highest number of nominations wins.
- iii. **The Dating Show:** This usually involves match making and selection of dates, which could lead to marriage. In these shows, participants compete for an eligible man/woman.

The *Wikipedia* (2011) provides the following sub-genres of reality TV programmes:

1. **Documentary Style:** In this subgenre, passive observers (the audience), follow people going about their daily personal and professional activities. Story plots are constructed via editing or planned situations, with the results resembling soap operas. This subgenre also has subcategories such as:
  - **Special living Environment:** Placing cast members, who in most cases did not previously know each other, in artificial living environments.
  - **Celebrities:** Shows that show celebrities going about their everyday lives; or putting celebrities on location and given a specific task or tasks.
  - **Professional Activities:** Shows portraying professionals either going about their day-to-day business or performing an entire project over the course of the series. No experts are brought in to either provide help or to judge results.
2. **Competition Game Shows:** Typically, participants are filmed competing to win a prize, often while living together in a confined environment. In many cases, participants are removed until only one person or team remains, who/which is then declared the winner. Variants of this subgenre include:
  - **Dating-Based Competition:** Dating-based competition shows follow a contestant choosing one out of a group of suitors. Over the course of either a single episode or an entire season, suitors are eliminated until only the contestant and the final suitor remains.
  - **Job Search:** In this category, the competition revolves around a skill that contestants were pre-screened for. Competitors perform a variety of tasks based on that skill, are judged, and are then kept or removed by a single expert or a panel of experts. The show is usually presented as

a job search of some kind, in which the prize for the winner includes a contract to perform that kind of work.

- Sports: Most of these programs create a sporting competition among athletes attempting to establish their name in that sport.
3. Self-Improvement/Makeover: Some reality television shows cover a person or group of people improving their lives. Despite differences in the content, the format is usually the same: first, the show introduces the subjects in their current, less-than-ideal environment. Then the subjects meet with a group of experts, who give the subjects instructions on how to improve things; they offer aid and encouragement along the way. Finally, the subjects are placed back in their environment and they, along with their friends and family and the experts, appraise the changes that have occurred.
  4. Renovation: Some shows make over part or all of a person's living space, work space, or vehicle.

Below is a table showing popular reality TV shows in Nigeria, the brands that sponsored them, the producers, and the year of inception.

S/N	REALITY TV SHOW	YEAR	BRAND SPONSOR(S)	PRODUCERS
1.	<i>Naija Sings</i>	2009	Glo, CoolFM, BeatFM, Never Machine	M-Net
2.	<i>Nigerian Idols</i>	2011	Etisalat, Pepsi, Sony	Optima Media Group and Rapid Blue Format
3.	<i>Project Fame West Africa</i>	2008	MTN	Ultima Ltd.
4.	<i>Peak Talent Hunt</i>	2009	Peak	IBST Media Ltd.
5.	<i>Sprite Triple Slam</i>	2010	Sprite	N/A
6.	<i>Maltina Dance All</i>	2007	Maltina	Lowe-Lintas
7.	<i>Gulder Ultimate Search</i>	2004	Gulder	N/A
8.	<i>Amstel Malta Box Office</i>	2005	Amstel Malta	IBST Ltd. And Endemol
9.	<i>Big Brother Nigeria</i>	2007	Coca-Cola Nig.	IBST Ltd. and Storm Vision
10.	<i>Star Quest</i>	2002	Star Beer	Lowe-Lintas
11.	<i>Roc Da Mic Nigeria</i>	2011	AIT, IdeaCentric, Primetime Africa	Zara Productions
12.	<i>Koko Mansion</i>	2009	Nig. Breweries, Tetmosol, Vitafoam	MoHits
13.	<i>Football Challenge</i>		Oceanic Bank	IBST Ltd.
14.	<i>Next Movie Star</i>	2005	Onga, Sparwasser, Close up, Vitafoam, Hier Thermocool	Digital Interactive Media
15.	<i>Who Wants to be a Millionaire</i>	2004	MTN	General Entertainment Television

16.	<i>MTN Family Game Show</i>	2005	MTN	TransAfrica Media
17.	<i>Three Crowns Family Game Show</i>	2005	Three Crowns Milk	N/A
18.	<i>Malta Guinness Street Dance</i>	2008	Malta Guinness	Velocity
19.	<i>National Comedy Challenge</i>	2010	MTN, HITV and AIT	Virgin Leisure Company
20.	<i>Lucozade Boost Freestyle</i>	2010	Lucozade Boost	JSP Communications

*Compiled from the Internet (February 2012).*

## METHODOLOGY

A sample size 240 respondents was chosen among Redeemer's university students with questionnaire as test instrument administered on them. The questionnaire consists of close ended type of questions. A total of 235 pieces of the administered questionnaire were retrieve from participants constituting 97.9% return rate. For the study, simple percentage was used to analyse the data and tabulation method were mainly used.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

**Table 1: age distribution of respondents**

AGE (YEARS)	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
<b>Below 15</b>	(n=7)	3%
<b>15-20</b>	(n=151)	64.3%
<b>21-25</b>	(n=72)	30.6%
<b>26-30</b>	(n=5)	2.1%
<b>Total</b>	(n=235)	100%

Table 1 above shows respondents' age distribution; 3% (n=7) are below 15 years, 64.3% (n=151) are between the ages of 15 and 20 years, 30.6% (n=72) are between the ages of 21 and 25 years, while 2.1% (n=5) are between the ages of 26 and 30 years.

From this table, it can be inferred that majority (64.3%) of the respondents are between 15 and 20 years of age, followed by those between the ages of 21 and 25 (30.6%). This shows that since most people that watch reality TV shows are youths, the respondents are ideal for the study as majority are in their late teens and early 20s (21-25 years).

**Table 2: Gender of respondents**

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
<b>Male</b>	(n=62)	26.4%
<b>Female</b>	(n=173)	73.6%
<b>Total</b>	(n=235)	100%



Table 2 shows the gender of respondents; 26.4% (n=62) of the respondents are males, while 73.6% (n=173) are females. This shows that the females constitute a larger part of the total number of respondents.

**Table 3: Number of Respondents that Watch Reality TV Shows**

GENDER	RESPONSE		TOTAL
	YES	NO	
Male	(n=51) 21.7%	(n=11) 4.7%	(n=62) 26.4%
Female	(n=159) 67.7%	(n=14) 6%	(n=173) 73.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>(n=210) 89.4%</b>	<b>(n=25) 10.6%</b>	<b>(n=235) 100%</b>

Table 3 shows the percentage of respondents that watch reality television shows. 89.4% (n=210) of them responded positively, while 10.6% (n=25) of the respondents responded in the negative that they do not watch reality television shows. 21.7% (n=51) of male respondents said yes, that they watch reality TV shows, 4.7% (n=11) of them said no, they do not watch reality TV shows. Similarly, 67.7% (n=159) of female respondents answered in the affirmative and 6% (n=14) of female respondents answered in the negative.

This finding showed that majority (89.4%) of the respondents watch reality TV shows. This finding is very important to the study.

**Table 4: Respondents that Watch Reality TV Shows Sponsored by Companies in Nigeria**

GENDER	RESPONSE			TOTAL
	YES	NO	NOT SURE	
Male	(n=46) 19.6%	(n=7) 3.0%	(n=9) 3.8%	(n=62) 26.4%
Female	(n=134) 57%	(n=21) 8.9%	(n=18) 7.7%	(n=173) 73.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>(n=180) 76.6%</b>	<b>(n=28) 11.9%</b>	<b>(n=27) 11.5%</b>	<b>(n=235) 100%</b>

Table 4 above shows the percentage of respondents that watch reality TV shows sponsored by companies in Nigeria. Of the total number of respondents, 26.4% (n=62) were males and 73.6% (n=173) were females. 19.6% (n=46) males responded positively to the question, 3% (n=7) responded negatively, while 3.8% (n=9) said they are not sure. Similarly, 57% (n=134) females responded positively to the question, 8.9% (n=21) responded negatively, while 7.7% (n=18) said they are not sure.

In total, 76.6% (n=180) of respondents indicated that they watch reality shows sponsored by companies in Nigeria, 11.9% (n=28) indicated that they do not, while 11.5% (n=27) indicated that they were not sure if they watch reality TV shows sponsored by companies in Nigeria.

The above finding showed that majority (76.6%) of respondents watch reality TV shows sponsored by companies in Nigeria.

**Table 5: Influenced of sponsorship of reality TV shows on Respondents patronage of sponsor's brand by gender**

GENDER	RESPONSE		TOTAL
	YES	NO	
Male	(n=25) 10.7%	(n=36) 15.4%	(n=61) 26.1%
Female	(n=76) 32.5%	(n=97) 41.5%	(n=173) 73.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>(n=101) 43.2%</b>	<b>(n=133) 56.8%</b>	<b>(n=234) 100%</b>

Table 5 above shows respondents who were influenced by the company's sponsorship of a reality show to patronize the company's product/service. Out of 234 respondents that responded to the question, 26.1% (n=61) are males, while 73.9% (n=173) are females. 10.7% (n=25) of the males said they were influenced by the sponsorship of the show to patronize the company's product/service, while 15.4% (n=36) of the males said otherwise. Likewise, 32.5% (n=76) of the females said they were influenced, while 41.5% (n=97) of female respondents said they were not influenced.

43.2% (n=101) of the total respondents said they were influenced by a company's sponsorship of a reality show to patronize them, while 56.8% (n=133) of the total respondents said they were not influenced by a company's sponsorship of a reality show to patronize them.

It can thus be inferred that majority (56.8%) of the respondents were not influenced by a company's sponsorship of reality TV shows to patronize the company's products/services, and thus, sponsorship of reality shows does not influence brand patronage.

## CONCLUSION

The findings above showed that majority of reality television audience are youth who are prime target of advertisers and marketers. The investment by sponsors of reality television programmes is a wise one if their intension is to reach this segment of the market. However, is the aim is to ultimately influence them to make purchase decision in respect of the brand behind the sponsorship, the finding in this work showed that this may be far from the reality.

Like any other promotional activities, sponsorship alone cannot move a prospect to take the desire decision; it has to work in conjunction with other factors in the marketing mix. Investment in the sponsorship of reality television programmes should be seen as an item among several other items needed in the marketing mix strategy to achieve the ultimate marketing objectives.

The population chosen for this work is limited hence, it may be inadequate for general application to national environment, but it may serve as a starting points for wider and further study of the subject matter.



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