

Art Marketing in A New Normal Nigeria Ravaged by Covid-19 Epidemic

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Article Info

Keywords:

Art Marketing, New Normal, Nigeria, COVID-19, Epidemic

DOI

10.5281/zenodo.8366625

Abstract

The advent of Covid-19 worldwide has significantly impacted the survival of businesses, and Nigeria is not an exception to this reality. The virus has ravaged the entire country, leading the government to implement various restrictions and bans that have affected businesses and their owners. One such business that has felt the impact is the marketing of artworks within Nigeria and internationally.

To delve into the effects of the Covid-19 epidemic on art marketing, this paper is designed to concentrate on Covid-19 as an epidemic and its repercussions on marketing artworks, among other aspects. As part of its findings, the paper establishes that art marketing plays a crucial role in the survival of artists and their practices. In conclusion, the paper asserts that Covid-19 is an epidemic that has adversely affected businesses in Nigeria and many other parts of the world.

Therefore, the paper recommends that despite the challenging circumstances faced by artists in this Covid-19 era, they should persist in their efforts to sell their artworks. Additionally, the government is encouraged to provide some level of palliatives to assist artists and art marketers during this Covid-19 era, enabling them to adapt to the new normal of Covid-19 restrictions.

Introduction

In our society today, one thing which has encouraged every producer to be in business is the level of patronage the producer receives and it is made possible most times through strategic marketing of the product. Notably, if there are challenges hindering the effective marketing of products, such products may not be sold easily as expected of it. As it related to this paper, the business of selling artworks is done through art marketing. Marketing of artworks is not as easy as marketing food or other commodities because it is also not very cheap to buy as compared to food. Thus, marketing artworks some times are rigorous and very challenging, especially like this when coronavirus has ravaged our society. Art marketing understandably is the process the artist engages to sell their finished artworks to prospective buyers. In the art world, art marketing creates a continuous exposure to

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artist and their works. The marketing of art is done most times primarily through art exhibition, art fairs, general displays, advertisement, promotions, social media, backstories and word-of-mouth, among others.

Art market simply put, is the marketplace for buyers and sellers trading in commodities, services and works of arts. According to Davey (2021) art marketing is creating awareness and interest for a company, product, or service that leads to a desire to engage buyers to own its goods, use its services or all of the above. Dawey adds that businesses use marketing to communicate their offerings, promote their brands, identify new prospects, and strengthen bonds with their target audience and exiting customers. There is no doubt that, one of the desire of every artist is to market their artwork. Thus, marketing artworks are very important to every artist; therefore; if any situation hinders it, it becomes a serious challenge to artists. One of such challenge which has hindered artist from successfully marketing their artworks is Covid-19 epidemic. Covid-19 has seriously affected the art market in Nigeria and all over the world. One way in which Covid-19 pandemic has affected the marketing of art is lockdown preventive measures taken by government to eradicate the spread of the dreaded Covid-19 pandemic in the country affect the sale of artworks because they were people not allowed to go out or move around, this situation made artist not to go out and sell their artworks. Also, the travel bans, closure of business outfits which included art galleries and art display centers were also challenge artist encounter as an impediment preventing them from marketing their artworks.

Coronavirus is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-COV-2 virus. The World Health Organization (2021) records that most people infected with the virus experiences mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some will become seriously ill and require medical attentions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer is more likely to develop serious illness. Anyone can get sick with Covid-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age. The challenging issue is that due to how deadly the virus is, it left governments with no options than to make bans and restrictions to travel freely or to do business freely in most part of the world. The restrictions have tremendously affected art marketers because they cannot travel for exhibition outside the country and in some situation even within the country to sell or market their artworks. Observably, this was not the situation in the past before Covid-19. Therefore, it is a new normal life for art marketers are to adjust to in our society.

The government of Nigeria tried to ensure that Covid-19 does not get into Nigeria but unfortunately it got into the country on February 27th, 2020 by an Italian. And ever since it has been discovered in the country, the way we live as individuals has changed even the way we do business, associate or practice religion in our religious centers has changed to seat arrangements.

The impact of Covid-19 pandemic seems to have rewritten the script of human life and businesses. According to World Bank Group (2021) Nigeria is at a critical historical junction, due to the impact of Covid19 pandemic in the country. Unfortunately, there seems to be a lot of uncertainty about when the pandemic will end, it is clear that Nigeria faces unprecedented crises that require an equally unprecedented policy response. Realizing the government's ambition of lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty by 2030 would be challenging even under normal circumstance. Therefore, there is no doubt that the onset of the Covid-19 crises has made the task much more challenging and urgent because of the severity of the economic downturn and the decline in the fiscal resources which is caused by Covid-19. The level at which the economy and businesses, which include art marketing business, has declined and if nothing is done fast to savage the situation, our country Nigeria may plague into uncontrollable economic quagmire. This paper is firmly as it is geared forwards, encouraging Nigerians to act fast to bring ourselves out of this new normal Covid-19 era where business is cradling to survive due to limited opportunity to market, especially artworks.

An Overview of Art Marketing in Nigeria

Art practice is a creative business that can only thrive were there conducive market standards that favour the artists (Matthew, 2014). In most case some economic, government policies, among other factors, infringes against the progress and creative zeal of the artist to strive to achieve undistorted growth and development. The fact is because some artist lacks the knowledge of art marketing, thus, finds it difficult to market their artworks. The situation observably has become even worse with the coronavirus pandemic.

Art marketing is a systematized process of creating awareness and interest for a company, product or service that leads to a desire to engage buyers to own its good, use its services, or all of the above (Dawey, 2011). Adegunloye (2021) also cited Hill et al.' (2003.pl) who define arts marketing as an integrated management process which sees mutually satisfying exchange relationships with customers as the route to achieving organizational and artistic objective. Borwick (2011) also, while discussing art marketing in the contemporary era, points out that art marketing is all about relationships. Borwick adds that given the potential arts have been contributing to richer fuller lives, arts marketing should be a leader (among all industries—for– profit) in relationship-based marketing for the 21st century should be a partner along with programming, fundraising, and advocacy in trail blazing community engagement possibilities.

One very important fact to be aware of is the fact that art marketing helps to create awareness about artwork or a product of art. Art marketing (2021) states that art marketing success starts with identifying goals, strengths, and resources. The next step is to create a plan that uses testing and refining to improve their methods continuously. There are always more ways to market art works than most artist can use at once. Artists must have both a familiarity with their marketing options and the clarity on which they will use. Understanding what works for each artist is different will help them develop a marketing plan that incorporates the tools and techniques most likely to return the desired results.

Covid-19 as a New Normal Situation

Covid-19, which is also known as Coronavirus, is seemly new to so many people in the world. The virus has taken many lives and destroyed businesses. Historically, the origin of Covid-19 was first discovered during the 1960's. The coronavirus study group under the international committee on Taxonomy of viruses used the principle of comparative genomics to further passes and partition the replicative proteins in open reading frames to identify the factors that differentiate Cov at different cluster ranks (Gorbalenya, Barker and Bari, 2020). Woo, Lau and Chu (2005) states that Cov is associated with illness of varied intensity. The most severe type resulting in large-scale pandemics in the past are the SARS (in 2002–2003). Corona virus as pointed out by the authors started in the 1960's but it was not popular to many in the world, not until the most recent discovered coronavirus which is the present moral Cov disease also known as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)– Cov-2 and coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) is an emerging global health threat. According to Fisher and Heymanan (2020) Covid-19 epidemic started from Wuhan city of China towards the end of December, 2019 and spread rapidly to Thailand, Japan among other countries of the world.

The word coronavirus was derived from the word "corona" meaning "crown" in Latin. It causes a range of human respiratory tract infections, varying from mild cold to severe respiratory distress syndrome (Welsby, 2020). Welsby (2020) adds that coronavirus is believed to be acquired from zoonotic source and spreads through direct and contact transmission. The symptomatic phase manifests with fever, cough and myalgia to severe respiratory failure. The diagnosis is confirmed using reverse transcriptase pcs. Management of Covid-19 is mainly by

supportive therapy along with mechanical ventilation in severe cases. The UK Research and Innovation (2020) states that coronavirus is a family of viruses that cause illness in humans and animals. Seven different types have been found in people, including those responsible for the SARS, MERSD and Covid-19 epidemics. Unfortunately, among different types of coronaviruses that exist there is no one that is not dangerous to human health, most dangerous in recent times is the SARS–Cov2. According to UK Research and Innovation (2020) evidence has shown that SARS–Cov2 may be transmitted more easily and cause life–threatening illness in some people. However, different preventive approaches have been recommended to help people not to be caught up with the virus or be infected some ways in recent times are wash your hands frequently and carefully, avoid touching your face, stop shaking hands and hugging people, cover your nose and mouth by way of wearing nose marks, maintain social distance during gathering and many more. Interestingly, with the discovery of a vaccine for Covid-19, one very important preventive measure introduced is the vaccination of one's self. All these preventive situations appear to be not common with especially Nigeria, thus, it seems to be a new normal situation.

As earlier mentioned, Nigeria's first case of coronavirus (Covid-19) was a first witness in February 2020 when the index case that was imported from Italy was discovered. Ever since the discovery by the Nigerian government, the government has introduced different preventive measures, just like other countries in the world where the virus is eminent. Some of the preventive measures introduced were alien to the people, especially lock down, closure of business indiscriminately, travel restrictions and forceful wearing of nose marks appear to be a new situation to the people. But unfortunately, with the virus still ravaging in the country, the preventive measure now appears to be a new normal situation to live with.

Effect of Covid-19 on Art Marketing in Nigeria

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are shaking up global socioeconomic structures. The effects are estimated to be astronomical in terms of the number of lives and jobs. Nigeria is one country that is taking health and economic measures to contain the pandemic, as uncertainty looms over its duration and the real-life consequences on the population and on the productive structure.

The visual art sector and its practitioner effort in developing the Nigeria economy and her people is very crucial role, because beyond its role in providing aesthetic appeal to home, office and our physical environment, it has also largely contributed towards creating employment opportunities to people through the skill they have acquired to be self-reliance and earn a living from it. The Covid-19 pandemic has really affected the sector because the practitioners of the sector (the artists) find it very challenging to market their artworks as they used to previously and these were caused by the downsizing of the labour market due to covid-19 which has cause unemployment, due to the ban and restriction on travel are some factors responsible for the unexpected abnormal situation that has affected the smooth marketing of artworks in Nigeria.

Economically, there is no doubt that art contributes largely towards the development of our country, Nigeria. The truth is the advents of Covid-19 pandemic have made the art market to have experienced significant economic setbacks in the country. Guibet and Hyde (2021) states that across the spectrum of artistic endeavours, restrictions on gatherings, changes in consumer behavior (voluntary or otherwise), and severe unemployment have taken a devastating toll on the sector. The full scope and scale of the impact can be hard to discern, in part because of the size and diversity of the industries and occupations that constitute arts. In the same vein, artist was worst affected and vulnerable by the pandemic because most of the artist are selfemployed thus, the restrictions prevented some of them not to practice because they could not visit their studios to work to produce their artwork or even could sell their works.

While artist continue to face the distinct challenges that the covid-19 has caused that hinder art markets and artist not to sell their artworks. Some artists were innovative adapt some other means to survive during the pandemic. For example, in some cases, some art marketers and artist developed different digital platforms to market their works. In order to effectively operate the platforms, effectively artist had systems, learn new skill such as video and sound editing, and learn how to monetize their offerings in digital platforms. But the unfortunate situation is that it is not guaranteed that all audience will be able to fully adapt to digital platforms.

Conclusion

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic is hampering on the effective transaction of artworks in Nigeria. The era of COVID-19 pandemic appears to be a very challenging period for business owner and traders of one form of goods and services. This is because the period of the pandemic has forced government to come up with different regulations and restriction that warranted business close down and others wish were not close down has had their own share of stringent restrictions which made business not to strive to make the required and expected profits. This ugly situation affected all business including the sales of artworks. Marketing finish artworks by artists is also very difficult due to the restrictions made by government, because the restriction prevented artist from staging exhibition. Thus, many artists find it very difficult to survive through the sale of the artwork. It has also hampered on the practice of art because they were on able to freely go out and buy art materials to produce their artworks. Unfortunately, some business owners were considered and given palliative, but artists were not even considered. Thus, the era of COVID 19 pandemic in Nigeria is a very turbulent period for most artist and art practitioner. Because government never prepare or had any plan prevent curb in an event of the occurrence of any pandemic on the country. Very important to note is that the experience of the pandemic should not be thrown away but should be a lesson to everyone to prepare at all times for the unexpected.

Recommendations

After considering the effect of the outbreak of COVID-19, the following recommendations are made:

1. Nigerian government should always prepare and provide the necessary health preventive measures before a pandemic gets into the country and not to wait until it arrives before measures are taken to prevent it.
2. In the case of any pandemic outbreak, palliative should be given to all business owners, including the artists.
3. Government should also try during the period of any pandemic to ensure the artist and the likes that need to be in their art studios should be allowed to have access to their studios to practice.

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