Adaptation of Yoruba Culture as Global Advertising in Some Telecommunications Commercials in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined the strategic consideration of the level of adaptation of Yoruba cultural elements as glocal advertising strategy in telecoms companies' television advertisements in Nigeria, as standardization and adaptation (globalization versus localization) in foreign markets is a topic of constant debate among scholars. Content analysis was adopted to investigate eight global campaigns of four telecom operators: MTN "Goody Bag" and "I Don Port"; Airtel "Recharge Plus" and "Smart Recharge"; Glo "Data is Oxygen" and "3-in-1 Recharge Option"; and Etisalat (9Mobile) "New Recharge Promo" and "Double Data". The research findings illustrate that the four major telecommunications companies in Nigeria glocalized with the use of Yoruba cultural elements in their television advertisements. The advertisements reflected Yoruba cultural dressing in form of dressing - cap, headgear and clothes; character, language, ornaments, settings, music and signs/symbols (crafts) in order to attract maximum subscribers and stimulate intention and actual subscription to telecom brands. This study recommends that more cultural accommodation should be made in telecommunication television advertisements by giving prominence to other elements such as ornaments, settings, signs/symbols and music which were not strikingly used in most of their advertisements.

Keywords: Globalisation, glocalization, advertising strategy, cultural elements, telecommunications

Introduction

Modern information and communications technologies have enabled easy access to people and places all around the world along with products, services and technologies that can move easily across national borders. Multinational companies today,in their quests at increased opportunities to enter foreign markets now employ global advertising to drive demand for goods and services across geographical locations (Kotler & Armstrong, 2013),as they operate in international environments, where the whole world through the "force of technology" is seen to be homogenized (Albaum & Duerr, 2008).

Global advertising usually requires tailoring the commercials to reflect national market cultural differences and preferences (Orth, Oppenheim & Firbasova, 2005). Thus, multinational companies embrace a compromise between global and domestic advertising, adopting the "glocal" (global-local) strategy.With careful research on foreign markets, global campaigns are able to: "allow the multinational corporation to maintain a consistent image and identity throughout the world; maximize the firm's cost advantage and meet a universal need of people across the world;minimizing confusion among buyers who travel frequently; affording the multinationals companies to develop a single, coordinated advertising campaign across different markets which subsequently result in considerable savings in media costs and advertising illustrative materials," (Jain 1989; Johansson & Thorelli 1985; Levitt 1983; Peebles 1989; Roostal 1963; Solberg 2002; Yip 1995).

Global advertisements, an offshoot of the globalization hegemony, have long been at the very center of research interest (Kotler & Armstrong, 2013). A thorough investigation into this discourse leads

to numerous and valuable data (Bhatia & Bhargava, 2008). Such research provides current evidence of noticeable trends in social preferences, reveal cultural values, expose norms, and reflect the era people live in (Simeon & Sarit, 2006). Surprisingly however, despite prior research on global advertising which discusses the use of overall standardization or adaptation of advertising strategies (Kalliny; Saran; Ghanem; & Fisher, 2014), minimal research effort as observed by Yankuzo (2013) has gone into delineating the importance of incorporating the local tastes, preferences, cultural differences in terms of dealing with external consumers and addressing the competition in designing advertising for global products – glocalization. Glocalization gains relevance as markets are socially, ethnically, traditionally and culturally dissimilar; even though globalization created a certain degree of homogeneity worldwide (Boykin, 2015). Thus, the insights emerged in the discourse is necessary to assist understand how glocal strategy in advertising can project a brand's global image, and design messages in "culturally correct" context.

The pursuance of glocalization becomes evident within the content of advertising, as advertising is a company's means of informing consumers about: "its products, its features and its unique value proposition" (Harris & Auttor, 2003). Arguably, advertising strongly aids companies to gain competitive advantage (Kotler & Armstrong, 2013). Therefore, it is expedient to understand how firms employ glocalization in their advertising strategy in different markets across the globe (Kalliny; Saran; Ghanem; & Fisher, 2011).

This study explores the use of cultural elements as glocal advertising strategy with a focus on Southwest of Nigeria, predominantly the Yoruba,as it seeksthe four major telecommunications brands which witnessed a transformation from global to glocal approaches in their advertising campaigns.

Objective of the study

Advertising globally have become widespread among multinational companies. It is therefore essential for organizations to create global campaigns that are effectivefor their brands(Bhatia & Bhargava, 2008).The purpose of this research is to investigate the perceived spread of cultural imperialism by these telecoms companies through their various television advertisements which at inception is believed to negate the glocalization dreams especially as it underscore the recipients' cultural values and to also advocate for the promotion of the Nigerian cultural heritage in any advertisement targeted at Nigerians as a people. Based on the foregoing, this paper intends to probe the strategic consideration of the level of adaptation of Yoruba cultural elementsas glocal advertising strategy in telecoms companies' television advertisements as well as examine how subscribers'perceptions are influenced or otherwise by advertisements that deploy indigenous cultures in their advertising campaign.

Literature Review

Since the early 1980s proponents of globalization have assumed that economic development would lead to converging needs and tastes of consumers, and facilitate standardization of marketing and advertising. Meanwhile critics have indicated that markets would become more diverse and their cultural differences would prevent successful standardization (Aggrawal, 2005, De Mooij, 2008). The influence of culture is particularly important in transferring advertisng strategy across the borders, because communication patterns are closely linked to cultural norms in each market (Hong; Mudderisoglu & Zinkhan, 2006). And if advertising differences across culture can be predictable, the task of the advertiser in multiple cultures can be much simplified (Albers-Miller & Gelb, 2006).

Despite the attendant advantages of globalization as put forward by its proponents, several other scholars including Emmanuel (2015); Kobayashi (2012); and Lee (2005) have challenged the globalization paradigm throwing their weight heavily on the localized strategies or localization which involves marketing strategies for a specific region according to its cultural, regional and national

uniqueness. However, some multinational enterprises apply hybrid strategies, commonly referred to as Glocalization. This group of strategies combines the globalization and localization strategies by emphasizing on the fact that globalization of a product will succeed when the product or service is adapted specifically to that region.

In the past few years, government readiness and enthusiasm towards extensive structural reforms, macroeconomic stability and economic revival made Nigeria seems a prospective country for foreign investment. However, Nigeria still suffers an image problem such as being a nation characterized with unbridled corrupt practice which has been further aggravated by foreign media depicting it as a society with religious extremism, oppression of women and children, political turmoil, mass illiteracy, high conservatism, hatred towards the West, and the likes (Alam, 2005). This distorted image may not only discourage the foreign investor from investing in Nigeria, it can also make it difficult for the international marketer to understand the true society and culture of Nigeria, its people, emerging social and consumption trends and technologies. Such lack of knowledge may further make it difficult for a prospective foreign investor to design appropriate communication for successfully marketing and selling its products/services in a multi cultured entity like Nigeria.

Incidentally, the concept of "world society" which globalization portends has both multifactorial and multifaceted underpinnings for Yoruba historiography (Tejuoso, 2018). The issues of international free trade, integrated globalized economy, multinational trade agreements, universalized financial markets and world-wide social relations have historical relevance which is of paramount importance to traditional Yoruba societies and their cultures (Nwagbara, 2006). Implied from this is that, many of these attributes of globalization – free trade, integrated economy, trade agreements, and social relations are majorly rooted in the traditional Yoruba culture. Globalisation, thus, have had an inexorably vortex effect especially on Third World, the bane of which have subsequently resulted in the protest against the erosion and adulteration of their cultural heritage. This persistent agitation among scholars and marketing researchers led to the advocacy for the reinforcement of cultural identity at the local community level which caught the commercial world in between, thus seeking the hybrid alternative – the glocalization paradigm. Glocalization has therefore, become a reality, not only as a response to cultural imperialism of the West, but also for the production and transfer of professional advertising services across international borders. Corroborating this, Gregory and Munch (1997), Singh and Baack (2004) and Zhang and Gelb (1996) state that advertising appeals that use local cultural cues, that is, an adaptive communication strategy, elicit considerably greater positive attitudes than those that do not. As Shannon (1998) clearly points out, "glocalization will become the norm for mega-brand accounts in terms of their alignment internationally" (p.186).

Whereas in Nigeria, the major telecommunications firms (MTN, Airtel, 9Mobile and Glo) are majorly multinationals except for Glo that is wholly owned by a Nigerian, and they have according to Nnorom (2012), often deployed global advertising where campaigns are developed for their home (foreign) market but to be adapted for the Nigeria market by few local agencies who act as localization specialists, thereby advancing the spread of cultural imperialism. Where the creative work for the adaptation is carried out by this few local agencies, Ijabadeniyi, Govender and Veerasamy *(*2015) argue that they hardly fits into our cultural linings in terms of language, characters, clothing/dressing, setting, music among other cultural values.

The homogenization dream inherent in the quests for globalisation therefore, has become a serious threat to the strategies for global advertising. Beyond this sentiment of cultural imperialism, studies such as (Frith, 2007; Negm, 2016 & Yankuzo, 2013) have also established that the underscore of cultural values of target markets in planning advertising strategies have altered subscribers' perception of the telecommunications services, subsequently, this have had a negative turnout on their performances.

The term "glocalization" derived from the Japanese word "dochakuka" and, according to Matusitz (2011), refers to the interface of the global and the local. Glocalization can also be defined as the conflation of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies; the dynamics between cultural homogenization and heterogenization and a co-optation of global and the local. Glocalization as argued by Kraidy (2001) emphasizes on particularities and details of a global idea, whereas globalization is based on the omnipresence of corporate processes and worldwide standardization.

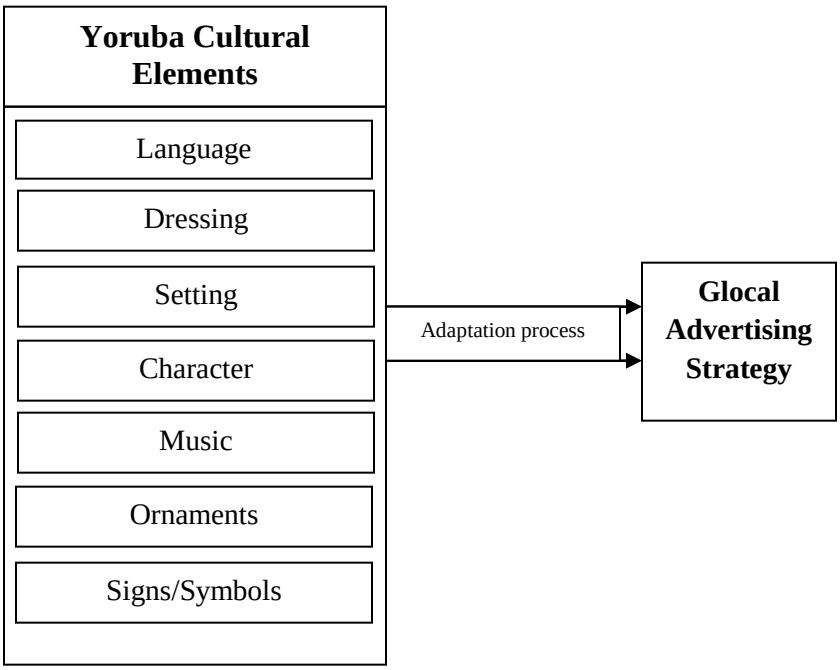
Kraidy (2001) believes that glocalization changes norms and practices, tailoring to local mindsets, balancing cultural homogenization and heterogenization, standardization and adjustment, convergence and divergence, universalism and particularism, opposing the concept of globalization, which aims toward full homogenization; glocalization blends local elements into global themes, products or services. Glocalization is therefore broadly defined as the ability of a culture, when it encounters other strong cultures, to absorb influences that naturally fit into and can enrich culture, to resist to those things that are truly alien, and to compartmentalize those things that, while different, can nevertheless be enjoyed and celebrated as different (Aaker (1991); Friedman (1999);Lee (2003); Maynard & Tian (2004). Explicitly put, the glocalization phenomenon can be considered a strategic synergy of global market and local peculiarities and preferences that are driving to specific combinations.

Extant literature therefore has called for viewing standardization (globalization) and adaptation (glocalization) as two extremes of the same continuum (Duncan & Ramaprasad 1995; Papavassiliou & Stathakopoulos, 2007; Taylor 2002) and investigating the factors that are associated with the standardization or glocalization of international advertising. Some studies in the last two decades have found a list of factors such as consumer and market similarity, high market competition, high-involvement products, and larger subsidiaries that fosters international advertising standardization (Florenthal & Shoham 1999; Laroche, Kirpalani, Pons, & Zhou, 2001; Samiee, Jeong, Pae, & Tai, 2003). With few exceptions (Duncan & Ramaprasad 1995; Jain 1989; Papavassiliou & Stathakopoulos 1997; Samiee *et al*. 2003), however, the international advertising literature still suffers from the lack of a broad theoretical foundation that explains when and why international advertising needs to be standardized, and what effect standardized international advertising has on companies' performance (Taylor 2005; Theodosiou & Leonidou 2003).

The establishment of glocal advertising strategies are based on three main factors: a global concept that addresses a universal human motivation; a unified brand vision with creative delivery that respects local nuances and empowered consumers in each locale; and an organizational architecture, including culture, technological platform, and dedicated resources that emphasizes and facilitates dynamic and effective collaboration between the developers of global strategy and local strategists and implementers (Wind; Sthanunathan; & Malcolm, 2013). This paper plans on analyzing different cultural elements in telecoms television campaigns in the Nigerian context to observe whether the multinational companies have applied those cultural elements to glocalize.

There are various cultural elements that can be glocalized in wide-reaching marketplaces (De Mooij, 2010). The researcher for the purpose of this study identified various cultural elements that can be analyzed in the telecoms global campaigns to measure its degree of glocalization. These elements make up the proposed conceptual framework for this study to investigate the degree of glocalization found in advertisement campaigns of the four telecoms operators selected for this study (as shown in the figure).

Figure 1: The proposed conceptual framework



The researcher (2018) elements include: (a) character, whether the advertisements uses indigenous actor/actresses, locally recognized statesman/musicians, or alien actors/actresses, statesman/musicians; (b) setting/scenic background, whether the advertisements were shot in a local environment or location or shot in an alien location; (c) dressing, whether the dressing portrays indigenous/local culture of the targets or not; (d) language, whether the indigenous language was used in the commercials or alien languages; (e) music, whether the music used in the advertisements were local/indigenous music or foreign music; (f) ornaments, whether ornaments like local beads, rings etc. were used in the advertisements; and (g) crafts/signs/symbols, whether the furniture used in the commercials reflected the culture of the targets or not.

Methodology

Content analysis was adopted for this study to systematically, objectively and qualitatively analyze the adoption of Yoruba cultural elements as glocal advertising strategy in telecoms television advertisements of the four mobile telecommunications service providers – MTN, Airtel, Glo and Etisalat (now 9Mobile) - selected for the study. Two (2)television advertisements each of the four telecoms operators aired in 2016 and 2017 were content analyzed.

The research began the content analysis by identifying the research questions and choosing the target sample. Once chosen, the researcher explored the richness, depth and complexity of the campaigns as it transpired. The media content was reduced and coded into manageable content categories as the researcher focused on patterns that are indicative of the research question. This allowed the researcher to collect data in other to make sense of reality, to describe and explain the academic and practical matter (Bryman 2013).

This study analyzed the telecommunications television advertisements in Nigeria, specifically the Southwest. There has been a considerable growth of interest in the Southwest region, predominantly Yoruba, who according to statistics constitute the largest number of telecommunications subscribers in Nigeria (NBS, 2017).Global advertising campaigns that are active or want to become active in Southwest Nigeria requires an understanding of their language, dressing, viewpoint and values (Negm & Tantawi, 2011). Thus, examining existing popular global advertisements, how they adda[t to the local cultures and themes and still successful in preserving and presenting global image of the brand is constructive for recognition.

The content analysis was conducted on eight global campaign, two (2) of each telecommunications brands: MTN "Goody Bag" and "I Don Port";Airtel "Recharge Plus" and "Smart Recharge"; Glo "Data is Oxygen" and "3-in-1 Recharge Option"; and Etisalat (9Mobile) "New Recharge Promo" and "Double Data". Specific elements were investigated (Character, Setting, Music, Language, Dressing, Ornaments, and Crafts/Signs/Symbols). For the purpose of classification during the content analysis, the elements were divided into two categories: yes (glocal), -- (global).

Findings

The following figures and paragraphs illustrate the content analysis used to investigate the eight telecommunications television commercials:

Fig. 2.1- MTN Advertisement

1. MTN "Goody Bag" Advertisement	**2. MTN "I Don Port" Advertisement**
Yoruba Cultural Elements Use	Yoruba Cultural Elements Use
1. Settings i. Interior - ii. Exterior yes	1. Settings i. Interior - ii. Exterior -
2. Character i. Male yes ii. Female yes	2. Character i. Male yes ii. Female yes
3. Dressing i. Cloth yes ii. Cap yes iii. Headgear yes iv. Footwear -	3. Dressing i. Cloth yes ii. Cap yes iii. Headgear - iv. Footwear -
4. Languageyes	4. Languageyes
5. Music-	5. Music-
6. Ornaments i. Beads/Rings yes	6. Ornaments i. Beads/Rings -

7. Crafts (Signs/Symbols) i. Furniture - ii. Curtain- iii. House - iv. Food -	7. Crafts (Signs/Symbols) i. Furniture - ii. Curtain - iii. House - iv. Food -

From Table 2.1, it was revealed that MTN "Goody Bag" advertisement reflected certain cultural elements: the exterior setting of the advertisement was supportive of Yoruba culture as both male and female characters used were Yoruba indigenes, cultural dressing (buba/sokoto), cap (gobi/abetiaja), head gear (gele) were adopted except for footwear which did not reflect Yoruba culture. Also, Yoruba language was adopted, while ornaments such as beads/rings also reflected Yoruba culture.

Further, Table 2.1.1a showed that in the second MTN Advertisement "I Don Port"; the setting did not reflect Yoruba culture, but both male and female characters were Yoruba; cloth and caps praised Yoruba culture, except for foot wear and missing headgear. The language of the advert was also Yoruba, while ornaments, music, signs and symbols were in no way cultural.

Fig. 2.2- Airtel Advertisement

1. Airtel "Recharge Plus" Advertisement	**2. Airtel "Smart Recharge" Advertisement**
Yoruba Cultural Elements Use	Yoruba Cultural Elements Use
1. Settings i. Interior - ii. Exterior yes	1. Settings i. Interior - ii. Exterior -
2. Character i. Male yes ii. Female -	2. Character i. Male yes ii. Female yes
3. Dressing i. Cloth- ii. Cap - iii. Headgear - iv. Footwear -	3. Dressing i. Cloth yes ii. Cap yes iii. Headgear yes iv. Footwear -
4. Languageyes	4.Languageyes
5. Music -	5. Music -
6. Ornaments ii. Beads/Rings -	6. Ornaments ii. Beads/Rings yes
7. Crafts (Signs/Symbols) i. Furniture - ii. Curtain- iii. House - iv. Food -	7. Crafts (Signs/Symbols) i. Furniture - ii. Curtain - iii. House- iv. Food -

Analysis in Table 2.2 shows that the Airtel "Recharge Plus" advertisement has certain cultural elements within it. The exterior is set in Yoruba cultural environment, while the male character was also a Yoruba indigene; none of the dress items- cloth, cap, headgear, footwear- reflected Yoruba culture, but the advert was in Yoruba language. Meanwhile, there were no elements of cultural music, ornaments, signs/symbols adopted in the advert.

The analysis of the second Airtel advertisement"Smart Recharge"did not reflect Yoruba cultural settings in anyway, but adopted Yoruba characters dressed in Yoruba cloth, cap and headgear, and equally spoke in Yoruba language. Though, there was no cultural music or signs/symbols visible, but ornaments- bead/rings featured prominently.

Fig. 2.3- Glo Advertisement

1. "Glo in the Air- Data is Oxygen" Advertisement	**2. Glo 3-in-1 Recharge Option Advertisement**
Yoruba Cultural Elements Use	Yoruba Cultural Elements Use
1. Settings i. Interior - ii. Exterior -	1. Settings i. Interior - ii. Exterior -
2. Character i. Male yes ii. Female -	2. Character i. Male yes ii. Female yes
3. Dressing i. Cloth yes ii. Cap yes iii. Headgear - iv. Footwear -	3. Dressing i. Cloth yes ii. Cap - iii. Headgear - iv. Footwear -
4. Languageyes	4.Languageyes
5. Music -	5.Music-
6. Ornaments i. Beads/Rings -	6. Ornaments i. Beads/Rings -
7. Crafts (Signs/Symbols) i. Furniture - ii. Curtain- iii. House - iv. Food -	7. Crafts (Signs/Symbols) i. Furniture - ii. Curtain - iii. House - iv. Food-

As indicated in Table 2.3, "Glo in the Air - Data is Oxygen Advertisement" was not set in a Yoruba cultural environment, but adopted Yoruba male character with Yoruba cloth (buba/sokoto) and cap (gobi), the language was also Yoruba, while other elements such as cultural music, ornaments and signs/symbols were missing.

Also, the second advert analyzed, "Glo 3-in-1 Recharge Option Advertisement" did not reflect Yoruba cultural setting, but adopted a Yoruba character with cloth - though there were no sight of Yoruba cap, music, ornaments or sign/symbols but the language of the advertisement was in Yoruba.

Fig 2.4- Etisalat Advertisements

1. Etisalat "New Recharge Promo" Advertisement			**2. Etisalat " Double Data" Advertisement**		
Yoruba Cultural Elements		Use	Yoruba Cultural Elements		Use
1. Settings			1. Settings		
i.	Interior	-	i.	Interior	yes
ii.	Exterior	yes	ii.	Exterior	-
2. Character(actors/actresses)			2. Character		
i.	Male	yes	i.	Male	yes
ii.	Female	-	ii.	Female	-
3. Dressing			3. Dressing		
v.	Cloth	yes	v.	Cloth	yes
vi.	Cap	yes	vi.	Capyes	
vii.	Headgear	-	vii.	Headgear	-
viii.	Footwear	-	viii.	Footwear	-
4. Languageyes			4.Languageyes		
5. Music-			5.Music-		
6. Ornaments			6. Ornaments		
i.	Beads/Rings	-	i.	Beads/Rings	-
7. Crafts (Signs/Symbols)			7. Crafts (Signs/Symbols)		
i.	Furniture	yes	i.	Furniture	-
ii.	Curtain	-	ii.	Curtain	-
iii.	House	yes	iii.	House	-
iv.	Foodyes		iv.	Food	-

From the analysis of Etisalat (9mobile)"New Recharge PromoAdvertisement" in Figure 2.4, cultural elements such as Yoruba setting was reflected, Yoruba male character was adopted, the character's outfit was culturally appreciative with Yoruba attire and cap to match. The language of advert was in Yoruba; though there was no use of music or ornaments visible, the advertisement reflected cultural signs and symbols such as house (built with mud/clay), furniture (customized for a Yoruba home) and food (amala, efo soup, ifokore).

In the second advert, "Etisalat Double Data Advertisement", the setting was in a culturally pleasing interior, Yoruba male character was adopted, dressed in cultural cloth and cap, the language of advert was also in Yoruba, though there were no elements such music, ornaments and signs/symbols.

Discussions and Conclusion

Today, global advertisings seem to have become universal (westernized). Western cultures have been influential among foreign nations. Nevertheless, people worldwide are still not completely identical in mindsets, behaviours or consumptions (Soloman, 2013), especially among the Yoruba in the Southwest, Nigeria. These factors, especially those that are linked with cultural beliefs help in determining subscribers' attitudes to products and services of global brands. The people in this ethnic group retain their fundamental values (Bhatia & Bhargava, 2008). Furthermore, their frame of reference is restricted and "home-grown". It is recognized that: "consumers make most of their purchases locally, as the majority of the population lives a local life with local values, norms, needs and dreams" (Hjorth, 2014).

When a global brand plans to market locally (in different foreign nations), communication must adapt to the local conditions (Kalliny *et al*, 2011). Multinationals in order to successfully advertise in the foreign market, are required to understand the local trends and traits (Walkosz, 2008). This is the most effective approach for the success of global campaigns (Boykin, 2015). Following the glocalization strategy, allows the company to have local power and identity, but also be consistent across regions with a global brand image (Harris and Author, 2003).

The aim of this research was to explore the strategic consideration of the level of adaptation of Yoruba cultural elementsas glocal advertising strategy in telecoms companies' television advertisements in Nigeria. To investigate this issue, analyses were made on the content of telecoms' TV advertisements that are aired locally. The researcher compared these advertisements on the basis of the selected telecoms brands.

Following analysis of data gathered through content analysis, this study has established that the four major telecommunications companies in Nigeria– Airtel, Glo, Etisalat and MTN– glocalized with the use of Yoruba cultural elements in their television advertisements. The advertisements reflected Yoruba cultural dressing in form of cap, headgear and clothes; character, language, ornaments, settings, music and signs/symbols (crafts). Analysis showed that Yoruba character, language and dressing were deployed abundantly in the television advertisements. But Yoruba cultural setting, ornaments, signs/symbols and music were used sparingly in all of the advertisements. This finding is in congruence with the findings of Emmanuel (2015) that most multinational advertisements sparingly adopt cultural values of their target markets, especially settings. Most of the settings in which the advertisements were shot reflected urban centers or cities which further resonate with the findings of Moon and Chan (2005) that international advertising are characterized with urban settings.

While thestudy recommends that more cultural accommodation should be made in telecommunication television advertisements by giving prominence to other elements such as ornaments, settings, signs/symbols and music which were not strikingly used in most of their advertisements, it also behooves on the telecommunications companies to ensure their subscribers have positive perception of their glocal advertising strategiesin order to improve subscribers' actual subscription.

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