

Informal Television  
format Adaptation:  
Tensions in the  
Nigerian Media  
Industry

*By Anyanwu,*

K  
Dublin  
Institute of  
Technology,  
Ireland.

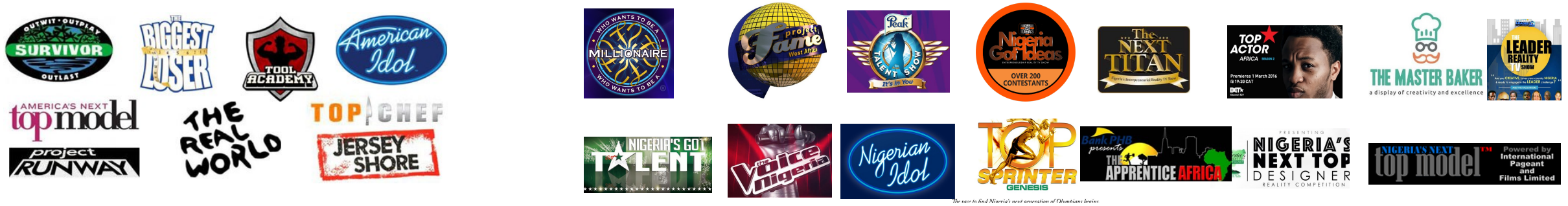
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Presentation

Next: **Outline**

- Outline:
1. Introduction, Aims and Objectives
  2. Rationale and Problem Statement
  3. Research Approach
  4. Results
  5. Implication
  6. Conclusion

**Definition of Term: Television Format**

The format is generally conceived in opposition to the transnational model of program import/export trade; unlike a finished or “canned” television program, format is an easily-replicated and adaptable framework licensed through the international television market for local adaptation. In its most basic, legally sanctioned, form, it is a program concept: a list of “rules” or conventions that make up the fixed and distinct aspects of each program. (Oren & Shahaf, 2012: 3)



Next: Introduction, Aims and Objectives

# Introduction, Aims and Objectives:

**Question: Should format adaptations preserve autonomy of original formulae while functioning as mere derivative renditions?**

Nigerian media industry surpasses other African countries in the adaptation of formats, in terms of scale of production and distribution across the continent. However, its dominance in African and global markets have been undermined by the controversy of informalities within a paradoxical formal nature of global formats.

**Aims:** To analyse formal and informal nature of global format adaptation embedded within Nigeria's cultural media industry

In Anglophone Africa, (or perhaps Africa at large), South Africa is identified as the most visible and prominent actor in the television format industry - globally. This is based on the argument that South Africa dominates the acquisition of format rights (mainly from western-based format actors), adaptation of the formats (through localization) and distribution (broadcasting) of finished programmes (mainly to the African markets, but also other global markets). (Ndlela, 2016)

## **Objectives:**

- Highlighting Nigeria's media industry and the unique patterns of its thriving film industry.
- Examining the place of television format industry - in various stages - within the existing cultural industry setting.

## Rationale and Problem statement:

A clear answer to the question on the previous slide anticipates better understanding of the differences between, as well as the cultural implications of, *formal* and *informal* structures of format adaptation.

Nigerian media industry is identified in media studies as possessing a unique combination of both structures. A significant degree of correlation has been argued between identified, formalised, production and distribution structures of format and globalization of formats (Ndlela, 2017). Contrarily, informal film industries, also identified as shadow economies have also been argued to play significant role in certain cultural industries, such as in Nigeria. (Lobato, 2012).

# Research Approach:

Navarro (2012) argues that to understand the significance of formats as cultural artifacts, we may need to look beyond the ***promise of adaptability*** and ask how the adaptation itself negotiates a local identity for an existing format.

I.E., This favours a more conservative view of adaptation, considering a mere ***“variation on theme”*** approach to exchange/borrowing/negotiation of formats, and expecting to preserve the sovereignty of original formula.

**Approaches the research argument following Navarro's theory, by highlighting the process through which the format circulates a useful tool to see formatted shows for what they really are - instances of cultural negotiation in which a formula designed for global consumption is adapted to a local context**

'even though the adaptation may derive from an original template, its cultural significance cannot be confined to this derivative status.'  
(Navarro, 2012)

The proliferation of **unlicensed programs** in different countries has granted television formats a distinctive place in the debate on intellectual property in contemporary culture. It has also shown that subjecting the circulation of formats to an original source might not be a simple task. Format “theft” is notoriously hard to punish, in part because violators tend to change the formula slightly and then claim ownership over the new version. **But this distance between the copy and its purported original is embedded in the concept of formatting itself, which assumes that the formula will be adapted to specific television cultures.** (Navarro, 2012:26)

# Discussions and Implication: Exemplifying Global TV format adaptation & Locally-made similar version



The Apprentice Reality TV show

## Global – Adaptation of US Franchise

“This revolution in Nigerian and Africa television begins on the **26th of January 2008** as the show debuts in its host country on the **Nigerian Television Authority and Silverbird Television**, and then train moves quickly through the continent: touching down on Thursday in Ghana (See the broadcast schedule), Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.... **18 housemates selected from the continent (18 different African Countries), from the Unites States and from the UK**” – Jideonwo, C (News, 2008)

This is the foremost business reality TV show in the world. **Bank PHB, STORM media and entertainment group, The Executive Group Int'l (TEG), Mark Burnet Production (MBP)** brought to Africa the African adaptation of this hit reality show. Apprentice Africa is set celebrate the African youth while inspiring strong leadership culture, innovation, and entrepreneurial skills.



The Titan Reality TV show

Local – Similarities with Adaptation of US Franchise, the Apprentice

# Conclusion:

Apparently, a look on different processes evoke the question of different cultural negotiations – different ways the adaptation interprets, actualizes, and redefines the original format, rather than consider the “variable elements” as presumably “invariable” formula (Kean et al., 2007; Navarro, 2012)

Noting, then, that Nigerian production companies have collaborated with regional and international players in the production of local versions of global television formats (Ndlela, 2017) as well as produced and distributed numerous TV shows regarded as original/home-made formats; the argument that Nigerian film governance structure is not compatible with the highly streamlined and standardized global television format business may indeed be notional, when looking beyond the popular variations on theme/elements approach of adaptation to the specificity of culture or variations of cultural negotiations.

This however, assumes that so-called informal structures could indeed be embedded in the different local cultures.