

Making capital out of reality shows and their ROI

 By [Emeka Enyadike](#)

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Sometimes I wonder if all that brands ask their agencies for these days are reality shows because I've lost count of the number. There are no dull moments... One ends, another begins and Nigerians just love them all.

Lagos - in the beginning, many of them were lacklustre, but gradually Nigerians responded so much to them that vote lines are stormed and you wonder about the viewing public's total SMS spend. My worry though, what is the impact on the brands, what is the short-term or do we see a long-term vision?

It began with the Big Brother phenomenon, Nigerians and the rest of Africa followed Big Brother South Africa with all its direct import from Big Brother everywhere else and of course Idols South Africa.

Then came Big Brother Africa – 12 Africans from 12 countries and Nigerian Housemate Bayo meant patriotic support. Then we had another pan-African MNet Production with a musical leaning, another Nigerian Housemate and another SMS battle. Then came Gulder Ultimate Search Is Snake Island, a truly Nigerian production. Following its success and the fact it went out simultaneously on MNet's then fledging Africa magic and free-to-air, NTA, AIT, the whole works, all hell broke loose. We had Next Movie Star, Tourism Nigeria, Amstel Box Office, Creative Academy Bank PHB's The Intern, Big Brother Nigeria (without the bathroom shots) and recently Idols West Africa, Nokia 1st Chance and, wait for it, LG Karaoke.

In all, huge advertising and sponsorship spend has accompanied these reality explosion. Now I truly wonder, is it just to belong, to show that they don't want to be left behind... what is it that *really* drives the brands.

There's no doubt that they all have a following; we are 140 million people and we'll always have someone we know or from our tribe to support. It doesn't really matter what the theme is, whether it's people idling away in a house, or learning to sing, get or doing serious business like in The Intern.

I can only imagine the impact these shows have had on the bottom line. Many sponsor brands prefer to measure success on media reviews and public applause - but who's counting? The amazing thing is that there are so many rather crazy concepts flying around; so many more companies and brands looking to cash in, others not wanting to be left out and another group just simply duplicating ideas.

Reality shows aren't cheap. I had the good fortune of being in The Intern as mentor to one of the groups and saw how production is sometimes more demanding and more expensive than making movies; Broadcasting them even more outrageous as Nigerian TV station always want you to pay even when it's good content. It could mean a company's overall marketing budget is hammered, especially if some costs are unbudgeted.

And what happens when it's not such a big hit? It raises the issue of the need for proper rating standards so that we'll be cured of the mania and only the best will be continued on measurable impact on ROI.

How much do they impact on sales of products and services? There's so much emphasis on SMS voting – OK for telecommunication companies, but what about banks and drinks companies, for example?

Then there is the curious lack of leveraging before and beyond the duration of these shows... Huge amounts are spent during the shows, but very little before or afterwards.

Above all, one common focus of most reality shows is to turn ordinary people into celebrities; sadly, few brands sustain the association. These youngsters' hopes are raised, but few enjoy a long-term commitment.

ABOUT EMEKA ENYADIKE

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