THE **CONCEPT** OF **VIRALITY**

EXAMINING A NIGERIAN BREADSELLER-TURNED MODEL'S RISE TO FAME

ENTER

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BHM Research & Intelligence presents a research report, highlighting the concept of virality, with Nigerian hawker-turned-model Olajumoke Orisaguna as case study.

The report, available for free on our website, attempts to provide lessons for public relations professionals, social and digital media marketers, creative agencies, brand managers and content teams.

Why did she become so popular so fast? Why are some brands benefitting from associating with her, while others are being burnt? How can brands recognise opportunities to create, or latch on to moments and contents that can get the world talking? Should they even try?

The report also looks at relevant case studies from her and abroad, from Rihanna and Sanam to Lagos State Waste Management Authority (LAWMA) and Sterling Bank.

This is a follow up on BHM R&I's Nigeria PR Report, which was released globally on January 29th, 2016.

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#Olajumoke as a Case Study

In making a stronger case for the empirical study of the effect of celebrity upon today's globalizing media and entertainment industries, Australian Professor Graeme Turner[1] of cultural studies at the University of Queensland, succinctly notes that:

"The growth of new media has generated new ways of representing, consuming and producing celebrity."

Turner pushes his position further, by likening the celebrity to a commodity and arguing that because it can be manufactured, marketed and traded, celebrity "needs to be understood and studied as an industry."

He is infinitely right.

Because if celebrity is a commodity, then we need to know more about the industries that produce and exploit that commodity, as well as the handlers that manage and craft this commodity for its ultimate purpose (as with any commodity) – consumption by the masses. As commodities, celebrities are the products that showcase and signpost the tangible products and services that are consumed by the paying public.

With varying staying power, for the time they are in "use," all celebrities influence cultural moments, with social implications and –depending on their clout– exert commercial and political influence on their au-

[1]Graeme Turner (2010). Approaching celebrity studies, Celebrity Studies, 1:1, 11-20, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19392390903 519024

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dience demographics for whatever period they remain in the public's consciousness.

Few things encompass a composite lesson in media communication, public relations and the human dynamics that create viral, cultural moments as exemplified in the life and current status of a Nigerian bread seller-turned-model Olajumoke Orisaguna. In late January 2016, the 27 year-old impoverished mother-of-two was hurrying through the streets of Lagos, presumably to sell off a tray piled high with the local Agege Bread, when she inadvertently walked into the set of a high-profile photography shoot. When the image came out, she found herself next to UK singer and rapper Tinie Tempah, with renowned artiste and photographer TY Bello behind the camera.

In post-production, Olajumoke photographed so well that Mrs. Bello encouraged by her fans, took to her Instagram and Twitter pages in a bid to hunt for Olajumoke, finally succeeding in early February.

The much talked about ThisDay Style Cover

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"If celebrity is a commodity, then I want to know more about the industries which produce that commodity."

– Professor Graeme Turner

By February 7, Olajumoke had a modelling contract, covered THISDAY Style, and has since gone on to catwalk and photography jobs, as well as being profiled on international and local media including the Huffington Post, CNN, The UK Telegraph, Daily Mail, theNET.ng, Star.ng, and more.

This research note by BHM R&I leans on prior and unfolding trends on the Internet, citing relevant research and case-studies to empirically examine the circumstances of Olajumoke's initial discovery and her personally chosen/professionally dictated path.

The Olajumoke Orisaguna case necessitates documentation and comparative analysis with its local and international equivalents, given the vast learning curve it possesses for talent management, PR firms, brands and communications students and practitioners.

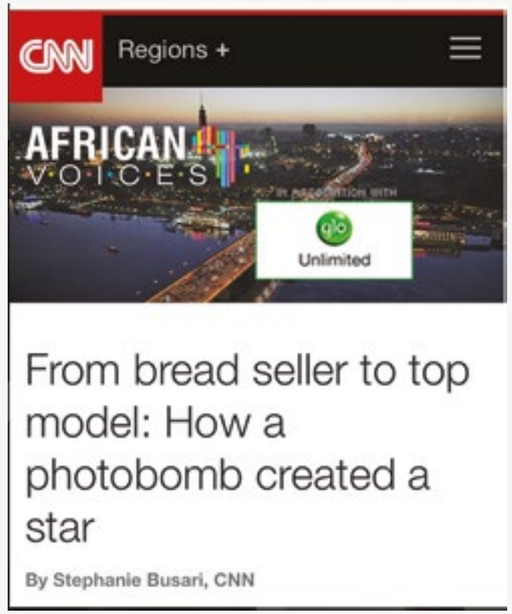

Photo: cnn.com

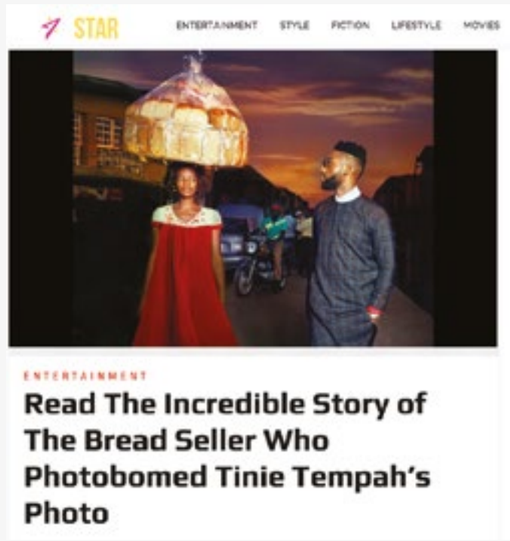

Photo: star.ng

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What made #Olajumoke go viral?

1. The initial medium

"Context is key"

In understanding the runaway success of this celebrity, context is key. The words "fame" and "celebrity" are far from transposable; while fame connotes a long and distinguished history, the defining characteristic of celebrity is that it is essentially a media production[2]. In Olajumoke's case, the primary media that produced her celebrity status are: Instagram and Twitter.

Photo: IG @tybellotweets, Twitter @tybello

[2]Giles, D. (2000). Illusions of Immortality:A Psychology of Fame and Celebrity. Palgrave Macmillan.

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In coining the term "New Viral Cycle" to describe how the famous blue-or-white dress went viral, renowned expert Neetzan Zimmerman cites the uptake rates between different social media[3]. What can be gleaned from this is that something which goes viral on Tumblr or Instagram today may catch on with Twitter tomorrow and hit Facebook anytime after that but could remain on Facebook longer. #Olajumoke kicked off from the best possible media for going viral: photographer TY Bello's Instagram and Twitter feeds.

1.1 The medium itself facilitates sharing and immediacy, which equals virality

Studies by Guadagno et al. (2013)[4] conclude that: "specifically, contagion may be more likely online due to the ease with which information can be transmitted between individuals…while the Internet itself may not motivate the spread of Internet memes, the ease with which it enables individuals to spread them may exacerbate the extent to which memes spread online."

US singer Rihanna famously approached "Sanam," a working-class, "ordinary" woman via Instagram to appear in her video B****h Better Have My Money (BBHMM). Sanam's virality as a celeb when the video aired was heightened by the fact that she had never been in acting, music or videos, as well as the surreal nature of her deal with Rihanna: "She (Rihanna) followed me on Instagram on a Wednesday night, and then I was in LA on Friday morning. It was crazy."

News › People

Introducing Sanam, the Instagram artist who became Rihanna's new Desi accomplice

The Seattle-based artist was scouted by Rihanna on Instagram for her "B***h Better Have My Money" video

Chris Mandle | @chris_mandle | Tuesday 7 July 2015 |

Photo: independent.co.uk

#Olajumoke's path was just as rapid. In less than a week she became an international sensation.

[3]Why Did 'The Dress' Go Viral? We Asked Meme Traffic Expert Neetzan Zimmerman. <http://motherboard.vice.com/read/ why-did-the-dress-go-viral-we-asked-meme-traffic-expert-neetzan-zimmerman>
[4]Guadagno, R.E., Daniel M. Rempala, D.M., Murphy, S., and Okdie, B.M., (2013).What makes a video go viral? An analysis of emotional contagion and Internet memes. Computers in Human Behaviour 29 (2013) 2312-2319.

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1.2 'Mobility' is everything

The latest Ericsson Mobility Report notes Nigeria as among the top five countries responsible for a 68-million increase in the number of mobile (device) subscriptions worldwide. It is common knowledge that Instagram is purposely crafted to function optimally on mobile devices, with other social media applications adapted to mobile use, all of which undoubtedly boosts viral sharing.

However, more interesting is that actual movement, and our on-the-go nature as we bustle through daily life may also be a factor in sharing online - as noted by at least one researcher. University of Pennsylvania Professor Jonah Berger[5] asked people to remain sitting in one place before reading a neutral story, and had others jogging in one spot for 60 seconds before they read the same article. The result? When provided with an option to share, 75% of those who jogged passed the article on, while only one-third of those who sat, did.

Photo: Ericsson Mobility Report, November 2015

[5]Berger, J. (2011.).Arousal increases social transmission of information. Psychological Science 22(7) 891–893 <http://jonahbe rger.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Arousal2.pdf>

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2. It had the ingredients for a hearty virality "soup"

2.1 It featured an amateur/unknown/underdog in an unscripted moment

Just as crucial as the media used is that often, the emotions that influence virality are invoked by the presence of an amateur doing inspirational things, or a professional doing the mundane.

Professional publicity stunt deployer David Seaman says the premise for virality is an ordinary person doing what the average established, famous person cannot do, and achieving this as a matter of routine; going about an ordinary day, yet being captured for posterity in that unscripted moment.

Media behemoth Buzzfeed has come out to say it has learned that "the things people like to share the most are things about themselves. Sharing something about yourself is often a statement about what you believe in, what causes or values you align yourself with, and what, in particular, you love and identify with…(people) are more likely to do that if the act of sharing helps them to make a strong statement about who they are."

Part of the initial reaction to Olajumoke centred on the novelty of photographer TY Bello's shot and the act Olajumoke was carrying out, as documented by Bello herself on Intsagram:

"…Questions and comments started to fly: Was she a model? How did we convince the model to balance all that bread on her head? The buzz about her multiplied when I clarified that she indeed wasn't a model at all but simply stumbled on our set. I immediately began my search for her. If so many felt she was beautiful enough to be a model, then maybe she was meant to be one."

Note the italicised portions – the buzz started with widespread wonder at a professional model being able to balance *Agege Bread* on her head, but multiplied (translating to more discussion/shares) when

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everyone discovered this was just an ordinary young woman going about her business who happened to innocently walk onto a set where a global superstar was being photographed.

2.2 It was an emotional rollercoaster

The science shows that viral content must evoke emotion to ensure a spread, and subsequent longevity.

As many came to know more about Olajumoke's circumstances including the details of her leaving a child to seek her fortunes in Lagos, they could relate to her situation, and shared her remarkable story. Examples of this phenomenon abound:

• Participants in a study watched one viral video that cut across an emotional range. Some watched a funny/cute clip (about kids), others saw one meant to invoke anger or disgust (police brutality) and the 3rd group saw a blasé video about arts and crafts. The findings were that: "Only content that generates stronger affective responses are likely to spread as viral…"

• Chief author Guadagno further wrote[6] : "we found that people were more likely to spread Internet memes when they had strong emotional responses to the content. It did not matter if the emotional response was positive or negative."

• An analysis of about 7,000 articles shared via email by readers of the New York Times showed that: "the amount of emotion content evoked influenced transmission. People said they would be more likely to share an advertisement when it evoked more amusement and a customer service experience when it evoked more anger…content that evokes more anger or amusement is more likely to be shared, and this is driven by the level of activation it induces[7]."

• Seaman[8] summarizes this unequivocally: "If you are not rabidly in support of something or actively disgusted by it, then it has no viral potential."

With the media/technological and emotion-invoking bases covered, #Olajumoke's virality was still boosted by a mélange of other additional factors, as the following comparative studies and incidences will show.

[6]What makes Videos Viral? https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/why-people-click/201304/what-makes-videos-go-viral
[7]Berger J and Milkman, K.L. (2011.) What Makes Online Content Viral? Journal of Marketing Research - American Marketing Association < https://www.ama.org/Documents/online_content_viral.pdf>
[8]Seaman, D. (2008). Dirty Little Secrets of Buzz: How to Attract Massive Attention for Your Business,Your Product or Yourself. Sourcebooks Inc., Illinois.

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3. Other factors

3.1 A rolling story sustains virality

After the initial buzz, the continued search for Olajumoke meant her story remained viral, meaning her presence was sustained throughout social media. Olajumoke herself is seen in a video noting that friends told her they saw her on Facebook (a medium which though often the last to catch on, ensures sustainability online - as pointed out by Zimmerman above).

Photo: theNET.ng

"If you're not rabidly in support of something or actively disgusted by it then it has no viral potential."

Other legs on which this story ran include her family members being interviewed, the publicised reunion with her husband, images of her endorsement deals and modelling profiles...even speculation about her marriage and a potential divorce due to her instant success provided fodder for virality. This is in sharp contrast to the finality of the story of "Groundnut Girl," which is compared to that of Olajumoke in greater detail further on.

3.2 Novelty is key

The freshness of a local-bread seller and a global superstar in a rustic shoot kicked off the buzz. If it were the popular image, the usual actions as expected by the public, virality would wane, or be non-existent.

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Case-study: Nigerian political trekkers

In April 2015, Suleiman Hashimu walked from Lagos to Abuja in 19 days, in honour of then President-elect Muhammadu Buhari, who had won the Presidential elections. As he embarked on his journey, Hashimu gained instant fame, with locals in each region stopping to take selfies with him. Traditional rulers hosted Hashimu and an unnamed individual sponsored a paid stay in the capital city of Abuja. Hashimu's cycle of fame was capped by a publicised meeting with Buhari, which was covered by news outlets.

Not long after, another man - Abubakar Duduwale commenced his trek from Yola to Abuja. The public was wary, and this story was not as viral; it often made headlines as an appendage to the pioneer - Hashimu. Duduwale however arrived Abuja and met, not with the President-elect, but with members of his political party.

Suleiman Hashimu, Lagos to Abuja trekker meets Buhari in Abuja

More excitement filled the air around the presidential campaign headquarters of the

Suleiman Hashimu during and after his Lagos-to-Abuja trek

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3.3 Notable personalities with a wider appeal were present - and name-dropped

This story had the draw of a personality no less than UK rapper Tinie Tempah. This ensured that the story also ticked off the editorial relevance boxes for Western media, who understandably lapped it up.Added to this was the fact that Tempah made Olajumoke his #WCW or Woman Crush Wednesday muse, posting her picture online and sending her greetings, all of which kicked off more traction in the social media and news spheres.

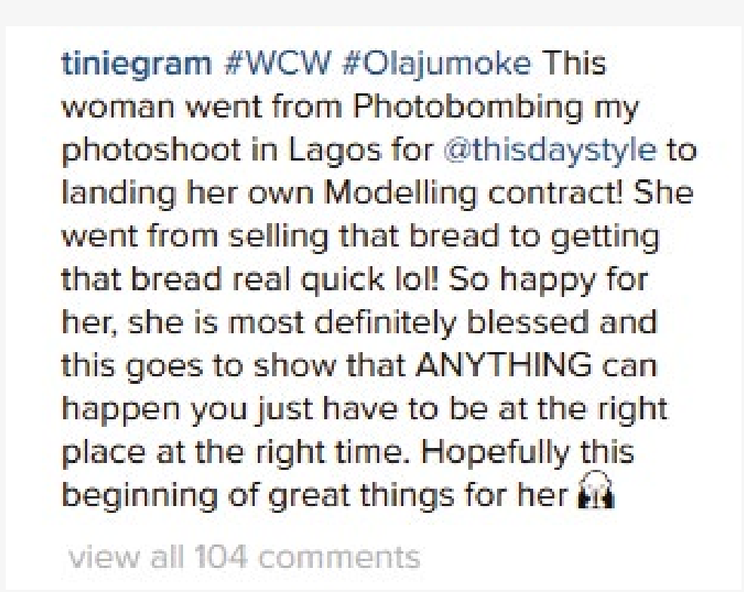

Photo: Tinie Tempah/Instagram

This is reminiscent of the effect of a short Instagram video of superstar Alicia Keys dancing to Wizkid's Ojuelegba hit, and Beyonce mentioning food-chain Red Lobster in her hit single "Formation," which has resulted in a 33% rise in sales for Red Lobster.

3.4 Audiences crave a resolution – justice or happy ending

As proven in prior-mentioned studies, anger and happiness contribute to virality. People are noted as sharing disturbing content often to get justice, or to celebrate a story with a happy ending. Where they cannot get a resolution, interest fades, and in some cases, turns to anger at the originator of the post.

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Case Study: The Abused Maid vs. #Olajumoke

On 19 November 2015, Francesca Joseph-Osenwa shared her video (via Facebook) of a housemaid being made to fan her employer for two hours in a hair salon. Public outrage ensured the video went viral, and it was picked up by local blogs9 then transmitted across various social media channels.

The main thrust of the debate centred on how to get justice for the child-maid, and bring her Madam before the law. Joseph-Osenwa was also challenged publicly for not standing up to the lady.

When Joseph-Osenwa exercised her rights, saying she would not stick out her neck and risk assault, basing this on a prior experience, she was turned upon and attacked verbally, probably due to misplaced aggression by members of the public who wanted justice and a happy ending.

By contrast, the response to the final resolution of Olajumoke's case – where she was found and rewarded - is overwhelmingly positive.

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3.5 Innate qualities that make the individual more "suited" to lasting celebrity

A case that bears a striking resemblance to Olajumoke's is "Groundnut Girl."

Groundnut girl is Chinenye Agwu, who was selling bottled, roasted groundnuts in traffic in Lagos. On 5 December 2015, a passer-by, Mosopefoluwa Odeseye posted (on Twitter) a photo of Chinenye, who was doing her homework under a streetlight, in-between sales. Odeseye reports that: "this picture struck a nerve, got hundreds of retweets within and hour, and before long, the search for the girl in the picture commenced."

It soon emerged that the 14-year-old was a High School student, living with her widowed mother and three siblings in squalor. An online fund was set up, donations poured in, and 45% of the initial target was raised for the family, as well as gifts of food and other household materials.

Juxtaposing both cases, one notes that the dynamics of celebrity and what attains virality are never cut and dried; the physical and circumstantial state of the celebrity will come to play in their attaining and retaining virality.

It is clear that Olajumoke being well over the age of consent, open to immediately begin a modelling career - even her being a shapely female, and beautiful to boot - all contributed to the proliferation of images of her transformation. Many commenters remarked pointedly on her beauty and body-type, meaning these moving and still images of the "making" and "makeover" of Olajumoke also in turn became viral, boosting her celebrity status and increasing her appeal to brands that, expectedly decided to latch on to her coat-tails, for altruistic or solely commercial reasons. This brings us to our next point.

One of the tweets promoting a GoFundMe account for Groundnut Girl's education
Photo: D.Olusegun/Twitter

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3.6 Online altruism and the "charity case" phenomenon

In her book The Psychology of the Internet, Patricia Wallace reports that the net has an interesting paradox; though it can sometimes release higher levels of aggression in humans, the Internet's psychological spaces seem to support and encourage higher levels of altruism and support groups: "People on the net are willing to help one another in small and sometimes very large ways." This is likely why posts that tap into this communal spirit often become viral.

Nigerians' social media spaces are often permeated by pleas for monetary donations to aid victims of ill health, abuse and misfortune. And just as revealed by Wallace, and seen with "Groundnut Girl," sometimes the public initiates the move to extend help.

CLICK TO WATCH VIDEO

Case Study: Battabox's "Meet Nigeria's Bus Conductor with One Leg" video

Shared on 17 February 2016 at almost noon, in a little over an hour, people had begun badgering Battabox – and fellow viewers – to set up a platform for donations towards the wellbeing of the interviewee, Mr Emmanuel.

[Image: One leg bus conductor]

However, within the complex human dynamics that govern online altruism, there are grey areas. Latcetera et al. (2014)[10] have explored this phenomenon, and note that: "broadcasting is positively associated with donations, although some individuals appear to opportunistically broadcast a pledge, and then delete it…although our campaigns generated considerable attention in the forms of clicks and "likes," only a small number of donations (30 out of 6.4 million users reached) were made."

As mentioned, every fundraising campaign gar-

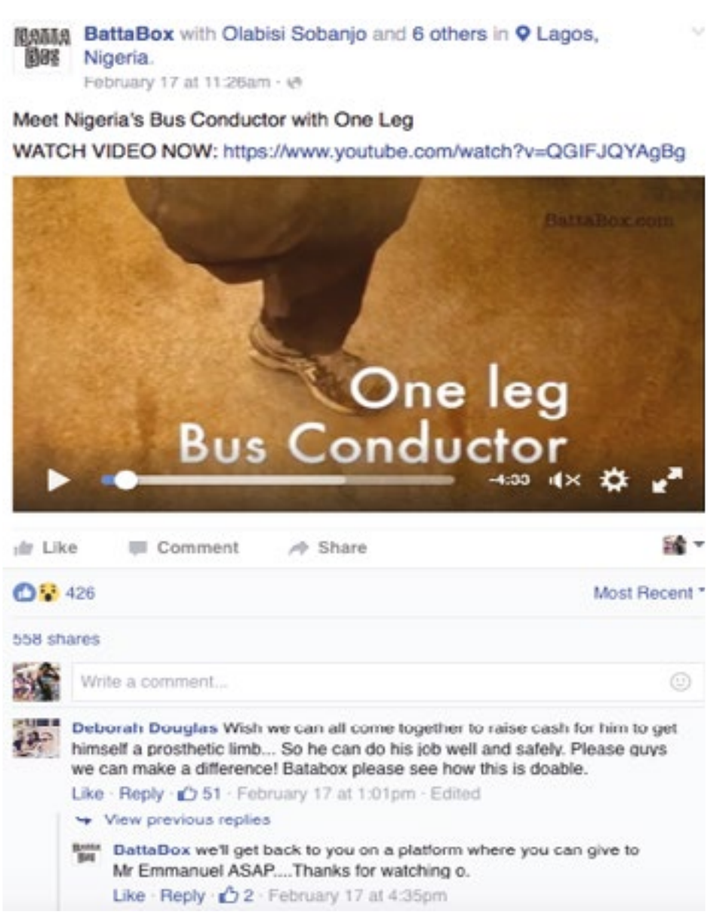

Photo: Battabox/Facebook

[10]Latcetera N., Macis, M. and Mele A. (2014).Viral Altruism? Generosity and Social Contagion in Online Networks. IZA Discussion Paper No. 8171. <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2441467>

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ners attention, but the delivery of actual donations is not guaranteed. In total, Groundnut Girl raised 45% of the target form, an admirable achievement by any standard.

That said, Olajumoke's virality is sustained by the fact that she is not a charity case. As Bello famously remarked, Olajumoke was working when she was spotted, and is working. Therefore, the onus to give cash is not there, and onlookers are more comfortable sticking with words of verbal support.

In fact, the only time where a handout was immediately necessary, Bello's personal networks stepped up to the plate. "Just this morning, a mentor of mine offered to foot the bill for her (Olajumoke's) accommodation, education as well as her child's. This finally makes it possible to be finally reunited with her husband and older child," Bello said.

This reinforces Latcetera's position that: "broadcasting a pledge is associated with more pledges by a user's contacts." As Bello helped, those closest to her learned of this online and followed suit, leading to the expected PR onslaught that follows instant celebrity.

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Brands should be cognisant of, and better utilize cultural moments

Cultural moments can be likened to the period in time when audiences suddenly become like ripe fruit in an orchard; they may all drop to the ground, or straight into strategically placed "PR" baskets. The best definition of this term however comes from Karlo Cordova, who is Group Media Director for global advertising agency Widen+Kennedy. It calls for extensive quoting:

"• *Cultural moments (are) real-time events that captivate and galvanize an audience. Small windows of time where people are collectively turned-on, tuned-in, open-minded, and socially active.*

• *These moments are obviously valuable to marketers, yet very few use these moments to their full potential. Cultural moments (including major movie releases and sporting events), offer an environment tailor-made for impactful messaging, with the potential for amplification through social media and the 24-hour news cycle. It's a missed opportunity—and a disservice to the audience—for a brand to show up with the same message that they show up with at most other times, and in most other places.*"

Social media has morphed into a space where a brand is automatically expected to make use of a cultural moment, and must do so with wit whilst selling their products. Red Lobster had to apologise on Twitter for its delayed, and lame response to Beyonce naming the restaurant in her hit song, while Nike's response to a derogatory remark by US rapper Kanye West earned them traction on social media.

Back home, one of Nigeria's best cultural moments came when rapper Olamide got into a verbal altercation with fellow musician Don Jazzy, spilling the

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bile to Twitter. His outburst immediately began trending, and when he ended a tweet for his opponent with the hashtag #LeaveTrashForLAWMA, the Lagos Waste Management Authority wasted no time latching on.

The organization's officials tweeted: "In 2016 we urge all our customers to #LeaveTrashForLawma use the licensed PSP operator in your area."
The immediacy of LAWMA's response and its tie-in of the feud into its campaign for the use of legal waste disposal agents was viral gold. Sterling Bank, a major partner of LAWMA also took advantage of the trend, tweeting: "Let's take this opportunity to appreciate #LAWMA for their work. Supported by #SterlingBankNg. #LeaveTrashForLAWMA."

Till date, both LAWMA and Sterling Bank use the slogan on Twitter.

Photo: Sterling Bank/Twitter

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Case Study: @ComedianEbiye vs. The National Identity Management Commission (NIMC)

In the cultural moments provided by #Olajumoke story, ordinary Nigerians have seized the times better than established brands. A painting was immediately made from one viral iconic headshot image of Olajumoke, while another individual released a song titled, well, Olajumoke.

But the most poignant seizure was by Ebiye Victor, who made a comedy skit of Bello photographing Olajumoke and eating all her Agege bread as compensation.

Ebiye, who tweets with the handle @ComedianEbiye tells BHM R& I that though he made the video a week after the actual incident occurred, "the response had been lovely."

With a conservative estimate of 40,000 views as at the time of interview, the video has been shared more on Instagram, Ebiye revealed.

Photo: Ebiye Victor/Twitter

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Also taking advantage of the traction was Stanbic IBTC, which utilised a simple, aspirational message with yet another already-viral image of Olajumoke. It read:

"We're inspired by Olajumoke, we'd love to move her forward #NeverStopMovingForward."

The next move for the bank was to make Olajumoke its brand ambassador, and setting up trust funds for her children.

By contrast, the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) tried to cash in, but ended up with far from stellar results. On the morning of 18 February 2016, the organization tweeted a picture of Olajumoke, and used a spin-off of the viral "Be Like Bill" campaign to ask Nigerians to register for their National Identity Number (NIN) and "be like her," who by their own accounts walked into the NIN center "unsolicited

Photo: Zikoko Mag, NIMC_NG and Ezeh Lily/Twitter

The backlash was instant, with responders noting they were yet to receive NIN cards, despite walking into NIN centres over a decade before Olajumoke. As public ridicule of this brand continued, commenters asked the agency to "get serious," "stop pandering" and realize it had "let people down." An individual pointedly called the NIMC "bastards trying to jump on the Olajumoke bandwagon." As the unfolding PR disaster leapt from Twitter to blogs, where it was recycled and shared on to Twitter again, the NIMC was left handling a barrage of complaints and issuing apologies, rather than basking in online prominence for the right reasons.

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Photo: @Mhagayr/Twitter

Brands can learn from individual Nigerians and established social media markets about the need to plan ahead for cultural moments, as these are rare in today's highly globalized world, and can be fleeting. In this regard, PR firms are best placed to assist brands to utilize social media to reach their full potential and avoid run-of-the-mill activities, or badly copied foreign concepts without recourse to Nigeria's domestic nuances on social media.

Retaining the USP of the "commodity" is key

As far as instant celebrity goes, the opposite of what obtains in the West is best suited to these parts. While a Sanam from the BBHMM video may be derailed from remaining true to herself if she took up a formal management structure, for Olajumoke, being managed is the best chance of securing her integrity as a brand. Already, she has a lawyer and a manager, to protect her interests.

So far, as a brand, Olajumoke is off to a good start and seems in capable hands. Notably, her permission was sought for all initial photographs to be taken, her first set of photos featured her natural makeup and hair, and her family has been carried along in the process.

However, the surest way to reduce her appeal would be to tamper with her image too soon and too radically, as evidenced by the criticism that greeted Olajumoke's second set of professional photos, for designer April By Kunbi. Sections of the public reacted negatively, forgetting she was now a working model serving a client, and expressed their fears she would change.

These behavioural patterns, as unrealistic as they may be, are in keeping with assertions on the field. As far back as 2011, Buzzfeed president Jon Steinberg said the amateur look is a boon to virality:

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"People want rough content…people don't want highly produced stuff, they want stuff that feels genuine to them."

Seaman agrees, and submits that overly packaged content loses its appeal: "package poorly!" he insists. So strong is the clamour for originality and the re-taining of thesame image that gave Olajumoke her celebrity, that public commentary has transcended the physical to include her linguistic assets.

When an Instagram account was opened for Ola-jumoke, with a translator posting in English, a few took to social media to express their disapproval. People see no reason why Olajumoke should not tweet, Instagram or Snapchat in Yoruba, pending her learning of English. This in itself could maintain the uniqueness and simplicity that endeared her to the public in the first place.

Other individuals have asked that Olajumoke plays up to her strengths and begins acting in Yoruba movies, with one in particular mentioning ace pro-ducer Kunle Afolayan, in a bid to ensure he takes no-tice.

Photo: @AfricanCeleb/Twitter

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Photo: @TomiWalker/Twitter

Note that there is some proof that the act of merely featuring Olajumoke in a Yoruba movie can make people who do not watch these movies begin to, as seen above. PR agents and handlers of Olajumoke or celebrities in similar circumstances would do well to pay attention to the pulse of the audience who sustain their clients' popularity.

"The first thing we learned about viral content is never, under any circumstances, say the words 'viral content."

- Buzzfeed

Make/retain the link between product and persona

Mukherjee[11] articulates the quandary that bedevils celebrity studies: "It is easy to choose a celebrity but it is tough to establish a strong association between the product and the endorser." If the brand fails to make the association, it falls on the celebrity's management to make this association and retain the link between product and persona.

This line of reasoning ties in with playing up to the strengths of the celebrity, to ensure greater chances of lasting success in the public eye. When a person becomes famous despite having no obvious talent, it is clear that their persona and life experiences brought the fame. Therefore, these should be cultivated, and sold to potential brands, rather than waiting for generic associations that do nothing to reinforce the worth of the "product," in this case, the celebrity.

Admirably, our primary case study has hit some high notes; one great instance of a perfect association between product and the endorser is Olajumoke's latest deal with Shirley's Confectionery, a baked goods company, which sells the same thing that made Olajumoke famous – bread.

[11]Mukherkee, D. (2009). Impact of Celebrity Endorsements on Brand Image. <http://usdrinc.com/downloads/Celebrity-Endor- sements.pdf>

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Case Study: Bobak Ferdowsi

Bobak Ferdowsi, 36, is a Systems Engineer with the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Ferdowsi achieved celebrity during the live broadcast of a space mission for… simply wearing a stylish Mohawk haircut while doing his job as a Jet Propulsion Laboratory Engineer.

Ferdowsi instantly became the subject of Internet meme images and was given the hashtag #NASAMohawkGuy. He was so popular that moments after the landing of the spacecraft, President Barack Obama mentioned he had "heard there is special Mohawk Guy that's working on the mission," in his official congratulatory call to NASA, adding that: "you guys are a little cooler than you used to be."

Undoubtedly, the main pull that brought him fame was that Ferdowsi looked nothing like the general opinion of what scientists should look like. What has sustained his fame however is

that Ferdowsi has continued to align his persona to causes and endorsements centered on science and technology. He has spoken about, and made appearances in support of Obama's call for more visas for immigrants who are skilled in the engineering, mathematics and science sectors. Ferdowsi has also been a reporter for popular science-focused competition BattleBots and had a cameo role in science fiction movie *Sharknado 3: Oh Hell No!*

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Since 2012, Ferdowsi has remained on the news radar, with features on his current work just published days ago.

Celebrities, know when to abstain from the endorsement Buffet - to avoid being a PR Buffet

The clamour for Olajumoke has begun, and you'd be hard-pressed not to agree with this observer:

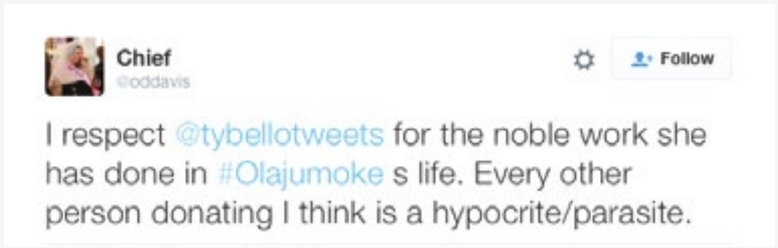

Photo: @oddavis/Twitter

In contrast to the previous point, when businesses fall over themselves to associate their brand with a celebrity, it falls on the celebrity's management and PR machine to be discerning, and know when to dissociate.

This is because as Mukherjee notes, multiple endorsements create clutter in the minds of the consumer, while in instances where there is a surfeit of endorsements, then use of the celebrity is redundant. Market share will in this case depend entirely on the power of the brand.

Experts such as Udo and Nwulu[12] also remind us that though celebrity endorsement makes advertisement more memorable, the company generates high brand awareness as well as an increase in market share in the short run. As companies cotton on to these dynamics in times of thrift, the smart celebrity will have to explore ways to maintain staying power and appeal.

Besides, based on an observation of viral cycles within and outside of Nigeria, it isn't necessarily a bad thing for celebrities to sometimes say "no." Just as much popularity is to be gained from refusing to work with a brand, as is gained from accepting to work with one.

Olajumoke received mixed responses when images showed she was going to be a motivational speaker at some events. Views ranged from members of the public supporting her, others wondering how qualified she was to be a motivational speaker, to some

[12]Udo, M.I. and Nwulu, C.S. (2015).A Theoretical Reflection of Celebrity Endorsement in Nigeria. International Journal of Business and Economic Development. (3) 2. pp 81-92.

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feeling she was being taken advantage of and over-booked.

The point is this: conversely, Olajumoke would have still been in the news and on the social media radar for declining to take several commitments, provided her refusal was strategically publicised, as done by our next case study.

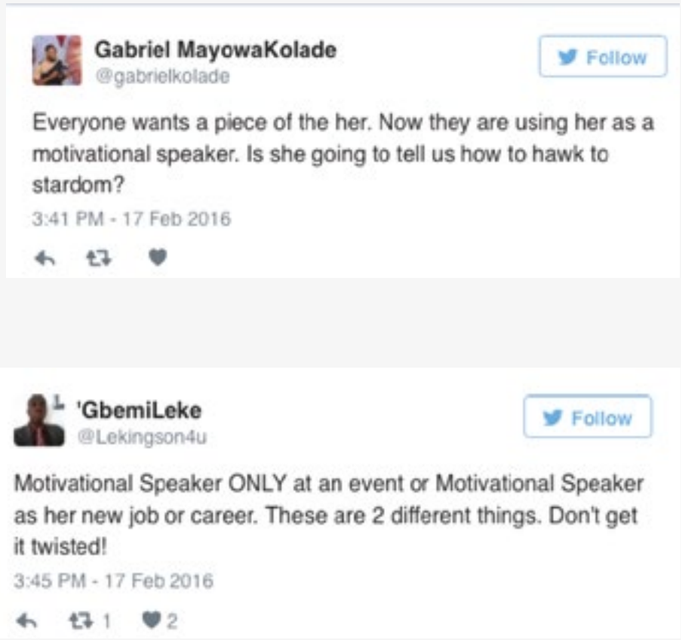

Photo: Gabriel Kolade and @Lekingson4u/Twitter

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Case Study: Najatu Muhammad

Activist Najatu Muhammad achieved viral status – albeit far briefly than Olajumoke's sustained version – when she turned down a political appointment from President Muhammadu Buhari.

The lady trended for two main reasons; she is noted as the first Nigerian to ever turn down a political appointment, and one who did so using a paid advert in a national daily.

A third reason was that Muhammad also received some flak for spelling mistakes in her newspaper advert. As with real-life buffets, imbibing too much in the "PR Buffet" spread before a celebrity can result in confusion and the derailing of a brand built on personal uniqueness – individuality is burnished best by selective action.

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This article has purposely relied on global research and case studies to empirically explore aspects of the complex nature of instant celebrity in Nigeria's online spaces, through the prism of the Olajumoke story. Examining fans' reactions and expectations during the outbreak of her fame online, the crux, therefore, is the role of talent management, public relations professionals and strategic Internet/media usage in the creation and sustainance of celebrity.

To attain enhanced comprehension of the function of celebrity, it is necessary for stakeholders to continually seek familiarity with the media production and audience reception of celebrity in Nigeria. As a "commodity," the celebrity shapes media consumption, fashion tastes and buying preferences, as well as potentially dictating the identities their followers decide to take on.

Therefore, the celebrity's manager must realize the media, cultural and demographic nuances that trail their client's career path, and strategically exploit or eschew these as needed, whilst feeling the pulse of their target audiences, to preserve the initial allure of the celebrity under their care.

Crucially, by being on the other side of the equation, PR has a more sophisticated role to play, as brands navigate the Internet today. Nigeria's brands – as with their peer elsewhere – will forever need to adequately prepare for, and intelligently seize cultural moments when the Internet churns up instant celebrities; which is where PR can leverage its strengths.

An efficient, well-developed PR machine will be what distinguishes the entities that are able to latch on to the fleeting periods of time that can provide favourable brand perception, guarantee the undivided attention of consumers online, and possibly deliver their offline business to boot.

Being the buffer between celebrities and brands, PR

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practitioners are also the gatekeepers, who decide what aspect of the "commodity" is suited to each brand.

Therefore, there is a need for the strategic integration of public relations and media planning to enable corporate entities tactically sort through the mass of celebrities prior to partnerships.

More importantly, this will help brands to recognize, and master the cultural moments being thrown up by Nigeria's growing, Internet-savvy population.

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