

Adaptation by artistes to the changing music industry environment

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Abstract

This study focused on popular music in Kenya. Kenyan popular musicians employ various performance strategies so as to win audience and to maximize on the business opportunities within the music industry. Successful musicians are measured by the huge audiences that they control through concert attendance, the airplay their music enjoys and the sale of their music products and lately viewership through the social media outlets. The main objective of the study was therefore to establish how popular musicians are adapting to the ever-changing performance environment. The study was conducted in Nairobi, the Kenyan capital city. This was deliberate due to Nairobi's cosmopolitan nature where thousands of artists converge to practice their trade. The music industry in Nairobi is deemed to be thriving with artistes from all parts of the country and the region striving to make an impact and to win audiences. The population sampled includes Disk-Jockeys (DJs), Video-Jockeys (VJs), and active pop artistes and event organizers. Purposive technique was used to arrive at the desired population. Primary and secondary data collection method consistent with the research design was applied. Primary data was collected using questionnaires, opinionnaire and interview schedules, while secondary data was collected from libraries and information archives like the Kenya Broadcasting Cooperation (KBC) among others. Qualitative data was analyzed descriptively and emerging themes discussed and related to the prevailing situations for better understanding leading to recommendations suitable for the primary objective of the study. The study outlines the most current adaptive strategies to performance environment as used in other parts of the world by popular artists and recommends the ones adaptable ones to local musicians.

Introduction

The music industry was born over a hundred years ago when innovations allowed the capture, storage and replaying of sound. Over time, the industry has adapted much technological advancement in sound technologies, which transformed from mono to hi-fidelity stereo to Dolby surround sound. On the other hand storage media technologies evolved from vinyl to audio-cassettes to CDs and mini-discs, replay devices evolved from gramophones to large, in-house stereo systems to compact and portable audio devices (Sen, 2010). Millard (1995) noted that this rapid transformation of the music industry is a classic example of how an innovation is able to disrupt an entire industry and make existing industry competencies obsolete.

In Kenya the last two decades have seen a complete transformation of the music industry and the abandonment of models that ruled the industry during most of the past century. Akuno, quoted in Kimani, (ed) (2008) described the music entertainment scene in Kenya today as dynamic due to the ever-changing audience demands and innovations. She further argues that commercialization and digitalization are the main players effecting change in the music industry. These two trends are evidently reshaping the identity of Kenyans as music and musicians introduce innovative elements which the audiences readily welcome. While agreeing with Akuno's views, Sen (2010) and Wikström (2014) pointed out that during these transitions, industry players either quickly adapted to the changes caused by the newer technologies or simply disappeared. This study sought to look at ways that industry players have adopted to the change to survive within the industry.

An Overview of the Music Industry in Kenya

Like many other disciplines, performing arts have not escaped the impact of change in the society. Technological, cultural and economic dynamisms in the society have overtime influenced change in the performing arts. For example, the value with which music and musicians were held in the traditional society has increasingly witnessed substantive transformation (Alstair, 2001). The music industry in Kenya faces its largest challenges to date. Having been fairly stable for an extended period of time, the sector seemed long overdue for the drastic change it would face entering the 21st Century. Technological advances and commercialization, is pushing the sector into a full-scale restructuring of the landscape.

Background to History of Music production and Distribution

Performing arts such as music, dance and drama have been part of the social landscape of many Kenyan communities for many years. History will show that in the traditional settings, musicians did not necessarily compete for audience attention or for patronage

of their performances. Rather, long established cultural norms, nature of ceremonies and activities dictated music and dance performances well suited for each occasion and artistes (musicians) were essential part of such ceremonies. They became regionally famous for their performance and leadership skills displayed. In terms of daily returns and payment for performers, rather than depend on events charges, communities supported their musicians through mutually agreed methods. With the shift from local settings to urban centers apparently this age-old support system is no longer available as it is not supported by tradition. Observations and experiences during current field study largely indicated inadequate recognition and support to musicians by the society in general. This is a contradiction from the traditionally known trends, and the reasons even more confounding.

Worpole, (1993) observes that today, competition for audience, the struggle to generate capital and the scramble for scarce opportunities for performance seem to be the order of the day. In Kenya musicians who perform in various entertainment venues are concentrated in the urban areas with a fairly high proportion in Nairobi, followed closely by other cities such as Mombasa, Kisumu and Nakuru. Among the numerous difficulties these musicians encounter are those emanating from constantly changing social cultural environment in which they live. For example, the audience in the city is made up of people from varied communities and social-cultural backgrounds. As expected, satisfying their music entertainment needs becomes increasingly difficult for artistes, and this situation forms part of the core challenges for the urban musicians. Giovanni, (2002) indicates that many of the functions which were performed traditionally have been compromised by modernization and change, creating a social void that requires alternative and creative means and approaches. These developments pose serious challenges for the survival of musicians especially those in the cities who are particularly hard pressed with the need for re-invention in order to remain socially relevant.

In terms of recorded music, historically, musical artistes have either produced and marketed their own music or needed the support of a record label to produce, promote, and distribute their music. Popular musicians signed exclusive contracts with record labels allowing the labels to essentially act as monopolies for their content. The labels were able to set royalty fees and subsequent retail price levels consistent with the consumer's willingness to pay and not necessarily based on the quality of music (Bockstedt, Kauffman, & Riggins, 2006) Technological and commercial transformation has upset this system making music production and distribution more democratic and participatory at the grass roots level. The music material, quality of shows and recordings are constantly under scrutiny a situation that produces tremendous pressure for the

survival of the artistes and their productions. Nairobi city (similar to other world cities), displays active entertainment activities, with a large group of artistes seeking to establish their entertainment niche in a fairly competitive social environment.

Music Creation and Production

It is clear that society today is exerting pressure on musicians to adjust to the current trends so as to fulfill membership and clientele needs within the context of relevance and novelty. Based on complex social orientations and cultural backgrounds contemporary society unwittingly set unwritten demands and expectations from popular musicians. These demands are exerted in such a way that only those popular musicians who are sensitive, creative and flexible enough enjoy the success defined and supported by perennially demanding audience.

Additionally, the modern entertainment has been a period of turbulent change in musical style and taste. A number of musicians have explored untraditional sounds and have based their music on rhythm, texture and tone color, instead of the more traditional aspects of melody and harmony. This has seen a fusion of styles and a development of hybrid of genres (Akuno, 2005) (which over time have eroded the authentic ideas in Kenyan Music.

Digital technological advances have caused rapid changes in musical style, and expanded our knowledge of music from other cultures, further accelerating changes in musical taste while providing a wider range of music to listeners, composers and performers. The power and influence of the pre- digital music industry was largely based on the ability to control physical production and distribution. However internet has made physical music distribution increasingly irrelevant and the incumbent artistes have been required to redefine themselves in order to survive (Wikström, 2014). Today, new musical ideas and styles can be introduced almost instantly, allowing large-scale trends to change in months or years, instead of decades. Computer-based technologies, synthesized sounds, and new recording techniques continually add new dimensions to today's music. Advancements in technology are undoubtedly influential, and the music producers' role has changed during that time too. The artist formerly relied on the producer to provide a critical eye and know the technical side of recording but they were expected to keep a distance from the creative process. This has now changed, as artistes can produce their own material independently, and producers can be just as important to the creative process as band members.

Music Distribution, Exhibition and Presentation

During the past decade, the music industry has experienced dramatic transformation in the way music is distributed. These changes have been sparked by new technologies and Internet use for the distribution of music as a digital product (Bockstedt, Kauffman, & Riggins, 2006). The MP3 audio format and the wide distribution network that have become available via the Internet are driving changes in the recorded music market structure and simultaneously are having a significant impact on the players in the traditional recorded music value chain.

As music became more widely available and popular, it was inevitably commercialized. Commercialization as a trend has directly affected the organization and marketing of popular music with musicians being forced to re-discover themselves and their production. The commercial music industry, which began in the 1930s, is now the dominant musical force across the world, leaving today's art-musicians scrambling to preserve an audience. Big record labels held a monopoly on the music industry, and arguably still do, albeit to a lesser extent. Labels would identify potentially successful artistes on their way to the top and provide them with the necessary resources to record their music in the hopes that some of the artistes would become stars (Ashraf, 2012). However, this is becoming an increasingly outdated paradigm as increasing numbers of artistes are recording and producing their own music. The way people record and produce music has changed. Arguably the most significant change in music production is that artistes no longer require a four walled studio to record.

Based on the given background, it comes as no surprise that currently, musicians in Nairobi are struggling more than ever before to make and sustain adequate business returns and living expenses in the competitive entertainment industry. On the other hand, society seems to consciously or unconsciously set demands which the artistes are constantly under pressure to meet. While public perception and image often paints the popular musician as rich, successful and economically endowed, the reality for most of them is the opposite. The demands and challenges in the current entertainment world are numerous, complex and more often not easily resolved and these have direct impact on the artistes.

Among the most significant challenges the artistes face include market access, sustaining clientele and remaining relevant in the society, performance demands such as recruitment of essential musicians, and professional services such as access to fine sound recording facilities. Other challenges include securing airtime play, purchase and maintenance of relevant musical equipment. Against these demands, modern day audiences often raise unrealistic performance demands on musicians, ignorant of the fact that some of the demands are not realistic (such as demanding that musicians be ready

to perform a variety of musical styles and in several languages) and not easily solved. The reality is that attempting to solve some of the audience issues result in very negative consequences, primary among them being poor performances as the musicians venture into music styles that are not familiar to them, for example playing music from pre-recorded disks in supposedly “live” concerts. Storm (1998), puts it into context, observing that ‘musicians’ performance opportunities, role in the community, relevance and survival seem to be under threat due to increased dynamism in the field of performance’. With an urban clientele that is more musically informed, and has a range of music supply from which to choose for their entertainment, it is apparent that musicians have to go an extra mile to provide unique and novel entertainment services.

Available information clearly indicates that Kenyan musicians (Artistes) are under tremendous pressure to perform individually and collectively. The overriding problem for the study was therefore concerned with the ways that musicians are coping with the demands, and more importantly exploring what relevant strategies are necessary to result in sustainable existence for the musicians. The study therefore sought to seek appropriate and focused performance strategies that popular musicians in Nairobi may adopt and employ in their music performance activities so as to remain relevant in the society. The study also sought to determine the strategies that will be economically rewarding and sustainable for their performance business.

Methodology

Research Design

This research employed qualitative research design which is aimed at obtaining information concerning the prevailing status of a phenomenon (Phelps, 1980). Its main purpose is to describe the state of affairs, as it exists (Kombo and Delno, 2006). Data was used to obtain and describe information on how popular musicians have and continue to operate in Kenyan urban centers, specifically in Nairobi. Narrative data was used to describe popular musicians and their struggles to sustain meaningful occupations while at the same time remaining socially and economically engaged in the society.

Target Population

This study targeted the population in Nairobi city who are consumers of popular music entertainment products, especially those that have a specific interest with music industry. These included the creators, consumers and disseminators of popular music. Specifically, the study targeted popular artistes (representing the creators), Disk-jockeys (DJs) and Video-jockeys (VJs) (representing the disseminators), and event organizers (representing the consumers).

Sampling Procedure

To cater for validity and independence of data collected, consistent with principles of good practice in research, three sampling techniques were adopted; (a) Purposive, (ii) Simple random, and (iii) Snowball sampling techniques as described below;

Purposive Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique, also referred to as judgment sampling is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses. It is a non-random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of informants. This type of sampling is exemplified through the key informant technique (Bernard, 2002; Garcia, 2006; Gustard et al, 2004, Lyon and Hardesty, 2005). In this study, purposive sampling was found to be suitable, based on the complex (and sometimes abstract) nature of information that was collected. The technique was employed to select popular artistes and performing groups because of their knowledge and experience. For purposes of representation and acquisition of desired qualities and research attributes, the researcher selected a total of seventeen (17) artistes and groups for study.

Simple Random Sampling Technique

In this data collection procedure, a group of subjects (sample) is selected for study drawn from a larger group (population). Each individual is chosen entirely by chance and each member of the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample. In the study, the technique was applied when selecting DJs and VJs. A list of DJs and VJs from various broadcasting stations and entertainment spots in Nairobi was obtained and used to generate a table of random digits to assist in creating the desired proportion. The table of random digits was used to ensure that each individual had an equal chance of being selected to control for independent selection and ultimately make the desired representation.

Snowball Sampling Technique

This is a non-probability sampling technique that is used by researchers to identify potential subjects in studies where subjects are hard to locate. This was evident in this study. The researcher encountered challenges in locating subjects with the desired qualities for the study. This challenge was however overcome through cooperation exhibited by the subjects who were identified and who sometimes reluctantly guided the researcher to their contacts who had the desired qualities suitable for the study. The technique works like a chain referral. After observing the initial subject, the researcher asks for assistance from the subject to help identify people with similar

traits of interest. In this study, the technique was employed in identifying event organizers. A total number of one hundred (100) events organizers participated in the study.

Data Collection

Two types of data were collected. These are Primary data and Secondary data which were consistent with the research design. Primary data was collected by administering the following research instruments: Questionnaire, Opinionnaire and, unstructured interview schedule, while secondary data was collected from libraries and information archives such as Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) and the Permanent Presidential Music Commission (PPMC).

Data Analysis

After collection, data was classified and coded in readiness for final analysis and extraction of emerging themes. Before final presentation, both qualitative and quantitative data was classified and integrated, by use of summaries, qualitative content analysis, tabulation and graphic presentations, which worked for easier organization and synthesis and in line with the research objectives.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Audience Control: Emerging Popular Music Practices in Kenya.

Today, as the Kenyan population continues to grow and literacy levels continue to increase, the demands for entertainment music continues to pile exceptional pressure on those whose business is to provide entertainment in public places, hotels, food joints and clubs. According to the World Fact Book (2010), 85.1% of Kenyans above age 15 years, can read and write and have access to internet. This is considered a good measure of literacy levels for any developing nation. This means that as country, Kenya has a population that can easily acquire and synthesis information and can also drive varied agenda of its choice in an informed way. The report (ibid), indicates that low levels of literacy and education in general can impede the economic development of a nation in the current rapidly developing technology driven world, often with negative outcome. Evidence indicates that the Kenyan society, based on the report, is not in the category of illiterates and therefore can be counted on to drive much of its economic agenda in the various economic sectors. It is in line with this argument that the study sought to interrogate the amount of participation and influence that the Kenyan society has had or continues to have in the popular music entertainment sector. Their varied and sometimes candid opinions on some issues raised in the questionnaires, opinionnaire and interview schedule revealed that while music itself

projects some uniqueness in its subject matter, the Kenyan society is actively involved in it and is generally focused on preferred music direction especially popular music which enjoys a fairly large following and patronage. The patrons clearly speak on issues of music importance to them, while demonstrating their views on desired popular music trends, in other intangible ways such as music purchase and opinions.

Performance by Popular Bands

For a long time, popular bands in Kenya have in the past operated independent of input from their audience. Observations in this study indicated situations in the past where bands formed, decided on the type of genres of music to engage in and they would be confident of getting fans and patrons who would buy and dance to their music. Until recently, before the rising of many bands especially in the urban setting, musicians could get away with unrehearsed performances and low quality stage display. But with the seemingly new revolution within the masses, this kind of 'impunity' has been brought to check and greatly reduced especially within circles of those who can be referred to as professionally-grounded artistes.

Today, bands and the performing groups generally are being compelled to work hard to impress their clientele to be assured of their continued support. For example, there has been a popular demand among the clientele suggesting that the bands must advance and diversify in their performance ideas and genres of music. It is important for performance groups to constantly explore new ideas in order to remain relevant and to appropriately engage with their clients.

In response to a related question posed to event organizers, an overwhelming majority of the respondents were insistent that bands need to engage in varied genres of music. This idea is favored despite the implication it may have on the bands in terms of lack of specialization and quality. According to the respondents in this study, this approach makes good business sense. Furthermore, it is argued that one band with sufficient repertoire and variety can sustain a mixed audience through such an approach.

From the responses, the remaining percentage of the respondents did not clearly identify with the negative response rather; they remained undecided. This is a strong indicator that the audience as stakeholders in the music entertainment business are starting to claim a big stake and taking a clear position in the entertainment scene with strong views. Since bands and other performing groups depend on them (audience) for business, it is highly likely that for better cooperation between the two entities (audience and

performers), a compromise settlement must be reached. Other indicators showing that the audience is beginning to take charge include instances through confessions by event organizers, where even though an event organizer is contracted to manage events, the clients generally dictate which band and what music should be played during their functions. In other words the event organizer today unlike before may not have a purely free hand in deciding which artists to invite; rather, they are given specifications.

From the responses of event organizers and performing artistes, it is apparent that the determinants of quality and style of performance are no longer the artistes themselves but rather it is a shared responsibility with the audience too. All avenues including print and electronic media are used to exert pressure on the artistes. When commentaries on the latest productions are done on print media, and when good quality songs are aired through radio and television, the message to the artistes is that nothing less than the current set standard is expected. It is essentially a self-regulation for media houses but driven by clients' demands, rather than the media houses.

In the survey, more than half of the respondents indicated that the quality and style of music performance is determined by the audience. There is a group of respondents whose total conviction to this fact was unwavering. However, a smaller minority were undecided. The fact that no respondent disagrees with the statement is also a strong indicator of the power held by the audience concerning the quality and style of performance by popular bands.

To ascertain the extent to which popular musicians listen to the views of the audience and the level of compliance, event organizers who directly deal with the bands in terms of coordinating performances were asked to indicate if it is possible to identify bands by the genres of music that they perform. The responses were quite telling and categorical regarding the power of choice that the audience seems to be wielding. The largest majority of those sampled indicated that most bands are not genre specific. In view of the current study, this clearly confirms the fact that musicians inevitably listen to the voices of their clients knowing that their clients hold the key to breaking through in their performance choices. Even though professionally speaking, this trend may point towards negativity in terms of quality of the genres that they engage in because of lack of specialization, the focus of musicians is currently skewed towards survival. The feeling is that as long as the audience is kept happy, the bands remain in business. Artistes are therefore forced to strike a tricky and delicate balance between promoting quality while keeping their audience happy since they need their support to remain in business.

Almost every respondent in the study indicated that no bands can be recognized through the music genres that they play. This may not be entirely binding, since observations show that there are few purely rock bands in Nairobi such as Murphy's Flow, some purely Benga music bands especially in the East lands, and some neo-traditional groups like the Ohangla bands among others. There is a concern that most bands are bowing to pressure to integrate other genres in their performance. This situation points to a concern of a genuine fear that the existence of most of these single genre bands is threatened. The situation is inevitably attributed to the influence and power wielded by the audience. On the same issue of bands identification, slightly less than quarter of the respondents was undecided. This is significant because though they do not want to be associated with negative views that could lead to possible demise of purely single genre specific bands; they equally did not want to endorse the mixed genre bands for undeclared reasons.

Reality, however according to the study is that the dawn of demands by the masses has come and bands are being compelled to re-invent themselves in line with the clients' demands. The results of the study strongly suggest that most bands in Nairobi perform a hybrid of genres and this is mainly for the purpose of survival and not by choice in a competitive audience driven market. To further investigate the trend of the audience's desire in controlling performance agenda in the popular music entertainment scene, the study sought to find out if there is any relationship between the bands' ability to perform music that is widely preferred by the audience against regular invitation to perform in various functions. Affirmation to this statement was overwhelming, where more than two thirds of the respondents returned a strongly agree and agree verdicts. An insignificant number of the respondents either disagreed or were undecided.

Approval rate for this statement was high, and coming from event organizers who are fairly well experienced with the masses, this is highly likely to be the voice of the audience. The resounding message to the musicians is that they must constantly be in touch with the masses, to know what is on demand at any given time. For this reason, the musicians ought to constantly practice, inculcate the spirit of cooperation between bands, have a strategy to link with the masses and perfect the art of live performance. These are considered to be sure ways of endearing the audience to their trade, and may translate to better economic sustenance and support.

Views by DJs and VJs Concerning Audience Participation

Participation of the audience in the music entertainment activities is demonstrated through the views of DJs and VJs whose experience in the selection and 'spinning' business is discussed in this section. Generally, activities of Jockeying involve three areas; video jockeys (VJ), radio jockeys (RJ) and disk jockeys (DJ). All these areas deal with music, but while VJs present shows on television stations and entertainment establishments, RJs and DJs do so on radio and in entertainment joints such as day and night clubs, restaurants and music stores. For the purpose of this study both RJs and DJs were clustered as a unit and are referred to as DJs.

The DJs and VJs who were involved in this study indicated that they had working experience in years ranging from 0-10 years, with the majority ranging between 3-5 years of work experience, while only while a minority fell in the upper cluster of between 6-10 years of experience. This category of entertainers, with their experience provided a population that could be relied on in terms of acquiring reliable information. The sampled media stations and entertainment establishments had been in existence for a similar number of years with the highest proportion having been in operation for between 0-2 years, the second highest proportion having been in operation for between 3-5 years, while the least proportion had been in operation the longest, thus between 6-10years. While giving information on the type or genre of music that dominates their stations, the responses were varied, with Raga genre posting the highest frequency. This was closely followed by Reggae. Rock, Techno, Blues and Qrunk genres posted the least number of frequencies.

The interesting point noted was the correlation between the frequency of appearance of the various genres of music and the genres that popularly known musicians are currently engaging in. A logical conclusion deduced was that popular bands and musicians attempt to engage in performing music and genres of music that are popular and are frequently played in the various media stations and entertainment establishments. Curiously, the first four genres with the highest number of frequencies thus; Raga, Reggae, Hip-hop, Local/Vernacular, and Rhythm and Blues-(R&B) seem to be the popular genres that most popular artistes engage in, especially in urban areas and in cities like in Nairobi.

It also emerged that music played through the various outlets is always as a result of request by the audience or DJ's and VJ's choices. On enquiry, an overwhelming majority of the VJs and DJs indicated that the choices of the music that they play

mostly emanates from the audience. A smaller minority of the respondents indicated that they play music according to the established weekly program for the stations. It is however interesting to note that even for the established weekly programs, the audience have a big say in the actual choice of the songs selected. A negligible number of the respondents said they play music out of will but also take request from the audience.

The respondents who indicated that they play music at will were asked to share some of their considerations when selecting the music. The responses were interestingly audience influenced, with over two thirds indicating that they take keen interest in the audience's choices and preferences. The other small remaining proportion of the respondents indicated that they base their choices mostly on quality of the recording and time and season of the year. The emerging scenario is that the audience has boldly asserted themselves in the entertainment scene through active participation and seems to be controlling the airwaves in terms of music repertoire.

Finally the, the respondents gave their views on the possible consequences of ignoring the audience wishes, on whether the audience dictates the music that is played in the stations and the audience pressure on bands and musicians. Out of all the listed possible consequences, a greater majority of the respondents identified the fear of losing their audience to their competitors. The implication is that it would lead to loss of much needed support both moral and financial. An insignificant number pointed to a loss to the respondents, where they could either lose their jobs or their popularity.

The voice of DJs and VJs in matters of disseminating music is credible. They have a privileged position through the stations and other outlets where they play music. Slightly more than half of them were categorical that the audience dictates music that is most often played in the stations. A further quarter of the respondents indicated that even though there are strict program schedules in their stations, most of the time the music is requested by the audience. Only less than a quarter of the respondents had a contrary opinion to the above.

Pressure of Audience on the Artistes

These responses strongly affirm the objective of this study which was to establish that there are demands and pressures that the audiences exert on the artistes. These demands and pressures inform the audiences' choices and requests through the DJs

and VJs. The study contends that these demands and pressures border on issues of quality of recording and approach to topical issues tackled in the music recordings.

As concerns views on whether the audience puts pressure on musicians on various aspects, the majority of the respondents were affirmative to the position. Only a slight minority negated the view and an even negligible minority indicated that this only happens partly. Even though their views may not be entirely binding, since they are not practicing musicians, the opinions of the DJs and VJs cannot be ignored, because they run the show long after the musicians have recorded and deposited their music products with them. They seem to be more in touch with the demands of the audience, meaning that symbolically, they are the bearers of the message from the audience to the musician. These messages are mostly transmitted through the frequency of song requests. Musicians who are able to decode these messages are assured of a lifeline if they undertake corrective measures to cure the perceived 'mistakes' so as to be in tune with their audience demands. However, the musicians who manage to 'correct' these 'mistakes, while ensuring no erosion of quality end up winning back their audience while maintaining their brand.

Views by Popular Musicians

It was thought necessary in this study to include the voice of the artistes who perform music. The study engaged them on various issues with intention of soliciting their own personal experiences. The musicians' hectic schedules and constraints in time and other limitations permitted the sampling of only a few musicians within Nairobi. However the study was careful to ensure a fair gender balance, a distributed age disparity, accommodation of various music genres and a representation of different locations, including the city sub-urbs (elite areas of Nairobi, especially the West lands) and East lands and the ghettos. All the musicians who participated in the study were viewed to be fairly well experienced having been engaged in the show-biz for a period of more than three years.

Apparently, majority of the musicians interviewed feel the public is quite supportive. Apart from attending their concerts and buying their music, and thus ensuring they are economically supported, they indicated that the public also gives them valuable feedback through electronic mails (e-mails) and short text messages (sms) and other social media such as face book and twitter. This category of musicians formed almost half of those interviewed.

The other category views the public as being too critical of their activities. They claim the public rarely buys or requests for their music and are always demanding something extra in their productions. Rarely, they claim, are they looked at in their own merit, but are always compared to other established musicians both locally and internationally. To make matters worse, only a few attend their concerts. This category of musicians formed slightly over twenty per cent of the respondents.

Interestingly, an equal number of the musicians seem to be comfortable, for their music products are well received; they make good sales and also enjoy considerable amount of air-play. They feel they are appreciated, well advised and are in constant touch with their audience through various social media.

Finally, on the same issue of how the public views popular musicians, a smaller group of respondents of slightly above ten per cent believes that the public is non-committal because they neither send feedback, nor are interested in forming part of their fan-base. They claim that they neither receive criticism or any feedback from the audience.

The disparity in the musicians' experiences is considered healthy because they are obviously not exposed to the same environment and audience and their experience in the number of years varies. However, trends in the music industry strongly indicate that a considerable number hold the view that audience holds the key to success in the entertainment business. Musicians therefore need to create room to accommodate views of the audience since they are part of their business strategy. Those who seem to be holding divergent views with the audience need to adjust, while those who seem to be enjoying their full support need to work even harder to ensure sustainability in their trade.

A majority of the musicians interviewed confessed that they acquire their inspiration to compose and perform from their fans and the public in general. Other sources of inspiration like nature, current affairs and their genre of specialization were not quite as popular as that from their audience. This clearly attests to the perceived symbiotic relationship between the audience and the artistes.

In response to the question on the factors that determine the performance genre that they engage in, nearly half of the musicians interviewed pointed to public demand, which they claim is highly market driven. Being market driven in approach is commercially beneficial. However, on the contrary, views by Fakhir, a Pakistan pop

sensation in a widely publicized interview argues that by being market driven especially in music composition, one becomes a slave trying to fulfill market demands, hence no free hand in composition and direction. This seems to be the actual situation within the local music industry. Whereas this could be his personal sentiments based on personal experiences, there are also other existing situations in a particular environment that could compel individual artistes to be market driven for survival.

The other group of respondents said their inspiration comes from current trends especially from contact with international musicians, whose standards they try to emulate. This category of musicians formed nearly one fifth of the respondents. An even smaller group out of the respondents indicated that they have established a given target audience who appreciate their music and provide good returns. These categories of musicians who are mostly found in the suburbs of the city have been handed a life-line where they can practice the genre of their choice and still get an appreciative audience. Most of them engage in Afro-fusion genre of music. They indicated that their inspiration comes from the intricacies of the genre which they engage in. The minority of the respondents indicated that they abide by specific views, specifications and demands from specific music outlets to which they are affiliated. These outlets like the radio and television have specifics in terms of quality and message. An equal minority, just like the former, work with their passion and develop their original style, while paying little or no attention to whether the public supports them or not. They do not mind the lack of audience support that they risk as long they develop their style which they always hope will come to be appreciated in future while they carve a niche for themselves.

On the question as to whether the public has any influence in their music composition and consideration, almost two thirds of the musicians interviewed indicated that theirs is music largely performed with the public in mind. Just about a quarter of musicians interviewed indicated that they are guided by the principals of the music genre they engage in and not the public, while the minority claimed that the public has no influence whatsoever in their compositions.

At the same instance a half of the artistes interviewed intimated that they most often compromise the styles which they are known for so that they can fit into the demands of their audience, so that they get their support and remain in their favor. Their argument here is that the audience is specific and sometimes ruthless in their

demands and rarely gives one a second chance. Nearly one third of the artistes agreed that they do compromise their style, though not often. They claim that they try to balance their individual styles with the demands of their clientele. This seemingly adamant and uncompromising group of artistes formed the minority. They claim to have a clientele base and are happy to perform what they are good at. However, they are conscious of the public interest in their work. The group claims that they allow minimum amount of pressure from the audience to infiltrate their creativity and performance, and remain largely independent. They do not get much recognition and support from the larger audience, but they are happy to maintain their style because it is in this that they draw their satisfaction.

The responses, arguments and scenarios presented from interviews with the artistes corroborate the fact that popular music is shaped by social, economic and technological forces and is closely linked to the social identity of its performers and audiences (Encarta). The society that consumes music considers it to be the centre of its most profound personal and social experiences (Turino, 2008). Music has special properties and fundamental resources that connect with our own lives, our communities and the environment (ibid). This strong link to humanity is probably what arouses extreme interest by the audience in any music that they are exposed to, hence their natural push to make a contribution to its growth and development.

Findings of the study

The study made some specific and general findings as below;

- (i) Many popular musicians are generally under intense pressure from numerous forces within the popular music industry, but especially from their audiences, who have specific demands which the artistes are pressured to fulfill, sometimes under very strenuous circumstances.
- (ii) Musicians have to a larger extent been yielding to audience demands. The main reason for this situation is that it is the same audience that is the target for their musical products, so they seek to be loyal to their wishes. The risk of failing to allow the audience to participate in shaping their music is that they may decide to withdraw their support in terms of buying their music, attending their live concerts or may withdraw any other kind of sponsorship that keeps the musicians active in the market.

The study also noted that even though popular musicians are faced with numerous challenges in the industry, they have come up with strategies to counter some of these

challenges to ensure their adaptation and survival in the industry. Based on practical reasons and for survival, the strategies are meant to ensure that popular musicians:

- i) Remain firmly in performance business and to make reasonable returns.
- ii) Sustain relevance in the dynamic music industry by being resourceful and remaining proactive.

The specific strategies include the following adopted by the artistes include the following;

- i) Engaging in performance of unique genres for selected audiences.
- ii) Signing contracts to perform in various institutions and entertainment establishments.
- iii) Organizing and performing in live concerts
- iv) Organizing album launching events
- v) Curtain raising events for visiting foreign artistes or locally based celebrities in the industry.
- vi) Collaborative performance and recording (popularly known as 'collabo') with renowned and established artistes.
- vii) Lobbying to perform during state and corporate functions.
- viii) Formation of small but well-managed groups due to limited financial returns.
- ix) Advertising their upcoming events through various electronic and print media.
- x) Integrating performance with other related business services presented as a package.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the study;

1. A society with a population that is mixed, musically literate and that is exposed to a wide range of experiences due to the influence of media and information explosion exhibits characteristics of control. Majority of members of such society, most often feel they have something to offer, whether a critique or a criticism, in contribution to the direction that music entertainment takes. This is considered to be so since music has been proved to be part and parcel of a people's daily lives.
2. The audiences, who are the main consumers of the finished products by popular musicians, have opted to assume an active role in influencing and shaping the kind of musical products which they receive. They do this through

'dictating' in among other areas the genres of music which they like to see being promoted, the quality of studio productions and stage performances, the kind of language used and the themes tackled in the music.

3. The audiences today unlike before have taken keen and active interest in the music offered to them. They feel entitled to have a say on the kind of products that are produced for their consumption by the popular musicians. Musicians are hence advised to pay attention to the voices of the audiences in order to cultivate their patronage and avoid a decline in their fan base.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations made based on the study findings;

1. Popular artistes in the Kenyan music industry need to re-invent their music making and performance, and diversify in order to attempt to adequately satisfy the ever demanding audiences. More innovativeness in the existing and yet to be invented genres of music could be an added incentive to the ever piling pressures emanating from the music loving Kenyan audiences.
2. Popular artistes ought to be in touch with their audiences who are their main clients. The artistes should be able to listen to the wishes of their audience, and understand, synthesize and turn these wishes into musical language that can satisfy the audiences. Popular musicians therefore need to identify a mechanism to enhance more cooperation and coordination between the artistes and the audience.
3. The artistes need to source for alternative strong financial bases. This will guard against manipulation and perceived blackmail by the audience and sponsors, where popular musicians are compelled to adhere to their demands or forfeit their valued financial support.
4. Further studies need to be carried out to determine how popular music which inevitably interests the masses can be utilized in other sectors, to bolster the Kenyan economy, since it seems to be universally accepted and is easily embraced in majority of the economic sectors.

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