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Intoxicating Entertainment? The influence of “Star Music Trek” on the Drinking Practices of Nigerian Students

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Abstract

Sophisticated marketing strategies are increasingly used by transnational alcohol companies in Nigeria. Whilst this facilitates alcohol availability and encourages alcohol consumption, there are no effective policies to regulate alcohol marketing. This study draws on qualitative interviews with 31 Nigerian university students (aged 19-23 years) to explore some of the ways in which “Star Music Trek” (SMT, a brewer-sponsored music concert) establishes spaces that facilitate alcohol consumption amongst Nigerian youths. The data were analysed to generate themes with the aid of NVivo 10 software. The article argues that although the rationale for attending the SMT event is to be entertained by famous artists for a reduced entrance fee, the event creates conditions that influence young people to use alcohol in diverse ways. Amongst non-drinkers, SMT establishes conditions that influence alcohol initiation because purchasing “Star beer”, the brand that sponsors SMT, not only

serves as a ticket or gate pass to some of the concerts, but it is also the only brand sold at the event. Amongst those who use alcohol, SMT creates spaces that encourage a culture of intoxication because of the easy availability and accessibility of Star beer and promotional activities in the form of price reductions, raffle draws and free drinks. The participants also discussed the ways in which the sponsor uses its marketing representatives to promote brand allegiance by encouraging attendees to favor Star beer after the concert. Overall, the findings reveal that SMT is a sophisticated marketing strategy to promote the Star brand. The study discusses the implications of the findings and concludes that effective national alcohol control policies should be formulated and implemented in Nigeria.

Keywords: Alcohol use, Nigeria, students, social event, sponsorship, Star Music Trek

Introduction

Internationally, evidence shows that alcohol consumption amongst young people is increasing. Studies conducted amongst students in Western countries (e.g., Hutton, 2012; Karam, Kypri, & Salamoun, 2007; Kypri et al., 2009) have revealed that many engage in heavy drinking and experience more alcohol-related harms than their non-student counterparts. In Africa, despite the fact that abstinence is relatively high, heavy episodic drinking, especially amongst youths, is prevalent (Jernigan & Babor, 2015). In Nigeria, diverse patterns of, and motives for, alcohol consumption exist amongst youths and alcohol-related problems are rising (Abayomi, Onifade, Adelufosi, & Akinhanmi, 2013; Dumbili, 2015a). According to the World Health Organization (hereafter WHO, 2014), Nigeria ranks second for per capita alcohol consumption (amongst those aged 15 years and above) in Africa, despite the fact that a quarter of the alcohol consumed in the country is unrecorded (Obot, 2007). Although no comparative study between student and non-student populations exists in Nigeria, recent evidence indicates that Nigerian students play drinking games and drink heavily (Dumbili, 2015c), resulting in alcohol-induced violence (Rotimi, 2005), anxiety (Adewuya, 2006) and injuries amongst the student population (Abayomi et al., 2013).

Although a growing number of studies have investigated the rising culture of intoxication and its related consequences amongst Nigerian students, no empirical research on how the sponsorship of social events may contribute to these trajectories was identified.

This gap suggests that there is a pressing need to examine how social events create spaces that influence alcohol consumption amongst Nigerian students. Specifically, the aim of this exploratory study is to examine the extent to which one such event, “Star Music Trek” (SMT, a brewer-sponsored music concert), contributes to alcohol use amongst students.

Nigerian drinking culture

Nigeria, a multicultural society, is made up of three major (Hausa in the north, Igbo in the south-east and Yoruba in the south-west) and over 250 minor ethnic groups, and these diversities mediate drinking rituals and spaces in different regions. Locally produced alcoholic beverages were cherished in pre-independent Nigeria (i.e., 1914-1960), especially in the south (Heap, 2005), because the north was predominantly inhabited by Muslims. In this era, alcohol had strong symbolic values that defined the rationales for drinking, the functions alcohol performed, and drinking time and space (Heap, 2005). Although alcohol was used for pleasure, its consumption was regulated according to gender and age. Adult males dominated drinking spaces because “drinking has never been part of the acceptable image of *Nigerian* women” (Ikuesan, 1994, p.942). Additionally, young people¹ were restrained from drinking because “alcohol consumption was a sign of being an elder” (Heap, 1998, p.29). Because people drank in groups, it was possible to monitor the quantity that others drank because intoxication was culturally taboo (Oshodin, 1995).

Towards the end of the colonisation period, in 1946, the first brewery was established (Heap, 1998) by seven European alcohol importers, who merged and formed Nigerian Breweries (NB) and contracted Heineken to be their advisor (Heap, 1996). The NB started to brew “Star beer” in 1949 (Nigeria Breweries, 2014), and the company monopolised beer production until 1963 when “Guinness Nigeria” was established (Guinness Nigeria, 2011). Because of the establishment of this new brewery, NB employed aggressive marketing strategies in order to continue its dominance of the Nigerian market. One of the strategies that the company used was to create advertising messages that suggested that drinking Star beer had an association with being modern (Van Den Bersselaar, 2011). This is one of the factors that greatly changed the drinking culture

because Nigerian elites began to jettison the locally produced beverages, associating their use with poverty or illiteracy (Van Den Berselaar, 2011). In partnership with Heineken, NB first began importing Heineken beer and later started producing it locally. In 2011, Heineken acquired a substantial part of NB (Nigeria Breweries, 2014b), making it the largest alcohol company in Nigeria.

Irrespective of the changes in the drinking culture caused by the factors discussed above, there are some resilient aspects of the past in contemporary Nigeria. Drinking remains ritualized and alcohol is a vital source of pleasure, featuring on almost all social occasions whereas solitary drinking is rare. Although young people now drink, alcohol consumption remains culturally regarded as an adult male preserve, and women (young and old) who drink are seen as transgressors of femininity because of their flouting of informal social structures (Dumbili, 2015b).

‘Star Music Trek’ and other alcohol marketing strategies

Star Music Trek (also called “Star Trek”) is an annual, all-night music concert held in 10 selected cities across Nigeria and sponsored by NB. Introduced in 2002, SMT is an aspect of NB’s integrated self-promotional, corporate social responsibility and marketing strategies (Nigeria Breweries, 2014). According to NB, SMT offers “Nigerians in every nook and cranny, a good share of the brighter life, in terms of entertainment and enjoyment”; thus, various young, idolised musicians and comedians are contracted to perform at these events (Nigeria Breweries, 2014). For example, at the 2014 edition, “2Face” and “Wizkid” (arguably the most popular young Nigerian musicians), and 15 other famous artists, including three disc jockeys, were contracted for the concert (Nda-Isaiah, 2014).

One of the significant features of this social event is that it is held in different government-owned stadia or similar venues. The event is widely publicised before and after each concert using both print and electronic media (Agency Reporter, 2014a). Additionally, NB engages the services of mobile phone network providers to send text messages randomly to Nigerians about the event. For example, on May 16, 2014, I received the following publicity message from “THE TREK”:

Don't miss the most memorable party in Benin as Davido, Wizkid, Dr. Sid, Kcee and Olamide rock on Star Music Trek, on Saturday May 17 at Ogbe Stadium. Gate fee is 200 naira [US\$1.2].

As such, SMT "has become the nation's most anticipated music carnival with the country's biggest artistes delivering spectacular performances to the delight of thousands of fans across the country" (Nda-Isaiah, 2014).

Furthermore, NB uses diverse social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for publicity purposes (Star Nigeria, 2014a), as has become increasingly common in other countries. For example, in the UK, Ruddock (2012) argued that social networking sites are increasingly used to publicise 'Carnage UK' (a nightlife social event where students' entrance to bars and clubs is subsidised). Similarly, Nicholls (2012) noted that alcohol companies such as Diageo use Facebook and Twitter for the branding and promotion of their nightlife events such as the "Smirnoff Nightlife Exchange Project". Nicholls (2012, p.487) found that "of 35 posts on the Smirnoff GB [Great Britain] Facebook wall, 24 were either pre-event announcements and links to related YouTube videos, or post-event photos and videos documenting the party". At the parties, attendees are encouraged to post pictures of these night-time events on their Twitter walls (Nicholls, 2012). Similar strategies are used by NB in Nigeria because the company engages Nigerian youths on social networking sites, by providing them with an opportunity to vote for the artists they want to visit each of the ten cities (Star Nigeria, 2014b). After each concert, videos and pictures are uploaded to the social networking sites and youths are encouraged to like and share these images. NB then displays how many "likes" the event has received on the sites.

Sponsorship of youth-oriented social events by transnational alcohol companies in Nigeria has a long history. Obot & Ibanga (2002) researched Guinness Nigeria's sponsorship of foreign musicians performing at events organised by the company in the 1990s and early 2000s. Dumbili (2014b, p.481) has also documented NB's recent sponsorship of the "Legend Real Deal Nite" (all-night party held in different bars and hotels) to promote "Legend Stout" nationwide. While some of these events are free, others are subsidised (Dumbili, 2014b). Both adults and minors can attend because there is no effective means of providing proof of

age in Nigeria (Dumbili, 2014b). Additionally, the beer brand that sponsors each event is the only brand sold at the venue, and at some of the events, is sold at a subsidised rate.

In Nigeria, there is little regulation of such marketing strategies, for various reasons. First, as is customary for transnational alcohol companies, NB regards organising social events as a part of its corporate social responsibilities (Obot & Ibanga, 2002). Therefore, the company claims that it creates employment and empowers attendees through the promotional activities that accompany these events (de Bruijn, 2011; Dumbili, 2014b).

Second, despite the fact that there are sundry laws in place (such as a minimum purchasing age of 18 years, restrictions on places where alcohol can be marketed and an advertising code of practice, which stipulates that alcohol advertising materials, such as posters and billboards, cannot be placed near schools, churches, mosques, hospitals, etc. (WHO, 2014; de Bruijn, Ferreira-Borges, Engels, & Bhavsar, 2014)) there are no evidence-based regulatory measures in the form of written national alcohol control policies (WHO, 2014). Additionally, there are no laws or policies regulating the sponsorship of social events in Nigeria (WHO, 2014). Moreover, the existing laws are neither enforced by the government nor obeyed by alcohol companies in Nigeria (Farrell & Gordon, 2012). Researchers have argued that the non-enforcement of these laws is attributable to the government's economic interest in the activities of the alcohol producers because they pay taxes and levies for using government properties, such as stadia, to host these events (Dumbili, 2014b; Obot, 2007).

Therefore, alcohol companies, which rely mainly on marketing self-regulation (Dumbili, 2014a), engage in activities that breach international marketing standards (Farrell & Gordon, 2012). This increases the physical, economic and psychological availability of alcohol (Babor, Robaina, & Jernigan, 2015; Dumbili, 2013; Obot, 2013), and affects the changing patterns of consumption and the rising alcohol-related problems. As indicated above, despite the fact that young people's use of alcohol is not normative in Nigeria (Odejide, Ohaeri, Adelekan, & Ikuesan, 1987), through the use of diverse marketing strategies, alcohol companies circumvent these sociocultural values by increasing the availability/accessibility of alcohol to the youths (Obot, 2013).

Globally, evidence shows that young people (students and non-students) are one of the groups targeted by alcohol companies through sophisticated marketing strategies (Jernigan, 2010; Jernigan & Rushman, 2014; Patil, Winpenny, Elliott, Rohr, & Nolte, 2014; Babor et al., 2010). Research suggests that alcohol companies employ multi-platform marketing strategies to reach students and to influence their drinking behavior (O'Brien et al., 2014; Raciti, Sharma, O'Hara, Reinhard, & Davies, 2013; Kuo, Wechsler, Greenberg, & Lee, 2003). This is because strategies that increase alcohol availability also encourage accessibility and alcohol consumption (Babor et al., 2010; Smith & Foxcroft, 2009).

In New Zealand, McCreanor, Barnes, Kaiwai, Borell, & Gregory (2008) have traced how beer industries sponsor youth-oriented music events such as Export Gold's "Big Day Out". Young people see these events as exciting because of the artists performing at them (McCreanor et al., 2008). In the same country, Casswell & Maxwell (2005) showed how alcohol companies use a popular youth-oriented radio station as a platform to encourage young people to send text messages and emails or make calls in order to win tickets to parties organised by alcohol companies. Additionally, they reported that the beer brand sponsoring each event is conspicuously displayed at the event. Similarly, McCreanor et al. (2005) argued that the strategy of alcohol branding also ties in with young people's identity formation, because the associated marketing messages are designed not only to appeal to youths but also to dynamically evoke their cultural capital (McCreanor et al., 2013). Carah's (2010) research in Australia also noted how corporate organisations engage the services of local musicians and young people in brand building.

In the UK, Szmigin, Griffin, Mistral, Bengry-Howell, Weale, & Hackley (2008, p.362) argued that sponsorship of national music festivals by alcohol producers/marketers creates social spaces for "bounded hedonistic consumption" (i.e., heavy alcohol consumption for pleasure in 'spaces' and 'situations' that influence it, while paying little or no attention to the risks of drunkenness). Similarly, scholars (e.g., Quigg, Hughes, & Bellis, 2013; Ruddock, 2012) have argued that through the organisation of Carnage UK, students are exposed to diverse patterns of alcohol use because Carnage is held in spaces where alcohol is readily available. Additionally, the prices of alcohol are reduced through the promotional activities that accompany Carnage events. Amongst other consequences, findings show that Carnage encourages binge drinking, risky sexual behaviours, injuries, etc. (Hubbard, 2013; Quigg et

al., 2013). Thus, Hubbard (2013, p.265) argued that this social event provides spaces where “social alcohol consumption becomes antisocial”.

Interestingly, Carnage (and other similar events) grew out of the deregulation of the economy, through neo-liberal policies that resulted in the issuance of licences to alcohol marketers, to sell their brands on sites that were previously categorised as dry, or to rebrand such sites (Hobbs, Lister, Hadfield, Winlow, & Hall, 2000; Measham, 2004). Consequently, these liberalisation policies engendered the rapid growth of the night-time economy, and increased alcohol availability and consumption and alcohol-related antisocial behaviours in city centres. Indeed, city centres and other urban leisure spaces became “sites of excessive consumption and transgression” (Measham, 2004, p.309), where ‘determined drunkenness’ (i.e., drinking for pleasure, especially with the aim of reaching a “desired level of intoxication” without paying attention to the consequences or risks (Measham & Brain, 2005, p.274)) or ‘calculated hedonism’ (Szmigin et al., 2008) became normalised. Similar policies, such as “the 1989 Sale of Liquor Act”, which contributed to the “increase in the number of off-licenses from 1,675 in 1995 to 4,199 in 2009” in New Zealand (McEwan, Campbell, & Swain, 2010, p.22) and also led to the growing night-time economy, have been reported (McCreanor et al., 2008).

In the Nigerian context, following the adoption of neoliberal policies and the deregulation of the economy (imposed by the World Bank/International Monetary Fund’s Structural Adjustment Programme in 1986 (Alos, 2000)), the existing transnational alcohol companies expanded their brewing plants. Following the return to democratic governance in 1999, the Nigerian government reinforced these neoliberal policies and this has resulted in an increase in the number of alcohol companies (Dumbili, 2015a; Jernigan & Obot, 2006), the volume of production and the competitive and concerted marketing activities of these companies. Although the night-time economy is still in its infancy in Nigeria (arguably due to insecurity and sociocultural/religious constraints), as indicated above, alcohol companies are encouraging nightlife by sponsoring diverse youth-oriented social events like SMT (Dumbili, 2014b). Therefore, they are creating social spaces where “bounded but determined drunkenness within a developing culture of intoxication” (Measham & Brain, 2005, p.276) is becoming normalised, especially amongst youths who use such spaces. It is against this backdrop that this study examines one of these nightlife social events.

Methods

This Project and Procedure

This article was developed from a wider study that explored three issues: the interplay between students' media consumption and alcohol use, the role of alcohol marketing in students' drinking practices, and the gendering of alcohol. Works focusing on alcohol consumption and social identity construction (Dumbili, 2015b), and the use of female students to promote beer brands in male-dominated drinking spaces, and how this creates social and health risks (Dumbili, 2015c), have already been published from the data sets. This article focuses on the second issue: the role of alcohol marketing in students' drinking practices. The rationale for employing a qualitative approach is to explore the processes through which social event sponsorship creates environments that promote the culture of intoxication amongst Nigerian youths. The study was conducted on a university campus located in a city of Anambra State in south-eastern Nigeria. The Nigerian University and Brunel University London Ethics Boards approved the study before the data were collected between September and December, 2013.

The participants were recruited from nine university faculties using word-of-mouth and snowballing approaches. Here, a word-of-mouth approach was used to recruit the first group of participants. On campus, the researcher approached students and introduced the project to them. After establishing rapport, the students were then asked if they drank alcohol. Those who self-identified as current alcohol users were then asked if they would consider participating in the study and sharing their experiences of alcohol consumption. Those who indicated interest were provided with an information sheet that detailed the aims of the study, the role of participants, the potential benefits and harms of participation, the methods for securing data and maintaining confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation (Flick, 2014). Whilst 26 (20 males and six females) were recruited via this word-of-mouth approach, snowballing techniques facilitated the recruitment of an additional three females and two males. These methods were required for the successful recruitment of female participants. While alcohol consumption amongst young people is a sensitive topic in Nigeria and elicits sociocultural disapproval, young female drinkers are particularly

stigmatised (Ikuesan, 1994). Young people, especially females, are not easily accessible for such studies, and reaching them through any means that may expose their identity will hinder their participation.

Participants, interviews and data analysis

Thirty-one in-depth interviews lasting 33-90 minutes were conducted with 22 male and nine female undergraduate students, aged 19-23 years. The interviews were recorded with a digital device with the permission of the participants. All but one of the participants was from the *Igbo*² ethnic group. This is mainly because of admission policies in Nigeria, in that government-owned universities have 'catchment areas' and admission quotas. Thus, gaining admission outside one's 'catchment area' or ethnic group is often difficult. Also, all the participants self-identified as Christians. No incentive was offered to the participants.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and a thematic analysis was undertaken to identify rich and detailed patterns of meaning in the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Silverman (2011) advises beginning analysis early and the preliminary analysis was initiated manually immediately after the first interview was conducted. Notes taken during the interview were read and reread and the audio file was crosschecked for accuracy. This provided an opportunity to identify some new areas to probe and explore further in the subsequent interviews. It also helped to record some tentative coding schemes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following this, the first interview was transcribed. As the audiotape was being transcribed, the initial extracts were categorised into broad themes and subthemes. This process was repeated for the next six interviews. Because it was imperative to assess the analyst's initial thoughts and ideas about coding, two senior academics read and commented on the interviews and the preliminary analysis. These processes turned out to be very useful because they assisted in obtaining an early grasp of the data (Morse, 2012) and some of these subthemes, grouped manually, became the parent nodes, while others were condensed (Saldaña, 2012) into different child nodes when the transcripts were imported into NVivo 10 for further analysis.

When all of the 31 interviews had been transcribed, the transcripts were read several times and crosschecked and reconciled with the audio recordings before importing them into the NVivo software. Following this, a number of queries were conducted, the first of which was a word frequency query to gain an insight into the words most frequently used by the participants (which included *alcohol*, *alcohol promos*, *drink*, *drinking*, *Star Trek*, *Star Music Trek*, *students*, etc.) and how this could help in understanding the patterns within the whole data set. It also helped with further coding the data (Seale and Rivas, 2012) because by clicking and opening each referenced source the analyst was able to highlight, and drag and drop the extract to the appropriate nodes.

At the end of this process, each transcript was reread and data that had not been coded through the first process were coded. When the coding was completed, the nodes were read thoroughly to identify incompatible quotes. Through these means, such quotes were condensed or expanded into the existing child nodes or new nodes were created before running matrix coding queries. At the end of the matrix queries, the nodes were exported to a word document and read several times. Here, some comparisons with the few tentative themes that had been generated manually were made before recording the patterns of meaning from the key themes that had been identified. These key themes, such as “alcohol companies and youth-oriented social events”, “rationale for attending SMT”, “SMT influences alcohol consumption” and “SMT: a space for alcohol marketing”, are presented in the following section.

Results

Alcohol companies and youth-oriented social events

Although the study focuses on SMT, participants were initially asked if they knew of any social event held on the campus or in the city where the university is located. The participants discussed diverse social events that they knew of or had attended since they gained admission to the university. They noted that alcohol companies often sponsor nightlife social events, and indicated that some of these events are regularly organised on campus or in the surrounding bars, hotels or nightclubs. One interesting element of these

accounts is that all 31 participants were able to identify at least two youth-oriented social events, such as 'Talent Hunt', 'Bonfire Nights', and 'Cultural Carnivals', that had been sponsored by alcohol industries. Many of them had also attended at least one previous event. For example, the majority of men who shared their knowledge of social events that they had attended indicated that different alcohol producers sponsor Students' Union Government (SUG) social events:

Some breweries do come to partner with the SUG during 'SUG Night.'³ And when they partner, they bring some of their products to sell ... They do serve alcohol during SUG night a lot. (Buchi, 23)

One particular night they did 'Bonfire Night'... Star beer sponsored the event. So they had their stand [kiosk] inside the school compound where they sold their drinks. (Jacob, 23)

Because the participants noted that during these events alcohol companies provide facilities where people can buy alcohol, the participants were probed further to encourage them to unpack how participating in these events may influence students to use alcohol. Although diverse opinions were articulated, they often expressed the view that attendees are likely to drink alcohol:

During one of the SUG Nights, Star beer [producer] came and sold their product at a subsidised rate. That is, like a cheaper amount than you'll get it outside the school. So that alone makes people drink alcohol. Even though you don't drink before, when you go to such events and see other people drinking, everybody is feeling good, you see drinks everywhere and at a cheaper rate than you'll get it outside, you'll want to try it. So it encourages you to drink more. (Chikere, 23)

Although other participants argued that price reductions encouraged drinking amongst those who attend these events, they identified another way in which these events create conditions that influence drinking:

There was one event they did when we were in the third year [class three]; they did it at [name of hotel]. Apart from the ticket you buy, the 'Gate Pass' stated that you must be holding a bottle of Star beer before you can cross the gate into the venue. (Fred, 22)

The participants explained how, in addition to the ticket, it was compulsory for any attendee to purchase a bottle or can of Star beer at the venue and when he/she reached the gate, the bouncers would confirm that the bottle/can was not empty before the attendee was allowed in. Similarly, some male participants recalled that they had, in many instances, consumed more alcohol than they had intended. For example, they shared their experiences of how boys "got messed up" (i.e., got drunk at one of these events) and could not go home on their own; thus other boys carried them back to their hostels. Their accounts emphasise the relationship between drunkenness and alcohol's availability and low cost. Both male and female participants emphasised the connection between students' parties and alcohol because being intoxicated puts them in a "party mood". They want to dance and socialise. Drinking games and other rituals add fun to parties organised by students (Dumbili, 2015b). The easy availability of alcohol at these events helps to facilitate these consumption rituals.

Rationale for attending SMT

When the participants were asked to explain what attracts them to SMT, they emphasised the presence of their favourite artists rather than an intention to drink alcohol. One of the male participants recalled that he had attended the 2012 SMT event because his girlfriend "wanted to see Wizkid" (a 24-year old musician). A female buttressed this point, stating that "it is just the artiste that students are all crazy about seeing and not the drink". In general, similar views were offered by the others, but one account revealed some nuances:

They bring varieties of superstars and celebrities, and students see it as an opportunity to see these very big superstars with a very small amount of money... These are superstars that on a normal day you'll pay up to ten thousand naira [US\$60 at the time of study] to go and watch them [live]. Then Star beer brings it to

your campus or city, and you can watch it live for just 200 naira [US\$1.2]. I have been in this school for five years, and whenever they do it, that particular day the whole campus will be empty. (Chike, 21)

From these accounts, it seems that one of the reasons why students coalesce in SMT venues is not only because NB contracts famous artists, but also because the gate fees are highly subsidised. Similarly, a self-acclaimed fan of many celebrities added that he attends SMT every year to avail himself of the opportunity to see the superstars that he admires. One female revealed a more complex account, noting that the attendees are not just youths who reside in the city where the concert is held, but also those from the surrounding cities. When she was asked to explain why people from other cities attend, she replied:

That's because of the attraction; they always bring artists, like these top musicians to come and perform and students see it as an opportunity to go and see those artists. (Pretty, 20)

Interviewer: Okay, why do you think students in particular attend the event?

They attend to witness it live. People don't like being told: 'this was what happened'. So, most students go there to see top artistes in Nigeria who come to perform live. (Pretty, 20)

When the male participants who had attended the 2012 event were asked to explain why they had attended, some revealed that although seeing famous artists was part of their motivation, they also attended because of other promotional activities that were held at the event:

There are raffle tickets they sell there where you have the opportunity to win prizes from them. I know that because the first time I participated, I got raffle tickets, and I had a lot of them... So I gave some to my friends that went there. I had to change the [beer bottle caps] to free drinks. Then on the raffle tickets, I had the opportunity to participate in the promo. (Jacob, 23)

SMT influences alcohol consumption

Additional findings point to the diverse ways in which SMT creates social spaces that influence attendees' drinking practices. As indicated above, the participants emphasised that they go to the event to see famous artists, but attendees also reported consuming Star beer at the event. Whilst some suggested that participating in the event establishes the conditions for alcohol initiation (for non-drinkers), others emphasised the consumption of large quantities of alcohol (among those who already drink alcohol). When male participants were asked to explain how the event affected their drinking practices, they noted the lack of drink choices other than beer and the links between low cost, pleasure, dancing and drinking. For example:

You know that they sell beer at a cheaper rate there, so you'll find it easy to buy a couple of chilled cans of beer because they have cooling vans around... They do not sell malt (non-alcoholic drink); it is just beer. So you will be left with no other option than to drink beer. Although you may not really be into much alcohol but... you have no other option... So, it might really cause someone who doesn't drink to start drinking beer. (Peter, 23)

They sell their product around the venue, and people tend to buy it at a cheaper rate... While the people [celebrities] are performing, people tend to be drinking and feeling happy. You know some people cannot dance without being controlled by alcohol; so people tend to buy and drink in order to feel happy and motivated to dance. (Ejike, 23)

The responses of female participants also revealed complex nuances with regard to how SMT provides spaces that influence drinking. For instance, one argued that although her brand preference is Smirnoff Ice, she consumed Star beer when she attended the 2012 SMT event:

If I should speak about my own [experience], what took me there was to see all those superstars like D'Banj, M.I [both popular musicians]. I have not seen them before, and I had the opportunity that day because of Star Trek. I went, and I was happy to see them, but I ended up taking Star beer... I tasted Star beer for the first time that day... On a normal day, I can't just start drinking Star beer. It's not my brand... but I took it and I liked the taste. I don't know if it was because of the environment, but I drank Star beer, so it affected me. (Genny, 23)

For Genny, because Star beer was the only brand of alcohol sold at the venue, she had little choice but to drink it. Some of the men provided similar accounts. For example:

When you get to the venue, the only drink they sell is Star brand... guys see it as an opportunity to take their girlfriends out, and guys tend to just liberate themselves. If you go there, you must buy a drink, and since Star is the only available brand, you must get that brand and get it for your girlfriend. So most people that go to Star Trek always drink. (Chike, 21)

Although the non-availability of other beverages (e.g., soft drinks) necessitates the consumption of the Star brand, the participants also articulated other reasons why people drink this brand at the event. For example, one recalled that the first time he participated, "if you had a can of Star beer you could enter for free.... if you didn't, you had to pay 200 naira [US\$1.2]". Similarly, another participant noted that:

When you're going to the show, you must... buy one [can] of Star beer and you'll get a free pass to the show. So they are using it to advertise their product. Do you understand? (Buchi, 23)

As indicated above, similar accounts were shared by the men based on their experience of SUG social events, which are also often supported by alcohol companies. At these events, purchasing an entry ticket entitled the purchaser to a bottle of Star beer at the event:

Sometimes you buy a ticket at the gate, and when you go inside, the ticket might help you to obtain a bottle of beer for free. So the ticket you bought outside is equivalent to a bottle of beer inside. You don't need to pay any more. (Pretty, 20)

Additional accounts emphasising how SMT events create spaces that encourage drinking were provided by male participants. For instance:

It affects students to drink because as the artists are performing, you'll buy a drink and as you are drinking your girlfriend will be watching you. So you have to get a drink for your girlfriend. Girls that come alone tend to buy for themselves; otherwise guys that are looking for girls to dance with will get them a drink and ask them for a dance. (Chike, 21)

The accounts of female participants also highlighted the fact that the gendered *branded environment of intoxicating entertainment* provided by SMT creates conditions that encourage "determined drunkenness" (i.e., SMT may influence alcohol consumption in a "hedonistic yet bounded drinking style" with the aim of attaining a "desired level of intoxication" (Measham & Brain, 2005, p.274)), by making people drink more than they would drink on a normal drinking occasion:

...Imagine somebody whose brand preference is Star. If that person can take like two or three bottles in a normal gathering, maybe being where your spirit is lifted, and you are happy that you are seeing someone [celebrities] you never anticipated to see, you may end up taking five or six bottles. (Genny, 23)

Among the men, it was revealed that drinking the same brand helps them to cement their friendship network. That is, men indicated that consuming the same brand of alcohol, especially beer in leisure spaces, not only helps them in sharing camaraderie, but it assists them to identify who can "hold his drink". This is similar to what they stated earlier, in that, consuming the highest number of bottles confers a higher status (Dumbili, 2015b). Thus, being in an environment where a single brand of alcohol is readily available may contribute to the use of heavy drinking for social identity construction. The data also suggest that young men have developed other SMT consumption rituals, such as the association between drinking and flirtation during and after the event:

When you are dancing and you are seeing beautiful girls mostly with provocative dresses, being under intoxication, it's a pleasure to dance with the opposite sex [girl]. It feels nice and probably after a bottle they tend to take another one... So after the concert, sometimes when you remember such a beautiful experience you had with the opposite sex, you just go to the bar and buy a drink probably to see if you can get a girl to dance with. (Chike, 21)

The participants also shared their knowledge about how alcohol availability may result in a wild behavior:

People were really buying, drinking and acting weird. It was one hell of a day. The crowd was really too much... Everybody was drinking... They always have their beer stands [kiosks] there. And you'll be buying and drinking and acting weird; so if you really can't cope with something like that you stay away. (Jacob, 23)

When the participants were asked whether they would attend future SMT events, many affirmed that they would. Furthermore, they were asked why they would want to attend given the "weirdness" that some of them had experienced on the previous occasions. The most significant reason men gave was that "drinks are always cheap at the event", while the women noted that they would like to see famous artists they have not seen before. As these accounts suggest, although drinking is often done in a party environment, the NB's presence and pricing policy shape drinking practices, such as choice of brand, consuming more than one intended, etc. Thus, the data suggest that the likelihood of drinking is increased to the extent that some attendees may engage in heavy drinking.

SMT: a space for alcohol marketing

The findings also point to another dimension of marketing strategy. NB utilises the events not only to promote Star beer, but to engage in face-to-face advertising. Male participants expressed the view that SMT is "a way to advertise Star beer" because it provides "an

opportunity for the brewer to bring their own stuff [product] and to make people like it". Additionally, NB marketing representatives encourage people (who may not be current Star beer users) to abandon their brands and start consuming Star beer:

They have so many people they invite [marketing representatives] that will come and tell you the benefits of the Star brand and that they recently added some new ingredients. They will advise that you have to do away with other brands and start taking Star [beer]. So after the programme you might be convinced and start taking Star beer. (Kelly, 21)

These accounts reveal some of the ways in which alcohol industry-sponsored events create spaces that influence young people's drinking.

Discussion

The interview data described above shed light on the ways in which some young Nigerians understand the effects of music concerts sponsored by alcohol companies, including the ways these events create social spaces that influence drinking practices. In this respect, the study contributes to the sparse literature on how alcohol marketing, through event sponsorship, may influence alcohol consumption and contribute to the normalisation of intoxication in Nigeria. The findings suggest that alcohol companies in Nigeria contribute to the developing night-time economy by sponsoring nightlife social events on university campuses (e.g., SUG events) or in leisure spaces (e.g., SMT). The young people interviewed for the study demonstrated a highly developed knowledge of these events.

Regarding the reasons why youths attend SMT, the findings suggest that their original intention is not to drink alcohol but to watch the live music presented by famous artists. In New Zealand, McCreanor et al. (2008) report a similar finding in that young people are attracted to the 'Big Day Out' events by the type of music performed. Similarly, the reason for attending Carnage UK is not always to drink but to meet and socialise with other students from diverse backgrounds (Quigg, Hughes, & Bellis, 2013). At the same time, these events are organised in ways that encourage alcohol consumption and direct attendees

towards particular brands. In the Nigerian context, SMT also brings together youths from diverse backgrounds (and the majority, especially women, may not originally plan to drink because of the sociocultural constraints discussed earlier). Thus, while on the one hand the events appear to reinforce the traditional rituals of social drinking and bonding that are prevalent (amongst adult males) in southern Nigeria (Oshodin, 1995), the events also seem to contravene traditional consumption practices by creating conditions for heavy consumption and by fostering consumption among young women.

Although social drinking has been cherished in southern Nigeria, scholars (e.g., Odejide et al. 1987) have argued that cultural norms have constrained young people's drinking practices. Despite the fact that some communities permitted youths to consume alcohol at traditional festivals (arguably once in a year), the quantities they consumed were monitored by adults (Obot, 2000). These constraints not only conferred on elder men a higher authority in many African communities (Willis, 2001), but they also curtailed youthful exuberance and alcohol-related problems. While the sponsor of SMT tries to reproduce or reinvent the dominant drinking practices that enhanced social cohesion in the traditional era, the concerts provide spaces that influence alcohol initiation (if the attendee does not drink) among those who are not supposed to consume alcohol. By making Star beer the only beverage sold at these venues (despite the fact that NB produces soft drinks), SMT establishes a condition that encourages transgressive drinking.

Amongst those who already consume alcohol, this study found that they may consume large quantities at SMT events for the following reasons. First, it was found that drinking to intoxication enables some of them to dance and socialise in party settings. Thus, this may result in 'calculated hedonism' (Szmigin et al., 2008) created by SMT event, especially because the physical and psychological availability of alcohol at these concerts is connected with the culture of intoxication (Measham & Brain, 2005) that is becoming prevalent amongst Nigerian students (Dumbili, 2015b). Relatedly, it was also found that SMT event creates spaces that encourage flirtation that may engender risky sexual behaviors.

Another way SMT may promote intoxication is through the provision of convenient sales outlets and low pricing of alcohol. Kuo et al. (2003) found that promotional activities (in the form of price reductions) engender binge drinking and other risky behaviors amongst

American students. If the participant accounts are accurate, the SMT promotional strategy of price specials and ticket concessions may encourage drinking. Similarly, promotional activities that offer free drinks are held at the SMT event, and as Babor, Robaina, & Jernigan (2015) argue, alcohol marketing that provides free drinks facilitates drunkenness.

As indicated above, SMT venues also serve as spaces for raffle draws and prize redemption (i.e., winners can exchange bottle caps that contain a seal for another drink). Therefore, those seeking to win promotional items must drink because the winning seals are concealed under crown corks or can lids (Nigerian Breweries, 2013; de Bruijn, 2011). These activities too may establish conditions that increase the consumption of large quantities of alcohol (i.e. in order to win promotional prizes). This is why McCreanor et al. (2008, p.945) argue that to understand why young people engage in “determined drunkenness” requires answering the question: “determined by whom?”. While recent evidence shows that the culture of intoxication is becoming widespread amongst students who use heavy drinking to construct masculine or feminine social identities (Dumbili, 2015b), the findings of this present study suggest that young people’s drinking is apparently circumstantial and determined to a large extent by alcohol companies, who create social spaces and establish conditions that encourage drinking and intoxication. Another important indication in the data is the way in which students revealed that they would attend future events, not only because of the entertainment but also because of the ability to buy alcohol at cheaper rates. Again, this reveals that alcohol promotion in the form of price reductions normalises the culture of intoxication (Kuo et al., 2003).

Most importantly, it was found that SMT is organised for brand promotion because when youths coalesce at SMT events, the sponsor interrupts the concert to inform the attendees about Star beer’s benefits and the ingredients they added recently to the brand. They also canvass for audience patronage of Star beer, especially after the event. Through this process, they transmit positive messages about alcohol’s benefits in a face-to-face fashion to the youths, encouraging consumption. Scholars (e.g., McCreanor et al., 2005) have argued that this has serious implications because it has long-lasting effects on young people’s immediate and future drinking. Again, as the data indicated, it facilitates direct advertising and brand promotion among the youths without an additional cost (McCreanor

et al., 2008), supporting Ruddock's (2012, p.61) assertion that "alcohol marketing works because it works with audiences."

One of the unexpected issues raised in this study was the way in which alcohol served as a ticket to these events, thereby creating a space of *branded intoxicating entertainment*. The fact that NB employs a strategy whereby partygoers must present a bottle or can of Star beer at the gate (or they must pay full admission price) before they are allowed into the venue suggests that everyone who attends the concert must buy and/or drink alcohol. In that it seems alcohol characterises and provides a supporting logic for these concerts, and the events establish spaces where intoxication is normalised, attendees are likely to drink more than one bottle of Star beer. This has serious implications for Nigeria, where alcohol-related problems amongst adolescents and young adults are growing (WHO, 2104; Dumbili, 2015b).

Conclusion

The study has a number of features that must be taken into account when drawing conclusions. One of them is that it relies on the statements of the participants without observing the events as they occurred in their settings. The collection of ethnographic data in these contexts is warranted, and would add a valuable dimension to analyses of the relationships between youth, alcohol marketing and cultural events in Nigeria. Furthermore, despite the fact that the article addresses one of the structural forces that is shaping the contemporary Nigerian drinking culture – gender – it did not elicit data from many female participants due to the recruitment problems indicated above. To overcome these problems in future studies, female researchers should be used to elicit data from female participants. Other issues to consider are that the data were collected from one university, and especially from people who share the same ethnic and religious beliefs. Because of the diverse religious and cultural beliefs in Nigeria, the opinions of these participants may not reflect those of other Nigerian students. As such, studies that collect data from all of the regions in Nigeria are needed. Again, future studies should integrate different qualitative methods. It is also imperative to elicit data from the sponsor of SMT. This will yield more nuanced

insights into the processes and thinking involved in SMT events, which would in turn aid in the design and implementation of more effective policies.

Internationally, evidence shows that countries with less strict regulatory measures experience more alcohol-related problems (Bosque-Prous et al., 2014). As indicated above, despite the fact that an advertising code of practice exists in Nigeria, it is not enforced (de Bruijin et al., 2014). Similarly, the sponsorship of events relies on marketing self-regulation because no policies on this exist in Nigeria (WHO, 2014). One possible effect of this weak regulatory environment combined with the apparent appeal of events such as SMT is that alcohol availability and easy access may continue to increase in the country, fostering an increasingly accepting environment for alcohol consumption among young people. As such, this study recommends that written national alcohol control policies to regulate event sponsorship that may influence alcohol availability/accessibility should be formulated and implemented.

WHO (2010) policy documents could serve as a useful guide for these policies if Nigeria takes care to adapt them to the local cultures. South Africa has proposed a total ban on alcohol advertising (Jernigan, 2013). While the results of this study do not in themselves point to this kind of measure in Nigeria, it is one option to be considered. Another less comprehensive measure would be to ensure that social events aimed at young people cannot be sponsored by alcohol companies. Likewise, the use of alcohol as a ticket to social events could be banned in Nigeria. In addition to more effective regulation, also needed are evidence-based mechanisms to disseminate information to young people regarding the potential health and social issues related to consuming large quantities of alcohol. This could promote safer consumption amongst Nigerian youths. In summary, the findings of this study have illuminated some of the ways event sponsorship and other aspects of alcohol marketing create and establish social spaces that normalise drinking amongst youths. It is hoped that these findings will, as a matter of urgency, engender discussions around the formulation of regulatory measures on alcohol marketing that target young people.

NOTES:

1. These are children, adolescents and young adults who are mostly below 30 years of age
2. The Igbo ethnic group is one of the three predominant ethnic groups in Nigeria. They live in the south-east where the data were collected.
3. SUG Night is an annual, all-night party organised by Students' Union Governments at Nigerian universities.

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