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Strategic Approaches to Piracy Syndrome in Nigerian Contemporary Music Industry

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Abstract

The proliferation of pirated musical works scattered across the country confirmed that pirates are feeding fat on the intellectual property of music producers. It is worrisome that piracy persistently thrives, despite the establishment of Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) and Copyright Society of Nigeria (COSON) to nip this incessant menace in the bud. Hence, this paper sets out to unearth strategic approaches that can be employed to complement and strengthen the effort of Nigerian government in combating the piracy syndrome in the Nigerian contemporary music industry. It relied primarily on oral interview, textual materials as well as internet sources for its data collection and adopted labor theory as the theoretical framework. Based on the active participation of the researcher in music production and performance for over four decades, participant-observation method becomes germane to this study. It was discovered that piracy is not only limited to buying and selling of musical products but copyright infringement also permeates musical performance arena where contemporary musicians pirate one another's works. Thus, originality and creativity are often eclipsed. The paper concluded that strategic preventive and punitive measures should be put in place by the government as copyright act is reviewed and enforced to check pirates' activities in the Nigerian contemporary music industry. The researcher, therefore, proposed some strategic approaches such as strategic sensitisation campaign; strategic law overhauling, promulgation and enforcement; strategic device of music anti-piracy software; strategic implementation and strategic funding in order to fight piracy in the Nigerian contemporary music industry.

Keywords: Strategy, piracy, music industry, copyright infringement, intellectual property

Introduction

Nigerian Contemporary Music is an integral part of entertainment business plagued with a plethora of frightening challenges threatening its survival. Obviously, the protracted major challenge confronting Nigerian contemporary music industry is piracy which is of great concern to music composers and producers. Piracy is a virus that has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian entertainment business in general and contemporary music industry in particular. Nigerian contemporary music industry, as a major component of the entertainment business, is currently being ravaged by a scourge of piracy syndrome. The pirated musical works, ranging from audio to video, are seeing scattered across the country and even beyond. The rate of proliferation of the market with pirated musical products is not commensurate with the profit accrued to owners of the intellectual property. Adedeji (2016, p. 264) confirms that piracy has not allowed artistes to be properly remunerated.

It is disheartening that pirates are feeding fat on the intellectual property of music producers, reaping where they have not sown. They make themselves happy at the expense of the hard labour of the music producers. They smile as they enjoy unmerited financial gain while music composers sob secretly as they endure unwarranted intellectual pain. This paradoxical scenario attests to the Yoruba axiom: *ọrọ ti oloko fi n s'ọkun ni aparo fi n rọrin,* which simply means what makes a farm owner weep, the same the quail laughs at. This is an ugly situation in which copyright strives to thrive and survive.

It is worthy of note that piracy is not only limited to buying and selling of musical products but copyright infringement also permeates musical performance arena where contemporary musicians pirate one another's work, especially in live show. At various events, be it religious or social, violation of copyright law characterises most musical performances done by the invited musicians, which gradually eclipses originality and creativity.

We cannot overlook or despise the efforts of the federal government of Nigeria in fighting piracy syndrome. The Nigerian government's response to piracy syndrome can be seen in the various enactments and amendments over the years that led to the establishment of Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) and Copyright Society of Nigeria (COSON) to nip this incessant menace in the bud. Some of the evident activities done by the commission are periodic raids and prosecution of the culprits. Unfortunately, with all the efforts of the Nigerian government pirates are yet to desist from their illegal activities. Nwogu (2015, p. 113) notes that despite the provisions of law and the raid by these agencies, copyright piracy still abounds in Nigeria. Rapid technological advancement is a major contributing factor. Technological advancement plays a significant role in most activities of the pirates and that of music producers. As music producers use it to enhance their music production, pirates engage it to perpetrate their illegal acts. In sum, it is an added advantage to both parties.

Therefore, this paper attempts to unearth a strategic approach that can be employed to complement and strengthen the effort of Nigerian government in combating piracy syndrome in the Nigerian contemporary music industry. It is hoped that the Federal Government of Nigeria, through her copyright supervisory agencies, will find this paper useful as they review their approach and come up with pragmatic measures to subdue piracy.

Theoretical Framework

Labor theory as propounded by John Locke is adopted to interrogate this study. The Locke's labor theory, which is also known as Lockeanism, justifies private property that is based on the natural right of one's ownership of one's own labor, and the right to nature's common property to the extent that one's labor can utilize it. Locke's theory is often used to analyze the natural rights of inventors, authors, and artists in their own creations (Karen, 1978).

A measure of individual's natural right is protected and limitation of such right is elucidated in Lockean labor theory. The measure of right by John Locke as stated by George (2015) is that:

> No Man's Labour could subdue, or appropriate all, nor could his Enjoyment consume more than a small part; so that it was impossible for any Man, this way, to intrench upon the rights of another, or acquire, to himself, a Property, to the Prejudice of his Neighbour, … This *measure* did confine every Man's *Possession,* to a very moderate Proportion, and such as he might appropriate to himself, without Injury to any Body in the first Ages of the World….

The application of Lockeanism to the music industry encourages natural rights of each lawful participant in the music production chain, and frowns at any form of encroachment or infringement that may cause 'injury' or 'pain' to another. As a composer has natural right by law to his intellectual property, so also other major components of production chain such as a registered recording studio, licensed marketers and expectant consumers. It is glaring from the theory that the composer owns the copyright of his intellectual property. The registered recording studio, which by natural right is saddled with the responsibility of audio and/or visual documentation, is bound by the copyright law. Reproduction of copyrighted work is the sole right of the assigned studio at the discretion of the composer. The licensed marketers are only permitted by law to sell and distribute copyrighted work to the expectant consumers. Any deviation from the natural right of an individual is an act of infringement.

Methodology

The research design employed for this study is descriptive survey. The population of the study comprises the staff of Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) and the registered members of Copyright Society of Nigeria (COSON). Three key officers of NCC and fifteen members of COSON were selected for the study using purposive and random sampling techniques respectively. This study was conducted in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara

State, Nigeria. A state branch of the Nigerian Copyright Commission is located in the state capital – Ilorin, which made collection of data easy. Primary data were obtained through oral interview. Some registered members of Copyright Society of Nigeria (COSON) who reside in Ilorin were engaged in an oral interview. For the secondary data, the researcher interacted with relevant textual materials and internet sources to strengthen the study. The experience of the researcher, both pleasant and unpleasant, gathered in the music industry thus far is a motivational factor to venture into this study.

Conceptualisation of Copyright, Piracy and Music Industry

We are not unaware of diverse perceptions of different scholars about the three variables – copyright, piracy and music industry. In order to avoid confusion or misconception, harmonisation of these perceptions becomes essential to this study.

Copyright

Copyright, according to Samuel (2016, p. 12), is a protection that covers published and unpublished literary, scientific and artistic works, whatever the form of expression, provided such works are fixed in tangible or material form. This implies the works may enjoy protection if it can be seen, heard and/or touched. To Nwogu (2015, p. 114), copyright is perceived as one among the tangible, incorporeal, invisible and abstract proprietary rights granted by law to the author or originator of a tangible corporeal, visible and real object. (COSON, 2018, p. 1). Nwogu points out that copyright does not protect ideas, only the specific and original expression of idea is protected. The creative expression to be protected must be in a tangible form.

It is imperative that originality and proper documentation are pertinent factors in securing copyright. Ahmadu (2014, p. 4) reiterates that:

> Copyright does not protect every work of authorship, to qualify for copyright protection; a work must be both fixed and original. The law considers a work to be fixed if it is recorded in some permanent format. To be original, the work must not be copied from previously existing material, and must display at least a reasonable amount of creativity.

He concluded that copyright only protects the words, notes, or images that the creator has used. It does not protect any idea or concept revealed in the work.

Works eligible for copyright, as contained in the Copyright Act (2004, p. 5), include: literary works, musical works, artistic works, cinematograph films, sound recording and broadcasts. When any of these works is copyrighted, the owner has right to produce, publish and perform his work.

In this context, copyright may be described as an exclusive legal right bestowed on a music composer or music producer to publish, perform, reproduce, sell or distribute his musical works. It is a protection and bulwark for intellectual property. Copyright does not only protect the work but also empowers the owners of the intellectual property to enjoy all rights and benefits attached to copyright registration and certification.

Piracy

Piracy is a phenomenon simply defined as an act of infringement on another's copyright. It is to usurp the trading rights of others. In an explanation submitted by Olaleye (2017/2018, p. 132), piracy is an unauthorised use or reproduction of another's work such as books, recorded music, trademarks and software. This act of infringement is what Samuel (2006, p. 12) referred to as robbery. This is not only against the law of the land, but it also contravenes the law of the Almighty God as it is instructed in the Bible that "thou shall not steal" (Exodus 20:15). This is the commandment of God that condemns stealing. Anyone who steals is a thief. Therefore, pirates are thieves because they steal through infringement of the copyright. If any person, other than the copyright owner or his authorised party, undertakes any of the pirates' activities with respect to a copyrighted product, it amounts to infringement of the copyright

(Ahmadu, 2014, p. 3).

Succinctly, piracy may be described as an illegal act of reproducing someone else's artistic work or intellectual property for a direct or indirect commercial purpose without seeking permission or consent of the owner, thereby denying him of the fruits of his hard labour. Piracy remains a great threat to the world of art and the entertainment industry as a whole and must be fought to a standstill.

Music Industry

Generally, music industry may be referred to as music business where music production and performance are promoted and marketed. According to Adedeji (2016, p. 262), music industry basically takes care of all aspects of the music business, and it has different organisations and outfits working together for a common goal which include the artistes, composers, managers/talent developers, the media, live music promoters and distributors among others. In the Nigerian contemporary music industry, Olaleye (2017/2018, p. 135) rightly observes that many musicians do not put marketing of their products into consideration. It is because of this that many do not get where they should have been.

The music industry, like any other business, has a process that every music producer must follow for success to emerge. The following summarises the music production chain:



A music producer that desires a huge success in his music production will ensure uncompromised diligence and excellence at every stage of the process of music production. An idea conceived must be translated into a musical composition, to be followed with meaningful rehearsal sessions involving all the singers and instrumentalists before proceeding into a carefully chosen studio for clean recording, clear mixing and neat mastering. Thereafter, good marketing strategy through a proactive marketer with wide networking system is required for the musical work to quickly and safely reach the targeted consumers. The music production chain notwithstanding, ownership of intellectual property is never compromised as attested to by Locke's labor theory.

Piracy Syndrome in Nigerian Contemporary Music Production and Performance

As lively and lucrative the Nigerian contemporary music industry is, piracy constitutes a major threat to music production and performance. Pirates are strategists, who often watch out carefully for good and likely acceptable musical works by the society before they launch out their illegal act. Pirates have no respect for copyright. They appear to be clever and smarter in their illegal act. At times, they are subtly ahead of the music producer. Olaleye (2017/2018, p. 132), quoting Okoroji (oral interview 2016), affirms that pirates' versions of every successful release in vinyl appears in the market sometimes even before the official release of a record. While artistes make a lot of music, pirates make all the money. This is very frustrating to the artistes, having invested so much money, time, energy and creativity in the production.

On the television and print media, renowned artistes like Sunday Adeniyi (King Sunny Ade), Bisade Ologunde (Lagbaja), Onyeka Onwenu and a host of others whose works have been pirated at one time or the other, complain and lament over pirates' activities in the Nigerian contemporary music industry. Nwosu (2016, p. 34) confirms that the widespread duplication of works and piracy pose a concern to the government and authors in Nigeria. We cannot discountenance the complaints of the artistes if originality and creativity would be sustained.

In the oral interview with some members of Copyright Society of Nigeria (COSON), frustration was vividly expressed. They claimed to have put in so much resources but reap little dividends. The case of how Moses Olaiya (a.k.a Baba Sala) was made bankrupt and forced out of the entertainment industry was cited. Since the time "*ọ run M'oru*" of Moses Olaiya was pirated, he has not only been forced into oblivion, but also has become frustrated and dejected. He struggled with the emotional and

financial trauma inflicted on him by the pirates till he died.

Another case cited during the oral interview was that of Paul Play Dairo, a music celebrity. It was reported that when Paul Dairo fell ill and was almost on the verge of death a few years ago, it was charity, not his intellectual property that saved his life. Definitely, it was lack of adequate proceeds from the intellectual property that made musicians who were big hit makers in the past to die in abject poverty. It is little wonder that we see many musicians who have produced several albums but still languish in penury. The general public should adhere to the truism, "the labourer is worthy of his reward" (Luke 10:7, I Timothy 5:18, Matthew 10:10, Leviticus 19:13).

Surprisingly, in the course of this study, it became clear that many people who are into music business lack awareness about protection of intellectual property. Those who are aware have little information about copyright. Many of them are not even aware of the existence of the copyright agency. For instance, most of our respondents complained of the risk of going to Lagos to copyright their musical works. They did not know that the agency saddled with the responsibility of protecting people's intellectual property (Nigerian Copyright Commission) now has a branch in Ilorin, Kwara State. Adedeji (2016, p. 267) notes that lack of awareness about copyright and intellectual property has led many artistes to commit blunders they end up regretting. Typical in this line, as further stated by him, is the trend of some artistes selling their master tapes to marketers outright at Alaba market for an agreed sum and ending up regretting after finding out that their work made huge sales. Akinwumi Justina, the State Coordinator, Nigerian Copyright Commission, Kwara State Office attested to the fact, during the interactive session, that very many people are yet to be aware of the benefits attached to registration and certification of intellectual property. This is confirmed by the low patronage of people to the office. She accepted that there is need to re-strategise if the impact of the commission would be felt by all and sundry. In conclusion, she promised a more proactive and impactful approach to be adopted soonest under the new management team.

Furthermore, ignorance was also practically demonstrated in a post-production meeting organised after the successful production of an album titled "*Dakọjọ*" (i.e. Be still) produced in September 2008 by Emmanuel Baptist Church Choir, Sabo-Oke, Ilorin, Kwara State, and directed by the researcher. In a brainstorming session on how to protect the work from the pirates, it was surprising to hear a university don affirmatively submit thus: "Let the work be pirated; let anyone that wants to pirate the work pirate it. It will fast track the spread of the work to the nooks and crannies; by so doing, evangelism is achieved as commanded by Jesus Christ." A brilliant intention was indeed submitted but an ignorant action was in fact recommended. This is nothing but a manifestation of ignorance. It is an indirect way of encouraging and justifying illegality. Godliness cannot be encouraged to thrive on the wings of ungodliness. The law condemns piracy, so we must not support people to break the law else we may be seen as accomplices.

Since the Nigerian contemporary music industry transcends buying and selling of musical products, the searchlight of the researcher is beamed on other areas, especially live music performance at events. Violation of copyright law characterises most musical performances at various social and religious events. Imagine a musician who was paid five hundred thousand naira or more for a musical performance at an event, but not less than eighty per cent (80%) of the entire performance was another person's intellectual property. Perhaps, both the artiste and the populace should share the blame because, on many occasions, the celebrant often requests a song of another musician to be performed by the invited artiste. This is a confirmation of the popular saying that "he who pays the piper dictates the tune". Consequently, pirating of one another's works eclipses originality and genuine creativity.

Recall that, in the past, originality and creativity were not compromised for mediocrity. A relevant example is to flash back to the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s when live performance of the likes of Sunny Ade, Ebenezer Obey, I. K. Dairo just to mention a few

were full of originality and creative thinking. The uniqueness of these artistes carved a distinct identity for each of them. Despite that, Obey and Sunny are both Juju musicians and each has a distinguished characteristic. They did not pirate each other's works. Obey sings his own songs and Sunny performs his own composed songs in his own style. The culture of making originality and creative thinking the watchword in the music production and performance should be revived and encouraged.

Complementing Government's Efforts with Strategic Approach to Combat Piracy in the Nigerian Contemporary Music Industry

Effort and Hiccups of Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC)

The establishment of the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) as far back as August 1989 shows that protection of people's intellectual property has been a matter of concern to the Federal Government of Nigeria for not less than thirty years. We must point out that the commission was initially recognised as Nigerian Copyright Council by the Copyright Decree No. 47 of 1988 now codified as Copyright Act (CAP. C28 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004). The mandate of the commission, as clearly stated in the copyright amendments of 1992 and 1999, was expanded to include the administration, enforcement, protection, promotion and regulation of copyright in Nigeria.

Ever since the establishment of the NCC, there have been wars between the commission and the pirates. Several arrests, prosecutions, conviction and seizures were made to serve as a deterrent for other potential pirates. A summary of enforcement and prosecutorial efforts of the commission for five years is given below as documented by Oyefeso (2015, p. 35).

Table 1: Summary of Enforcement and Prosecutorial Efforts of the Nigerian Copyright Commission from 2011 to 2015

Year	Number of Anti-piracy Surveillance Conducted	Number of Anti-piracy Operations Conducted	Quantity of Seizures	Market Value of Seizures	Number of Arrest	Number of Conviction	Container Seizure
2011	68	34	267,396	N91,185,000.00	129	3	-
2012	60	55	3,621,787	N4,379,431,000.00	84	26	13 Containers, (11 contain pirated books, 2 contain pirated music/film works)
2013	80	74	1,868,339	N1,643,786,000.00	158	15	4 Containers, (3 contain pirated music/film works, 1, pirated books)
2014	95	40	323,862	N308,819,600.00	72	9	3 Containers, (2 contain pirated books, 1, pirated music/film works)
2015	105	41	1,783,914	N1,649,343,460.00	98	1	5 Containers, (4 contain pirated books, while one contain CDs, VCDs, and DVDs)
Total	408	244	7,865,298	N8,072,565,060.00	541	54	25

Source:Oyefeso, V. A. (2015). Report of enforcement, prosecutorial and other activities of the Nigerian Copyright Commission (2011 – 2015).

The table and the entire report only revealed that the commission seems to lay more emphasis on the punitive approach than preventive campaign. The title of the book – Report of Enforcement, Prosecutorial and other Activities of the NCC – is a confirmation of the observation. Even at that, the enforcement exercise is concentrated in a few states and regions. Since the law is not created for selected states, the operation should cut across the entire country so that pirates would not have a hiding place.

There is virtually no successful organisation without its attendant challenges. The only factor that distinguished a successful organisation from its failed counterpart is the approach adopted to confront and conquer the threatening 'Monster'. No doubt there are hiccups to smooth operation of the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC). The core challenges of the commission are highlighted by Oyefeso (2015, p. 34) as follows:

- Increasing cost of overhead operations against drastic reduction of budgetary allocation of the commission;
- Inadequate human and institutional capacity;
- Low level of awareness arising from lack of funds to execute public enlightenment campaign;
- Lack of office accommodation;
- Communication facilities;
- Insufficient operational vehicles; and
- Rising cost of prosecution.

Similarly, Nwosu (2016, p. 28) summarised the problems hindering the performance of the commission as delay in the judicial process, untrained staff, poor financing, inadequate mobility, insecurity, favouritism, poor information and communication technology (ICT) knowledge, poor equipment for the implementation of the anti-piracy policies and so on. With all these enormous challenges, the commission can only do little.

The Strategic Approach

No matter how long a problem might have been in existence, we must never give up on searching for solution. It is true that piracy has been a protracted challenge to the Nigerian contemporary music industry, but we can no longer fold our arms looking at the 'Monster' destroying the industry that brings joy and happiness to the society. On this premise, the researcher proffers some strategic approaches to nip the piracy syndrome prevalent in the contemporary music industry in the bud.

First and foremost, strategic sensitisation campaign against piracy is expedient. Achieving this will require making the Federal Government of Nigeria ensure that the presence and activities of the NCC are felt in all states and local governments. The NCC should have state offices and liaison offices in all the State Capitals and local governments respectively. Through this, NCC will be closer to the people and anti-piracy sensitization campaign will be effective.

Secondly, there is urgent need to have strategic law overhauling, promulgation and enforcement. Perusing some cases of prosecution and conviction of culprits documented by NCC (2015), the researcher was surprised to see a convict being asked to pay as low as the paltry sum of N100 on every copy of the 156 DVDs found with the offender (NCC, 2015, pp. 57- 58). The total fine translated to N15,600. What a ridiculous amount! This cannot serve as a deterrent to his other colleagues in the crime. Thus, the copyright law needs general overhauling if the government is sincerely determined to fight piracy. We should be reminded that we are in a digital age where analogue approach to issues may prove grossly inappropriate. Laws promulgated in the era of phonograph, cassettes, cartridges, and CDs are obsolete and cannot be adequate in a digital age where several means of digital devices for recording and storage are available to everybody. Clear regulation about usage of digital devices is imperative. If there is no control mechanism put in place, violation is inevitable. As part of the enforcement strategy, media outfits should be invited to cover the prosecution proceeding and make the final judgment public. Pictures of the offenders should be made public on the electronic and the print media.

Thirdly, strategic anti-piracy music software should be designed as we now have anti-plagiarism

software named turn-it-in in the academic. The music anti-piracy software test should be fabricated and structured in a way that it will detect level of piracy in any music played through it. By doing this, the commission is encouraging originality and power of creative thinking. Secrecy of the software is very crucial.

In line with the production and procurement of music anti-piracy software, good implementation and administration strategy will facilitate and ensure its success. This is a long-term plan that will be later used as a preventive measure. Within a space of about two years, music composers and producers would be made to submit their past and present musical works for copyright registration and certification. As people respond, the NCC is building her music data bank which will later be used for the proposed anti-piracy software. This will require the commission employing specialists to take charge of different units of the commission. The intention of mandating music producers and composers to submit their intellectual property to the NCC will be revealed later on after the works must have passed through and passed the proposed anti-piracy test. The anti-piracy test report will determine acceptability of the musical work for copyright registration and certification. The implication is that piracy is checked at the registration stage before the musical work is allowed into the market for public consumption.

We cannot ignore strategic funding in this study. The federal government of Nigeria cannot claim to be responsive enough to fighting the piracy syndrome without adequate funding of NCC. All other proposed strategic approaches can only be a reality with adequate funding. The funding strategy should capture all the state offices and local government liaison outlets as suggested earlier. Strategic funding should take care of purchase and upgrade of required and available digital equipment. Staff welfares should be paramount in the strategic funding policy. With money, commitment and dedication, dreams and aspiration come true.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, piracy syndrome has been exposed to be a virus that has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian contemporary music production and performance. Pirates are seen in this study as people who have no regard or respect for intellectual property. They are thieves who sneak into the music industry to make money not minding whether the music composer or producer die in poverty, making themselves happy while they make others sad. In order to complement the effort of the government agency in combating piracy in the Nigerian contemporary music, the researcher proposed some strategic approaches such as strategic sensitisation campaign, strategic law overhauling, promulgation and enforcement, strategic device of music anti-piracy software, and strategic implementation and administration. Without adequate funding, all the proposed strategies would be a mirage. Thus, the Federal Government of Nigeria is advised to provide adequate fund, conducive work environment, operational vehicles, human resources, and digital equipment for most activities like registration and administration. Heavy sanction for convicts so as to serve as a deterrent to potential pirates is highly recommended. Finally, all stakeholders in the music industry should cooperate with the federal government to fight piracy to a standstill.

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