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Creation or Content Pollution? Algorithm, Virality and Value in Nigerian Skit Production

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has transformed cultural production across the globe, with Nigeria emerging as a vibrant hub of digital creativity. Among the most visible forms of this cultural output are comedic skits, which circulate widely on Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook. This essay investigates the ways in which platform algorithms shape the visibility, value, and perceived quality of Nigerian skit production. Drawing on media ecology and attention economy as theoretical frameworks, the essay interrogates how algorithmic systems privilege certain forms of content and incentivise creators toward an "anything-for-views" culture. While skits provide accessible avenues for expression and economic participation, their algorithmic circulation often rewards sensationalism, repetition, and superficiality over creative depth. The essay employs a platform algorithm study—an interpretive examination of engagement metrics, recommendation logics, and content patterns—to critically analyse the tension between virality and value. Findings suggest that Nigerian skit culture is simultaneously a site of creative experimentation and of content pollution, where quantity often overshadows quality. By situating Nigerian skits within global debates on platform capitalism, digital labour, and cultural value, the essay contributes to understanding how African media ecologies are entangled with global digital infrastructures. It argues that while algorithms offer visibility, they also reshape cultural horizons, raising urgent questions about sustainability, authenticity, and the future of digital creativity in Nigeria.

Keywords: Algorithmic Culture, Attention Economy, Nigerian Skit Production, Content Pollution

Introduction

The past decade has witnessed an extraordinary surge in digital cultural production across Africa, with Nigeria emerging as a focal point of innovation and virality. Nigerian creators have not only taken to YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook but have also cultivated distinctive genres that reflect local humour, idioms, and social realities. Among these, short-form comedy skits stand out. Often produced with minimal resources but rich in improvisational flair, skits circulate rapidly and command

millions of views within hours. For many young Nigerians, skit production has become both a creative outlet and a pathway to livelihood in a precarious economy. Yet, behind this success lies a more ambivalent story. Increasingly, observers and creators alike question whether the drive for virality—amplified by algorithmic recommendation systems—is eroding the quality of content. This tension animates the present essay: Are we witnessing a renaissance of local creativity, or a descent into content pollution, where spectacle and superficiality dominate?

The significance of this question extends beyond Nigeria's digital landscape. Globally, the role of algorithms in shaping attention, taste, and cultural production has provoked debates in media studies, cultural theory, and platform studies (Bucher, 2018; Gillespie, 2020). Algorithms are not neutral. They privilege certain types of engagement—likes, shares, watch time—over others, thereby structuring what circulates and what fades. In contexts like Nigeria, where digital visibility translates directly into economic opportunities and social mobility, the stakes of algorithmic visibility are especially high. This essay pursues three guiding questions:

i. How do social media algorithms shape the production and circulation of Nigerian skits?
ii. In what ways does algorithm-driven virality encourage or undermine creative value?
iii. What broader implications emerge for understanding cultural production within African media ecologies under the regime of the attention economy?

To address these questions, the essay draws on two interconnected theoretical frameworks. The first is **media ecology**, which views communication technologies as environments that shape meaning, interaction, and culture (McLuhan, 1964; Postman, 2000). Social media platforms constitute a new ecology where creators and audiences interact under algorithmic mediation. The second is the attention economy, which frames attention as a scarce resource in digital culture (Davenport & Beck, 2001; Wu, 2017). Algorithms are the infrastructure through which attention is allocated, commodified, and monetised. Together, these frameworks enable a critical reading of Nigerian skit production as both a cultural practice and an economic strategy shaped by global digital infrastructures.

Methodologically, this essay adopts a platform algorithm study, which involves interpretive analysis of how platform logics manifest in content circulation. Instead of treating algorithms as opaque technical systems only, the study focuses on their observable effects: patterns of visibility, content repetition, and creator adaptation. By comparing Nigerian skits across platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, and by examining engagement metrics and audience reception, the analysis foregrounds the interplay between algorithmic design and creative practice. It is important to clarify that the essay does not assume a binary between "good" and "bad" content. Rather, it treats value as a contested and contextual concept. What counts as quality for one audience—relatability, humour, brevity—may appear as superficiality to another. The central concern is how platform logics structure these contests of value and how creators navigate the resulting incentives.

The following sections are organised as follows. Section Two reviews existing scholarship on algorithms, virality, media ecology, and the attention economy, situating Nigerian skit production within these debates. Section Three outlines the methodology, detailing the rationale for a platform algorithm study. Section Four presents findings and discussion, highlighting how algorithmic amplification fosters both creativity and content pollution in Nigerian skit culture. Section Five concludes with reflections on the implications for media ecology, the sustainability of creative labour, and the cultural future of Nigerian digital production.

Literature Review

In contemporary media scholarship, algorithms are increasingly understood not merely as technical tools but as cultural forces that shape what people see, value, and engage with. Gillespie (2014) conceptualises them as "public relevance algorithms," which not only organise information but also structure cultural visibility in ways that privilege some voices over others. Bucher (2018) advances this further by describing algorithms as cultural intermediaries that actively participate in meaning-making processes rather than passively curating content. Beer (2017) similarly argues that algorithms function as socio-technical assemblages, embedding assumptions about what counts as valuable engagement. This body of work underscores a critical point: algorithms are not neutral, but deeply implicated in cultural production and circulation. In the Nigerian skit industry, these dynamics are particularly visible, as creators often measure their success less by narrative craft than by their ability to resonate with algorithmic signals of value.

Creators' adaptations to algorithmic logics reflect what Bucher (2017) calls the "algorithmic imaginary"—the everyday ways users imagine, interpret, and respond to algorithmic systems. Nigerian skit makers, like their counterparts elsewhere, craft content with assumptions about "what the algorithm wants." Anecdotal evidence and creator interviews suggest practices such as exaggerated gestures, loud sound effects, and clickbait titles are deployed to maximise algorithmic favour. Similar dynamics have been observed in other creative industries: Cotter (2019) documents how Instagram influencers adopt "visibility practices" tailored to algorithmic curation, while Bishop (2019) highlights how YouTubers modulate their style to satisfy platform metrics. In Nigeria, this negotiation between artistry and visibility is sharpened by the precariousness of youth livelihoods, where creative labour often doubles as economic survival. As Striphas (2015) cautions, however, cultural production cannot be reduced to algorithmic determinism. Rather, creators negotiate a space of tension between agency and constraint, making choices that are simultaneously expressive and economically strategic.

Virality, another key concept in this debate, has long fascinated media scholars as a mode of cultural circulation. Early studies likened viral media to "memes" that spread through replication, humour, and mimicry (Shifman, 2014). More recent scholarship situates virality within the logics of platform capitalism, where circulation is monetised through advertising and data extraction (Srnicek, 2017). Nahon and Hemsley (2013) emphasise that virality is not a spontaneous phenomenon but structured through infrastructures of amplification. TikTok exemplifies this logic, deploying a recommendation system that surfaces content based on micro-signals of user interest (Kaye et al., 2022). Unlike older platforms that privileged follower counts, TikTok's "For You Page" allows even unknown creators to achieve sudden visibility, though unpredictably and unevenly. This industry-wide convergence toward short-form, attention-grabbing content is evident on Instagram and YouTube as well, both of which increasingly foreground "Reels" and "Shorts." In Nigeria, this convergence manifests in the rise of skit collectives and influencer networks that collaborate to maximise reach, reinforcing the platform logic where visibility translates directly into monetisable engagement.

The theoretical framework of media ecology offers a valuable lens for situating these developments. Originating with McLuhan (1964) and later elaborated by Postman (2000), media ecology foregrounds the idea that communication technologies are environments that reshape social practices and cultural meaning. From this perspective, platforms like Instagram and TikTok are not just distribution channels but environments that structure comedy itself. Meyrowitz (1994) argues that media

environments reconfigure social roles, and in the Nigerian skit ecology, the boundaries between professional comedians and everyday creators have blurred. A university student with a smartphone can gain visibility comparable to established Nollywood actors, provided the algorithm amplifies their content. This democratisation of creative opportunity is empowering, yet precarious, because it ties visibility to opaque platform infrastructures. Scholars such as Fuchs (2021) remind us that these infrastructures are driven by corporate imperatives rather than cultural sustainability, meaning creators' agency is always embedded within structural constraints.

If media ecology explains the environment, the **attention economy** clarifies the stakes. Goldhaber (1997) first argued that in an age of information abundance, attention becomes the scarce and valuable commodity. Wu (2017) expands this into the notion of "attention merchants," corporations that capture and sell human attention as their core business model. Platforms design algorithmic systems to hold users' gaze for as long as possible, with metrics such as watch time, retention, and click-through serving as proxies for success (Davenport & Beck, 2001). For creators, this translates into pressure to craft content that prevents viewers from swiping away. Nigerian skit makers often tailor their work not to artistic satisfaction but to the imperatives of retention, which explains the prevalence of exaggerated scenarios, hyperbolic characters, and sensationalist themes. Yet, attention-driven metrics often fail to capture cultural or social value. A slapstick skit may garner millions of views, while a nuanced piece on corruption remains marginal. Couldry and Mejias (2019) warn that this reduction of culture to metrics risks erasing other registers of value, such as reflection, authenticity, or cultural resonance.

While much of the global literature on algorithms and attention economies emerges from Euro-American contexts, African media ecologies present distinctive conditions. Internet access remains uneven, data costs are high, and infrastructural challenges shape platform usage across the continent (Mare, 2020). Despite these constraints, African creators have cultivated vibrant digital cultures that blend local idioms with global trends. Nigerian skit culture, for instance, draws from oral traditions, satire, and Nollywood's improvisational aesthetics (Adesokan, 2011). These skits resonate with audiences because they translate everyday challenges—traffic congestion, power outages, family disputes—into comedic relief. At the same time, they function as survival strategies in precarious labour markets, where digital hustling offers alternatives to limited formal employment (Uche, 2022). Munyati (2021) and Mare (2020) caution, however, that creators remain embedded in extractive global infrastructures, where value disproportionately accrues to corporations in the Global North. Thus, while skit culture demonstrates creative agency, it also highlights the asymmetries of global platform capitalism.

Despite growing scholarship, notable gaps remain in the study of Nigerian skit production. First, existing research on African digital cultures often centres on political activism, such as the #EndSARS movement, or on Nollywood's digital transformation, leaving everyday entertainment genres relatively under-examined (Mare, 2020; Uche, 2022). Second, while there is growing recognition of platform capitalism in Africa, few studies explicitly connect algorithmic logics to local creative practices. Much research remains focused on infrastructure and access, neglecting how creators adapt to and internalise platform incentives. Third, limited attention has been given to the question of cultural value in an algorithmic age. Scholars often document what circulates but less frequently ask whether what circulates enriches or diminishes cultural life. This essay seeks to address these gaps by situating Nigerian skit production at the intersection of creation and content pollution, thereby contributing to broader debates on digital labour, platform capitalism, and cultural sustainability in African media ecologies.

Methodology

This study adopts a platform algorithm study to examine the relationship between algorithmic visibility and the production of Nigerian skits. Rather than treating algorithms as purely technical black boxes, this approach follows Bucher (2018) and Seaver (2017), who argue that algorithms can be studied through their observable outputs, cultural effects, and the practices they engender among users. By shifting attention from hidden code to visible patterns of circulation, this study foregrounds how algorithms operate as cultural forces in everyday life. Nigerian skit makers, like other content creators globally, engage platforms with partial knowledge of algorithmic systems, often relying on what Bucher (2017) terms "algorithmic imaginaries." These imaginaries are not always accurate representations of technical processes, but they nevertheless shape creative decision-making in profound ways. By focusing on such observable and discursive dimensions, the study captures both the structural pressures of algorithmic design and the agentive responses of creators navigating visibility.

The analysis centres on four platforms most significant to Nigerian skit production: TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. TikTok is particularly influential for its powerful recommendation engine and its reputation for lowering barriers to virality, making it attractive among younger Nigerians (Kaye et al., 2022). Instagram, by contrast, is deeply intertwined with influencer economies in Nigeria, where comedic skits often serve as vehicles for brand integration and commercial partnerships. YouTube provides more stable opportunities for long-term monetisation through ad revenue and subscriptions, though its viral potential is slower and less predictable compared to TikTok. Finally, Facebook, while sometimes overlooked in global scholarship, remains dominant in Nigeria due to its affordability, integration with mobile data bundles, and accessibility in rural areas (Mare, 2020). Comparing these platforms illuminates how different algorithmic systems reward or discourage particular creative practices, while also reflecting the cross-platform strategies many Nigerian skit makers employ to maximise visibility.

To operationalise this inquiry, the study employed a multi-pronged data collection strategy. First, a purposive sample of 200 Nigerian skits was drawn from popular TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and Facebook pages between January and June 2023. Sampling criteria included high view counts (over 100,000 views), trending hashtags, and algorithmic prominence on "For You" or "Explore" feeds. This sampling strategy was designed to capture content already subject to algorithmic amplification, rather than focusing on less visible or marginal productions. Second, engagement metrics were systematically recorded for each sampled skit, including views, likes, comments, shares, and watch-time data where available. These metrics, while imperfect, served as proxies for algorithmic reward, recognising that high engagement is both an input into and an outcome of recommendation systems. Third, supplementary insights were gathered from creator discourse, drawing on interviews, podcasts, YouTube Q&A sessions, and media reports where Nigerian skit makers reflected on their strategies and perceptions of "what the algorithm wants." Together, these data sources enabled a holistic reading of both content practices and their algorithmic contexts.

The analysis proceeded in two stages. First, a qualitative content analysis was conducted, coding skits for recurring themes, stylistic devices, and narrative strategies. Categories included slapstick humour, cross-dressing, sexual innuendo, social commentary, exaggeration, and cross-platform promotion. This allowed for a systematic identification of how creative choices aligned with or resisted algorithmic incentives. Second, these content categories were correlated with engagement metrics,

examining which stylistic and thematic strategies consistently attracted higher visibility. For example, skits with exaggerated physical comedy were compared to those featuring reflective social commentary to assess differential algorithmic amplification. This dual process of qualitative coding and engagement correlation provided insight into how creators adapt practices in response to algorithmic logics, while also foregrounding the structural pressures that incentivise "content pollution."

Reflexivity and positionality were also central to the research design. As a researcher examining Nigerian skit culture through the lens of media studies, I approached content both as cultural text and as data point. This dual perspective required balancing empathy for creators—many of whom navigate precarious economic conditions—with critical scrutiny of the platform systems that shape their creative horizons. It was also necessary to acknowledge my reliance on publicly available metrics and secondary creator discourse, which may reflect strategic self-presentation rather than full transparency about compromises made in creative practice. By foregrounding these interpretive limitations, the study aimed to remain sensitive to both the agency of creators and the structural asymmetries that condition their labour.

The study faced several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the opacity of algorithms means that no analysis can claim complete transparency regarding platform mechanics; what is studied here are manifestations of algorithmic logic rather than its inner workings (Pasquale, 2015). Second, the six-month sampling window captures only a snapshot of skit production, while viral trends are notoriously fluid and ephemeral. Third, reliance on publicly visible engagement metrics is inherently partial, as platforms withhold deeper data such as completion rates or demographic breakdowns. Fourth, creator discourse, while valuable, may reflect aspirational narratives or strategic positioning, limiting its reliability as a direct window into practice. Nonetheless, these limitations do not undermine the value of the study; rather, they mirror the conditions under which creators themselves operate. Nigerian skit makers, too, navigate their craft with incomplete knowledge of algorithms, partial access to analytics, and interpretive imaginaries of platform behaviour.

Finally, ethical considerations guided the research process. Since all sampled content was publicly available, no private data were accessed, and all creator discourse was drawn from voluntary public interviews or media appearances. Still, care was taken to treat creators not as mere data points but as cultural workers whose labour carries emotional, social, and economic stakes (Terranova, 2000). By framing findings in aggregate patterns rather than individualised critique, the study sought to avoid stigmatising particular creators while illuminating broader structural dynamics. This ethical orientation reflects a commitment to studying digital cultures not only as texts or datasets but as lived practices situated within precarious economies.

Findings and Discussion

Analysis of the sampled content reveals consistent patterns in the types of skits rewarded by algorithmic circulation on Nigerian social media platforms. Across TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook, short clips relying on immediacy and spectacle outperformed those that employed slower build-up or nuanced storytelling. This reflects the broader rhythm of "scroll culture," where content must capture attention within the first few seconds to avoid dismissal (Nahon & Hemsley, 2013). Nigerian creators appear highly attuned to this dynamic, often beginning skits with loud sounds, exaggerated gestures, or confrontational scenarios designed to arrest attention instantly. Such strategies are not unique to Nigeria; scholars of TikTok culture in the United States and China have similarly noted the prominence of "the first-three-seconds rule" (Kaye

et al., 2022). Yet in Nigeria, this immediacy takes on particular salience because digital visibility is closely tied to livelihood opportunities, meaning that skits must not only entertain but also secure algorithmic favour as a survival strategy.

The prevalence of exaggerated performance underscores how algorithms foster an "anything-for-views" culture. Many skit makers openly acknowledge repeating formats that perform well, even when this repetition feels creatively limiting. For instance, the cross-dressing trope—where male comedians portray women through exaggerated costumes and gestures—has been recycled across hundreds of skits despite audience fatigue and feminist critiques. This dynamic mirrors Bishop's (2019) findings on YouTubers who optimise for algorithmic metrics at the expense of innovation, suggesting a global tendency where creators converge on "safe" formats that guarantee reach. In Nigeria, repetition often escalates into hyperbolic excess, with creators amplifying scenarios into ever more sensational forms—such as depicting domestic quarrels as violent chases or parental discipline as near-caricature. While such strategies produce entertainment, they also contribute to what local commentators call "content pollution," a saturation of formulaic skits that risks narrowing cultural horizons (Omoniyi, 2021).

The case of Mark Angel Comedy, one of Nigeria's most widely recognised skit collectives, illustrates this algorithmic adaptation vividly. Their early videos, celebrated for freshness and relatability, relied on simple humour and the comedic talents of child star Emmanuella. Over time, however, their output shifted toward slapstick repetition, pranks, and recurring character archetypes that align neatly with algorithmic preferences for spectacle. Engagement data confirm that exaggerated, high-energy skits consistently outperform narrative-driven videos, some reaching tens of millions of views in contrast to slower-paced productions that stagnate below one million. This pattern echoes Jenkins et al.'s (2013) argument that participatory cultures often slide into convergence cultures, where innovation is constrained by platform incentives. Yet, Mark Angel Comedy also demonstrates the economic sustainability afforded by algorithmic amplification: their visibility has secured brand partnerships, tours, and cross-platform monetisation. Thus, the relationship between content pollution and creative livelihood is complex, as repetition simultaneously limits artistic range and sustains material survival.

Audience responses to algorithmically rewarded content reveal a more ambivalent picture. Comment sections often oscillate between praise for providing comic relief and criticism for recycling stale tropes. Skits employing cross-dressing or slapstick violence may generate enormous engagement but also provoke debates about stereotyping, cultural dignity, and creative laziness. This aligns with Couldry and Hepp's (2017) notion of "deep mediatisation," where not only creators but also audiences adjust expectations in line with platform rhythms. Nigerian viewers accustomed to rapid-fire humour may inadvertently reinforce algorithmic logics by scrolling past slower, narrative skits, even as they articulate frustration with formulaic repetition. Importantly, some creators have turned this reflexivity into material, producing meta-skits that parody the very tropes of algorithmic culture—for example, mocking clickbait thumbnails or self-consciously exaggerating "content for views" behaviour. Such practices demonstrate that both creators and audiences are aware of algorithmic pressures, though this awareness rarely alters platform dynamics.

The interplay between local cultural forms and global platform logics introduces further complexity. Nigerian skits draw heavily on traditions of oral storytelling, satire, and Nollywood-style improvisation (Adesokan, 2011). Yet these traditions are increasingly reframed through short-form, high-energy formats that privilege visual immediacy

over linguistic or narrative depth. A Yoruba comedy sketch that once relied on gradual dialogue and layered humour must now compress into 60 seconds for TikTok, often shedding cultural nuance in the process. Scholars of Indian TikTok (Arora, 2021) and Brazilian funk memes (Pereira, 2020) have noted similar tensions, where local performance traditions are streamlined for global shareability. Nigerian creators thus inhabit a paradox: while algorithmic environments dilute cultural specificity, they also inspire adaptive creativity, with some skit makers embedding indigenous idioms or proverbs into bite-sized formats that travel globally. The result is not a simple loss of cultural authenticity but a hybridisation that reflects both constraint and agency.

Collaboration has emerged as a prominent strategy for navigating algorithmic visibility. Influencer collectives such as House of Ajebo or Broda Shaggi's team demonstrate how creators pool audiences by appearing in each other's content, effectively gaming algorithms that reward network effects. van Dijck et al. (2018) describe this as the "platform society," where visibility is achieved not just through individual merit but through strategic collaboration and cross-promotion. In Nigeria, collaborations often pair established comedians with emerging creators, enabling both to benefit from expanded reach. However, these dynamics also reproduce hierarchies: access to high-visibility collaborators often requires financial resources, patronage, or reciprocal status, making entry into visibility uneven. Thus, even as platforms claim to democratise creativity, algorithmic amplification frequently entrenches inequality, echoing long-standing patterns of media gatekeeping.

Precarity emerged as another recurrent theme in both content and creator discourse. Nigerian skit makers often express anxiety about sudden drops in engagement, where a creator averaging half a million views per video may suddenly see only tens of thousands, with no explanation. This volatility reflects the opacity of algorithmic systems, where platform tweaks can devastate visibility overnight (Cunningham & Craig, 2019). For Nigerian youth, whose unemployment rate hovers above 30%, such fluctuations carry material consequences, undermining not just creative aspirations but also livelihood security. Diversification across platforms is one common strategy, as creators repost skits to TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook to hedge against instability. Yet even this cross-platform strategy cannot eliminate structural precarity, leaving many creators vulnerable to burnout. Terranova's (2000) concept of "free labour" resonates strongly here: Nigerian creators expend continuous energy producing content for platforms that extract disproportionate value, while bearing the financial and psychological costs of production.

The prominence of **excess**—in gesture, narrative, and performance—was striking across the sampled content. Skits frequently depict extreme domestic conflicts, exaggerated gender dynamics, or hyperbolic displays of wealth and poverty. This aligns with Debord's (1994) theory of the "society of the spectacle," where cultural value is displaced by its ability to command attention. Excess is algorithmically rewarded because high-energy content tends to hold viewers longer, yet it carries risks. Nigerian critics argue that exaggerated portrayals reinforce negative stereotypes—depicting Nigerians as chaotic, aggressive, or overly dramatic—and these caricatures circulate globally via social media. While excess ensures virality, it may simultaneously undermine cultural dignity, producing a tension between visibility and authenticity.

A gendered analysis reveals further complexities. Many viral skits reproduce reductive portrayals of women as nagging wives, materialistic girlfriends, or secondary foils to male protagonists. Cross-dressing, while popular, often relies on caricatured depictions of femininity that reinforce patriarchal humour. Feminist scholars of African media (Okome, 2013; Nwafor, 2022) argue that such portrayals marginalise female voices and

normalise gender inequality in cultural production. Yet women creators such as Taaooma and Real Warri Pikin have disrupted these dynamics by crafting skits that exaggerate maternal authority or satirise patriarchal expectations, thereby reclaiming visibility. Their success illustrates that women can thrive within algorithmic cultures, though they often face harsher scrutiny, trolling, and harassment in comment sections. Importantly, algorithms themselves are indifferent to gender, but they amplify cultural logics that are already patriarchal, privileging content that aligns with dominant norms. This intersection of platform logics and gendered humour raises critical questions about whose creativity is valued and whose is marginalised.

Bringing these findings together, Nigerian skit culture emerges as a precarious balance between creation and content pollution. Algorithms have undeniably democratised visibility, enabling young Nigerians to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and monetise creativity in new ways. Yet the same algorithms incentivise repetition, excess, and superficiality, threatening to stifle long-term innovation. For creators, the challenge lies in balancing economic survival with artistic experimentation, often alternating between quick, low-effort skits that guarantee engagement and more ambitious productions that risk invisibility. For audiences, the result is ambivalence: they are entertained by spectacle yet frustrated by repetition, participating in a cultural ecology that is at once vibrant and vulnerable.

Conclusion

This essay set out to interrogate a central tension in Nigerian digital culture: whether the rise of algorithm-driven skit production represents a flourishing of creativity or a descent into what commentators call "content pollution." Through a platform algorithm study of skits across TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, the analysis demonstrated that Nigerian skit culture embodies both innovation and repetition, empowerment and precarity. Algorithms function as cultural filters, privileging short, exaggerated, and visually immediate humour over slower, narrative-driven forms. In doing so, they incentivise creators to embrace an "anything-for-views" culture that often recycles familiar tropes such as slapstick violence or cross-dressing stereotypes. Yet, these same strategies sustain livelihoods, enabling many young Nigerians to transform digital creativity into tangible economic opportunity. The paradox is clear: visibility is attainable, but it comes at the cost of narrowing creative horizons.

At the same time, Nigerian creators exhibit remarkable agency within these constraints. They hybridise global formats with local idioms, embed social critique within humour, and experiment with collaborative economies that pool visibility. Audiences, too, display ambivalence—rewarding spectacle with clicks and shares while simultaneously voicing frustration with formulaic repetition. These dynamics resist reduction to algorithmic determinism; rather, they reflect an ecology of negotiation where creators, audiences, and platforms interact under asymmetrical conditions of power. As Couldry and Mejias (2019) argue, digital infrastructures commodify human expression while marginalising alternative registers of value. Nigerian skit culture thus illustrates both the promise of digital democratisation and the extractive logics of platform capitalism.

The implications of these findings are significant for cultural sustainability and policy. First, the dependence on global platforms entrenches digital asymmetries: while Nigerian creators provide the cultural content that fuels engagement, the majority of profits accrue to corporations headquartered in the Global North. This extractive relationship raises urgent questions of digital sovereignty for African nations. Without local or regional alternatives that prioritise cultural depth over engagement metrics, Nigerian creators remain tethered to external infrastructures that prioritise advertising

logics. Second, the rise of content pollution underscores the limitations of equating visibility with cultural value. A skit may attract millions of views by exaggerating stereotypes, while a more nuanced piece addressing corruption or inequality remains marginal. For policymakers and scholars alike, this disconnect highlights the need to rethink cultural value in algorithmic environments.

A further implication lies in the sustainability of creative labour. The precarity of Nigerian skit makers—manifested in burnout, creative stagnation, and financial volatility—demonstrates the human cost of algorithmic mediation. As Cunningham and Craig (2019) remind us, platform-dependent labour externalises risk onto creators while centralising profits for platforms. If Nigerian digital creativity is to remain sustainable, interventions are needed at multiple levels: platform governance that rewards diversity, local initiatives that support cultural production, and collective strategies among creators to resist homogenisation. Such measures would not only protect creators but also preserve the richness of Nigeria's comedic traditions.

Ultimately, the future of Nigerian skit production hinges on whether creators, audiences, and policymakers can navigate the dialectic between creation and pollution. Emerging evidence suggests hybrid strategies—balancing quick, algorithm-friendly skits with longer, narrative-driven projects—may offer one pathway forward. Yet, without broader shifts in infrastructural ownership and governance, the underlying asymmetries of platform capitalism will persist. What this study underscores is that the question "creation or content pollution?" has no definitive resolution. Rather, it captures the ambivalence of Nigerian skit production under the attention economy: a cultural ecology that is vibrant yet vulnerable, innovative yet constrained, democratic yet extractive. Recognising this ambivalence is essential not only for understanding Nigerian digital creativity but also for reimagining cultural value in an increasingly algorithmic global order.

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